

After all the business necessary for the constitution of the synod had been completed, the synod decided to proceed immediately to the

Doctrinal Proceedings.

The Reverend Dr. C. F. W. Walther had taken over the presentation and put forward theses

on some of the main duties which a synod has if it wishes to bear the name of an Evangelical-Lutheran synod with justification.

The theses are as follows:

Thesis I.

Its first main duty is to be faithful to the confession in word and deed, and therefore

- a. acknowledge the symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church without restriction;
- b. accept only faithful pastors, teachers and congregations;
- c. supervise the confessional fidelity of its members;
- d. hold fellowship only with confessionally loyal bodies.

Thesis II.

Another main duty is that it should faithfully care for its congregations in an evangelical way, and therefore

- a. does not arrogate to itself any authority over them, but **only** assists them in an advisory capacity;
- b. help them to obtain righteous preachers and teachers;
- c. Protect them against preachers who are erroneous in doctrine, vexatious in life and domineering in their ministry.

Thesis III.

A third main duty is that they prove to be a support to their preachers and teachers, and therefore

- a. advise the same;
- b. support them in the proper conduct of their office;
- c. defend them against injustice.

<page 10>

Thesis IV.

A fourth main duty is that it should in every way promote the growth of its members in the knowledge of the truth, and therefore

- a. primarily hold doctrinal discussions in their meetings;

- b. set up pastoral and teachers' conferences and inspect and assess the reports on the results of these;
- c. be concerned with the dissemination of good writings.

Thesis V.

A fifth main duty is that they cultivate peace and unity among themselves in the truth, and therefore see to it,

- a. that all members are subject to one another;
- b. that one bear another's burdens in brotherly love;
- c. that no unnecessary disputes break out and are maintained, whether they concern doctrine or practice.

Thesis VI.

A sixth main duty is that they should not seek their own glory but only God's glory, that they should not be concerned with their own expansion but with the expansion of Christ's kingdom and the beatification of souls, and therefore

- a. not by dishonest means, but above all through the gospel in its purity and fullness, to win souls and keep them with him; **<MH 227>**
- b. does not seek to bring about in its members both zeal for their special community and living faith, uncolored love and true godliness;
- c. take a lively and, as far as possible, active part in all God-pleasing events for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world.

The esteemed Mr. Speaker first made the following introductory remarks:

I have been asked by the dear brethren in this district to present theses which should be the basis for the first assembly of this district. Then I thought, although this district, as far as its members who belong to our synod are concerned, already knows quite well what rights not only, but also what duties a synod has, — I thought, 'since the dear brethren now stand there as a separate, independent district, that it is good if they now, at the beginning, realize again quite vividly what duties they are assuming in particular, what great responsibility rests from this moment on precisely on this division of our synod.

For **<page 11>** we Christians, even if we know what is right, always need to be reminded of our duty, to be admonished and encouraged, because we still bear the poor flesh. This is what the holy apostle does. Apostle also does this with the churches [**Gemeinden**], even those to whom he gives the highest praise. He continues to work on his [**Gemeinden**] and teaches them what they already knew before. But it should become fresh and alive with them. And that, I think, would also be good for the dear brothers of this district.

They then went to the discussion of

Thesis I.

The same reads:

Its first main duty is to be faithful to the confession in word and deed, and therefore

- a. acknowledge the symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church without restriction;
- b. accept only faithful pastors, teachers and congregations [*Gemeinden*];
- c. supervise the confessional fidelity of its members;
- d. hold fellowship only with confessionally loyal bodies.

This was explained as follows.

Someone might be surprised that faithfulness to God's Word is not mentioned as the first primary duty. But consider: by confessing God's Word, a synod testifies that it wants to be a Christian synod. But if it wants to testify that it is a Lutheran synod, then the confession of the Lutheran Church must be its confession. Then, of course, it will also confess God's Word with all seriousness. For our confession demands the confession of God's Word above all things. —

<MH 228>

Even in apostolic times it was considered necessary to make a confession. We have the apostolic symbol in our catechism. It seems that it was originally only transmitted orally. Every Christian knew it, and only later was it written out. But it is a testimony for all time that apostolic wisdom also considered a symbol necessary for the Church. This happened especially when false brethren crept in, as in the Galatian churches [*Gemeinden*]; when such people as Simon the Sorcerer allowed themselves to be accepted among the believers. They professed the Christian doctrine, the entire Old Testament and the written documents that were available from the apostles. But they misinterpreted them. Therefore, if someone wanted to be accepted into the Christian church at that time, he was not merely asked: Do you believe that the Christian doctrine is right? do you believe all this? For with this confession <page 12> he could always carry a rogue in his heart and understand something else by the Christian doctrine. Therefore he was asked: Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? And only when he made this whole symbol his own was he accepted.

For the first three centuries, one could be content with this symbol, until heretics such as Arius, Nestorius, Eutyches and Pelagius finally emerged, who also apparently confessed with great seriousness that they accepted all apostolic writings in their actual, true sense; but who understood everything differently from the Christian church.

They were opposed by the Nicene and Athanasian symbols. Only later, when the Antichrist took his seat in the Church, did the use of symbols against the emerging false teaching gradually cease. For the pope, the Antichrist, wanted to be the living symbol together with his creatures. For what, he said, is the need for symbols? Just ask me, and I will decide which is the truth.

Now the noble doctrines contained in the apostolic symbolism, and in the ecumenical symbolism in general, have been preserved even in the midst of the

papacy, which proves the incomparable importance of these symbols. Antichrist had taken the Bible from the poor Christians; but the symbols, especially the apostolic, he could not take, for they knew them by heart. He dared not speak against this because he was afraid of exposing himself. Only in eternity will we see how important it was that the three ecumenical symbols remained while the Antichrist reigned in the Church. No matter how many abominable errors he brought forth, those truths remained firm among all those who asked for truth and salvation at all, until the good Lord finally came with the Reformation.

But no sooner had Luther preached the truth, and no sooner had it penetrated the Christian people, than God gave cause for the Lutherans to confess their faith. They did so faithfully at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. This Augsburg Confession was not a document drawn up by a private individual in his study in order to establish a law of faith for the Lutherans; it was nothing other than a record of what all **<MH 229>** Lutherans without exception believed at that time. It was a confession of the Lutherans in the true sense of the word. The Papists wanted to refute it; but they did not give their refutation, because they felt vividly enough that they had not refuted it. This was the reason why the Apology, the defense of the Augsburg Confession, was drawn up in the name of the Lutheran Church.

Afterwards, because the Lutherans continued to insist that a free Christian council should be held so that the whole of Christendom could pass judgment on the errors of the papacy, **<page 13>** Luther was instructed to draw up a confession for the purpose of being delivered in the name of the Lutherans at a council. The pope wrote one out to Mantua, but only as a pretense. He knew that if it went through, he was doomed. For at that time things had not yet become as divided as they were later.

After Luther's death, dangerous disputes also broke out in the Lutheran Church. Everyone wanted to be Luther. That is why in 1577 our dear Formula of Concord was drawn up by the faithful scholars of our church. This is the last general symbol of our church. But because one cannot demand of very simple-minded people that they have studied the whole convolute of our confession, it was decided that Luther's small and large catechism, because it was known to the whole Lutheran people and was regarded by them as a real golden book, should also be elevated to the confession of our church.

So it is not because the Scriptures are not sufficient that the confessions are so necessary, but on the contrary, because so many refer to and invoke the Scriptures, but in a false sense, that it became necessary for the orthodox to say to anyone who wanted to hold with them: Yes, you say well, you believe what is written in the Bible. But there are very many who say this, who do not believe it, but who abominably pervert the Scriptures. Do you also believe this and that, namely the teachings contained in our confessions? — Ah, when our synod began in America, it was generally said: "Now a new sect has arisen." For the Lutheran doctrine was not known at all. Perhaps there were not ten copies of the

Concordia Book to be distributed besides our own, and we could not find anyone here, not even one of the so-called theologians, who had read it, let alone studied it.

If we had not been able to prove with our confessions what our Lutheran doctrine is, we would have had to put up with being called a sect. And if we had then said: We are Lutherans, our opponents would have said: You misunderstand the Holy Scriptures, Luther did not understand them that way; and even if he spoke that way here and there, he also spoke differently at other times. But then we could say: "Look, we do not want anything other than what is written in our Book of Concord. Prove to us that we deviate from it in one point, then we will stop calling ourselves Lutherans". But since we could refer to the symbolic books, as one had to realize, God has given grace that all those who wanted <MH 230> to be Lutherans from the heart have united with us. And even our dear congregations, who at first regarded us with suspicion, finally said: "They bring us nothing other than what is written in our catechism", and that convinced them that we were true Lutherans. Therefore, may this <page 14> district also recognize it as its main duty to be faithful to the confession, just as our fathers were.

To explain this in a few quotations:

Formula of Concord: "Because for thorough and constant unity in the churches it is above all necessary to have a summary unanimous concept and form, in which the general summary doctrine, to which the churches, which are of the true Christian religion, confess, is drawn together from God's Word (as the ancient church had its certain symbols for such a custom), and such should not be placed on private writings, but on such books, which are placed, approved and accepted in the name of the churches, which confess one doctrine and religion; we have declared to each other with heart and mouth that we do not wish to make or accept any special or new confession of our faith, but that we confess the public general writings, which have always and everywhere been used for such symbols or common confessions in all churches of the Augsburg Confession, before the discord arose among those who professed the Augsburg Confession, and as long as they unanimously adhered everywhere in all articles to the pure doctrine of the divine Word (as Dr. Luther more blessedly declared). Luther more blessedly declared) has been held and used." (Introduction to the summary term. Müller, p. 568.) [*Triglotta*, 849-851]

As our fathers stood at the time when the false teachers invaded our church, such as the crypto-Calvinists and the like, so must we stand today.

They say: in order to eliminate the disputes that have arisen, it is necessary that we first go back to all the confessions of which even the opponents must confess: they have hitherto been recognized throughout the Lutheran Church as the expression of their faith and doctrine. Here it is testified that it is necessary for every "church which is of the true Christian religion to have a summary unanimous concept and form, in which the general summary doctrine, which

these churches profess, is drawn together from God's Word". This doctrine is not contained in "private writings", but in books that are "adopted in the name of the Church". However, as already noted, these confessions are by no means intended to replace God's Word, nor to stand alongside God's Word, but on the contrary, they are intended to testify that the Church accepts not only the appearance of God's Word, but God's Word in its pure sense, as it says.

Therefore, on the next page of the Formula of Concord it says: "...we also confess the same first unaltered Augsburg Confession, **<MH 231>** not because it was made by our theologians, but because it is taken from God's Word **<page 15>** and is firmly and well founded therein." (S. 569.)

We Lutherans do not accept the Augsburg Confession and the Smalcald Articles because they come from Luther and Melancthon, but because they are "firmly founded in God's Word", and which our pious fathers, who now triumph before God's throne, also accepted as their confession of faith. We also want to stand with them; we want to confess their faith as their faithful children in this last sorrowful time.

But it is not without intention that our thesis says "without reservation". It has now become fashionable, as the brethren know, to confess the symbolic books. God has given the great grace that those who call themselves Lutheran, and yet do not have Lutheran doctrine, are ashamed if they should speak a word against the symbols. That is why everyone begins to cry out: we also hold to the confession! But how do they do it? Just as they falsify God's Word, so of course they also falsify our symbols with an even freer conscience, and want to take out of them what they like, saying: Yes, we must distinguish between what is confessional and what is not. We accept what is confessed in the confession. That is just as foolish as saying that one must accept only what is true of what is true. For if everything is true, then I cannot exclude something that is more or only true; that is pure nonsense. Our confessions are called confessions precisely because our Church has confessed everything that is written in these books before God and the whole of Christendom, indeed, the whole world. Nothing may be taken out of them. — Others say again, and the pastors in Iowa know this best, since this theory has arisen here: one must understand the symbols historically. That could be taken quite well. For certainly, a scripture written in earlier times must be compared with the circumstances under which it was written in order to understand it properly. But these want to say: there is much in it that can no longer be accepted now, but which is true in so far as it was believed at that time. It is seen as a venerable document, albeit one that contains a golden core. But this deprives the church of its symbolic books. For if those who profess the confessions have the freedom again to take out what they want to take out, then it helps nothing if someone says: Yes, I confess what you confess. For then I do not even know what he confesses, unless he says: from the first sentence to the last, the Lutheran Confession is also mine. **<MH 232>**

Then they also say: They wanted to reserve the occasional remarks for themselves. Others say again, and this has <page 16> happened especially now: It is the doctrines of salvation to which they want to consider themselves bound, but the other doctrines do not bind them. Now everyone can easily see that it is up to these gentlemen what they want to declare as doctrines of salvation and what not. The only thing one knows is that they do not believe everything, but rather they don't believe a lot of what is in the confessions.

How the Confession has been accepted in our churches can be seen in the Preface to the Book of Concord: "For we (to repeat this again and finally) do nothing new by this work of Concord, nor of the divine truth once recognized and known by our godly ancestors and us, as founded in prophetic and apostolic Scripture and in three Creeds, also the Augsburg Confession of 1530 Emperor Carolo the Fifth, the Apologia which followed, the Schmalkaldic Articles and the great and small catechism of the highly enlightened man Luther" (lat. ne latum quidem unguem, i.e. not a finger's breadth) "neither in rebus nor phrasibus *) to deviate, but rather by the grace of the Holy Spirit to persevere and remain unanimously in it, and also to regulate all religious disputes and their explanations accordingly." (p. 20. f.)

*) neither with regard to the content or the things taught therein, nor the manner of speaking about them.

This is what our entire Synod expects of us, with the firmest confidence that it is not deceived in this; namely, that we too are resolved not to deviate at all from the symbols of our Church, neither in rebus nor in phrasibus, not even a finger's breadth, whether it concerns doctrine or the way in which doctrine is expressed. And that if a dispute arises among us, we are to decide everything according to this confession of our church.

Similarly, the Formula of Concord reads: "To the same Christian and in God's Word well-founded Augsburg Confession we herewith confess again from the bottom of our hearts, remain with the same simple, bright and pure mind, as the words bring with them, and consider the said Confession to be a purely Christian symbol, in which true Christians of this time should be found according to the Word of God. Just as Christian symbolism and confession were set forth in the Church of God in times gone by over a number of great disputes, to which the pure teachers and listeners professed with heart and mouth at that time. We also intend, by the grace of the <page 17> Almighty, to persevere steadfastly to our end in the Christian confession as delivered by Emperor Carolo anno 30, and our intention is not, either in these or other writings, to deviate in the least" (lat. vel transversum, ut ajunt, unguem, i.e. not even, as one speaks, a finger's <MH 233> breadth) "from the much-mentioned confession." (Repetition, p. 565 f.)

The mischievous false Lutherans say that there is a dispute about how the symbols are to be understood. They say: "For example, we also accept the

doctrine of church and ministry as it is found in the Smalcald Articles. But we do not agree on the interpretation of the passage that deals with this in the Confession." This is nothing but an appalling mischievousness. There is nothing to fiddle with in the Confession. It is written clearly and plainly, and it is only a matter of, as our fathers say, "remaining with the same simple, bright and loud mind that the words bring with them". We do not want to hear "historical" fantasies, but we want them to say: as it is written here, so we accept it. Or the symbolic books are again used as a means of introducing false teachings.

It is clearly stated in the Schmalkaldic Articles [Treatise], for example, that the keys are given directly to the Church, and just as clearly that the Church is to be understood as every little cluster of Christians. When it says, for example, that the church has the highest judgment, reference is made to Matthew 18, where it says: "Tell the church [*Gemeinde*]". Here in Matthew 18, however, it clearly speaks of a local church. [*Ortsgemeinde*] So the symbolic books say of every local church [*Ortsgemeinde*] that it has the keys, in very clear words, and that it has the keys directly, i.e. it does not first receive them through a pastor who has received them by ordination and brings them into the church [*Gemeinde*]; no, not so, but the dear children of God who are in the church [*Gemeinde, una sancta*] have the keys, and when they desire a preacher, they do so by virtue of their power of the keys and confer [*übertragen*] this glory on a preacher so that he may administer the ministry in their name within their circle. —

And so it is with all the doctrines which are in the symbolic books and which our opponents say are not so clear that it can be said that a decision has already been made about them. It is often said by our opponents: "We also confess all the doctrines of salvation" in the Confession. But the Augsburg Confession, for example, clearly states that Sunday is not ordained by God. But our opponents say that "the doctrine of Sunday is an open question. It is not decided by the symbols, because they can also be interpreted differently". Well, the devil interprets everything differently from what the Scriptures say. But a true synod "remains with the light and pure sense of the Confession, as the words bring it with them".

<page 18>

Now we ask: Can we recognize a synod as a faithful Lutheran synod which itself says: "Oh no, the symbolic books contain many things to which we cannot commit ourselves. We consider ourselves committed only to the great doctrines of salvation. This <MH 234> is what the Iowa Synod does, for example. From this synod false Lutheranism has been proclaimed again under great pretense. This synod must therefore be stripped of its sheep's clothing and shown that it is playing a false and evil game with these holy things, and that in that day it will find a heavy and terrible judgment before the great and holy God, when he asks it whether it has preserved the example of wholesome doctrine. Then she will have to say: No, we have not preserved it, but have done away with much and yet tried to make people believe that we are confessionally faithful Lutherans. —

God grant the poor men repentance, otherwise they will one day cry alas and woe over themselves forever. It would be much better if they declared freely: "The old Lutheranism in the Concordia Book has outlived its usefulness. In the 19th century, we can no longer hold on to the religion of the 16th century; we can no longer defend our fathers. We want to give them credit for it, but we must renounce it." That would be honest. But: No, they say, we are the truly confessional. One must marvel at the great patience of God that such men can still go along so calmly; they want to make the poor people believe that they are faithful to the confession, while at the same time they say: "But we do not commit ourselves to everything, there are many incidental remarks, but only the propositions and antitheses for the sake of which it has been acted upon, we want to accept that. But if they are then also examined as to the propositions which, according to their explanation, belong to the confession, whether they hold all of them, namely the so-called thetical propositions, they do not want to accept them all either. For example, there is a whole article that the pope is the Antichrist. This is so clearly stated that a small child can understand it. But you say: No, that is an open question. Yes, they think it is a mistake to think that the pope is the Antichrist. Isn't that appalling? Oh, may the faithful God preserve our dear Synod here from ever becoming unfaithful to the Confession; but may He draw this Synod with power from on high to bear witness with a mighty voice against this un-Lutheran nature and to stand firm against all the gates of hell that fight against it.

That our confessions were not merely for that time is proven by the The Formula of Concord (this was first pronounced in the Formula of Concord, because after Luther's death there were people who professed the earlier symbols, but according to their interpretation): "Wiewohl nun obgemeldte Schriften" (the general Symbola, the Augsburg [page 19](#) Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and Luther's Catechisms) **<MH 235>** "give the Christian reader, who bears desire and love for the divine truth, a fair and correct knowledge of all and every controversial article of our Christian religion, what he should consider and accept as right and true, and what he should reject, flee and avoid as false and unjust, by virtue of God's word, the prophets and apostles' writings; so that the truth may be kept all the clearer and more distinct and distinguished from all error, and not be hidden under common words" (lat. nimis generalibus verbis, i.e. overly general words) "something might be hidden or concealed, we have declared to each other clearly and expressly about the most noble and highly important articles that are in dispute at this time, so that it may be a public certain testimony not only among those now living, but also among our descendants, what our churches' unanimous opinion and judgment of the disputed articles is and should remain." (ibid, p. 572)

That is why the Concordian formula was established, because many expressed themselves in such general terms that it could be understood well and also differently. These foxes were dragged into the light so that they could not

spread their false doctrine with ambiguous words. And when it says: "We have declared to one another... that a certain public testimony may be given, not only to those now living, but also to our descendants, as to what is and should remain the unanimous opinion and judgment of our churches concerning the controversial articles", it is clear from this that the Concordian formula is not a confession solely for that time. It was not a historical document from which one could infer what the people of that time in their simplicity believed to be the truth; but a confession which set forth what the faith of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church was then and has remained for all time; so that those who do not confess it themselves testify: we are not Lutherans and do not want to be Lutherans.

It was also noted that the enthusiasts and Unionists will be very triumphant when they hear what we confess here. "What does God ask about what is Lutheran!" they will exclaim. "We are Christian." But they will triumph too soon. What has already been said proves the futility of their boast. If we were a sect, they would have to call out to us: be Christians.

As for the fact that in Thesis I. it says: true to the confession, the expression is also used to indicate that we do not regard the Lutheran church as "the" one, holy, Christian church, apart from which there is no salvation; but it differs from other churches only in that it has the pure doctrine, the pure confession; not in that **<Page 20>** one alone could be saved in it, that it alone would be a Christian one. Even where the Word of God is still essential, there is still a Christian church. The Lutheran Church differs from all others in that it has pure doctrine, and this pure doctrine is expressed in its confession. So far from wanting to exalt ourselves falsely, the expression "faithful to the confession" means: we do not want to be a Christian church alone; but we want to be the church that is pure in faith and doctrine. **<MH 236>**

Therefore, when we separate ourselves from others, we do not do so out of pride and arrogance, thinking that we are something better, but rather we have more to thank God for entrusting us with the pure Word. And we do not say to another: you must become Lutheran, for there alone is salvation; but: you must become Lutheran, because you are not to confess a falsified, but the pure Word of God. That is why the theme also says: "if it wants to bear the name of an Evangelical-Lutheran rightly". It does not do this when it says: we profess God's word. That is what the sects and the papists do. So that proves nothing at all. But with this alone I prove that I am a Lutheran, when I confess that this is my faith, the faith of the Lutheran Church, as it is laid down in the Book of Concord, and when I also prove this in all the articles.

Anyone who has the slightest scruple about the fact that the confession is mentioned here first must be asked whether our confessions agree with Scripture. If he must admit this, then he must see, if he has no plank before his head, that it is the same whether one says that one teaches according to the confession or that one teaches according to Scripture. For example, there is the dear sun in the sky, and there on the tower is a good clock. Now if it is proven

that the clock on the tower is exactly in time with the sun, and someone wanted to say: Why do you judge yourselves by a human work, as this clock on the tower is? is it not shameful that you despise God's creature in the sky and look at this human work here? Whoever speaks like this belongs in a madhouse.

To confirm what was said above about the Iowa Synod, one of those present read out various passages from the current issue of the "Kirchenblatt".

When we are told that only the "doctrines of salvation" or the "doctrines of faith" in the confessions are binding, we ask: But does it not affect my salvation, for example, when it is a question of what the church is? what power a preacher has? whether a state has the keys? whether a preacher has the power to put me under the ban? whether he can refuse me communion out of stubbornness or because he is personally offended? Or should it not affect salvation whether Sunday is ordained of God or not? for if it is ordained of God, I must observe all that [Page 21](#) God says in the Old Testament, so I am in the greatest distress on Sunday, not knowing whether I am not sinning against God. Then, to know whether the pope is the Antichrist? As long as the Antichrist did not yet exist, it **<MH 237>** was not important to know who the Antichrist would be in the future. But if he is there now and God's word warns us so earnestly, and says that the smoke of their torment will rise from eternity to eternity, whoever allows himself to be seduced by the Antichrist, is that not part of salvation?

It is an ungodly teaching that "only the doctrines of salvation" are binding, and then to exclude a whole series of doctrines revealed by God. Rather, we should say: What God has revealed, I must believe, no matter how great or small it may seem to me. As James says, "He who sins in one is guilty of the whole law," so he who believes all the doctrines in Scripture and not one, though he admits that it too is revealed in Scripture, believes none. Therefore it cannot be said that these gentlemen believe anything but what is necessary, since they do not consider themselves bound by so many things which the Church declares to be the fruit of the Reformation. If you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, you take it in its entirety, or not at all. Likewise the confession: either completely or not at all. The Lutheran says: the Lutheran church's understanding of Scripture is my faith. The Iowans expressly say that there are doctrines of Scripture in which one may teach differently. They also say that our Lutheran church should be brought to "a greater perfection". Marvelous! First they curtail the doctrine, and then that is "greater perfection". So this is "greater perfection" when you tear down! Isn't it pathetic when such people want to lead the Lutheran Church to perfection? They should be humble enough to say: if only we were real Lutherans first! We Missourians do not consider ourselves perfect Lutherans, but would like to become perfect Lutherans. It is downright ridiculous what these gentlemen are saying. If the Iowa Synod were truly Lutheran, it would be ungodly of us to establish our own synod on their soil. If they were true to the confession, we would have to work with them, we would have to join them. But we cannot do that, because they are not faithful Lutherans. Just think, for example, of the

chiliasm that they teach. They say: we hold to what the symbols say about it. But it is not true! They believe in an earthly glory before the last day, and that is the Jewish error of the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession, which the Pharisees and scribes once held. And now that the Christian Church has happily overcome this Jewish error, they want to impose it on her again.

The meaning of the word "synod" was also pointed out, and it was said that it does not consist of pastors alone, but of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] with the pastors. Accordingly, the confessions must also be <Page 22> made known in the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. In their own assemblies the Augsburg Confession or something else can be interpreted. Again, when the church [*Gemeinde*] members come together with those false <MH 238> spirits, they should not stand behind the mountain out of politeness; for that is to deny and betray. Every member of the congregation must stand as firm as the preacher. Indeed, the whole congregation should stand much firmer than its preacher, so that it can say: "Pastor, do not depart from our confession, or you have been our pastor." The congregation must watch to see whether he is also a watchman on the pinnacle of Zion. False spirits must be shown the door where one is not compelled to associate with them for professional reasons. But they must not be accepted as "brothers", for brothers should believe the same and confess the same. It was pointed out that the same is true of the General Synod, except that it has the advantage of being more honest, while the lowans say, "We accept the whole confession without reserve," and then comes a register of what they do not accept. This is an unheard-of impertinence in all of church history.

According to point b. in Thesis I., a synod faithful to the confession should also

"only accept confessionally loyal pastors, teachers and congregations
[*Gemeinden*]."

It should again be pointed out that the question is not: what is the main duty of a Christian synod? Then much more would have to be mentioned. Rather, the question is: what is the main duty of an orthodox synod? For Lutheran and orthodox are one and the same. The Lutheran church is not the holy Christian church, but only a part of it. But it is pure in doctrine, i.e. orthodox, or, as it used to be called, catholic, not in the sense of Roman, for catholic means universal. The Church is truly catholic which has the universal faith of true Christianity. The second requirement is that it only accepts pastors, teachers and congregations who are faithful to the confession. For the Apostle Paul expressly says: "Lay hands on no man quickly, neither be thou partaker of other men's sins", 1 Tim. 5:22. Thus no one should be ordained unless he has first been tested and convinced that he is willing and able to proclaim the pure doctrine of the divine Word. This is not a genuine Lutheran synod, which accepts vagabonds from the street if they can prattle a little piously; places them in the preaching office, gives them a license, for example, so that they can handle the congregations for a

while and see if they prove themselves. That is horrible beyond all measure. As if someone came along and said: I am a doctor, and nobody knew whether he was one, and was told: there are so many sick people here in the hospital that you should treat them once, and then we will see what you can do. If he is not a real <page 23> doctor, he will soon treat the sick and send them all to God's cemetery. <MH 239>

It is even more terrible when someone is made a spiritual doctor and tries to cure the soul. This can only be understood by those who know the pure doctrine. For this alone is the medicine that brings life to people who are sick or even dead in sin. False doctrine does not bring about spiritual life, but pours a false spirit into people and leads them down a wrong path that leads to hell. For if some are still saved in the false-believing community, it is not through false teaching, but through the truth that such a community still has. For the word of God is so powerful that one word can bring the poor soul to the knowledge of sin and lead it to Christ.

The apostle goes on to say that Timothy should not make himself partaker of other people's sins. So if a synod promotes someone to office who it knows beforehand does not know the right doctrine, and if he therefore deceives the congregation [*Gemeinde*], then the synod is the deceiver, and the poor souls are not only claimed by the false teacher, but also by the synod. Of course, this concerns the officials first and foremost. But they are only servants of the church; therefore the congregations [*Gemeinden*] must see to it that they also act according to the confession.

So let us vow to ourselves that we will proceed most conscientiously when accepting preachers, and not think that if we get a few more, that will be a gain. It is better for the synod to be small and to stand right than to be large and to have among it those who are peddling around and not bringing the bread of life. This gives rise to damnable false teachers, and for this very reason they should be tried first, 1 Tim. 3:9-10: "Those who have the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, let them be tried first; then, if they are blameless, let them serve." So first seriously tested!

If any do come, they must either have a testimony that the Synod cannot reject, because it is given by fellow believers who also have the testimony that they are conscientious to the utmost. But if this is not the case, then a colloquium must be held, if the passed examination can be proven, and this in the strictest manner. One must not just ask in general terms whether they also profess the symbols without reserve! That is a poor guarantee. One can claim that he professes the confessions without reserve, and yet he has a completely different doctrine, shows a completely different way to salvation; or has much that is false alongside the right, which cancels out the right.

If it is proven in the Colloquium that he is a true believer, then he must also be solemnly committed to the confession. This was not only introduced in the 17th century, or after the Concordian formula was introduced into the Lutheran

Church; but already in Luther's time all had to pass an examination or colloquium, and then they were solemnly <page 24> committed. This can be seen from the fact that in 1552 the restless spirit A. Osiander opposed it, accusing Melanchthon <MH 240> of having introduced it in order to bind people, especially young preachers. He wanted a clear path for his error. (As is well known, he confused justification with sanctification and dealt the Lutheran church the deathblow with his teaching on his part). But Melanchthon testified that Luther himself had made this arrangement.

With regard to this institution (of 1532), that those to be ordained had to undertake and promise not to teach anything new before they had consulted with the elders (seniores) of their and the associated churches, A. Osiander wrote:

"The parents would do well to consider if they let their sons become doctors or magistrates at Wittenberg. For there the money would be taken from them, and if the parents then thought that their son was an excellent, well-trained man in the Holy Scriptures, who could shut the mouths of all enthusiasts and heretics, behold, he would be a poor, imprisoned man, entangled with oaths in his conscience and confused. For he had sworn to God's Word and had sworn on Philippi's doctrine, had had the gag tied in his mouth that he would not speak anything final in important matters of faith, had first consulted with the elders who hold the Confession, and with them he must stick to his oath in the unanimity of the Confession, even if the Holy Scriptures say otherwise. Scripture says otherwise, or he must allow himself to be reproached for breaking his oath. He was therefore a secret ally of such a conspiracy, which "looked more to men than to God's word and was therefore not a little harmful to Christianity." (Osiander's "Refutation of the reply of Ph. Melanchthon against my knowledge". Cited in the Erlanger Zeitschrift. New series. Vol. I. S. 358.)

Thus, as early as the 16th century, we find the same objections made by the Rationalists and here in America by the General Synod against the obligation to confess: it is a terrible tyranny, they say. How can one present a human book for commitment? He should commit himself, yes, swear! that is shameful!

But, O poor people! If someone is told to commit himself to the symbolic books, it is not said: You must do this; but rather: You want to take up a preaching office in the Lutheran Church, but the Lutheran Church has a certain doctrine, a certain faith. So you cannot be a preacher here unless you have the same doctrine that the church has.

Think if someone wanted to join the Anabaptists, but said there: I want to preach to you nicely; but I hold to infant baptism, I will not give it up. What would they say to him? "You're crazy! You want to come to us and teach the exact opposite of <page 25+> what we think is right?"

It is the same in worldly matters. If someone were to allow himself to be admitted to a society that was founded for a certain purpose, and he said: "I want to be a member of your society, but I do not want to strive for this purpose, then the society cannot use him. It is the same here in ecclesiastical terms. <MH 241>

The Lutheran Church has committed itself to preaching and defending the pure doctrine of the divine Word as laid down in the Confession and to rejecting all those who do not agree with it. Thus it quite rightly demands of anyone who wishes to enter its preaching ministry that he say: "Yes, that is my faith too, and I will preach no other."

No, those who do not want to be committed are the tyrants. Think of what would happen if every preacher were allowed to preach what he thought was right! Then there would be as many believers in the churches [*Gemeinden*] as preachers, and such a wretched man would have the right to say: I have the right to preach what I want. He could teach a right way or a wrong way, a triune God or one who exists only in One Person, present Christ as God or as a mere man; he could say that man's powers are sufficient for his salvation, or whatever he wanted. Such a preacher is a shameful tyrant. He wants to subjugate the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. He wants to rule over their faith. Therefore, do not think that this is an act of the rule of conscience when we demand a commitment to the confessions. The opposite is the case: because they want to preserve the freedom of the congregations [*Gemeinden*], that is why right preachers hold so firmly to it.

The congregations [*Gemeinden*] should know that when they get a preacher, one is appointed to them who preaches the true Christian faith that leads to salvation. It would be the most shameful tyranny if we were to say: you are now consecrated, ordained; now you can preach what you want, and you congregations [*Gemeinden*] must listen to what he wants to preach. This is what the Antichrist does. He says: when I ordain a priest, no man may think that what he preaches is false, but everyone must take it for truth.

Melanchthon replied to A. Osiander's letter thus:

"He (Osiander) prides himself on having retained his freedom and not having tolerated these gangs. In the great licentiousness and riotous reign of these times, many have taken pleasure in this clamor, who take unlimited liberty to invent opinions and, like Pyrrho" (a philosopher of doubt), "to cast doubt on everything that has been correctly handed down. But the pious and prudent see, not without great pain, where this furious rebuke is headed, namely, that disciples and the honest should not even be reminded of modesty. For wild, impudent men, puffed up with admiration of themselves, can **<page 26>** be kept in check neither by such promises nor by other restraints. —

But first I will speak of the originators of our habit and of the intention behind it. This vow was not only recently devised by us, but was introduced by this college about 20 years ago, namely by Luther, Jonas and the pastor of this congregation [*Gemeinde*], Dr. Pomeranus. **<MH 242>** Osiander does great dishonor to these sincere men when he sows the suspicion that they wanted to establish a tyranny, since it is now clear that they had the most honorable cause for their intention. At that time, too, many enthusiastic people wandered about, who soon afterward only scattered foolishness, Anabaptists, Servet, Campanus,

Stenkfeld and others. *) And there is no lack of such pests at any time. Therefore, as much as human diligence could prevent it, this senate wanted to remind "good ingenia" (gifted minds) "of modesty and show them the barriers that should not be easily broken; it also wanted to restrain the restless minds as much as it could. 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 resolutions 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." (Corpus Reform. XII, 7.)

*) Servet was a denier of the Holy Trinity. Trinity.

Campanus denied the deity of Christ.

Stenkfeld was a fanatic who taught the direct action of the Holy Spirit and raged against the means of grace under the greatest halo.

Luther had thus said: in the event that a dispute arises, the person concerned should first discuss the matter privately with elders, otherwise a fire may be kindled which will consume many; while the matter may be of no importance and can be settled privately.

The Formula of Concord and the entire Book of Concord concludes with the following words:

"Wherefore we desire to have testified before the face of God and all Christendom, among those now living and those who shall come after us, that this declaration now made is our faith, doctrine, and confession of all the precepts and controversial articles declared, and none other, in which also by the grace of God we desire to appear before the judgment seat of JEsu Christ with undaunted hearts, and to give an account thereof, nor to speak or write anything about it either secretly or publicly, but by means of **<Page 27>** the grace of God to remain mindful of it: we have thoughtfully, in the fear and invocation of God, signed ourselves with our own hands."

 (Repetition, Art. XII. p. 730.)

Let us listen to an ordination certificate that Luther once issued in 1540 to someone he had ordained. There you can clearly see how they did it back then. Luther writes:

"Johannes Fischer brought us a letter which indicated that he had been called to the ministry of the Gospel in the city of Rudolstadt, and testified that he was a man of pious and honorable conduct. But since it was requested in that letter that the appointment of this Dr. Johannes Fischer **<MH 243>** be confirmed by public ordination, we have been convinced, after examining his ability (*eruditio*), that he is devoted to the pure and general Christian doctrine of the Gospel, which our church also teaches and confesses, and that he abhors all fanatical opinions which are condemned by the judgment of the general Christian

church. He has also promised that he will faithfully present to the people the pure doctrine which we profess. Therefore, since we cannot deny our ministry to the neighbouring churches, and since the Nicene Synod has godly decided that the ordination should be requested by the neighbouring churches, we have commanded this Dr. Johannes Fischer by public ordination in the church to teach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments instituted in the Gospel according to his vocation. Therefore we commend him to the congregation [*Gemeinde*] of the city of Rudolstadt and pray that the Holy Spirit may govern the ministry of this Dr. Johannes Fischer for the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ and for the salvation of the church. Given at Wittenberg on Sunday Jubilate in the year 1540. The pastor of the Wittenberg church and the other ministers of the Gospel in the church, Martin Luther, Dr." (Unschuldige Nachrichten. Jahrgang 1715, p. 190 f.)

The religious oath in the Saxon Lutheran Church, which was used after the introduction of the Concordian formula from 1602 until it was superseded by the now valid denominational Gelöbniß formula, thus read:

"You shall vow and swear that you will remain and persevere in the pure and Christian knowledge of these lands, as it is contained in the first unaltered Augsburg Confession and repeated and declared in the Christian Book of Concord and preserved against all falsifications, constantly, without any falsehood, and that you will not practice anything secretly or publicly against it, even if you note that others want to do so, you will not restrain the same, but reveal it immediately without fear. Since God would also impose, which he would graciously avert, that you yourselves, through human wit and delusion, should be led away from [page 28](#) such pure doctrine and knowledge of God either to the Papists, Calvinists or other sects opposed to the above-mentioned pure confession, suspended and rejected in the religious peace, (you shall swear that) you will immediately declare this in the proper place, on the strength of the oath you have taken, without fear, and await further decree and resolution; and all this faithfully and without danger." (See Abriß der meißnisch-albertinisch-sächs. Kirchengesch. von Haffe. II, 75.)

We see that those people in Saxony were not lowans. According to them, one should confess the symbols "without some falsehood". One was bound by an oath to report to the superintendent as soon as he realized that a fellow minister had apostatized and wanted to deceive his congregation [*Gemeinde*]. Then the apostate was tried, and if he did not repent, he was deposed **<MH 244>** as a perjured scoundrel with shame and disgrace. He also had to swear that if he himself became of a different persuasion, then he should declare himself and be aware of what would be done with him. It is nice that it does not say: he should be deposed immediately; but then the proven fathers should take him and tell him: see, the devil has deceived you, our confession is that of the Word of God. But if he could not be rebuked, he had to go out.

Our Missouri Synod requires the following confession and vow from those to be ordained and inducted:

"I recognize the three principal symbols of the church, the unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's two catechisms, and the Formula of Concord for the pure, unadulterated explanation and exposition of the divine Word and will, I confess the same as my own confessions, and will faithfully and diligently conduct my ministry according to the same to my end. May God strengthen me through his Holy Spirit! Amen." (Church Agenda for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations [*Gemeinde*]. St. Louis, Mo. 1866. p. 240.)

Löhe himself formulated this confession earlier. They are his *ipsissima verba* ("very own words"), and how completely different are his followers now! How must an Iowa pastor feel when, kneeling at the altar before the omniscient and omnipresent God, he says: "This is the pure, unadulterated declaration and exposition of the divine word and will" and I "confess the same as my own confessions", since they do not accept everything, e.g. that the pope is the Antichrist, and if they were honest, they would state a whole lot more in which they do not agree with the confessions. But they just say: "This is not a doctrine of salvation", and this is their barn door through which they can slip with all their false doctrines.

"I confess them as my confessions" is what our credal formula says, and that is excellently expressed; for that is the [page 29](#) real meaning of the creed. It is not a law imposed on the ordinand; but the meaning is that he says: what this book confesses, I also confess, I will stand with you in rank and file, I will give good days and my life for it. We can only use those who say this.

And woe betide a synod if it does not demand this of its preacher and accepts him without first investigating whether what he says is true. For there are enough who are Jesuits but call themselves Lutherans. This is not to say that the Iowans are such abominations that they do so knowingly and willfully. Whether they do it knowingly, God knows; they have to settle it with Him. **<MH 245>**

"To the end of my life", it continues, "so someone mustn't think: I want to be a storekeeper, agent, lawyer or something similar, because I'll earn more money there.

Heilbrunner says: "A superintendent" (we call such an official: Präses) "should rather suffer death than knowingly introduce such a (Calvinist) preacher." (Cited in *Opus Novum* by Mädlar, fol. 483.)

This is how those godly fathers stood. Now, of course, one thinks: this is the *Bornirtheit* of earlier times. They made a conscience of themselves where it was not necessary.

Many say: Yes, one may commit oneself to the symbolic books; but because they are human books and not inspired by the Holy Spirit, one should only be required to confess: one accepts everything that is written in the symbolic books, insofar as it agrees with God's Word. This has always been the desire of all false teachers in the Lutheran Church. Only the "insofar as" should be conceded, then

one should happily sign it. Why? Because then you can preach anything. And if such a person is then taken to court for false doctrine, he can then apologize: "I said it: insofar. Here the church does not agree with the Scriptures."

Certainly, we can only swear by the symbolic books to the extent that they agree with Scripture. But I must not commit myself to them until I have seen, by the grace of God, that they agree with Scripture in all their teachings. I cannot say to anyone who has not read the symbolic books: subscribe to them! that would be pabstism. Let him first see whether they agree with Scripture. I do not believe **in** the Lutheran Church; I only believe that there is a Lutheran Church; yes, I even see it. But I do not believe in it, only in Jesus Christ. It is wretched to commit oneself to something one does not know; only scoundrels can do that; they can conspire with the robber-chief to do everything he asks of them. It is the same with the Jesuits. They must <page 30> swear that they will obey their chief even if a mortal sin commands them to do so, by virtue of the obedience they have sworn.

We demand this obligation only when one has read the confessions and testifies: "I have examined them according to the Scriptures, and found that they are in perfect agreement with the Scriptures; that there is no doctrine in them which is not taken from the Scriptures. And now such a person need not — in order to save his conscience — swear: I pledge myself "in this respect," for he knows that, for he has found it so; therefore he pledges himself **"because** they agree with the Scriptures."

Even Spener, this godly man, who was very inclined to contradict the strict, harsh orthodox and to rebuke their severity, is nevertheless opposed to **<MH 246>** swearing "insofar as". A Pietist candidate once asked him whether he could not demand that he be made to swear "insofar as". To this Spener gave the following answer:

"On the question of whether a candidatus ministerii, because of the question: 'whether to accept the symbolic books, quia (because), or quatenus (inasmuch as) they agree with sacred Scripture', because he holds with the quatenus, is to be kept from promotion as suspicious? (I) will answer thus: 1. There is a difference to be made whether one out of a deceitful heart chose such a quatenus, namely, did not truly regard the teaching of the symbolic books as correct, but tainted with errors of faith, and yet for worldly reasons, because of promotion and the like, wanted to sign them with a quatenus with the reservatione mentali (with the secret reservation in thought), because nevertheless there were some truths in it; as those who insist so strongly on the quia could and do make a not entirely futile objection: that in this way one could also subscribe to the Koran, the Tridentine Canonibus and so on, as far as they were in agreement with Scripture; because in all of them there is more or less divine truth to be found. (2) If anyone, when questioned, would not generally declare the truth of the doctrine contained therein on points of faith, but would

only keep to himself with such quatenus, he would with good reason be suspected of not holding to the doctrine of our Church." (Theolog. Bedenken. I, 596 f.)

The Iowans have also done this, namely they have confessed to the Quatenus. They expressly acknowledged a judgment given by a German theologian, who said that one could only sign the [page 31](#) symbolic books with Quatenus. They said it was a true apostolic judgment, and when we came with them to the colloquium in Milwaukee (1867), they said, "It is none of our business what this professor says." They realized that if they were only to be committed to Quatenus, they would have gambled away; then they would even be disreputable in Germany as false teachers.

Everything that is said here about preachers also applies to school teachers. The school teachers in the free schools are in a completely different situation; they are in a secular profession, which we do not want to call reprehensible in itself. But our teachers are in an ecclesiastical ministry. They must teach God's word in the name of the church [*Gemeinde*] and must feed the sheep of Christ with the sweet pasture of the gospel; therefore no one should be accepted who has not committed himself to the confessions. They should also make such a confession as the preachers. They should be reminded that when they enter the church ministry, they have renounced the civil profession and should serve the church until their last breath, and that should be their greatest joy.

That is why it is important that a certain solemnity takes place and that the congregation [*Gemeinde*] hears it: he is committed. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] should hear it with ears: our preachers and teachers must not rummage out their own wisdom. If they depart from the Augsburg Confession, we will censure them, and if they do not **<MH 247>** repent, we can chase them away. They cannot then complain that they have been chased away, for they are perjurers. Even if we do not take a formal oath here - we only require a vow, a promise - it is still the same before God as if they had sworn a thousand oaths.

Congregation members [*Gemeindegliedern*] should also be taught this when they are received, that they should say: I would rather suffer anything, even death, than depart from this confession. As well as a pastor, such a person confesses: "The confession of the Lutheran Church is also my confession. I will live and die by it. For only in this way will a church be established in America, as in Luther's time, and such a church is then also the greatest blessing for a country, and all the gold and silver in the Black Hills and in California is miserable dirt compared to what our church has brought to this country. For our testimony rings out, and the sects, if they were honest, would have to confess: how much we owe to the Missourians! Formerly they all considered the public schools sufficient, now they also establish Christian schools. And it is the same with Confirmation. When the "Lutheran" first came out with his motto: "God's word and Luther's teaching are now and never will be forgotten", he was attacked on all sides by the nominal Lutherans. Because, they said, he was mixing the word of

God and the word of man and putting them on an equal footing. <Page 32> And after ten years, the same people published a paper in which they also said:

"God's word and Luther's teachings
are now and never will be forgotten";

for it had become clear to them that we would not give a damn about Luther's teaching if it were not God's word. It would be quite terrible of us if we were to equate the word of man with the word of the great God. —

Our position on the confession, as set forth here, also refutes the repeated talk of our opponents, as if we were only Dr. Walther's after worshippers. It is not to him, but to the confession of the Lutheran Church that we confess with him; and if he were to say something contrary to the confession, it would soon become clear that we do not know any personal respect in matters of faith.

If our thesis also speaks of congregations [*Gemeinden*] that are to be faithful to the confession, then it must be said that there is of course a difference. One cannot demand the same degree of knowledge from a congregation [*Gemeinde*] and from a congregation member, but one can demand the same degree of faithfulness as from the pastor and teacher. This is not a Lutheran synod that accepts a so-called "united" or united congregation; for as the parts are, so is the whole.

Furthermore, a confessionally faithful synod should also

c. "supervise the confessional fidelity of their members."

It is not enough, therefore, that a synod should have, so to speak, only the Lutheran company; that over its door should be written: <MH 248> "A confessionally faithful synod, which confesses all symbols without reserve." Indeed, it is not enough for it to accept only those preachers and teachers who prove themselves faithful to the confession. It must also see to it that they remain so, for only "he who perseveres to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). But it is impossible for a larger church community to persevere in the right faith if it is not always checked to see whether everything is still as it was when the preacher first came into the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. Without visitation it is not possible for a church to remain in unity of faith and confession.

That is why the so-called "confessionalists" in Germany make such an atrocious statement: "If only the pure doctrine is doctrina publica, i.e. the legally valid, the lawful one, which everyone should lead according to the law; so that every false doctrine is actually unlawful!" So if the pure doctrine is only the lawful one, however corrupt the church may be, it is still a true Lutheran one. If the obligation to the confession is not yet abolished, but still rightly exists, is still legally valid, even if there is not a single preacher who preaches it, <page 33> the church is still good.

It is no different than when a society comes together for a good purpose and finally the members agree that they want to do a mischievous thing - but they retain their constitution as a benevolent society. They could not then say: we are

committing a bad prank, but because we are supposed to do good according to our constitution, we are still an honest, righteous society; because it is written in our constitution, which we still have! So those so-called "confessionalists" in Germany say: "It is written in the constitution: the Lutheran doctrine is doctrina publica!" —

But it is not enough that it is written on paper; nor is it enough that all preachers and teachers, when they come into office, are committed to it; but this confession should also be practiced.

This is why Luther writes in the book Councils and Churches:

"First of all, this Christian holy people is in the process of recognizing where it has the holy Word of God. ... But we speak of the outward word, preached orally through men, as through you and me. For Christ has left such things behind him as an outward sign, whereby his church or his holy Christian people should be recognized in the world." (1539. XVI, 2785 f.)

It is not enough that there is a Bible in the sacristy; it must be preached in the pulpit. Besides, a church may have a thousand oaths sworn on the Augsburg Confession, but it is still a shameful sect; and so it is with the regional churches. <MH 249> Where it is best, there is still a good commitment to the symbols; but very few preach accordingly from the pulpit. Some are Reformed, others Methodist, rationalist, even atheist, i.e. there are even those who believe in no living God, and yet have sworn themselves with a solemn oath to the confessions of the Lutheran Church. They say: "This is an old institution, the abolition of which would be dangerous because of the people who still cling to the old faith. But our superintendent, who took the oath for us, knows what we mean; he doesn't fully accept the confessions either. Because that's what the regional bishop ordered, that's why we're keeping it." - But these are not Lutheran preachers. The confession of the church must resound from the pulpit. And there can also be a congregation [*Gemeinde*] in the middle of a large Lutheran church — if it has a false teacher, and he always preaches false doctrine, and it finds it so beautiful how he preaches, and expressly wants to keep him: that is also not a Lutheran congregation [*Gemeinde*], even if the right confession company stands over the door. The confession must be preached, and not just written in a book that it should actually be preached. It must be said that those churches are not so bad which, although they preach false doctrine, <Page 34> have not committed themselves to the true doctrine. They are better because people are not so deceived by them. So if a church says: here is the Lutheran doctrine doctrina publica! and you do not hear it preached, it is a wretched sect, whatever it may call itself. It is not without intention that God has allowed us to be called "Lutherans" - a name which we do not really like (as is well known, the Romans gave us this name as an insult); for with this name it is now indicated that it is the Church which has the faith which Luther had and preached. If we were not called "Lutheran", but "Biblical", or "Christian", or "pure", then one person would think:

this is "pure", and another: something else is "pure". But now we can prove which is the orthodox church: namely, it must have a Lutheran confession.

We find a beautiful passage on the necessity of church visitation in Luther:

"Both the New and Old Testaments show us sufficiently how divine and beneficial it is to visit the pastors and Christian congregations [*Gemeinden*] with knowledgeable, skillful people.*)

*) We often think of something that there is not a word about in the Bible; but when Luther comes to it, he finds it "in the Old and New Testaments".

For thus we read that St. Peter went about in the Jewish country, Acts 9:32, and St. Paul with Barnabas, Acts 15:36, also went again through all the places where they had preached. And in all the epistles he shows how careful he is for all the churches [*Gemeinden*] and pastors, writing letters, sending his disciples, and also walking himself. Just as the apostles also, Acts 8:14, when they heard how Samaria had received the word, sent Peter and John to them. And **<MH 250>** in the Old Testament we also read how Samuel went about now to Nama, now to Nobe, now to Gilgal, and so on, not for the pleasure of going about, but for the love and duty of his office, and for the need and thirst of the people; as did Elias and Elishaeus, as we read in the books of Kings. This work Christ himself also did most diligently before all; so that for this reason he did not keep a place on earth where he laid his head, which would be his own, Matt. 8, 20. Which examples the ancient fathers, the holy bishops, also did with diligence. For it was from this work that the bishops and archbishops originally came, according to which each was commanded to visit and visitate much or little. For a bishop is actually called an overseer or visitor, and an archbishop who is overseer and visitor over the same: because every parish priest is to visit, wait and look after his parishioners as they teach and live, and the archbishop is to visit, wait and look after such bishops as they teach; until finally such an office has become such a secular, splendid rule **<page 35>** that the bishops have made themselves princes and lords and commanded such a visiting office to a provost, vicar or dean. And afterwards, when provosts and deans and canons also became lazy bachelors, the officials were ordered to do so, who plagued the people in money matters and visited no one. But how to teach, believe, love; how to live a Christian life, how to care for the poor *), how to comfort the weak, how to punish the savage, and what else belongs to such an office, has never been thought of. And so this ministry, like all holy Christian doctrine and order of old, has also become the devil's and Antichrist's mockery and trickery with terrible, terrifying destruction of souls.

For who can tell how useful and necessary such a ministry is in Christendom?

*) The Visitors should therefore also ask how the poor in the parishes [*Gemeinden*] are being cared for.

One may notice the damage that has come from it since the time it fell and was perverted. No doctrine or state has remained right or pure, but as many abominable factions and sects have arisen as the monasteries and convents, as a result of which the Christian church has been oppressed, faith has died out, love has turned into quarrels and war, the Gospel has been put under the bench, and the works, doctrines and dreams of men have ruled instead of the Gospel. Of course, the devil had done well, because he had brought such a ministry down and under himself and had set up vain spiritual larvae and monkish calves, so that no one resisted him: even so it was a great trouble, even if the ministry went on rightly and diligently, and, as Paul complains to the Thessalonians, Corinthians and Galatians, that even the apostles themselves had their hands full with it. Accordingly, since the gospel has now, by the abundant and unspeakable grace of God, mercifully returned to us, or has come to us for the first time, through which we have seen how miserably confused, scattered **<MH 251>** and torn Christendom is, we would also have liked to see the same right episcopal and visiting ministry re-established as supremely necessary." (Instruction of the Visitors, corrected by Luther 1538. Preface. X, 1902-1906.)

No one should think that this was not the case with us. We must not disregard the office of visitor, even if the benefits are not always immediately obvious. For example, a dear brother who has visited us may have given us good advice, lifted us up, or encouraged us by his appearance; and if he says in full: oh, dear brother, I am in the same trouble as you, and he then sees that others are in the same situation as he is, then the blessing of such visitations is no small one. We must also remember that such ministries are especially important for the future. If we fail to establish such offices now, when we are all united by God's grace, then an infinite harm can result. Now is the **<Page 36>** time for us to hold on to such institutions, so that they will be there when false spirits have crept in. For such ordinances are not for the zealous, who are on their knees day and night that they may be found faithful, but for those who grow weary and faint in teaching, watching, praying and searching. The devil can blow out all our light again, and unity can turn into such Babylonian confusion that we are terrified. That is why we must do everything we can to ward off such danger. If it does not work, well, we did not give birth to the church, nor can we preserve it. We must then commit it to God and see that we save our souls.

We know how little Luther cared for human orders, how he hated that the salvation of the church should be made dependent on orders and divisions. But how highly the same Luther speaks of the office of visitor! He mainly attributes the terrible decay in the papacy to the decay of this institution. Therefore, let us keep this in mind. And this Synod, too, will certainly do so with God's help.

In the preface to the Concordia Book it says: "Thus we also want to continue to compare ourselves in a friendly manner, in such a way that in our countries, through diligent visitation of the churches and schools, supervision of the printing

presses and other salutary means, we will have the opportunity to take this Concordia work seriously and, where the current or new disputes in our Christian religion want to stir up again, how these may be settled and compared in time without dangerous prolixity to prevent (all) kinds of trouble". (Preface to the Concordia Book p. 21 f.)

As soon as the Formula of Concord was adopted, it was recognized that visitation was necessary. That is why the Christian princes said in the name of their Christian people: "Let us continue to compare ourselves in a friendly manner, <MH 252> in which way in our countries through diligent visitation of churches and schools . . . to take this work of concord seriously". The church has always had the same needs. What our dear elders felt, we also feel. So we want to follow in their footsteps and use the means they found to be effective.

Finally, according to Thesis I, a confessionally faithful synod
d. "only hold fellowship with confessionally loyal bodies".

It is therefore not enough for such a synod to profess the symbolic books without restriction; not enough for all its pastors, teachers and congregations [*Gemeinden*] to commit themselves to them; not enough for supervision to be exercised over the existing confessional faithfulness. No, such a synod may then also only hold fellowship with confessionally faithful bodies.

<page 37>

The Lord warns too clearly and plainly in Matthew 7:15 against false prophets. But it would be a bad precaution to have fellowship with false prophets. The prophets, i.e. the teachers, give a church its character. If the preachers are orthodox and the congregations [*Gemeinden*] want their pure preaching, then the congregations [*Gemeinden*] are also orthodox. But if the preachers are false prophets and their congregations [*Gemeinden*] are satisfied with them, indeed, they even want them to preach this false teaching, then this community is also a heretical, a heterodox, a sect, and a right-believing synod may not maintain fellowship with such.

Another proof is Romans 16:17, where St. Paul says: "But I exhort you, brethren, to watch out for those who cause division and offense apart from the doctrine which you have learned, and to depart from them." Where a separation has been made by gathering around false doctrine, you have before you such a fellowship with which you can enter into no union, no pulpit fellowship, no altar fellowship, no church fellowship, no brotherhood of faith.

1 Timothy 6:3-5, the apostle writes: "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not abide in the saving words of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the doctrine of godliness, he is darkened and knows nothing, but is addicted to questions and wars of words, from which spring envy, strife, blasphemy, evil suspicion, and the school bickering of those who have broken minds and are deprived of the truth, who think that godliness is a profession. Get away from such." It does not say: "If anyone fights against the pure doctrine", but: if he only "teaches differently and does not abide in the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ" etc.

Titus 3:10 also says: "Avoid a heretical man if he is once and again reproached." If each individual Christian is to have nothing to do with a heretical man, it goes without saying that a whole community should do the same with another community that is led by a heretical man.

And finally it says in 2 John 10:11: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this **<MH 253>** teaching, do not take him home, nor greet him. For whoever greets him makes himself partaker of his evil works." A synod that is faithful to the confession is therefore required to have no fellowship with communities that are not pure in doctrine. Of course, this is something difficult. How we are blasphemed, what terrible names are given to us, what a horrible picture is painted of us as loveless, quarrelsome, arrogant, proud spirits who consider themselves alone to be orthodox and infallible! It is indeed no easy task to bear this shame that is imposed on us. But, dear brothers, we must bear this shame. In this time of religious mania and religious equality, we may be afraid to **<Page 38>** separate ourselves from those who do not teach purely: God's word demands it. God will also one day make a terrible separation, and no creature will be able to say anything against it. That is precisely God's government: always separate, always separate. According to 2 Cor. 6:14, the church must not pull on one yoke with the unbelievers.

Whoever teaches false doctrine, teaches to believe contrary to God's Word, is in this point an unbeliever, and therefore I may not pull on one yoke with him, i.e. I may not cultivate any ecclesiastical fellowship, nor any ecclesiastical working community with him; thus I may not concern myself with him with ecclesiastical matters, pursue ecclesiastical purposes and the like. No, I must separate myself from him.

That is not the way to cast a spell over people, as they write about us in Germany. That is stupid gossip. We only reject their teaching because it is against God's Word; and we leave it to God to judge whether they are under ban or not. But this is the usual way in which the false teachers condemn the testimony of the orthodox church, that they say: "They put us under ban!" No, we only say: "We do not belong together and we cannot take part in falsifying the dear Word of God." They want us to say: "We are one heart and one soul; you may falsify God's word and preach your own thoughts, but that does not make us enemies." No, a true church should only consist of those who are united in the true faith, as we heard in the opening sermon (on Eph. 4:3-6): "One faith." — Therefore the

Formula of Concord: "We also believe, teach and confess that neither church shall condemn the other, that one has less or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other, if otherwise in doctrine and all the same articles, as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, unity is held with one another." (Summar. Term. Art. X, p. 553.)

We should always remember this golden passage. There our church professes that the unity of every church community should consist in a unity of

doctrine, namely in "all articles". We cannot therefore say: We are in agreement with the people of the General Council on many doctrines, namely on the great chief matters, why should we not maintain church fellowship with <MH 254> them? No, we cannot recognize such a community, which, for example, cultivates chiliasm among itself, we cannot work with them. Ah, that is not unkindness, but true love. - If some people had poisoned the wells in one region and people came from another region, making a noise in the whole area and saying: "Don't get involved with them, they're poisoning your drinking water! - would you say: That's disgraceful! Do they come from so far away <Page 39> and want to make the good people here suspicious! What harm would it do if they put a little arsenic in it? No, but one would say: Praise God that they come so far and warn us. Otherwise we would all have been dead! That is love.

It has always been the true love of the Church to say: for God's sake, do not enter into fellowship with those who poison the fountain of eternal life. We do not separate ourselves from such a church community because we think that we are better people than others and that such holy people cannot deal with others. That would be an abominable thought. We are poor sinners. But we consider the pure Word of God to be worth more than heaven and earth and would therefore rather lose the friendship of all people than this. In this way of acting we preserve the dear, precious, saving gospel, and not only for ourselves, oh no, but also for the sake of other souls we must go forth with our confession. For if we say: we do not enter into church fellowship with these and those, then all those who are of one faith with us will take notice and think: we must beware of them. Praise God that our Synod does so!

This was also Luther's position. How he was tormented at the colloquium in Marburg when he was asked to shake hands with Zwingli! **He** was begged with tears. He stood there like a man of iron who had no heart in his body. There came the Swiss, they were so sweet, they spoke so kindly, so godly; only Luther stood there and did not give his hand, and for that he is eternally blessed.

This was just as important an event as a year later, when the Confession was presented to the Emperor and the Empire at the Diet of Augsburg. If Luther had allowed himself to be moved to offer his hand at that time out of false considerations for the sake of his mind, woe to him! there would never again have been a true church community. The ruin of the Union would have broken in like a great flood and the orthodox church would have ceased to exist. For even if other men had confessed the truth in his place, the great people would have stood with Luther. God had ordained him from eternity to draw the gospel from God's word again, and he should <MH 255> throw his profession away? Woe to him if he had done so! But he was faithful. He was the angel who flew through the midst of heaven with the eternal gospel. This gospel is called "eternal" because it is not one that contains things that are permanent **and** transitory, but one that contains **only** the holy truth of God. — It became even more difficult for Luther, and he would not have been able to do it on his own, when two years

later Bucer, who acted as an intermediary between the Reformed and the Lutherans, conceded more and more and now asked Luther to enter into church fellowship with the Zwinglians. Bucer said: "We have [Page 40](#) convinced ourselves that body and blood are partaken of in the Lord's Supper; but only not with the mouth, only not by the ungodly." Luther remained firm again and said: "If you cannot understand this, then we are divorced people." For Luther could see that the body of Christ was not in it at all if it could not be taken with the mouth and not even by the ungodly. If there is food in a bowl and it is passed around, do only the worthy receive it and the unworthy receive something else? No, if that is all that is in it, then everyone gets the food. So it was miserable gossip on the part of the Zwinglians when they said: we believe as well as you that "the true body" is present. Luther knew well what was meant by the small addition. That is why he wrote

Luther wrote the following to Bucer:

"Therefore I cannot understand myself to be in complete and firm unity with you, for I would violate my conscience or cause a much greater disruption of our church and also cause more discord among yourselves if we were to boast of unity in this way."

God grant that we may always stand in such a way that our conscience will not allow it, as Luther says of himself here. If you only have a theory in your head, then you can leave in the hour of temptation; but if your conscience does not allow it, then you remain firm, because you cannot do otherwise. Luther knew well that if he had united with Bucer in Wittenberg at that time, there would have been a terrible disagreement in Strasbourg, Basel, Zurich, in the whole of Switzerland. For some would have thought it right, others would have said: this is a caper. "Therefore,"

Luther continues, "I beg you also for the conscience and peace of your and our churches, do not let it happen that by this means we arouse even more noise and anger against discord, but let us commit the matter to God and meanwhile keep the peace of the harmony that has been reached to some extent." **<MH 256>**

So they had come closer together, and that was already something. Let us be satisfied with that for the time being, says Luther, "for you yourselves can easily see, if we were to establish unity, that some of yours would communicate with us and some of ours with you, and yet do so in different faiths and consciences, and consequently receive on both sides something different from what they believed: thus their faith would necessarily have to be mocked by our ministry and conscience through secret and worldly cunning, if they did not know it, or, if they did know it, would have to be abolished by an open church robbery. But how godly and Christian this is, you will easily see. Therefore, out of two evils, we would rather choose the least, even if we have to suffer one."

This is most strange. If a synod should hold communion with other communities of false faith, it would shamefully deceive its [<Page 41>](#) congregations [*Gemeinden*] and commit a terrible church robbery. This is not so great an evil when I say: we cannot walk with each other as when we walk with each other, and both go astray.

Luther goes on to say:

"Let us therefore rather bear this lesser discord with a lesser peace, than, if we would heal it, to excite a veritable game of greater dissension and intolerable discord. And you can believe me, as I also said to you in Coburg, that I would wish to calm and quiet this discord, even if I were to lay down my life three times."

Luther must have been a very wicked man if it had not been so in his heart. He would have been a miserable liar if he had only claimed it; but what he says here is actually an oath. He wants to say: You will think I have such a hard heart, such a steely disposition, or that I always want to be right. But I tell you how sorry I am: three times I should lay down my life for it." Luther writes further:

"For I have seen how necessary your company is to us, what mischief it (the disagreement) has brought and still brings to the Gospel; so that I am certain that all the gates of hell, the whole papacy, the whole Turk, the whole world, the whole flesh, and what is evil everywhere, could not have done so much harm to the Gospel if we had been united. But how can we do anything in this matter, since it is not possible to accomplish anything? - You will therefore not attribute it to my obstinacy, but to my true conscience and the necessity of my faith, if you wish to act otherwise righteously, that I refuse this agreement. After our conversation in Coburg I gave myself every good hope, but such hope is not yet firm. May the Lord Jesus enlighten us and make us perfectly united! This I ask, this I lament, this I sigh." (Letter to Bucer dated January 22, 1531. XVII, 2395-97.)

Let us write this in our hearts, dear brothers, so it should be in us, as it was in our dear Luther, who would have bought the peace of the Church with his life if it had been **<MH 257>** possible. We should suffer because, for example, we cannot cooperate with the Iowa Synod. Our hearts should bleed over it, and we should regard the day as a day of rejoicing, when they would come and say: we see now that we have been wrong up to now; we want to preserve the heritage of our fathers faithfully down to the last letter. And we should fall around their necks with tears; and if an even greater sacrifice had to be made, we would be ready for it, as many of us are Christians — and hopefully we all are. —

We have "also seen", as Luther did, what "disagreement has brought and still brings trouble to the Gospel": the devil would have to be afraid of us if all Lutherans [<Page 42>](#) in America were united. But as it is, he laughs because they are at loggerheads. — It is terrible how we are blasphemed over and over again because we do not want to have fellowship with false believers. But who is to blame for this? The one who prevents us from having fellowship. Otherwise it

would also be Christ's fault that the Jews were lost. He would have had to give a different teaching because they did not want to accept it. But no one is insane enough to claim that Christ is to blame. In the same way, the false believer is also to blame if a breach occurs. For the orthodox must separate themselves for the sake of conscience. They are therefore thrown out, even if they are held back by force. So we have been thrown out by all false believers, because they have tormented our poor consciences with their false teaching. - Ah, dear brothers, there is no other way than: "Here through mockery and derision, there the crown of honor." Here we are considered a shameful people, but on that day God will bring us honor and comfort us abundantly. Then it will be revealed whether we have separated ourselves out of pride. Then all the false brothers who secretly agitate against us - after they have stolen our treasure - will also be revealed.

If we look at the concluding words in Luther's letter to Bucer, there we have our dear faithful Luther, there he reveals his heart; there he shows how he sighed and wept before God in his quiet chamber, and when he had wept himself out, then he went and wrote so powerfully that one thought: he is only happy when he can shoot people to death; and yet he had only fought for Christ and his church, not in "hardness", but in sweetness of heart.

Luther also wrote:

"Some clever people have now begun to patch things up; they want to advise and settle the quarrel, pretending that one should give way and yield on both sides. We <MH 258> let them do what they can and try what they can, but if they make the devil pious and one with Christ, they are the first. But I think that this kind of patchwork (as Jesus says in Sirach 22:7) is like trying to mend broken pieces. And though there have been many cobblers who have undertaken it, they have worked in vain and lost both wire and stitch." (On Psalm 110, 2. V, 1420.)

The same man:

"Some unintelligent Christians, deceived by the devil, claim about the sacrament and other errors: we should not argue so harshly about one article and divide Christian love over it, nor give each other to the devil over it; but even if we err in a small part, since we are otherwise one in others, we may well give way and let go a little and still maintain brotherly and Christian unity and fellowship. No, dear man, not to me of peace and unity, about which one <PAGE 43> rejects God's word; for that would already mean the loss of eternal life and everything. The point here is not to give way, nor to concede anything for the love of you or some people. Rather, all things should yield to the word, whether it be enemy or friend. For it is not given for the sake of external or worldly unity and peace, but for the sake of eternal life. The word and the doctrine are to bring about Christian unity or fellowship: where these are equal and united, the other will follow; where they are not, there will be no unity.

Therefore, do not tell me of any love or friendship where one wants to break off the word or faith; for it is not said: love, but: the word brings eternal life, God's grace and all heavenly treasures. Let us gladly do this, that we may make

outward peace with them, as we must do in the world with everyone, even with the worst enemies; let this go its way in this life and worldly being, about which we have nothing to fight; but for the sake of doctrine and Christian fellowship we will have nothing to do with them, nor consider them brothers, but enemies, because they knowingly persist in their error, and fight against them through our spiritual warfare." (Sermon on Christian Armor and Weapons of 1532. IX, 455 ff.)

From this we can see that Luther seriously believed that eternal life could only be obtained through the pure Word of God. He was convinced that the whole Bible is the living Word of God given to Christians for their salvation. But now people think like this: the Word of God is given to create a beautiful unity, so that people sit together comfortably and everyone declares the other to be a good Christian, so that life in this world is pretty. But always fighting and quarrelling, that is unchristian, it makes you "feel" so bad. But, my brothers, there is no other way; only in eternal <MH 259> life will that come. And even if we are united here in faith, there are still many things that want to tear this bond apart. Only now and then does God give us an hour of joy, sweet consolation and living hope. — But although we must always fight against all false faith, we do not believe that if a church [*Gemeinde*] is not orthodox, it is full of bad boys. We know that there are also dear children of God among them; our polemic is not directed at them at all, but at the deceivers. These are traitors to the pure gospel, the enemies of Christ with the appearance of the greatest friendship towards Christ. We do not want to have anything to do with them, and because they are like this, we must withdraw from many a dear soul of whom we are convinced that they are right. Because they are associated with false teachers, we cannot have brotherly fellowship with them, but can only lament to God that a dear brother is also imprisoned there. So we surround this <Page 44> prison in order to conquer it and to get our dear brothers and sisters out of the clutches of those who seduce them.

In response to the question of how one should oppose a church community that allows church fairs and similar un-Lutheran things, the following answer was given: A distinction must be made between sins that are committed due to a lack of sharpness of conscience and sins that are the fruit of false doctrine, insofar as they are based on doctrine or contradict doctrine.

The Synod then wholeheartedly endorsed Thesis I and its implementation.

Thesis II.

Another main duty is that it should faithfully care for its congregations [*Gemeinden*] in an evangelical way, and therefore

- a. does not arrogate to itself any authority over them, but only assists them in an advisory capacity;
- b. help them to obtain righteous preachers and teachers;
- c. Protect them against preachers who are erroneous in doctrine, vexatious in life and domineering in their ministry.

Many dear congregations [*Gemeinden*] are afraid of synods. We have seen that here in Iowa. It took quite a while before some decided to join. They only decided to do so after they got to know their own preachers and saw that there was no danger involved. The reason for this shyness is that there are many shameful synods that have usurped the ecclesiastical power that the consistories have in Germany, and in many cases they have turned the Christian concilium into a clerical council. They do not want to serve the congregations [*Gemeinden*, but to rule the congregations [*Gemeinden*, and the latter are to provide them with the means with which they intend to carry out their <MH 260> plans. They also want to enjoy the pleasure of exercising dominion over a whole large society. For it is pleasant for the old Adam to give orders to others and not to be ordered himself. But it is un-Lutheran. Why? It is precisely unbiblical.

We read in Matthew 18: when it comes to church discipline, it ultimately goes to the church [*Gemeinde*], and when it has decided, Christ does not say: then the sinner can appeal to the pastor; but it says: then "hold him as a Gentile and a tax collector". Christ thus declares that the church [*Gemeinde*] is the last and highest judgment, from which no appeal can be made. Where it has decided according to God's word, there the matter is decided. <Page 45> No man can rebel against it, as the Scriptures teach.

That is why St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Let no man boast. It is all yours. Whether Paul or Apollos, Cephas or the world, etc., everything is yours", 1 Cor. 3:22. He wants to say: "Do not look at the great, gifted people in the church as if they had more than you. No, it is all yours. The apostle thus makes the congregation in the Holy Spirit the owner of all the goods that Jesus has acquired for his church [*Gemeinde*]. On the other hand, the Savior says of the preachers: "One is your master, but you are all brothers." "Worldly kings reign, and mighty men are called lords; but you are not so: but the greatest among you shall be as the youngest, and the noblest as the servant." This is how the Lord placed the preachers, and this is what the dear apostles kept until their death, for themselves and for all others appointed by them. Even Peter, whose successor the disgraceful pope wants to be, says: "Not as rulers of the people, but as examples of the flock", 1 Pet. 5, 3.

So if you want to be the highest in the church [*Gemeinde*], then be the most pious, then you are also the highest; but otherwise you must not rule over the church [*Gemeinde*]. And to the Corinthians St. Paul writes: "Not that we are lords over your faith, but we are helpers of your joy, for you stand in the faith", 2 Cor. 1, 24. And when the apostle exhorted the Corinthians to "raise up a collection", he said: "Not that I command you anything." Consider: the great apostle Paul, who, it is said, studied in the third heaven, said to the Corinthians, when he asked for a collection: "Not, I say, that I command anything; but because others are so diligent, I also test your love to see whether it is of the right kind." So according to the heil.

Thus, according to the Scriptures, no preacher can command the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to do anything, but he can only repeat the Savior's commandments and say: "Thus says my Lord Christ, you must obey or you will be lost. But if he commands something himself, every member of the congregation [*Gemeindeglied*] can say: "Pastor, you have nothing to command us; you are not a pope. Don't you know that we are Christians? Whoever wants to command us, to order us to do something, we renounce him, for he turns a servant of Christ into a ruler of Christ, a vice-king, just as the accursed pope says <MH 261> of himself that he is Christ's representative and has the power to give laws to Christendom.

The preacher is a servant, a servant of the church [*Gemeinde*] "for the sake of Jesus". And that is nothing terrible for the preacher, for then he does the same thing that Jesus did. Let us only remember that the great God has come from heaven and has become our servant, and we miserable sinners should say: it would be against my sense of honor if I were a servant of the church [*Gemeinde*]. That does not make you a servant of men. For love makes all Christians servants, and whoever does not want to be such does not belong <Page 46> in Christ's kingdom, for Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of love.

But this is not meant to imply that the church [*Gemeinde*] can command him to do anything. We poor pastors are also Christians and also want Christ to be our king; otherwise, if the church [*Gemeinde*] had to command us, we would have a many-headed king. We are both equal; you have nothing to command me, and I have nothing to command you. But I, as a preacher, have the command of my Lord, and when I say what He commands, you must obey or you are not a Christian; for Christ says, "He who hears you hears Me, and he who despises you despises Me." It is no joke when the preacher holds up God's pure word to the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] cannot say: "Oh, we already know him, that poor bastard; we don't pay much attention to what he says. Yes, if Jesus came today and preached to us, we would obey."

But when the poor preacher preaches Christ's word, it is as much as if Christ were present in the flesh, for He says, "He who hears you hears Me," and you must bow. That is why it says in Ebr. 13:17: "Obey your teachers and follow them." Obey them when they appear in the name of the Lord and proclaim his word to you. But if a preacher comes with his own wisdom - even if it were really high wisdom - and he cannot say: The Lord Jesus has commanded it, then I say: "All respect to your wisdom, but you have nothing to command me. I also have experience, I also have a head; I will not take orders from you."

It is not right for the members of a congregation [*Gemeinde*] to always say: "The pastor has said so, therefore we must do this or that." No real church [*Gemeinde*] speaks like that. We are sheep, but not four-legged sheep, but sheep of Christ. Therefore, when that wise preacher says: "Of course I cannot prove it from the Bible, but you must respect the ministry that I hold," say to him: "You do

not seem to know what your ministry is. We have not given you the office to rule, but to preach the gospel. That is not your office, that you should rule over us."

We now want to hear whether our dear Lutheran Church also stands in this way; for that is precisely why our synod has been so much blasphemed here in America, because we have preserved the freedom of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] and have always told the preachers: You are not masters, you are servants, and as such you must confess yourselves, or the Lord Christ will not confess you. <MH 262>

The fact that we have declared the congregations [*Gemeinden*] to be the highest court has been highly suspected. It was said that we were setting up a confused, crazy economy; this was said most of all in Germany: here the preachers were miserable servants of men, and the congregations [*Gemeinden*] did what they wanted with the preachers. That was [said to be] un-Lutheran, Anabaptist, independentism.

<page 47>

In the Formula of Concord, this position is expressly granted to every local congregation [*Ortsgemeinde*], namely the "congregation [*Gemeinde*; MH uses Tappert and Kolb-Wengert / McCain 2006 p. 598 "**community**" in opposition to Walther's "*Ortsgemeinde*" (and the *Triglotta*), "**local congregation**" translation. This is confusing Walther's point clearly **for** the LOCAL congregation! MH charges JTM with mistranslation, but what about MH?? Walther clearly is saying the BSLK archaic "Gemeine" is to be orthographically updated to "*Gemeinde*".] of God of every place and time", when it states:

"Accordingly, we believe, teach and confess that the congregation [*Gemeinde*; Walther translated FC SD X, 9 as *Gemeinde*, "congregation", NOT *Gemeine*, "**community**"] of God of every place and time has the opportunity according to good judgment, authority and power to change, diminish and increase these (middle things *) without frivolity and annoyance in an orderly and proper manner, as is at all times considered most useful, beneficial and best for good order, Christian discipline and discipline, evangelical prosperity and for the edification of the church." (FC SD X.9. Art. X, p. 698 f.)

*) Middle things (adiaphora) are those which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word.

O dear brothers of the laity, remember this passage! Our dear Church has given you a treasure from her best days. You must hold on to it; for what good are all rights if you do not know them or do not use them? — Where God's Word has commanded or forbidden something, the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has the decision, not a synod, not a pastor, not a presbytery, not a consistory. That is what our church confesses. It is a liberal [or free] church. It is not a clerical ruled [*pfaffenherrschaftliche*; see also DL67. 341] community, but a community of members of Christ who are united by an evangelical, gentle, loving bond.

[Pfotenhauer quoted this entire paragraph in [DL67, p. 341](#)] [Cp. to MH, [Church & Office, p. 76](#): "Wilhelm Löhe promoted Luther's "from above" teaching of the office. Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling, for example, promoted the "from below" teaching. Walther held both in all their challenging tension. [Walther did not teach a "challenging tension", but "an evangelical, gentle, loving bond."]

In this thesis, we see the "from below" teaching on the authority of the Church, present wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name. ... Here it is significant that Walther does not exclude clergy from the inherent authority that belongs to the Church. [But Walther does exclude "a pastor" (above) from decisions on adiaphora.] Clergy possess the Keys both as baptized spiritual priests and as those called to exercise the Keys—which are given to all—publicly in the name of Christ on behalf of the Church." Harrison is always in haste to defend the clergy's role and authority, but never speaks like Walther teaches above defending the "laity".]

The [Smalcald Articles](#) [*Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*] say: "Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: Tell it unto the Church." [Matt. 18:17] (First Appendix, p. 333 [[Treatise 24](#)])

Note also this passage. We have been so suspected and reviled that we have said: "The church [[Gemeinde](#)] has the highest judgment in its circle." We were told: "Yes, the holy Christian church [[Gemeinde](#)], has that, namely the whole church on the whole earth in its entirety." But it is a lie that it is to be understood in this way, for Matthew 18:17 says: "Tell it to the church," and the whole context of the passage shows that nothing else can be meant than the local church [[Ortsgemeinde](#)]. For if "the church [[Gemeinde](#)] in the whole world", "the church in its entirety" were meant: when and where should it come together, how could it be told what Christ commands? "The church of the whole world" is never and nowhere gathered in one place. Christ would have demanded something impossible, even nonsensical. No, Christ obviously means the church [[Gemeinde](#)] where those who have sinned have come and where those who have punished sinners are. — Furthermore

The [Smalcald Articles](#) [*Treatise*]: [<MH 263>](#) "1 Cor. 3, 21. Paul makes all church ministers equal, and teaches that the church is more than the ministers" (Latin *supra ministros*, i.e. above the ministers), "therefore [<page 48>](#) it cannot be said with any truth that Peter had some supremacy over the churches and all other church ministers before other apostles. For thus he says: 'It is all yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas,' that is, neither Peter nor other ministers of the Word may attribute to them **any** authority or supremacy over the churches." (First Appendix, p. 330.)

Everyone, pastors and church [[Gemeindeglieder](#)] members alike, should note this passage. There our church confesses that the church is more than the ministers. Of course, when the preacher preaches God's Word, the congregation [[Gemeinde](#)] is under him, because he does not come in his own name, but in the name of Christ. But if he cannot prove that this is what Christ has commanded, then he must place himself under the congregation [[Gemeinde](#)]. It is then above him. So not even Peter had any authority over any church [[Gemeinde](#)]. He only

had the duty to preach the word of God. But if he could not say: thus says my Lord Christ, thus the Holy Spirit impels me, thus God has revealed it to me; then he, the high apostle, also gave the churches [*Gemeinden*] all freedom to decide as they saw fit.

Hebrews 13, 17. is usually quoted; this was done by the late Pastor Grabau in Buffalo. He and his followers said: "Obey your teachers and follow them." So when the preacher says: you must build churches [*Gemeinden*] and schools, the congregations simply have to obey. But that is a terrible error. As the saying goes: "Where there is nothing, the emperor has lost the right." But here the pastor is supposed to have the right to order the church to be built if, for example, the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has no money. It is true, as Christ says: "He who hears you hears me"; but by this he does not mean: if you do anything else in life that is of equal value, I do all that; but: if you preach my word, it is as good as if I preach it myself. The fact that it comes out of your mouth does not make it less, even if the poorest man preaches it. Therefore the saying "Obey your teachers" is to be understood as follows: if they appear as your teachers, and they do so when they preach God's word to you; for if they do not, they are your deceivers, of whom Christ says: "They do not follow a stranger, but flee from him." (John 10:5). (Joh. 10, 5.) About Ebr. 13, 17. says

The Apology: "This saying demands that one should be obedient to the Gospel. For it does not give the bishops any authority or power of their own apart from the gospel. ... Therefore, if they teach unchristian and contrary to the Scriptures, they are not to be heard. Nor does this saying establish a reign apart from the gospel; therefore they cannot prove their authority, which they have established apart from the gospel, by the *<Page 49>* gospel, for the gospel does not speak *äs traditionibus* (of men's statutes), but of God's word to teach." (Art. 28. p. 289 f.) *<MH 264>*

So it is not only when the preacher teaches wrongly that the congregation [*Gemeinde*] must not obey, but also when he teaches rightly but presents something that God has not commanded. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] should maintain its freedom and say: we want to discuss the matter and if we have different thoughts than you, Mr. Pastor, then we will go according to our understanding. Every faithful Lutheran preacher goes to great lengths to help the congregation [*Gemeinde*] achieve this freedom, while the false preachers hide it from the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. As long as the Missouri Synod has existed, we have had to fight a serious battle to preserve the freedom of the congregations [*Gemeinden*]; therefore we want to continue to stand together as one man and help them defend their freedom. However, no one should become safe because things are still going well for us. Many a synod has stood well for a time and then fallen away.

But the fact that the freedom of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] was also taught in the Lutheran Church in the same way as the symbolic books proves this.

Heshusius*), the famous preacher from the time when the Concordia formula was made, when he writes:

"Matth. 18. the Lord Christ does not give to the secular government, but to his church the highest judgment and authority in church matters, among which almost the most important are the election and appointment of preachers and the judgment on doctrine and the dismissal of unfaithful teachers. For he expressly says that whoever the church does not want to hear should be regarded as a banished heathen and publican, which is not only to be understood as meaning that the church has the power to banish impenitent sinners, but that the church has supreme authority in all church matters, censures, church punishments, judging doctrinal divisions, appointing the pastorate, among other things." (On the appointment and dismissal of preachers. Giessen, 1608. p. 50. f.)

*) A splendid Postille of the same has been republished in St. Louis by Mr. Dette.

So in church matters the church [*Gemeinde*] has the highest judgment. If an obvious sinner has been dealt with in stages according to Matthew 18 and the church [*Gemeinde*] does not hear him, Christ does not say: "Then go to the synod (or consistory) as a higher court", but he says: then it is over; then he is considered a Gentile and a tax collector. The point here is not how the congregation should act in detail in such a case, but rather: what right does the congregation [*Gemeinde*] have before God according to his holy word? Only when the congregation [*Gemeinde*] knows this exactly does the question arise: how should we act? I should only keep freedom in my conscience, <page 50> but not use it arbitrarily without wisdom. —

Heshusius grants the congregation [*Gemeinde*] the right to exercise "judgment on <MH 265> doctrine". Accordingly, the preacher cannot say: I have studied 9 or 12 years, I must know better than you what is right and what is not. No, everyone is equal. Everyone must settle his own case with Christ, therefore no man can dictate to him what he should believe, only Christ can do that. And that is why no one can allow himself to be tyrannized over, but everyone must say: show us how it is written. The saying has always been true: "The more learned, the more wrong". So if someone insists on his erudition, one need not listen to him for the sake of it; but, conversely, one can say: that you want to be such a learned man, that is already questionable. For it is the same with learning as with riches. Christ says: "How hardly will the rich enter the kingdom of heaven!" One man has money, that is his wealth. Another has learning, that is his wealth. Therefore such a one must become humble and be taught like a child by God's Word, otherwise he cannot be saved.

But if someone thought: well, if the congregation [*Gemeinde*] is very large and there are many important men in it, then I'll put up with it. But what kind of congregations [*Gemeinden*] do we have? Some churches [*Gemeinden*] consist of 7 to 10 families. Do they also have great power, like the church [*Gemeinde*] in

Jerusalem, which consisted of many thousands, or like the church in Rome, which also counted its members by the thousands? Yes, it is all the same. For according to Matthew 18, the Lord adds: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". So if there were only two or three Christians there, the Lord would also be there, and **from this** He proves that the church [*Gemeinde*] has such great power: because He is among them. But if He is there, it is not half or a quarter of a Christian, but the whole Savior. Yes, a small bush [*Buschgemeinde*] of seven families has as much power as all the churches [*Gemeinden*] in America put together, because it also has Jesus among it with all his grace and with all the rights and merits that he has earned for us on the cross. That is why he says

Heshusius: "A small group of 10 or 20 people who confess Christ correctly has just as much authority in the kingdom of Christ as a church of many thousands." (On the office and authority of pastors. Edited by Dr. Schütz. Leipzig 1854. p. 65.)

Let everyone who is in such a small community remember this, and know that it is not the same in the church as in the world. — We are glad that we are in the United States of North America, which is such a great and glorious empire. Not every fool can come and disturb the peace, as in the smaller states of South America. There is a difference whether the empire is powerful or not. But in the kingdom of God it is different. The smallest church [*Gemeinde*] is as high as the largest [page 51](#) and the largest is not higher than the smallest: because every church [*Gemeinde*] is only great because it has JEsum with it. <MH 266>

Luther wrote a letter from Coburg to Melanchthon in Augsburg about the fact that a preacher had nothing to command a congregation [*Gemeinde*]. The latter was in great distress in Augsburg, as the papist scholars were pressing him and saying that if it were to apply that the bishops had no power in the church except to preach the gospel, then everything would fall apart. The bishops should also be allowed to do this: to make ordinances, but not against God's word; otherwise, if they had demanded this, they would have clearly betrayed that they were servants of the devil. They said that the bishops were also princes, so it was revolutionary to deny them the power they did have. Poor Melanchthon had no advice and wrote to Luther. But Luther only needed one word to prove his point, the word "as", that as bishops they did not have that power. So

Luther wrote:

"A bishop as a bishop has no power to interpret some statutes or ceremonies to his church without the consent of the churches in clear words or in a tacit manner. Because the church [*Kirche*] is free and a ruler (Latin domina = mistress of the house), and the bishops may not rule over and molest the faith of the churches. For they are only servants and stewards, not masters of the churches. But if the church as one body agrees with the bishop, then they can impose whatever they want on each other, if only godliness does not suffer as a result; they can also leave such things as they like. ... Therefore we cannot grant

the bishops the power, either by ecclesiastical or secular law, to command the Church to do anything, however right and godly it may be; for nothing evil need be done for good to result from it. Even if they wanted to use force and compel it, we must not obey, nor consent to it, but rather die; to maintain the difference between these two regimes is for the will and the law of God against ungodliness and church robberies." (Reply to Melanchthon from 1530. XVI, 1207 ff.)

Oh, the golden freedom that the Lutheran Church gives its congregations [*Gemeinden*]*!* For this reason alone we should thank God every day that we are Lutherans and that no tyranny is practiced here, as is the case in all other churches. Let us consider, dear brethren, what Luther says here. If a preacher wants to force the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to do something that God has not commanded, which they could do otherwise without sin, and the preacher says: by virtue of my office I command you to do this; have you not read Ebr. 13:17: "obey your teachers"? then the congregation [*Gemeinde*] should say: we would fall away from Christ if we *<page 52>* were to obey now! If you, Mr. Pastor, had said: do it for my love, we would have said: well, if it is so dear to you, then let it be done. That would be a proof of love that submits to all people. But because the preacher commands, the congregation says: we have only one king and he is extremely jealous. Therefore nothing there, since you want to command it. For then Christ would say, "You do not belong to me if you let him command you.

As if someone came to America and swore his oath of allegiance here. If he went back to Germany and wanted to be a Prussian there again without further ado, the king *<MH 267>* would say: No, you must first renounce before you are accepted here. So it is here. Therefore, one should rather want to die than go under such a human yoke. If our dear Lutherans in Germany knew this, they would all leave the regional church, for there they are forced everywhere to do what their sovereign "as regional bishop" commands. Here is another testimony from

Luther: "Therefore I say, neither pope, nor bishop, nor any man has power to set a syllable over a Christian man, unless it be by his will; and what happens otherwise happens from a tyrannical spirit." (Of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, v. J. 1520. XIX, 83.)

Oh, not a "syllable", dear brothers in the ministry, let us remember that. It is no shame for us if we do not have this authority, for God has given us a much greater one. What greater power can there be in heaven and on earth than to preach the gospel? The apostle says: "If you do these things, you will save yourself and those who hear you." (1 Tim. 4:16)

Thus, a preacher becomes a savior of men! Would we not be wretched people if we desired a higher power and glory? We can be satisfied and more than satisfied. We cannot thank God enough for eternity that we are allowed to lead the glorious ministry of saving souls for eternity. Finally writes

Dannhauer: "The pastors are servants of the congregation [*Gemeinde*, to whom the final decision is to be entrusted." (Hodosoph. p. 179.)

But if, according to the above, a preacher cannot command a congregation [*Gemeinde*], what about the synod? A synod consists not only of pastors, but also of congregational deputies, i.e. also of lay people. It is therefore a representative of the church. Should it not have the power to command a congregation to do something, to give it laws which it must keep for God's sake? No, just as little as the preacher can give commandments and laws to the congregation, so little can a whole multitude of preachers together with just as many lay people. For even the church has no power to give a law that would bind individual Christians <pages 53> or even whole congregations [*Gemeinden*] in conscience. For in the kingdom of God we are all equal to one another. Therefore writes

Luther: "The Christian Church has the power to set customs and manners to be observed in fasting, feasting, eating, drinking, dress and the like; yet not over others, without their will, but over itself alone; has never done otherwise, nor will it ever do otherwise." (Article of the Christian Churches Violence. XIX, 1191.)

So if, apart from the commandments that God has given, there is another commandment on a Christian or a church [*Gemeinde*], it must be one that the Christian or church [*Gemeinde*] has given itself. Of course, I can put whatever I want on myself. But <MH 268> our church members [*Gemeindeglieder*] are not gathered here. So if we wanted to make a law here, to draft a commandment, the church [*Gemeinde*] would not have drafted it, the church [*Gemeinde*] would not have given itself this law; and if we came to our churches [*Gemeinden*] with it, it would have no force at all; it would only have force if the church [*Gemeinde*] looked at it and said: yes, it would be nice if we did it this way, and if it now made it its order by a resolution. Then it would be right. But the congregation [*Gemeinde*] would also have the right to say: we don't accept that. But if the synod were to say: we have decided, we are the highest court, you must obey us, or we will banish you — then the congregation [*Gemeinde*] would have to say: farewell, synod! we have seen ourselves. You are standing in the place of Christ, you are an assembly of mere popes. We want to be free and remain free. That is Lutheran. And this is not only what Luther said, but also the later teachers, even though they languished in abominable bondage under the bishops of the regional church. Thus writes

Gerhard: "The true Church does not mean to do mean things or to underburden for the sake of her commandment, but only for the sake of preserving order and decency, so that order may be observed and offense avoided, and as long as this is not violated, she leaves consciences free and neither makes them conscience-bound nor imposes anything necessary on them." (Confessio catholica, fol. 627.)

This is another delicious passage. So, even if a synod can say in a certain sense: we are the representatives of our congregations [*Gemeinden*], that is, the representatives of our church within our territory, it does not follow that we can make laws that bind consciences. We can draft laws, but if the congregations

[*Gemeinden*] do not like them, they will not accept them. Only Christ has the right to prescribe laws to others; but no synod, no national church, indeed no church in the whole world. It can only give [<pages 54>](#) laws to itself, but no one else, no creature, not even an angel or archangel, let alone a pastor or a synod.

But now the German theologians, who believe that the state churches can only be helped by a strong church government, say: "Do you not know that the Lutheran church has always been under a consistory? There the preacher received "Rescripte" [*official letters from a higher authority*], which he had to read out in the church; new "ordinances" were issued, new offices were filled by him; the consistory prescribed new books for churches and schools, and one had to comply.

To this we reply: Yes, unfortunately, that is how it was in the Lutheran Church in Germany. But that was not the realization of the doctrine of the Reformation, but rather directly opposed to it. Luther also helped to establish the Consistory, but not in this ungodly sense, but he wanted to set up the Consistory as our Synod stands now, i.e. the Consistories were to be merely a collegium to which one could turn to get answers to questions in difficult cases, to be advised **<MH 269>** by this collegium, in short: the Consistory established by Luther was an advisory body.

Thus, for example, Löscher, the court preacher in Dresden and Oberconsistorialvice-president, who could really have had an interest in elevating the Consistory, says this:

Löscher writes: "In Leipzig (1543) a consistory was arranged, but without jurisdiction, in which, as in Wittenberg, everyone could be informed (*advised*)."
(Unschuldige Nachrichten. Jahrg. 1703. p. 25.)

As we see, even in 1543, when the last consistory was established during Luther's lifetime, it had no "jurisdiction", i.e. no power or jurisdiction. The consistories could not give the slightest order. Anyone who had received an order could have sent the rescript back and said: I have nothing to do with you, gentlemen, in this matter. If you want to talk to me, wait until I ask you. You have nothing to command me, but only to advise me if I ask for it. That was Luther's thought.

When we began our work here in America, we said: But what is to become of our church if the preachers all stand alone, scattered over such an immense area? So Luther thought: if all the preachers stood alone, it would soon become a Babel; therefore he established consistories, but not one with "jurisdiction", but one that had a consultative power, which is actually not a power at all, but a duty; for I can be advised by whom I want.

How far Luther was from establishing Consistories with such jurisdiction as they now exercise in the regional churches [<page 55>](#) can be seen from the fact that he declared, when already during his lifetime in the Consistories the magisterial class as such wanted to govern the church through its lawyers: **"We must tear up the Consistory, for in short we do not want the lawyers**

and the pope in it". ([Walch¹ XXII. 2210](#) [[StL 22. 1511](#)] [Table Talk](#)) If God had wanted Luther to live longer, he would certainly have "torn up" the consistories again.

But did it not happen later that the consistories issued orders? Indeed it is so. But that does not prove that it is right, but only that even in a church of orthodoxy all kinds of infirmities are found, that abuses creep in; and if the abuses are then protected by mighty men, it is difficult to abolish them. Now, however, through the unfaithfulness of many pastors and theologians, the princes have obtained the power to order all central matters in the church by their own authority and also to make laws in the church and not only in the state, to appoint and dismiss preachers according to their arbitrariness. This was abominable, even though even good theologians put up with it. They often complied only because they were afraid of making the whole country rebellious. But the pure doctrine of church authority was still upheld even by the strictest state churchmen at the time. For example

Hülsemann: "The dependence on the jurisdiction of another (church) and the obligation to maintain unity in faith and doctrine with all other particular churches of Christ are different from one another. The former (obligation) is of divine right (1 Cor. 12:24 ff.), the latter (dependence on jurisdiction) is of **<MH 270>** human right in the relation of one church [**Gemeinde**] to another." (Praelect. ad Breviar. c. 17. § 2. p. 1217.)

The old Leipzig theologian thus wants to say: "One should not confuse this: that one church should always have the same faith, the same doctrine and, on the basis of this doctrine, the same practice; this is divine right; for God says: "Be diligent to maintain unity in the Spirit through the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit. . . . One Lord, one faith, one baptism." In Eph. 4:3-6 and 1 Cor. 1:10 the apostle says: "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye hold fast one to another in one mind and in one accord." But the fact that several congregations [**Gemeinden**] unite and then have a kind of superior over them, who also have something to say, is human law.

Hereby Hülsemann declares that the princes actually have no power in the church (and he said this to the princes' faces), but that if they exercised any power, it was because men **<pages 56>** had given it to them. He naturally wants to say the same of the consistory, superintendent, dean, bishop and whatever these offices are called.

Therefore it also follows that if the Church has given them this power, it can withdraw it again if this power conferred by men leads to the ruin of the Church. — This is why we have declared in our Synodal Constitution that the Synod is only a consultative body. Do the dear members of the congregation [**Gemeindeglieder**] remember that! — Most of them think when they come from Germany: Praise God, now we are rid of the Consistory, which has imposed so many laws on us and dealt with our pastors as it pleased; it has imposed taxes,

appointed preachers and taken them as it wished. We are now rid of that in this free country.

But here they saw: there are synods! The old story is back again! Now it means again: now you have to submit to the synod. — Many who are good-natured by nature put up with this; others, however, always, and rightly, remain suspiciously distant from the synod. For if a synod behaves as if it were a German consistory, it should be trampled underfoot and said: "I do not want to go back under the rule of the clergy, but stand as a free Christian and thank God that I am free from slavery. I don't want to be put in new chains. That is a terrible tyranny and, as we have already heard from Luther, a Christian should rather die than tolerate it. One must say to such tyrants: "Even if you were a king or an emperor, even an angel or an archangel, I would not obey you. Shoot me dead, hang me — but I will not do your will.

But if you say: I have it by human right; one cannot turn everything upside down, I say: Well, for the sake of peace I will do it. If you appeal to my love, it is ready for anything. — From experience, one could share many examples from America of how many poor souls have perished under the tyranny of the synods until their last hour in the greatest distress, because this false church power had made a false conscience of them. They did not <MH 271> know rightly and yet did not want to submit; and when they came to die, they said to themselves: in the end you are wrong and set yourself against God: how can I be saved? But an orthodox Christian laughs at such tyrannical impositions and says: "Show me the Bible passage! But if it is the case that you merely consider it necessary, then it is none of my business; you can impose what you want on yourself, but not on me. We Christians have only one King, namely Christ.

The Constitution of the Missouri Synod states in Cap. IV. § 9: "The Synod, in regard to the self-government of the individual congregations [*Gemeinden*], is only a deliberative body. Therefore, no decision of the former, if it imposes something on the individual congregation [*Gemeinde*] as a synodal decision, <page 57> has binding force on the latter. — Such a synodal decision can only be binding if the individual congregation [*Gemeinde*] has voluntarily accepted and confirmed it by a formal congregational decision [*Gemeindebeschluss*]. — If a congregation [*Gemeinde*] does not find the resolution in accordance with the word of God or unsuitable for its circumstances, it has the right to disregard the resolution and to reject it."

You see, as far as the self-government of the individual congregation [*Gemeinde*] is concerned, the synod is only a consultative body; i.e. the synod cannot command the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to do anything.

In its own government, the congregation [*Gemeinde*] can do as it pleases before God, and the synod has no say in the matter. But it has a duty to give advice when asked. So it cannot make laws, ceremonies or any kind of regulations, it cannot impose taxes, not even a cent. If our synod were ever to say that each congregation [*Gemeinde*] must give one cent every year, the

congregations [*Gemeinden*] should say: not half a cent. You must beg, yes, we will gladly give to a beggar, but if you want to order us to do so, then our friendship is over. For — much or little — if we have granted you a cent this year, you can demand a dollar next year and even more in two years; for we would then have given you the right, the power to command us to do something. The saying that Luther uses in relation to this power is well known: "Dogs learn to eat leather by the strap." Give no man any power that God has not given, that he may say: you must, no matter how little. This is about the freedom we have as Christians, which Christ, the Son of God, has acquired for us through his precious blood of God. Therefore no one should become a servant of men.

According to our constitution, no synodal decision has binding force for the individual congregations [*Gemeinden*]: no decision, you see! What we decide here in the synod, the preachers and deputies must bring home and say: this is what the synod has decided. But they cannot say: now you must also keep it. No, but the congregation [*Gemeinde*] can say: as soon as it is a matter that is free to us as Christians, we can disregard the decision of the synod, and the synod can say nothing against it. <MH 272>

Of course, if it sees that the decision is also good for it, it would be foolish not to follow it. As if a man were walking in the forest and had lost his way, and a man came and told him where the way out of the forest was. If that man were to say, "You have nothing to command me," he would be a fool, and the congregation would be a fool if it wanted to reject advice that it saw was good. But be it as it may, the synod can now and never again say: you must obey, even if you do not want to. -

<page 58>

Now we ask everyone: Is a congregation [*Gemeinde*] in any danger if it excludes itself from a synod which itself declares in the constitution that it is only a deliberative body? This fear is now either childish, or one thinks: yes, they are talking well now; but it can become quite different afterwards. It can certainly be different, according to the principle: *jura sunt vigilantibus*, i.e. the rights are only valid if one takes it upon oneself to watch over them.

But if the Synod once deviates from this, everyone has the right to say: What do you gentlemen want? you are in contradiction with yourselves; you expose yourselves as obvious deceivers! First you say so, and then you curtail freedom again and want to shackle the congregations [*Gemeinden*]? —

According to the Constitution, the congregations also have the right to reject and disregard all decisions which are not in accordance with the Word of God or which they do not find suitable for their circumstances. It should be noted that it does not merely mean "not in accordance with the word of God" — that goes without saying and is even conceded by the papists - but it means "or unsuitable for their circumstances." So as soon as a congregation [*Gemeinde*] realizes that the decision recommended and advised to us is not suitable for us, it can say: we do not accept it.

The constitution of the Iowa Synod, for example, reads quite differently. There it says in the 5th chapter, under the heading "Powers and duties of the Synod and its districts" in § 16: "The Synod is the holder of church government over all pastors and congregations [*Gemeinden*] belonging to it and makes the final decision in all disputes brought before it from among its members."

This synod declares itself to be the highest court; yes, even the "holder of church government". Immediately afterwards, of course, there is another passage. They probably feared contradiction and therefore added a different form, but the same fox is behind it. It goes on to say: "Or: the synod exercises church government over all the pastors and congregations [*Gemeinden*] belonging to it and is the highest authority in all disputes brought before it from among its members."

Now it is true that the German regional churches have had it this way. But to the great chagrin of all orthodox believers and to the great detriment of the church. The German Lutheran Church would never have got to where it is now if the great Hanseatic League had not been in control. This can be seen from this: when a believing pastor comes somewhere, everything runs to and leaves the miserable rationalist clergymen, and where the congregation [*Gemeinde*] still has the power to hire preachers, and various preachers hold trial sermons, they almost always take the one who preaches a believing <MH 273> sermon, <page 59> who gives the people a clear answer to the question: What must I do to be saved? Such a person usually gets the majority of the votes, except for completely godless congregations [*Gemeinden*] in the cities, where bad boys are in charge.

Rationalism would never have become so dominant in the Lutheran Church if the congregations [*Gemeinden*] had had the right to appoint and dismiss their preachers. The old books in church and school would never have been abolished if the congregations [*Gemeinden*] had been consulted. But because the consistory imposed all this, with the declaration: woe to him who opposes it! the church has fallen into terrible decay. If the authorities had not done this, the whole Lutheran church would be in a different state today.

That is why we here in America must be jealous that a similar situation does not gradually develop here. For it is certain that the Iowa Synod does not mean so badly that it would be willing to force people to do anything. But they give themselves this power, and when the right people come, they will say: here it is written: "the synod is the highest authority", therefore be quiet.

As the shameful Pharisees once said: "The people who know nothing of the law are accursed" (John 7:49). They also spoke of the people with such contempt, but they showed that they were enemies of God and his word. No, God also gives his Spirit to the laity, which is why they are called upon to watch over false teachers.

So it goes without saying that it is foolish for the dear congregations [*Gemeinden*] that adhere to the Synod to say that they could lose their church

property by joining. We would consider someone to be a very nefarious person who, as a pastor, wanted to persuade the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to have its church property transferred to the synod. The synod would say: What's it to us? We don't need a church there. We don't even live there. So we don't want a church, a school or a vicarage. We want to possess nothing but the dear Word of God; and when we come, we come as guests who are happy to be entertained, and then we want to strengthen ourselves together from God's Word and say what serves our salvation, and then we go home and tell our congregation: So and so has the synod said, and at home it will then be said: Well, if they speak so sensibly, then we want to consider the matter and if we find the proposals good, we want to accept them.

We have said at all times that the dear churches [*Gemeinden*] should not include in their constitutions the sentence: we always adhere to the Missouri Synod. We do not wish this. The name of the Missouri Synod should not appear at all in the constitution of the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. It is not a sin. But only not if it is added: as long as the Missouri Synod sticks to the pure doctrine it has now. Without this [page 60](#) addition it is wrong; no one should chain himself to men, but retain the freedom to leave it again at any moment, so that one cannot then say: you are traitors if you leave. The church [*Gemeinde*] has the freedom at any moment, if it joins today, to leave again tomorrow, and no man can make a conscience of it. **<MH 274>**

For the good Lord has given no law that at least 3, 5, 10 congregations [*Gemeinden*] should form a whole, send representatives and have them make decisions for them. For if a congregation did not have another congregation [*Gemeinde*] nearby and was alone on an island, it might not have the opportunity or the money to send its representatives to Berlin, for example. That is all free. So let no one worry that we are lusting after the property of the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. And if the churches [*Gemeinden*] wanted to give it to us, we would say: you are great! You need it yourselves and we don't need it. *)

*) That it is really most foolish to say that the congregation [*Gemeinde*] loses its church property by joining the synod is evident from the fact that the opposite is true. For if the congregations [*Gemeinde*] join, they become co-owners of the institutions and all the property of the synod, to which they may not have given a cent; while the synod never, ever receives a right to the possession of the congregation's [*Gemeinde*] property.

But that is what we want the church order to always say: If disputes break out in the congregation [*Gemeinde*], those who stick to the pure doctrine, to the confession of the Lutheran Church, should retain the church property. We do not want to catch people by trickery. Nor do we believe that we have accomplished anything great if we have only gathered many congregations [*Gemeinden*]. If they join reluctantly and unwillingly. No, we have only accomplished something if the congregations [*Gemeinden*] have come to realize that we are doing a blessed work of God here. Our dear pastors know that it is not our way to harass the

congregations [*Gemeinden*]; rather, we want to show them the benefits of such an association and tell them how there is no danger at all to their freedom; and if they are then convinced and want to join, they are very welcome.

Following this, attention was drawn, for example, to the practice of other synods in America, especially that of the Pittsburg and Canada Synods, which shows how there the freedom of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] is curtailed in a tyrannical manner. We know very well that those synods which allow the church property of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] to be prescribed to them do not do so because they want it for themselves; but they have it prescribed to the synod in order to keep the congregations [*Gemeinden*] with the synod through the property; because, as is well known, many weak Christians prefer to remain with a synod that does not please them <page 61> rather than to leave and lose their church property. And those clever people know this, which is why they do it. But that is satanic. One should not seek to force something apparently good by such miserable earthly means. The Jesuits have this principle. No, if we have a good purpose, then let us use only good means to achieve our holy purpose.

That we Missourians, in spite of these principles, which we have always practiced, have been so often reviled and slandered, as if we held the same view of church property of the congregations [*Gemeinden*] as those tyrannical synods, is not in the least owing to some <MH 275> zealous members of the Iowa Synod, though the Synod as such has not been guilty of any such outrages.

According to this Thesis II, a further main duty of an orthodox synod is also that it should

- b. "help their congregations [*Gemeinden*] to obtain righteous preachers and teachers".

It is the next and main purpose that a congregation [*Gemeinde*] has when it joins the synod, that it then has the prospect of always getting a faithful pastor, whereas if it stands completely alone, it is always in danger of getting some vagabond who ingratiates himself with it.

That is why it is of course a sacred duty of a synod to take the utmost care to provide each of the affiliated congregations [*Gemeinden*] with a good preacher. It is not possible for most congregations [*Gemeinden*] to know personally who they need and can obtain. That is why the synod should step in.

But it should be borne in mind that this does not mean that the synod can give a congregation [*Gemeinde*] a different preacher than it wants; that the synod has the right to choose preachers. No, the right to appoint, call and elect preachers is a right of the congregation [*Gemeinde*] alone. We see this clearly from Acts 6, where the apostles wanted to appoint only one deacon in the church [*Gemeinde*]. They did not say: Well, we are even apostles, not even mere preachers, therefore we decide: Let it be such and such a one. No, the apostles first explained to the congregation [*Gemeinde*] how necessary it was that an office of deacon should now be established, and said that they should look around for such and such a person. They would have to choose them, and when

they had chosen them, they (the apostles) would pray over them and appoint them to the office. This is apostolic.

A synod, therefore, which assumes the right to appoint preachers to the congregations [*Gemeinden*] whom it does not want, is a tyrannical synod and not worthy to be called a Lutheran synod; rather, it should be called a papal synod, for God's Word gives the right of appointment to the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. This is what the Lutheran Church does.

<page 62>

Smalcald Articles: "Where there is a church, there is always the command to preach the gospel. Therefore the churches must retain the power to demand, elect and ordain ministers. And such authority is a gift which is actually given to the churches by God and cannot be taken away by any human authority." (Second Appendix. p. 341.)

Remember that. This is what our church teaches. No human power should deprive a church of the right to choose its own preachers. Of course, a church [*Gemeinde*] cannot always have the preachers come and test them, given the vastness of America. But if it goes to the presidents or the teachers of the institutions and says: You may give us a preacher in our name, then the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has chosen. Because the decision remains with the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. If the man comes <MH 276> and they see that he is not what they asked for, if he is a false teacher, a drunkard, a stubborn, domineering person with whom no one can get along, then the congregation [*Gemeinde*] says: "Go away again. We have appointed a completely different man. But of course there really must be a good reason for this.

It is important to keep this principle in mind that the synod may not interfere with the congregation's [*Gemeinde*] right to vote. For church history teaches that often one person has done something with the free consent of others, and finally, if others have put up with it for a long time, then that person has made a right out of it, such as the Roman bishop. Because the Roman bishops were mostly excellent men in the beginning, they were able to give advice everywhere, and in the end, when the bishops had fallen away from the faith, they said: I have the right not only to give advice, but also to give orders; you can see from this that it has always been so. We will not act so deceitfully toward the churches [*Gemeinden*], for we confess that we have no right to interfere in your affairs unless you ask us to do so. But if you ask us, and we serve you, then it would be ungodly to say afterwards that we have meddled in your election affairs.

That it has always been the custom, however, that when a congregation carried out the election, preachers or those who were placed over others, such as the bishops (here presidents), also took part in it, is attested by the

Schmalkaldic Articles: "In the concilio Nicaeno it was decided that each church [*Gemeinden*] should elect a bishop for itself in the presence of one or more bishops who lived nearby. This has been held not only in the Orient for a long time, but also in other and Latin churches, as is clearly expressed in

Cypriano and Augustino. For thus speaks Cyprianus epist. 4. ad Cornelium: [<page 63>](#) 'Therefore it should be diligently observed according to the command of God and the apostles, as it is observed in our country and almost in all countries, that when a bishop is to be elected, other bishops who are close to the place should come together, and in the presence of the whole community, as we see that in the election of Sabini, our fellow bishop, it also happened that after the election of the whole community and the **council of** several bishops who were present, he was elected bishop and his hands were laid on him, etc.' Cyprian calls this manner a divine manner and apostolic usage, and testifies that it was practiced in almost all countries at that time." (First Appendix. p. 331.)

So when a congregation [*Gemeinde*] wanted to elect a preacher or bishop, who was even to be appointed over the preachers, it usually called neighboring preachers or bishops to be present and give advice and watch that everything was done according to God's word. What is said here of the custom of the old churches of the East and West is of great comfort to those congregations [*Gemeinden*] which are not able to see for themselves; for not all of them can send **<MH 277>** messengers to St. Louis or Springfield, for instance, to see the young people, and if they could, they cannot see at once whether he can preach, teach, comfort and exhort well. So they have to rely on the testimony of the teachers.

But it is an old custom that the congregation [*Gemeinde*] always asked the preachers for advice first, and then acted on it. It is very important to bear in mind when it is said that the apostles appointed elders or pastors (according to Titus 1:5, St. Paul gave the commission to "appoint elders to the cities [*Gemeinden*]"). Then it says in Acts. 14, 23: "and they appointed them elders in the churches" ["appointed", Greek. *χειρο τοσαντες* = stretching out the hand; this indicates that the act of election took place by stretching out the hands, which were then counted]), so it cannot be concluded from this that the apostles took the right of election and appointment for themselves; for how this "ordained" is to be understood, we see from Acts 6:3: "whom we may appoint for this need". For "order" here is the same word in Greek which Luther translated Tit. 1, 5. with "occupy".

How did they do this "ordering" or "occupying" or "arranging"? Apparently, they said: "Elect first; and then when the church [*Gemeinde*] had elected, the apostles prayed over them, laid hands on them and held their duties before them. Just like we do here in America. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] elects, and when the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has elected, it says, let him be confirmed and committed to it by holy ordination; for the public acts are to be done by the pastor, by the preaching office instituted by Christ. When a preacher stands and ordains a preacher, he does not do so [<pages 64>](#) in his own name, but in the name of Christ and the church [*Gemeinde*]. All public ecclesiastical acts are performed in the name of the congregation [*Gemeinde*].

After Thesis II, a synod faithful to the confession has finally

c. "to protect the congregation against preachers who are erroneous in their doctrine, vexatious in their lives and addicted to their ministry."

The first thing to note here is this again: Just as the synod cannot appoint preachers to congregations [*Gemeinden*], neither can it dismiss their preachers. Just as the right of appointment is the power and right of the congregation [*Gemeinde*], so is the right of dismissal and not of the synod. The synod can exclude a preacher from its fellowship, but it cannot take away his preaching ministry; only the congregation [*Gemeinde*] that gave it to him can take it away. And no matter how atrociously a preacher reveals himself, the synod should not declare: He is deprived of his office. It has no right to do so; it can only say: He can no longer be a member of our synodal community; for every society has the power to say: He can no longer be our member. So does the Synod. <MH 278>
***So don't think that when it says: "the synod should protect the congregations [*Gemeinden*]", it means that a congregation [*Gemeinde*] is not allowed to do this, that it cannot, for example It, the congregation [*Gemeinde*], cannot dismiss anyone because of ungodly living, nor can it get rid of someone if he oversteps his authority and proves to be domineering, only the synod can solve it; no, the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has full power to appoint, dismiss and also to judge the teaching of its preacher.

Even in Luther's time it was said, as many, even so-called Lutherans, say now, that the congregations [*Gemeinden*] have no such power. For it was said: Yes, if the great bishops were to begin a reformation in a council, that would be acceptable; but that an individual congregation [*Gemeinde*] would want to fall away from the pope and bishops, that would be terrible. No, the congregations [*Gemeinden*] should wait until the bishops declared: now you can go, the pope is wrong. Then he wrote

Luther: "Perhaps they will also be disgraced before the simple-minded mob and the otherwise unintelligent, as they are not yet recognized by the Church" (that is, in the sense of the popes, by the bishops) "as wolves and false teachers" (i.e., declared so by a judicial verdict), "but are held to be true Christians. Yes, indeed, that is wise and well said: if the sheep were not to flee from the wolves until the wolves were called to flee by their Christian concilium and public judgment, the sheepfold would soon be empty and the shepherd would find neither milk, cheese, butter, wool, meat nor a hoof in one day; that would be called the sheep herded! What then has Christ <page 65> our Lord done when he calls and commands us to beware of wolves without waiting for the wolves' concilium? Not only does the whole flock of sheep have the right and power to flee from the wolves, but also each sheep has the right and power to flee for itself alone, wherever it can do otherwise; just as John 10:5 does: "My sheep flee from strangers." (Example for the consecration of a true Christian bishop, 1542. XVII, 140.)

According to this, therefore, the congregation should not leave until the bishops have declared their preacher to be false and have given the

congregation [*Gemeinde*] the freedom to dismiss their preacher. This is not to say that the synod alone can discipline a preacher or that the synod can dismiss a preacher at all; that is a matter for the congregation [*Gemeinde*].

Of course the synod can discipline him, every Christian can, i.e. he can punish him with God's word. Yes, not only can the synod do so, but from the outset it has made the contract that every preacher will accept that if he errs and fails, he will be admonished and excluded.

But of course the congregation [*Gemeinde*] must proceed correctly. The synod cannot stand quietly by if the congregation [*Gemeinde*] acts wrongly. The synod then also has the right to say: If you do <MH 279> such and such with a preacher, then you can no longer be in the synod. If, for example, a preacher is dismissed by a congregation [*Gemeinde*] because he preaches the truth to them, the synod would admonish the congregation [*Gemeinde*], and if that did not help, they would have to say: You can no longer belong to us. But nothing more. That would be all. How this is to happen, that a preacher is dismissed, writes

Gerhard: "It is the divine will that a minister of the church should teach God's word purely and loudly and set an example of a blameless life to his listeners. Therefore, if a minister either falls into heresy or gives offense through serious crimes and causes the name of God to be blasphemed, then the church has the power to dismiss him. For three kinds of ministers can be distinguished: 1. some are impious (that is, deceitful), who deal deceitfully and falsify God's word, 2 Cor. 4:2, Ephes. 4:14, who obscure the light of heavenly doctrine with heretical mists, and falsify the sincerity of it; these the church not only may, but must remove from herself as a curse, Gal. 1:8, that is, as a detestable thing, corrupting by offense; such were they of whom the apostle desires that they should be cut off, Gal. 5:12, and to whom John forbids to open house and ears, 2 John 10."

So if a preacher is revealed as a heretic, i.e. as a false teacher who perverts an article of faith, and he cannot be rebuked, then the congregation [*Gemeinde*] can say: From today you are no longer allowed in our pulpit and perhaps from tomorrow you will have to <page 66> leave the parish. It need not say: After a quarter of a year; no, a false teacher should not be tolerated for a moment if he is revealed as a stubborn false teacher, but he should be chased away at once.

Gerhard continues: "2. some are onerous, whose crimes are both grave and manifest, who are also to be deprived of their office, lest for their sake the name of God be blasphemed, and lest they further cause offense to the hearers."

Accordingly, if a preacher commits a mortal sin, e.g. exposes himself as a drunkard, a liar, a slanderer or a lewd person or a deceiver and dishonest person, the congregation [*Gemeinde*] has the right and the sacred duty to bring such a man to trial and to tell him that he no longer has the right to the sacred ministry, even if he repents, for if it has become evident in the world or in the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. Then tell him: "Well, if you repent, we will forgive you, but you can no longer be a preacher. For a preacher should be "blameless", i.e. he should not live in any mortal sin that would cause offense; but this does not

mean that he should be as pure and holy as the angels, for he cannot, since he is also a human being. But he should not blaspheme the enemies of God. <MH 280>

Finally, Gerhard says: "3. others are morose (i.e. vexatious), subject to lesser infirmities, which are to be tolerated." (Loc. de ministerio eccles. § 174.)

There are also such preachers who cause much trouble. But the congregations [*Gemeinden*] should not demand that the preacher walk like an archangel; he cannot do that; he retains the flesh and blood of other Christians and weaknesses occur here and there. If there are experienced Christians, they will say to their pastor in such cases: "Pastor, it was not right for you to behave like that. If they are only weaknesses, you must bear them and not weigh everything on the gold scales — "for with the measure that you measure with, it will be measured to you again." But this is not to defend a preacher who is living in besetting sins. If he does not allow himself to be reproved, then no mercy is to be shown. If the members of the congregation [*Gemeindeglieder*] of such a preacher then come to the president and say to him: So and so it is, you will agree with us if we dismiss him; he will say: Of course it is right, such a man does not belong in the holy office. But the opposite also happens, that individuals make the sin greater than it is.

There are quite a few congregations [*Gemeinden*] that do not belong to the synod; who, when asked: How do you stand? We are a free congregation [*Gemeinde*], we have not put ourselves under the yoke of men; for here we live in a free country and we do not want to be <pages 67> subject to the clergy. These dear churches [*Gemeinden*] really do not know what they are talking about. They consider themselves all the freer because they do not belong to the synod, and do not realize that they are endangering their freedom to the utmost. A preacher can be very unfaithful in his office, indolent, negligent in his official acts; he can fall into sins, into drunkenness or other vices already mentioned; he can prove obstinate; no one can get along with him; domineering; everything should go according to him alone; when he has spoken, he presents himself as if it were now decided; he does not visit the sick diligently and snaps at people when they come to him; and all the sad sins that sometimes occur with preachers.

Now it is true that the church [*Gemeinde*] has a right to punish such a preacher, to remind him of his duty, as we read in Colossians 4:17, where the apostle says to the Colossians, "And say to Archippus, 'Look to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may carry it out. So the apostle gives the congregation [*Gemeinde*] the command that they should exhort and remind their bishop that he must be faithful in his ministry. —

But first of all, such preachers, who do not want to belong to any synod, will try to make people believe that a preacher has much greater authority than is attributed to him in God's Word and than a righteous synod will grant him. But, assuming that quite a number of church members [*Gemeindglieder*] know what duties and rights a preacher has, a preacher has an extraordinary opportunity to

win over quite a number of people in his congregation [*Gemeinde*], a majority that will always go <MH 281> with him through thick and thin. And if the dishonest preacher then wants to push through his cause, his guard stands behind him and supports him and then the honest ones can often do nothing. Such a preacher will usually deal with the noble, rich people who have great influence and from whom the little people may have borrowed money. When the nobleman, who has lent money to many of the little ones, says in the congregational meeting [*Gemeindeversammlung*]: "Just as the preacher says, you should not do anything to this man," they think he might announce the capital and keep quiet.

No, a congregation [*Gemeinde*], if it wants to be assured (humanly speaking; for there is no absolute security in this life), should join a faithful Lutheran synod - of course only a faithful Lutheran synod, otherwise, if it joined a false-believing synod, it would, as they say, come out of the frying pan into the fire; for there it would first have had only one little preacher and now it would get a great mass of preachers — then it would have a tremendous backing. For a true synod will always side with the congregation [*Gemeinde*] if it can prove that a preacher is unfaithful in his ministry, lazy, indolent, lascivious, domineering, obstinate or walking in obvious sin. The synod will then arrange for the president to visit the <pages 68> congregation [*Gemeinde*] and he will be on the side of the righteous and will perhaps understand better how to take away the weapons of those who want to support the unfaithful, ungodly preacher. That it was already the case in apostolic times that a church [*Gemeinde*] was helped by a president, even if they were not called that at the time, we can see from the third letter of the apostle John. For there it says vv. 9, 10: "I have written to the church [*Gemeinde*], but Diotrephes, who wants to be exalted among them, does not accept us. Therefore, when I come, I will remind him of his works which he does, and speaks evil against us, and will not let him be content with that. He himself does not accept the brethren, and rebukes those who would do so and casts them out of the church."

This is a passage that every church [*Gemeinde*] must remember so that it has the foundation of the divine word under its feet when God has afflicted it with an ungodly preacher. This Diotrephes "wanted to be held high" (Greek "φιλοφρονησας" [*philoproteuon*] i.e. he who loves to be first).

So this was a bishop who was addicted to power, addicted to honor, proud and arrogant. He didn't want to hear the apostle either. He said: What is that to me? John therefore goes on to say: "Therefore, when I come, I will remind him of the works he does" etc. So when people from other churches [*Gemeinden*] came to his church [*Gemeinde*] who had a better knowledge than other church members [*Gemeindeglieder*] and could then easily make him manifest, he did not accept them, even if they came with the apostolic letter of recommendation;

and when others in the church [*Gemeinde*] said, "We must accept them, because the apostles have recommended them," he cast them out of the church

[*Gemeinde*]. This was such a fellow. Then the apostle promised: "I will come and remind him of the works he is doing", and no doubt, although church history records nothing about it, he came and declared to the church that they should put him away. <MH 282>

But even in other cases it is important, even if the preacher is not an ungodly man. A preacher can be the most godly man, more godly than others, but a very conscience-stricken man. He can consider many things to be sin that are not sin, but he cannot convince everyone in his conscience that they are sin, and so he thinks he must penetrate and can thus confuse the consciences of many in his fear; or he can misunderstand something and in this view compel the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to do something that he thinks is certain. Therefore, for the sake of such overly anxious preachers, it is often of the utmost importance that a synod stands behind the congregation [*Gemeinde*], to which it can say: Our pastor — we have nothing else against him — but he is making something a sin which he says is wrong, and we cannot see that. Help us, convince us that we are wrong, or our pastor that he is too fearful. If the pastor is a righteous man and has a clear <pages 69> insight, he will soon make the matter clear and the pastor, if he is honest, will thank the pastor with his hands and say: Oh, what need I have had! Now I see that it is not necessary at all, one can let freedom prevail here. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] will also thank him and say: Through your mediation, peace and quiet have been restored; whereas in the other case, if the preacher had not been instructed by anyone, he would not and could not give in. For even he who acts against his erring conscience commits sin.

If I believe that something is wrong and I do it, it is still sin for me, although it is not sin in itself, because my conscience says otherwise, and everyone must follow his conscience or he is an ungodly person. Conscience is God's voice and it says: what you know to be right, you must do, and what you know to be wrong, you must leave alone. I must walk according to my conscience. The apostle earnestly says: "Let every man be confident in his own opinion", Rom 14:5. For example, anyone who believes that God instituted Sunday in the New Testament like the Sabbath in the Old Testament must not do any work, not even cooking, or he violates his conscience. But there are Pharisaical people who believe this and yet break Sunday and look down with contempt on those who teach them Christian freedom.

This is what 1 Timothy 5:19 says: "Against one elder do not take up a case except with two or three witnesses." There we see that the "elders", that is, the pastors, could be sued by Timothy at that time, so Timothy must have been a kind of superior. That was also a human apostolic institution, and how good it was for the churches [*Gemeinden*] at that time! because there were already people like Diotrephes; and things may not have been the best with Archippus either, although at any rate not as bad as with Diotrephes. This was also the reason why godly theologians of our church held so firmly to the <MH 283> establishment of supintendentates (or deaneries). Our godly theologians did not

want to subjugate the congregations, did not want to turn the superiors into masters, but wanted to help the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. The fact that later there were also evil superintendents who abused their office and enslaved the congregations [*Gemeinden*] was not in accordance with the confession. A passage from

B. *Meissner*: "We will not be dissuaded from keeping our bishops or, as others prefer to call them, superintendents, and will keep them until the end of the world, and that for the sake of great benefit. For if the hearers have to complain of the negligence and slothfulness of their pastor in teaching, or of any other fault, then these hearers may apply to the bishop to whom that pastor is subject, accuse the pastor and substantiate their [<page 70>](#) accusation, and he may afterwards, when the matter is investigated and decided, if he is guilty, suffer the just punishment of his negligence, so that afterwards the sheep entrusted to him may be more dear to him than before." (Colleg. adiaphorist. Disp. X, p. 9. sq.)

This theologian knew: where there are true Lutherans, there are also true visitations, like Luther, who testified: without them it is not, or hardly possible, to remain in the unity of faith and life. That was the intention of our theologians: to protect the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. The superintendent did not want to come to prescribe laws, but rather to protect them from domineering preachers or those who lived in anger or taught falsely.

It should also be noted here: It is not for this reason that it is so necessary for a visitor to be sent by a synod to act in its name: because the congregation [*Gemeinde*] does not have the right to judge doctrine. This is the most necessary freedom and the most necessary right of the congregation [*Gemeinde*] to judge the doctrine of its preachers. It is shameful how the American synods have acted in the past. You can read it in all their constitutions. As soon as the doctrine came to it, the members of the congregation [*Gemeindeglieder*] had to step aside, only the ministry (i.e. the pastors) came together. What would the laity know about it? They would have to plow and work in the fields. The Pharisees were once just as godless as these so-called Lutheran synods and preachers. As surely as Christ said, "Beware of false prophets," and here he is addressing Christians and not preachers, so surely has he given Christians the power to judge doctrine. For if Christians are not allowed to judge the doctrine of their preachers, they cannot be careful.

Think about it: a preacher, if he is a false teacher, will usually act cunningly and slyly. He does not want to be revealed. The Savior indicates this by saying: "Those who come to you in sheep's clothing", **<MH 284>** i.e. they come with a good appearance, as if they were also sheep of Christ. For when the sheep realize that someone is coming in wolf's clothing, they all run away. But when one comes with a sheep's clothing, they think: "Of course it's a bit of a big sheep, but it also has wool; and then they stay; and then the wolf eats the sheep. It is no small thing for a church [*Gemeinde*] to reveal a cunning, sly, clever, astute,

eloquent man as a false prophet. And even if individuals realize it and also bring good scriptural reasons, this knave has perhaps brought the great majority to his side. No, they say, our pastor is right. Then there are also people who say: "Oh, what do you farmers understand? The man has studied. His father has spent so much money on it; he will know. Let the pastors sort it out among themselves, it's none of your [<page 71>](#) business. And whoever speaks like this, the false prophet says: This is a pious man, this is how pious Christians must speak.

The false teachers in the Galatian churches [*Gemeinden*] did the same. They spoke so beautifully and so sweetly that Paul was a wicked man; he was leading them away from God's word. You had to keep the law and also believe in Jesus; both had to be together, then you would go to heaven. And a large number of churches [*Gemeinden*] allowed themselves to be carried away by these false teachers and fell away, so that the apostle had to lament: "You have lost Christ, you who want to be justified by the law", Gal 5:4, and he certainly wrote with tears: "How blessed you would have been at that time! I am your witness that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me", Gal 4:15.

We can also see that in the Corinthians. It was very sad there. Some did not even believe that there was a resurrection of the dead. Horrible things were happening with regard to the use of Holy Communion. There were divisions, but the apostle wrote to them and set things right again. Church history tells us that there was a glorious church [*Gemeinde*] in Corinth for a long time after the apostle's death. But if the apostle had not taken care of them, those who were in error would have perverted everything. You would not believe what the churches [*Gemeinden*] often put up with from false teachers. Just read what the apostle writes about the Corinthians: "While many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. For you gladly put up with fools, because you are wise. You tolerate those who make you slaves, those who beat you up, those who take you, those who defy you, those who spite your faces," etc., 2 Cor. 11:18 ff.

He wants to say: The false teachers boasted: What is Paul? (He was probably also a little man.) They and they are quite different people. To this boasting of the wretched deceivers Paul says: "I also will boast, and will show, if it were a glory, that I could boast still more. He does not do this out of pride, but out of great sorrow that the dear church [*Gemeinde*] has been deceived **<MH 285>** and that such wretched, pompous people have deceived it. No matter how shamefully the false teachers treated the churches [*Gemeinden*], they put up with everything, but to the great dishonor of the name of Christ. But the apostle took care of the church and so it was saved from the clutches of the false prophets.

About the fact that other preachers and whole churches should take up the cause when false teachers arise, writes

Luther: "If an Arius at Alexandria becomes too powerful for his parish priest or bishop, if the people are attached to him, if other parish priests and people in the country are mixed in with him, so that the parish priest at Alexandria is

defeated and his office of judge can no longer defend the right of this kingdom, i.e. the <pages 72> true Christian faith. In such an emergency and at such a time, the other parish priests and bishops should run to help the parish priest of Alexandria with all their might and defend the right faith against Arius and condemn Arius, to save the others, so that the misery does not get out of hand. And where the parish priests are unable to do so, the pious Emperor Constantine should use his power to help the bishops together. Just as when a fire breaks out, if the landlord cannot extinguish it alone, all the neighbors should run to help put it out ... to save the other houses." (Conciliis and Churches. 1539. XVI, 2765. f.)

So when a preacher begins to preach false doctrine in a church [*Gemeinde*], it is as if a conflagration had broken out, a spiritual conflagration, but one that is much more terrible than a physical one, for in it souls must perish eternally. Of course, the church [*Gemeinde*] should intervene first if it realizes that its preacher is presenting false teaching. But it can easily be, firstly, that the congregation [*Gemeinde*] does not notice it at all, and secondly, if it does notice it, there are usually only a few who do; and the preacher has already brought the great majority over to his side. Then the dear people are in great distress. The question is: How do we start, how do we get rid of him? He has the majority. But now we've built a church and a school and we're supposed to look at all this with our backs, because we can't let ourselves be grazed by a shepherd who leads us into poisonous pastures.

In most cases, the churches [*Gemeinden*] that stand alone perish. The false teachers are usually much more zealous than the orthodox ones. Why? To carry out the pure teaching is contrary to the flesh, goes against the world and the devil. This causes great distress and struggle. False teaching, on the other hand, is well received, is more for the flesh, for the world that wants to be clever. With false teaching, the preachers usually have better days, more peace, tranquillity, friends and also more income.

Luther says: "In such an emergency ... the other pastors and bishops should run to you" — but they will not "run to you" if the congregation [*Gemeinde*] is not in a church association; for the others will not know, and even if they do know, <MH 286> the preacher will say to those who come: "You have no business here; do you not know that it is said that one should not interfere with another's ministry and that those who do so are to be regarded as thieves and rogues? And his party will say: Yes, pastor, you are right. — But if the congregation [*Gemeinde*] is within the synod, then the president or visitor comes and the preacher must put up with it, because that is part of the connection to the synod, that he allows himself to be accused; that he suffers, that an investigation is made.

Therefore no congregation [*Gemeinde*] should be so foolish as to say: We are a free congregation [*Gemeinde*] and that congregation [*Gemeinde*] there has put itself under the <pages 73> yoke of the synod. Yes, if the synod is wrong, then it would be an abominable yoke, and it would be shameful for the children of

God to place themselves under such a human yoke. But if the synod is righteous, it is the greatest blessing for a church [*Gemeinde*] to have a band of other churches [*Gemeinden*] and pastors behind it. For when a fire starts, there are a hundred and a thousand hands, or better, a thousand mouths to help.

We experienced it in the synod that a preacher angered his whole congregation [*Gemeinde*] and divided it into many parties. Then the synod came through its president and another companion, and lo and behold, almost everyone was saved. The preacher had to leave; he then made a small opposition congregation; but it can hardly live and die, and it will not be long before it is said to have been. But if the synod had not been there, he would undoubtedly have gradually won over almost the entire congregation [*Gemeinde*]. For there are many weak among the righteous, and so it will continue to be. But if the synod is there and keeps a good doctrinal watch, it will happen less and less often; for such a one knows: you will not get through; and if he shows himself domineering and the congregation [*Gemeinde*] says: we want to let the president come once, he will give in beforehand so that the president does not come.

The Synod then also adopted Thesis II with its implementation and proceeded to the discussion of **<MH 287>**

Thesis III.

which reads:

A third main duty is that they prove to be a support to their preachers and teachers, and therefore

- a. advise the same;
- b. support them in the proper conduct of their office;
- c. defend them against injustice.

For this is certain: the synod should not act with partiality and only help the congregations [*Gemeinden*] if the preachers do not behave properly towards the congregations [*Gemeinden*]; but also the other way round: the synod should take care of its faithful preachers if they are wronged by the congregation [*Gemeinde*] or individuals. He who has only one heart in his body will say yes and amen to this. "Equality is the measure of justice." Just as we must help the churches [*Gemeinden*], we must also help their pastors. But this help consists in the fact that we

- a. "advise the same" and
- b. "support them in the proper conduct of their office."

This means that the Synod, either as a whole or through its presidents or visitators or through its members in general, should give good counsel to those of its preachers who need it.

<page 74>

But there is no country in the world where a preacher has to deal with so many difficult things as in America. Where does that come from? People come to

America from all corners of the earth. And very few of them have had a knowledge of Christ over there. One has left his wife, or a wife has left her husband and gone up and away; the child has gone into the wide world without the will of the parents. The world. One has stolen, another has committed adultery, a third fornication; some have sworn perjury and whatever other terrible sins the cloak of night might better cover.

They come here, go to a Lutheran church; there the living word of God is practiced, the law is preached in all its seriousness and severity. So they sit there and tremble and shake, and think: "The man is right, but then I am lost. I cannot be saved, I am a child of hell and death." Then they hear the sweet gospel of salvation. Then the poor sinner, perhaps a hideous criminal, thinks: "Should that be true? can I also be saved? is there still help for me too?" Of course, this is a heavenly sweet sermon, the gospel that he has never heard before. Then he comes and perhaps sneaks into the parsonage in the evening and pours out his heart and tells everything;

and sometimes it is so terrible that one does not know what to advise, especially in matrimonial matters. Someone has already taken another wife after running away from the first one, who may now be in Germany; or he is living in blood libel, and the like. The preacher is often in great distress. Some preachers often do not have a large library to look up what advice the pious scholars of God have given for such cases. <MH 288> They often want to fall into despair when they know of no advice anywhere, and yet they have to decide, have to act and yet do not know what is right according to God's Word. If a member of the congregation [*Gemeindeglied*] were to say in such a case: I don't know what advice to give you, then no one could declare that to be wrong. But a preacher should know; that is why he is in office; he should have counsel in the most difficult cases. —

But we are not all alike: one is more astute than the other; one has more books, the other more knowledge; and these gifts the good God has given for the common good. But what good would this do for the common good if the churches [*Gemeinden*] did not unite to help one another? But every preacher in the synod has the right to write to his president or vice-president, as well as to the theological faculty and every other member of the synod. And no president or official has the right to say: "What business is it of ours?" See here! I do not want to involve my conscience in your cause. Nay, thou official mayest not say, thou art no Cain, and mayest not say, Shall I be my brother's keeper? Thou shalt be thy brother's keeper of all <pages 75> things, and thou presider hast a double duty. It is the same with the faculty. They cannot avoid it. This is not just a duty of love, but also a duty of office. That is why a preacher should know that he does not only have from the synod that he may be scolded and punished, but also the good that he knows: You must help me now; I am in need; why would I have come to you if you had left me in my distress? No, we must help him as much as God gives us knowledge and grace.

Here again belongs the passage by Löscher, who says that the consistory should be a consultative college. Therefore, when they wrote to Wittenberg, they could not say: "We have no time to deal with your trifles"; for these are the most important and highest matters concerning souls. They therefore had to come together immediately and one of them had to write: "So it is according to God's Word." But they could not merely say: This is what you must do, but they must also prove it. Because anyone can just say: this is what you must do. But to prove it from the Scriptures and show that the church has always acted in this way, that is what the preacher demands. He doesn't care what I think about it: he wants to know what the Scriptures say.

Oh, those preachers who think it is best not to be dependent on a synod are very much mistaken. That is just freedom from error, nothing more. Only dishonest preachers will shy away from going to a synod; the dear congregations [*Gemeinden*] can believe that. This does not mean, however, that everyone who does not immediately join a synod is of such a mind. The more conscientious a person is, the longer he will consider not whether, but which synod he should join. For it is of course true that it is a thousand **<MH 289>** times better to be alone and independent than to belong to a false synod, for there he must take upon himself the sins that such a synod commits through its false principles. But otherwise, if the synod is an orthodox one, and he knows this and yet wants to preserve his independence, he is a fool. Times will come when he will certainly regret it.

A preacher can often get into the most dreadful trouble of conscience, and the more pious and godly and humble a preacher is, the greater fear and distress he will often feel, even if he diligently bows his knees before God; he still does not want to realize what he has to do. For the good Lord has only promised that he will help if we use the means he has given us. So if a preacher can enter into a real fellowship in which there are many men who possess the most varied and glorious gifts, and he does not want to, God speaks, even if he prays: You have a synod, why do you not seek counsel there? For God has arranged it so in the whole world that one person always needs another.

If, for example, **<page 76>** we had no parents who would have taken care of us, we would have suffocated in our misery. That is why God has arranged it so that he always links people to people. That is also why the marriage bond exists, so that people always cling to people. He could have done it differently. It is not so with the angels. Nor are angels born and raised, why? God knew in advance that some would fall in such a way that they would be irretrievably lost; the others would remain faithful and love God and each other with all their hearts, so there was no need for any means of tying the bond of love.

But we humans are all fallen, we have an evil heart; therefore God has given us selfish humans means to keep us together. As it is in the kingdom of nature, so it is in the kingdom of grace. One Christian is always directed to another and one church [*Gemeinde*] to another; only not in such a way that it is

absolutely necessary. But it is necessary for prosperity, for well-being; for although he has left no one without all gifts, he has not given all gifts to all, but has distributed them very differently, and these gifts are given for the common benefit. But in order for this purpose of God to be achieved, it is necessary that Christians come together and use one another, and this happens when a synod stands there and the individual knows: I am not alone, I have a large group of brothers to whom I can complain of my need, and if one person knows no counsel, then I go to another, and finally someone does know counsel, because God lets him find counsel. He leaves no one without counsel, provided he uses all the means he can; <MH 290> God only leaves the arrogant in the lurch.

A preacher — it must not have been very far from Hamburg, because he turned to a famous preacher there (1614) and he presented the matter to the whole Hamburg ministry (clergy) - once asked what he should do? his town magistrate no longer wanted him to belong to the synod. - You can see from this that he did not belong under the authority of the Free State of Hamburg; but he was in the neighborhood and had joined the Hamburg Synod, and there the magistrate of his little town had said: "We do not suffer this. You are our subjects, not Hamburg's." He would have liked to stay there, but now he did not know what to do, as his town authorities were against it, because they thought they were losing their sovereignty. So when this preacher asked, he replied

The Hamburg Ministry (a member of which wrote in its name):

"Concerning your Synod, I faithfully advise: do not separate yourselves from it and do not stop asking your beloved authorities to change their opinion of your separation from the Synod in a Christian way. For such a laudable church union is of great benefit in dangerous times. <page 77> when the devil wants to stir up false doctrine and other trouble, and is able to do much in the Lord. If your church should now be separated from the others, it would in future be in dire straits alone, and would perhaps be considered an apostate church, from which much evil could easily arise, which the offspring you are now causing would like to malign. The things that have led your beloved authorities to this opinion can nevertheless be kept to themselves and, where necessary, protested. Then you could seek the Synod's advice and concern." (Dedekennus, *Thesaurus consiliorum*, T. II. fol. 464.)

That is very important. As long as there is no struggle and dispute over doctrine and life, and as long as the preacher always knows how to act, then there is no need for a synod. But now a doctrinal dispute may break out and we all go our own way, we are like scattered stones that are not joined together. The result will be that false doctrine will soon take over the church, especially if it is presented with a good appearance. And young preachers in particular, who are not yet deeply grounded, are easily misled when the doctrinal disputes are difficult and it is difficult to see where the point at issue actually lies, if the false teacher perhaps has a very excellent talent and can apparently prove to those who hear him through all kinds of arts: "This has always been the teaching of the

Lutheran Church, and the Bible also clearly proves it." Someone can be caught and never be free from error again; he himself can be lost and the congregation [*Gemeinde*]. — <MH 291>

It is the same with things that concern life. When it says in that letter that a synod "in the Lord" can do much, it means this much: if the Lord gives grace; for the mere synod does not do it, but that we do the Word of God here; and even that would help nothing; if God did not give his grace, we would remain blind and defend error instead of the truth.

And if that letter also refers to the "falling need" in "future" times, then it shows us how it can also be with us. If a congregation now holds back from joining an orthodox synod, there may come a time when it bitterly regrets it. Now he has a pastor, with whom he keeps it, whom he holds above all else; the pastor does not want to join, and he helps him, and after years he sees that the preacher is a hypocrite who has not sought the good of the congregation [*Gemeinde*] but his own, who brings the greatest misery upon the congregation. Then the wicked take over and the righteous say: "This is what you have done. If you had not talked the church [*Gemeinde*] out of it then, we would now belong to the synod and it would have overcome the man <page 78> before he came to this power. Now he sits warm in his nest and no one can bring him out." This is especially the case with influential churches [*Gemeinden*]. —

According to Thesis III, however, a synod that is faithful to the confession is also obliged to

c. "defend their preachers and teachers against injustice".

It will not occur to any member of the congregation [*Gemeindeglied*] to say: No, he should not be helped, especially a preacher who belongs to us and has therefore come to us, allied himself with us, so that he may have help and not just advice! —

A preacher, when he preaches the truth, will sometimes find resistance because it is not considered to be the truth. For example, when our preachers now come into a congregation [*Gemeinde*], it often becomes apparent when they preach the doctrine of absolution and especially when they read it out in the pulpit after the sermon that there is a movement. "We have not heard this in Germany," they say, "this is a new, American doctrine. It never happened in our schools! The fact that he left absolution from the pulpit is completely new, we don't want that!"

And now the congregation [*Gemeinde*] comes to the preacher: "Pastor, you seem to have a completely different religion than we do. That's not Lutheran!" He may say what he likes, she sticks to it, and he should no longer preach from the pulpit, nor should he preach the doctrine of it. But he must answer: "I cannot refrain from doing so. I have committed myself before the omniscient and omnipresent God that I will teach and confess everything that our church <MH

292> teaches in the confessions, including this part of absolution, which is one of the most important teachings in the Bible."

But none of this helps. The congregation is in an uproar. The pastor won't budge and the congregation [**Gemeinde**] won't budge. They think they have a stubborn man in front of them who is presenting them with a false doctrine, and the whole congregation [**Gemeinde**] could perish over it. But if the synod is there, it can say to them: "Dear people, you are in error; your preacher is right, he cannot give way." If the congregation [**Gemeinde**] now sees that these all testify to it, and prove the doctrine from Scripture, as from the symbolic books and from the history of the Lutheran Church, it will certainly, if it is not completely filled with an evil spirit, leave the pastor alone and finally accept the doctrine. That such cases occur is a well-known fact. But one must not judge such congregations [**Gemeinden**] too harshly for the sake of such behavior. For one should consider the circumstances in which most of our church members [**Gemeindeglieder**] found themselves in the past, that they had often never heard the pure doctrine before, and had to contend on all sides with false-believing preachers and spiritual deceivers.

But, be it **<page 79>** what it may, the synod must not abandon a preacher who is faithful in this or that, must not allow him to be condemned as a false teacher; but the synod should bear witness: "No, you have cast out the man and in the man the Lord Jesus. He has stood in the truth and therefore in the Lord Jesus, and woe to him who drives such a man away! Then you should know what Christ says: 'Whoever listens to you listens to Me, and whoever despises you despises Me. Thus says the Lord.'" Oh, what a comfort it is for a preacher when he is in great need and now his brothers come! Then the matter can be lifted up, and to the praise of God we can say: we have almost always calmed the churches [**Gemeinden**] and kept the victory, when it was often thought that everything would go to pieces.

But this also applies to life; if the preacher, for example for example, if the preacher is accused of pride, arrogance, avarice, or if perhaps a false rumor has gone out about him, even for fornication or drunkenness; if he is accused of domineering - for they perhaps consider it domineering that he does not allow himself to be moved from the word of God; as our enemies often say of us: "These are the worst, even if they speak much of freedom"; and then they point to examples that here and there a Missourian pastor has not given way. —

But these are cursed preachers, who, in order to keep peace, give way; some congregations [**Gemeinde**] which have such, rejoice and say, "That is a good man; if we say, Pastor, you cannot do that, you must allow it, he does not contradict us; that is a good pastor! He lets us do what we like." "We respect him in the pulpit," such people go on to say, "but otherwise he stays three steps away from us. He must not interfere in everything. When he comes to visit, we have every respect for him, but in our homes we don't let him say anything rude to us.

<MH 293> We will not tolerate that."

The lowans also accuse us of being opinionated people; and they are right, inasmuch as we do not depart from God's word, do not want to give in, but want to be right when we preach it, even when it often seems as if the whole congregation is going to ruin over it. Of course, there is often a terrible unrest, parties arise, peace ceases, one person is against the other and it seems as if the pastor has only come to ruin, to curse. But the Savior says: "I have not come to send peace, but a sword", Matth. 10, 34. This is no different in the world. Where a pure teacher comes, there is no peace. Whoever does not want this discord must also say to Christ: You may stay where you want. For where the Lord Jesus comes, there is sword, war and strife. Why? Because the Lord Jesus wants to cast out the devil, and he does not give way easily. He wants to **<page 80>** spread out his kingdom and will not let JEsuism shake it; hence the strife, contention and discord.

Before Christ came, there was true joy in Judea; everything was so peaceful and united. But when Christ came, it was as if a fire had been thrown into the people everywhere, from the highest to the lowest. And it was the same with the apostles afterwards. Wherever they went, it was said: "These are the ones who stir up the people." —

There is no other way, dear brothers from the laity, we pastors must tell you the truth, whether you like it or not, and we would be shameful traitors and murderers if we did not do so. Now, of course, some churches [**Gemeinde**] would say: "That's a good man, because he submits"; but a day is coming when things will change terribly. Then the congregation [**Gemeinde**], which has rejoiced that its preacher has yielded to it in everything, will stand before God's throne and say: "There stands the wicked clergyman; so that we would give him our money, he concealed the truth, betrayed the truth, allowed us to fall into sin and did not punish us. This accursed priest is to blame for our going to hell!" —

Then the preacher will see that he has made them his eternal enemies through his godless indulgence. For when he is in hell, his condemnation will increase every moment when he sees them and has to say to himself: If I had preached the truth, he would have repented. Oh, woe to such a preacher! We are not there to take our parishioners [**Gemeindegliedern**] to hell, but to say: Look, you must go this way and then you will be saved. And then they may say what they like about us, they may make our lives miserable, they may say to us: We no longer pay anything towards our salaries, and they may try to get us out of the parish through hunger, but none of that will help: we will stick to the truth, but you will become God's enemies through your behavior towards us.

It was probably in Arnstadt, where they once wanted to banish an **<MH 294>** excellent but extremely zealous preacher because he had spoken the truth with great earnestness to the noble people and wanted to introduce church discipline. The town council wanted to make short work of it and chase him away, but they were afraid to do so without further ado. They were afraid of getting a bad reputation. So they wanted to make a fine start. They waited until the first

visitation came, and then they told the visitators what a bad pastor they had; he was doing nothing but scolding, even attacking a highly praiseworthy town council. He would bring the parish [*Gemeinde*] to its greatest ruin.

But the Visitors asked: What has happened? and then they had to tell everything. Now this man had often used strong language, for he was not a man of velvet and silk. He also had a powerful voice that was able to shake the ear as <page 81> well as the heart. Then the visitors said: "Yes, if it is nothing more, then it is good. The man wants to save you, does not want you to be lost, even if he sometimes says a little too much. You should therefore thank God that you have such a preacher, even if he could sometimes be a little quieter. —

But the gentlemen were not satisfied with this and turned directly to Luther. But then they came to the right man! He soon saw how much they had done, namely, that they wanted to drive out a servant of God under the pretense of order, for they had made it a matter of a visitation.

So Luther wrote:

"So now you also have the misgiving: Because there is no other cause and fault than that you have thrown grief on the pastor without his merit, yes, for the sake of his great merit and faithful preaching, that it is not to be done nor possible, for the sake of your grief and unrighteous presumption, to do violence and injustice to such a well-witnessed pastor and to throw dirt on him. I cannot blame the visitators for not doing so, nor for burdening their consciences with such injustice for the sake of the devil and going to the devil with you (where they were authorized to do so by you).

Beware, dear lords and friends, beware! If the devil brings you down, he will not leave it at that, but will continue to bring you down... You are not masters of the pastors and preaching office, you did not establish them, but only God's Son; you have given nothing to them, and much less have any right to them, neither the devil in the kingdom of heaven, you are not to master them nor teach them, not to punish them. For it is God's punishment, and not man's; he will have it unchastened, but commanded; wait for your office, and let God be satisfied with his rule, before he teach you. <MH 295>

You are not one who can suffer a stranger to deprive him of his servant or to drive him away when he cannot do without him. Indeed, no shepherd boy is so lowly as to suffer a crooked word from a foreign master; only God's servant should and must be everyone's servant and suffer everything from everyone, whereas one neither wants nor can suffer anything from him, not even God's own word.

Let this admonition be well understood, which I mean faithfully. For it is God's admonition. But if you will not heed, nor mend your ways, we must let you go, and yet see how we can resist the devil, at least so far as not to burden our consciences with your sins, nor to please the devil in them. We must not put you under ban; you are doing yourselves in, for we would much rather have you out.

And even if you could get another pastor (which is still a long way off), you still cannot become Christians, nor be partakers of some Christian grace and life; no one will accept it against the will and command of the visitators. And who would want to join such denied Christians, [<page 82>](#) who would have such evil cries that they have ousted their pastor by force and injustice, and yet want to be called Christians and bear such a name with shame? You would get a good name in all the world and become quite an example.

Finally, I advise you in Christ to get along with your pastor and live with him in a friendly way; let him punish, teach and comfort you as he is commanded by God and as his conscience dictates; as it is written to the Ebrews in v. 17: 'Obey your teachers and follow them, for they watch over your souls as those who are to give an account of them, so that they may do so with joy and not with groaning, for that is not good for you'. For this is a wicked example, that any magistrate, judge or counselor should want to expel a pastor who has no right, justification or cause, according to his whim; God will not and cannot suffer it. God grant that you may not experience it, but that the same dear God may help you to recognize his will with fear and humility, and to honour his Son, that is, his Word, which he has given and given you through his blood, and his servants, the poor pastors, who are otherwise afflicted and should have protection and comfort from you worldly rulers, so that your ministry may become a service of God. Herewith commanded to the good Lord in his mercy.... Anno 1543." (Letter to a city councillor, that a righteous pastor should not be deprived of his office because he severely punishes public vice. X, 1898 ff. [[Walch², 1626 ff.](#)])

At the beginning of this letter, Luther wants to say: "You claim that you are the highly noble, highly wise city council, which must be allowed to do what it wants with a priest. Oh no, says Luther, the secular authorities have nothing to do here. If the city council wants to do something, it should say: We are also Christians, we also want to hear God's word. [<MH 296>](#) But if he says: I am the mayor, he is told: We have no mayors here; and if the king were to come, claiming that as king he had something to command in the church, he would be told: So? you are the lord king? then just sit on your royal throne; but here are all poor sinners and no kings. As a king you have no business here, for the church is a spiritual kingdom of the invisible King of Jesus Christ. The worldly authorities have as little to do with it as the devil has to do with the kingdom of heaven.

It is the same in the secular world: my neighbor cannot dismiss my servant, and if he were to say to my servant, "From today on, your service ceases," he would be a fool. It is not for the secular authorities to dismiss a servant of God from his office and to say, as it were: the good Lord wants him to suffer in his office, but I do not. Luther himself calls his letter "an amicable admonition"; see what "an amicable admonition" means in the case of our dear Luther! He was just a German man who said everything straight out, as he thought it; [<page 83>](#) but

then you could also be sure that he meant it. There were no "Iowa misunderstandings".

So let it be noted: if a congregation [*Gemeinde*] expels a preacher because he preached God's word purely and loudly, but in doing so also attacked the flesh with punishments from God's word — a synod may not give a preacher back to such a congregation [*Gemeinde*]. It must say: "We are not giving you preachers so that you can chase them away, but so that they can preach God's word to you and you can hear them. — Of course, if a congregation [*Gemeinde*] later comes to the realization of its sin and says it is sorry, it will be forgiven and receive an even better preacher. By the way, we have already met enough churches [*Gemeinden*] that only want preachers who preach to them after their ears are pricked, 2 Tim. 4:3.

With regard to the saying "Obey your teachers" etc., it should be noted that when Holy Scripture uses the expression "not good" instead of the word "bad", as in the passage "it is not good for you", this is an amplification. It means that the sighs of a servant of God ascend up to God and that the blessing descends from God on a church [*Gemeinde*] that has treated its servant so shamefully. If a preacher is faithful, one must think that the Lord Jesus is behind him. If, on the other hand, he is an ungodly scoundrel, there is no need to ask anything about his priestly robe. In his priestly robe he is all the more shameful.

If, however, he is faithful and he fails here or there in spite of his faithfulness, he should be credited with it, or it should only be held against him in a friendly way; otherwise it is ungodly and Christ will avenge it. Think of many a beautiful story from ancient times, which tells how a servant often saved his master from mortal danger at the risk of his own life, and how, when such an old faithful servant also came into danger, his master then also stood up for him and how it would have been bad for the one who had attacked the old servant. Christ does the same **<MH 297>** with his faithful servants. That is why we attack the Lord Jesus when we attack a faithful servant of God because he proclaims the truth. The congregation [*Gemeinde*] should rather say: "Pastor, thank you very much, don't spare us, and don't think that you will lose the friendship of some people. And if we ourselves make frowny faces at this, don't take offense; when we have considered the matter carefully, we will agree with you. Just preach God's word and you can leave that to God. "Honor His Son, that is, His Word,"

Luther writes so beautifully to that city council. "But I cannot visibly worship the Lord Jesus; he no longer walks around in person so that I could serve him and fall down before him." "Well," says the Lord Jesus, "I will tell you how you can do it: Honor my word!" This means to honor the **<page 84>** Lord JEsus; but not that one should act piously and talk piously and always speak of the Lord JEsus; but when the preacher comes with God's word, he opens his mouth and says, "What does the preacher want? Let him preach as we want! Such people say all this against the Lord Jesus.

The Synod then adopted Thesis III with the above discussion of the same and then proceeded to the discussion of

Thesis IV.

which reads:

A fourth main duty is that it should in every way promote the growth of its members in the knowledge of the truth and therefore

- a. primarily hold doctrinal discussions in their meetings;
- b. set up pastoral and teachers' conferences and inspect and assess the reports on the results of these;
- c. be concerned with the dissemination of good writings.

There are many preachers in America who get together to play synod, have perhaps escaped the discipline of a righteous synod, are ignorant, do not know the doctrine of the church whose name they bear, have perhaps never been prepared for the sacred ministry, and are full of errors. Perhaps they have never been prepared for the holy ministry, are full of errors, and are probably unscrupulous people who only practice the ministry like a trade in order to earn their living and have a comfortable life. But when they come to a region, especially where there is no synod, they think: That's nice, we'll make a synod ourselves. So they take on all the riff-raff they can find to play synod. Everyone wants to be president. They elect so and so many vice presidents so that everyone gets an office and dignities and honors. But no doctrinal discussions are held, because the hollow heads have nothing in them and can therefore give nothing of themselves. Nor is it at all in their interest; but they do nothing but business, study how they want to proceed in a right **<MH 298>** parliamentary manner; they seek to establish a great train of instances, a great order of procedure, in which the matter is to be brought to the "Reverend Synod" or to the "Reverend Ministry"; then it goes from Caiaphas to Annas, etc. It is terrible, one is horrified when one hears the history of the origin of certain synods; there one sees how they do it. It is a real scandal.

No, a synod should meet above all so that the gifts that are scattered among the various servants of Christ can be brought together to be used for the common good. And here again the main thing is to promote the knowledge of the divine word. And even if a synod is somewhat **<PAGE 85>** uninspired, not in any particular order, it is still a glorious synod if God's Word is practiced effectively in it. There the Lord is in the midst of the synod members. For there they are gathered in His name, where His Word is practiced in childlike faith.

This also happened when the first synod that ever took place was held in Jerusalem, where God's word was expounded above all things. Acts. 15. we read how the holy apostles came together. There they proved everything from the Old Testament. They could have said: We are the high apostles of the Lord, you must believe us; and they would have spoken the truth. But no, as a testimony for all time the apostles themselves cite the writings of the holy prophets and give from

them the answer to the question put to them: whether circumcision is necessary if a Gentile wants to become a Christian; whether he must first become a member of the old covenant people, or whether he can enter the Christian church immediately through baptism? The noble apostles discussed this from God's Word.

Therefore they do not say: "It pleased us and the Holy Spirit", but the other way round: "The Holy Spirit and us", Acts 15:28. 15:28, for if they had not been able to prove the former, the latter would have had no value.

That was the wrong thing in the later councils, that they said: We, the holy council, have decided it, and whoever does not accept it is anathema! At the Council of Constance they even said: "Although Christ ... instituted this venerable Sacrament under both species and administered it to the Apostles, notwithstanding this, the authority of the sacred laws of the Church ... for the avoidance of certain dangers and annoyances" or "for similar and more important reasons introduced the other custom ... that, although in the ancient Church the Sacrament was received by the faithful under both species, it is now received only under the species of bread." (*Rerum Conc. Const. Tom. III. fol. 646 sq.*)

So this synagogue of the devil himself says: although Christ used it differently, we must now do it differently. For once the devil really got it right and came out with the language and threw off the mask. —

It is a sad thing about a synod when it does almost nothing but business at its meetings. <MH 299> A testimony to this is given by

Luther:

"It is a sin and a shame," he writes, "that one should hear and suffer such pretensions in Christendom that the Holy Spirit should... something more or more necessary behind him, which ought to be revealed and taught especially by the Concilia, which after all have dealt with the lesser part of the doctrine, without what the first Concilia were, which retained the one article of the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit against the heretics from the <page 86> Scriptures; but are vain human ordinances and statutes." (Church Postil. 2nd Sermon on the Ev. of the Day of Pentecost. XI, 1448 f.)

"That the councils have acted the lesser part of the doctrine" is Luther's complaint, which he calls "sin and shame". We here in America also govern the church in the form of the synod. God forbid that we should ever get into the habit of merely presenting a large ministerial organization and then coming together to discuss all kinds of external matters, ceremonies, ordinances and paltry trifles, but that we should always do doctrine. [by sending doctrinal matters to commissions, boards, etc.]

When we had Synod in New York two years ago, a well-known man from the *General Council* Synods was present and saw how we taught. Thereupon he wrote to the "Lutheran and Missionary":

Now he sees well where it comes from that the Missourians are so united. It was because they always spent so much time discussing the doctrine, and not

only did they discuss it, but they always tried to get to the right reason and prove everything from the Scriptures. That would be the secret of the Missourians; they would certainly have to agree on that. So wrote that churchman.

Some synods have imitated us in this; even those hostile to us have often adopted more from us than one might think. Just look at their new constitutions. But how do they do it? A certain synod presented over a hundred theses at once! Then the members themselves said: if it goes on like this, we won't be finished in this century. For as often as it came to the point where the synod was supposed to make a decision, the matter was always postponed until the next year. But the only right way is not to rest until there is clarity and agreement. When you then go home again, you only part outwardly, but stand together inwardly, so that the devil cannot get in the way. Let us therefore also fear Luther's punishment that the councils, even the older ones, have done so little teaching, and let us never allow it to happen that in our assemblies we only set external orders or even laws, or that we only provide ourselves with recreation, amusement and excursions, as, for example, a large synod in the East recently made a day-long joint excursion to visit coal mines on the 21st day. <MH 300>

On the necessity and usefulness of the Synod and what the latter consists of, writes

Hülsemann:

"It is of the greatest benefit, and to a certain extent a moral necessity, that, as there are presbyteries (congregational councils [*Gemeindevorstände*]) in the individual congregations [*Gemeinde*] for the preservation of the individuals, so also synods consist of several congregations [*Gemeinden*], whether they belong to one or more provinces and <page 87> realms, for the preservation of several particular churches in unity of confession and respectability of morals." (Breviar. c. 18. th. 1. p. 532.)

Hülsemann calls the synods a "moral necessity," because they are not necessary in themselves, since God has not commanded them, but for the sake of circumstances. The Church is everywhere in such a situation that it must establish such or similar institutions or it will not achieve its purposes. This is very well observed. Everyone realizes that if a congregation [*Gemeinde*] had only a pastor and no church council [*Gemeindevorstände*], and he had to take care of everything alone, things would soon look sad. There are many things that a single person cannot do. How much more will a larger ecclesiastical community, the totality of a large mass of congregations [*Gemeinden*], need to discuss their interests together, to deliberate, to make proposals! The main purposes are thus: 1) "unity of confession", 2) "respectability of morals".

There is, thank God! almost no main doctrine that we have not discussed in our Synod for the past 30 years, and so we must continue. That this is so important can be seen, among other things, from the fact that more people from the laity attend the doctrinal discussions than the business discussions. The doctrine makes the synod dear to them.

People who do not know the synod usually think that it is a consistory; that the pastors come together and make laws, and then they bring these laws home, and whoever does not fulfill them is banned, at least to church discipline. But that's not how it is.

We come here to strengthen ourselves in faith and knowledge, and this we desire not first of all for the sake of our salvation, but that we may become more able to shepherd the churches [*Gemeinden*] in the green pasture of the gospel. The congregations [*Gemeinden*] that have preachers who are serious about the synod will soon realize that when the pastor comes from the synod, he is more zealous and serious; so that real members of the congregation [*Gemeindeglieder*] often think: when will there be another synod? It takes quite a long time until there is synod again! Yes, it has happened that they have complained that their preacher does not go to synod.

It is very charming how Luther, in the writing of "Councils and Churches" at the Synod of Nicaea, demonstrates what was done and what was not. There he says that a whole lot of writings had been received, in which one bishop had always complained about the other. <MH 301> Constantine, however, had put all these writings in the oven and said: they should do the Scriptures! It would be good if there were such a Constantine at every synod. If doctrine is not the main issue at the synods, there is no other way out, one of two things will happen: either the synod will become a law factory, or something even worse, namely a mutual praise, love and life insurance society.

<page 88>

However, the promotion of the knowledge of the truth is only possible if we not only come together every year and teach God's Word, but also if this happens much more frequently. And therefore it is necessary that there should also be pastoral conferences. It is too long a time for a preacher to go his own way if he spends a whole year in his own parish. It is necessary for the pastors to come together and discuss doctrinal matters that concern them and their ministry.

It would be wrong if we were to discuss all sorts of things here at the synod, instructing only the preacher how he should preach. The laity would say: "It's quite interesting what advice the pastors give each other, but it's not really for us. But a synod is an assembly of representatives of the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. Deputies must therefore also be present. Therefore, a subject should always be dealt with that interests the preacher as much as the layman and the layman as much as the preacher and is of use to everyone.

But the preachers who have to teach the doctrine publicly must devote even greater earnestness, zeal and time to being grounded in the doctrine, and therefore pastoral conferences should also be established and used with all fidelity. The apostle Ephesians 4:11-14 tells us how necessary it is for Christians, let alone pastors, to grow in knowledge. 4, 11-14.: "And he made some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds and teachers, to prepare the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all

come to the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God, and become a perfect man in the measure of the perfect age of Christ; that we should no longer be children, being weighed and swayed by every wind of doctrine, by the craftiness of men, and by deceit, to deceive us."

The ministry of preaching is thus organized so that the members may also become competent for the work of the ministry, that is, that they may acquire such a degree of Christian knowledge that they can also be preachers in their own way. But how is it possible for all children to become men and fathers in knowledge? A congregation [*Gemeinde*] must therefore not look askance when its preacher goes to a conference every four weeks or so; it must not think: this is an eternal event; the pastors always go together; what can they possibly be up to? Yes, dear brethren, they have very important things on their minds; they are practicing God's Word for the purpose of showing each other how to practice God's Word in the church [*Gemeinde*] and how to apply it. This is not a benefit for the preacher, <MH 302> but a benefit for the congregations [*Gemeinden*]. The preachers who always want to squat at home alone and be wise alone, either do not get away from <page 89> the spot, preach themselves out, their sermons become thinner and thinner, or, because they do not always want to say the same things they have been saying for years, they let the devil lead them astray through false doctrine, and then regard false doctrine as a great treasure.

So the dear churches [*Gemeinden*] should not look askance if their pastors often go to pastoral conferences and never want to miss them. The pastor is not looking after himself or his dear congregation [*Gemeinde*]. No preacher should be absent without need; he commits a great sin if he is absent without need. A pastor often says: "I have often been to conferences where nothing right has happened, a dispute has even arisen, I have felt bad, so I have stayed away." A preacher should not make such a judgment; first of all, he should consider that it is a good thing to know that there are others who are in the same situation as me; that gives comfort.

Secondly, he learns what he has to call upon God for in his district of conference. And if he himself has to complain that nothing right or proper has happened, he can accuse himself. But be it as it may, all these speeches are put down with this: It is written: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matth. 18, 20. Whoever believes this word comes to the conferences and comes again, and even if he does not feel what blessing he has, he does not stay away. But if you come with eagerness and think: we have important things to discuss, we have to help each other and exchange what God has given to each individual so that it may become a common good, then the conferences will be of infinite blessing. "I have taken something good away with me every time," one person must then say.

It is often something seemingly small and you take it away as a seed for your whole life. When, for example, everyone starts to lament that it is so difficult for them: what comfort it is for everyone to see that others are not doing any

better! Or there is one among them who, while the others are hanging their heads, is cheerful and happy and thinks: "The devil shall not win; what do I ask of the world? Then the fearful one is ashamed and thinks: What a cowardly wimp you are! Behold, he has courage, not carnal courage, but courage in God, founded in Christ on the rock of his word. Oh, how wonderful it is to walk in trust in the word of promise: "Where two or three are gathered together" etc.! You will always take great blessing with you.

An excellent theologian, namely J. Freder, has written a preface to an interpretation of the <MH 303> 15th Psalm by J. Epinus. He addressed himself to the city council of Hamburg, which had, among other things, also confirmed such conferences. J. Freder wrote <page 90> to the magistrate: "Those in your city who first decreed that the more difficult and useful points of Scripture should be discussed several times a year are undoubtedly intelligent, highly knowledgeable, wise people, who were also very eager and inclined to promote divine honor, to preserve the Christian religion and for the best and welfare of your entire common city. That the doctrine may remain pure and pure, and that the teachers may be one among themselves and act righteously and prudently according to God's word, no thing is so useful and beneficial in a city in which there are many people, opinions, wills, suggestions and nobles, as that such lessons and disputations may take place in it as have been established in your laudable city.

For those who are still young or have recently come to such an office, or who have missed it in their younger years, are thereby stimulated and encouraged to study all the more diligently and to learn their subject all the more conscientiously and thoroughly, who might otherwise go there well, would not be too hard on themselves with their studies and would rarely come across a book....

It is also common for people who have a gift of speech and yet are not well grounded to presume to be the cleverest and most learned, and to hold and insist hard and firmly on what they like and what they grasp first, even if it is fundamentally wrong and false; They do not want to give way to anyone, do not allow themselves to be taught or instructed better by others, but rule alone over others, mastering and outsmarting everyone, arrogating to themselves many things, subjecting themselves to great deeds, breaking out, often forcing themselves to do what they cannot do, because they have to fall and lie down, yes, often disturbing the country and the people, causing much misfortune and doing terrible, great damage to the church.

We have seen and experienced this not only in the examples before our time, in Arius, Apollinaris, Samosatenus, Donatus, Pelagius, Manichaeus, Mahomet and such cursed, harmful heretics and enemies of Christ, but also in our time in the Anabaptists, the Münsterites and other enthusiasts and deceivers, unfortunately all too often with great heartache and sorrow, and also with wretched, great damage to religion and common peace.

But so that one does not fall into such false, dangerous and harmful delusions and self-grown, supposed prudence, so that one does not measure oneself too much: ... to this end it helps and serves very much and especially such a laudable and Christian foundation that such.... disputations in the Holy Scriptures take place, as happens in your laudable city; from which lessons and disputations every man often hears what he still lacks and lacks, that he does not yet know everything, <MH 304> but always has enough to learn. Many are also hereby instructed that they can be <page 91> used in time in the place of those who have left. Although there is no one else who could not benefit from it. For no one at home can study or read as much in one day about the subject matter that is dealt with in doctrines and disputes as he can hear here in one hour. But it is especially useful and good, as I said, that the preachers teach rightly and purely and agree with each other everywhere, as far as the main points of true religion are concerned, as God praise! has happened in your city until now, because the Gospel has been preached rightly and such lectures and disputations have been held." (A vthlegginge D. Joannis Epini aver di Vöffteinden Psalm. Printed b. Hamborch anno 1583. preface, addressed to the Hamburg City Council. Page A iii.)

They were nothing more than pastoral conferences. You just had to come, that was the order of the day. May the dear churches [*Gemeinden*] remember that; they would not have such zealous preachers if they always stayed at home and had no critics but themselves. For we rarely have open eyes for ourselves; but we do have open eyes for others. If someone who has been lukewarm and lazy, or who has brought something wrong into pregnancy, comes to the conference, it soon becomes apparent, and then all the other preachers come upon him and do not let up until they have healed him. The churches [*Gemeinden*] always get a better preacher from the conferences than they sent. Pastoral conferences are especially important because of those pastors who are somewhat in love with themselves, who think they are great heroes, who think they can't learn anything from anyone, but that the whole world can learn from them. Such people are in terrible danger of falling away from the faith and leading the church [*Gemeinde*] astray instead of leading it. But when these high spirits come into the conferences, they soon have to let down their wings. They come to realize that there are still people who know as much, perhaps even more, than they do; and when he, the wise man, has opened his mouth, he is quickly refuted and has to be quiet, was ashamed, and if he is a Christian, he will become humble, humiliation will be good for him and he will praise God that he has arranged it so that the poor pastors do not have to stand alone, but can stand in cordial, brotherly fellowship.

Our quotation from J. Freder reminds us of the "examples before our time", of Arius, Pelagius, Mahomet etc. and of the cursed, harmful heretics and enemies of Christ in his time, of the Anabaptists, the Münsterites etc. ... These aforementioned enthusiasts, heretics and deceivers all began in silence,

gathered a small circle around themselves and then with this circle they penetrated further into the [<page 92>](#) heart of the church and caused great heartache in the church. That is why the congregations [*Gemeinden*] should say: Pastor, you have a pastoral conference! What are you doing here? Do you want to be wise on your own? Or are you afraid that something will be revealed?

J. Freder also points this out: How can the church know what a highly gifted man it has if everyone remains alone? Therefore get out, and use the gifts honestly, then you can employ one in such and such a place. And anyway, "there is no one," Freder continues, "who could not **<MH 305>** benefit from it." And so it is.

Someone often says: I'd rather stay at home and read Luther and not read him, because if he read him, he'd be driven to conferences.

Just as people often say: I'd rather read my old Postille, it's more thorough; you can't profit much from the young pastor. That's how separatists talk. No, God has directed you to your preacher, and even if he is not a Luther, God can still give you greater blessing through him if he is pure in doctrine than if you stay at home and read the best Postille, because you are going out of God's order. You can be quite sure of this (no matter how weak the preacher may be): if you do not benefit from the public service, it is your own fault. For whoever goes to church like the Pharisees, who only looked to Christ to see if they could find something to say to him; if someone comes to church as a patriarch who thinks he already knows everything, he will certainly not benefit.

But whoever comes with the prayer in his heart: My dear God, give me something today for eternal life, instruction, consolation, awakening, warning, give me something; surely God gives something.

And it is the same here at the [pastoral conferences](#). Every preacher receives something if he does not enter the conference as an arrogant person. After all, Christ did not arrange it so that Christians should be scattered individually throughout the world; rather, he established a church, that is, a community of Christians among themselves. This also concerns the preachers. They should be in [fellowship](#), or they are not right according to Christ's word. But if this is how Christ has arranged it, there is no doubt that a preacher who withdraws, who always wants to remain alone, will come to wrong things; that is God's blessing and God's punishment. Why is he such a stubborn, pompous, proud, arrogant man? He should want to be a disciple of his brothers, then God will bless him, then God will finally make him a teacher, so that he can say with David: "I am more learned than all my teachers", Ps. 119, 99. That means: I don't just know what the teacher has taught me, I have researched for myself and found many things. Yes, many church members [*Gemeindeglieder*] have already found what many a preacher has not found. — All this also applies to teachers and their conferences. [<page 93>](#)

According to our thesis, the Synod should also

- b. "Inspect the reports of the pastoral and teachers' conferences", but not merely "inspect" them, but also "assess" them.

We have sometimes heard that at the time of the larger pastoral conferences, church members [*Gemeindeglieder*] spoke with great suspicion of the pastoral conference when it sometimes held closed meetings. There you see, they said, these are also secret societies. They talk so much against it and do it themselves. But that is a completely <MH 306> uncharitable condemnation of the matter. Every class has its own particular affairs that it doesn't want everyone to see. Every family, every profession, every art has this, and so do the preachers. We sometimes have to tell the truth to some of us, to speak worldly: to wash their heads, much more seriously than the laity ever do, because we know that if the preacher makes a mistake, great disaster can result. But would it be in accordance with love if we were to hang this on the big bell? We have no right to do so. So we do it privately.

Sometimes something has to be told, without mentioning names, in order to get advice in a difficult case. But if the church members [*Gemeindeglieder*] were to find out, it would come out through our own fault. By the way, it rarely happens that we have closed meetings. As a rule, everyone can be present from early morning to late evening, as at the synod. There should be all the less reason for anyone to have reservations, since conferences have the duty to record all the essentials of what they have done, and to send these minutes to the synod, which looks through them, or has them looked through by committees, which must then report what they have found, so that every preacher and layman hears what has been discussed in the conference. For otherwise a small corner might start something special if a deceiver were among them. But their preachers must come and report how they stand, what they are doing, so that the synod always knows whether those who are on their register are really still in their spirit and are pulling together with them.

In order for the Synod to fulfill its fourth main duty, it must finally

- c. "be concerned with the dissemination of good writings",

both for the preachers and for the laity.

As for the preachers, the apostle says in 1 Timothy 4:13: "Stop reading." These are wretched enthusiasts who say: Yes, I am in the school of the Holy Spirit and do not need to <page 94> study. No, God has arranged it so that one can lay down his knowledge and treasures of experience in books, and so God wants, when such treasures have been laid down, that each one, as much as he can, should lay up these treasures. A preacher who does not do this will soon grow stale, i.e. he will no longer take his spiritual ministry seriously and will become increasingly empty or even fall into false teaching.

But it is not only the preachers who are told this, but also the laity. According to Psalm 1:2, a God-fearing person should study God's word "day and night". That is not a righteous Christian who does not diligently study God's Word; but this does not mean merely reading the Bible (although that is the main thing); for when one reads other books drawn from God's Word, one also searches God's Word.

So a synod does not fulfill its calling at all if it does not ensure that the right books are available. What good would it do if the preacher said: You must hold a house service if he does not ensure that you **<MH 307>** also have good books for it? That is why, for example, our synod has published the Altenburger Bibelwerk. Everyone who has this Bible is provided for throughout his life. It is a precious treasure. It is so well made for the fathers of families. —

But you also need good agendas and hymnbooks for church, good catechisms and reading books for school. For those who have a little more time, there are other excellent books, such as Luther's writings. — The synod must ensure that such books are published or at least made accessible to everyone, or it will not use all means to achieve the goal of promoting true Christian knowledge in its circle and turning everyone from a child in knowledge into a man and a father in Christ.

It is also necessary, especially at the present time, when all sects without exception publish magazines by means of which they go into people's homes every eight or fourteen days and teach them, that the orthodox church should also use this means. We live in a time of reading mania. But this reading frenzy is mostly satisfied by reading bad newspapers, in which godless party politics are practiced, heart-poisoning miserable novels and blasphemy against Christ and the church, pastors and congregations [**Gemeinden**] are the encore.

One reads this while one should satisfy one's lust by good reading, to whom God has given this lust. One would then learn how things are in the kingdom of God, as in other churches. Nor is it enough to have just any church magazine. You must also have an orthodox one. For example, the Methodist "Apologete" probably also brings information about all kinds of church events. But he judges everything in the spirit of his enthusiasm. Even less should an orthodox Christian read a papist paper. There **<page 95>** the Antichrist even comes into the house with his filth. But a Lutheran should read a good, pure magazine.

And one more thing. We spoke so much about the confessions in the first theses. The Concordia Book should also be in every Lutheran family's home. That is why the Synod should first obtain a good, polished edition and the preachers should make sure that it reaches every home. For "what I don't know won't hurt me". If someone does not know the book, he thinks: the old book only concerns the pastor. I don't have to preach. If I have plowed during the day, I can't sit down and study in the evening. When I read my evening and morning blessings, that's enough. - No, that is not enough! We should not remain children and allow ourselves to be carried about by all the winds of doctrine, but we

should grow in the knowledge that we can also teach others and refute the false spirits, in short, become "effective for the work of ministry, by which the body of Christ is edified", Eph. 4:12, 13-14.

When a preacher comes to a church [*Gemeinde*], one of the first questions he should **<MH 308>** ask when he visits the people is: Dear people, what books do you have? They may only have a Bible, a hymn book or a catechism. You ask: What Bible? Where is it? Answer: Yes, where is the Bible? You first have to get it down from some junk room, blow off the dust; perhaps no one has picked it up for ages. "Well," the preacher must say, "there's a lot of dust on it; it's not enough that it's lying in the house, and that perhaps you only sympathize with it when you have a headache, or something else! You must read it!" "But," the preacher must then say, "you must acquire more. You don't just have bread to eat. There is much in the kitchen, the cellar and the vault, all beautiful drinks and food for the body. Why should one food be enough for the soul?" We feel what the body needs. But what the soul needs, we feel with difficulty. The Holy Spirit must first create the feeling and the hunger for different kinds of food. The various foods for the soul are, of course, first of all the Bible, but then also the Concordia book, Luther's writings, a biography of Luther, a booklet for confirmands, such as our "Timothy", etc. Christians should acquire these, and for this to happen, the preachers should bring such books with them and read something quite beautiful from them. When the people hear this, they will say: If there is something so beautiful in it, then I want to buy it. So you have to try to bring them to a cheerful conviction, so even those who are a bit stubborn and at first thought: that costs another half dollar, will finally overcome their stubbornness and gladly sacrifice a few dollars for a work like the Altenburg Bible. Several Americans have already said that the price for such a comprehensive and beautifully **<page 96>** equipped work as this Altenburg Bible work is so unprecedentedly low that they have nothing to show for it in their literature.

Of course, what is said here regarding the recommendation of books also applies to magazines. In many new congregations [*Gemeinden*] there is still no understanding of the right magazines. And yet, for example, many congregations [*Gemeinden*] have already been called together and founded through our "Lutheraner". But the preacher must not be put off presenting this and similar magazines to the people and reading something from them. Admittedly, as long as one is still a child in knowledge, one needs milk food, as it is offered in our dear catechism; **<MH 309>** so long the strong food does not yet taste good. But when one grows up, one must also eat stronger food for the soul, such as that offered by the "Lutheran", in which above all doctrine is taught and the heart is made firm against all the winds of false doctrine that blow through the world.

Thereupon Thesis IV and what is noted here was adopted by the Synod.

They then went on to

Thesis V. *)

*) Unfortunately, due to a lack of time, the last two theses could not be discussed in as much detail as desired.

Which is:

A fifth main duty is that they cultivate peace and unity in the truth among themselves, and therefore see to it,

- a. that all members are subject to one another;
- b. that one bear another's burdens in brotherly love;
- c. that no unnecessary disputes break out and are maintained, whether they concern doctrine or practice.

The good Lord has established only one office in the Church, and that is the office of preaching. It is not true what the Episcopalians say that Christ established three offices: namely, bishops, presbyters or pastors, and deacons. We read nothing of this. Christ established only the office of preaching, and there is no office which by divine right is higher than the office of preaching; there are no officials in the Christian church who, according to God's Word, are more than the least of the preachers. The preachers should all be equal to one another according to Christ's express declaration. And yet it is true: just as no worldly fellowship can exist unless a certain order is established, according to which one is the superior and the others are his subordinates, some exercise the rule and others allow themselves to be ruled, so it is also in the church. As soon as a community comes into being with a view to [<page 97>](#) ecclesiastical affairs, an order must be established.

So whoever enters a synod knows in advance: I am now becoming a member of a community that wants to and has to deal with church matters. Now I am also joining a community which is governed by a certain order, for without order it would not be possible for it to exist.

It follows that when someone enters this synod, he enters with the firm decision that he will gladly submit to this order. For although the Lord Christ has not prescribed a synodal order, he has nevertheless prescribed that we should love one another and that we should not seek what is ours, but what is the other's. Now the synod could not achieve its purposes if all were in the same relationship, if there were no leaders, no presidents, no Visitors [*circuit counselors*]. I must therefore submit [<MH 310>](#) to this order willingly and cheerfully.

Luther therefore writes in his precious treatise "On Christian Freedom":

- "1. a Christian is a free lord over all things;
2. a Christian is a servant of all things and subject to everyone. These two resolutions are clear (from) St. Paul's 1 Cor. 9: 'I am free in all things, and have made myself servant to everyone'; item Rom. 13: 'Be under no obligation to

anyone except to love one another'. But love is servant and subject to the one it loves." (XIX, 1207.)

So one must not think: We Lutherans expressly teach that no Christian is subject to another Christian, that we are all equal; so when the Visitor comes, he may say: What does he want? we are equal, I do not want to be visited. It is true: according to the faith you are free, not subject to any man, angel or archangel; you are right about that. But that is not what we are talking about here. Rather, that is what we are talking about: What does your love have to do? Love is a servant of all; therefore, if you realize that love for the kingdom of God demands that you observe the order of the synod, you must not do the opposite. You are wrong to invoke your freedom. We are indeed free in our conscience, but not so that we can use our freedom outwardly in all cases; rather, the apostle says, "I have all power, but not all things are good." 1 Cor. 6:12 —

Of course, every preacher has the power to say, "I will stand under no other preacher." And where he says this merely to establish pure doctrine, and to show how his conscience stands, it is right. But if he considers that a synod is beneficial for the kingdom of God, he will soon realize that it must have order, leadership, superordination and subordination. Although he now holds fast in faith that no one is above him by divine right, he will nevertheless gladly submit for the sake of love. The apostle says: "Be subject to one another [<page 98>](#) in the fear of God", Eph. 5, 21. So I may be subject to my brother and he to me. And even if he would not be subject to me, I remain subject to him. A Christian considers it shameful to seek his own honor. If he is subject to his brother, he is actually subject to the Lord Jesus.

In the future there will be no lack of pastors in this synod who, out of a misunderstanding of Christian freedom, do not want to submit and think that they are therefore brave heroes and stand up for the pure Gospel, and yet this is pure deception. That I do not become a servant of men through such service of love, but am only subject to the Lord Jesus, of which

Luther: "Among Christians there should not and cannot be any supremacy, [Oberkeit] but each one is at the same time subject to the other; as Paul says in Romans 12:10, 16: 'Each one should hold the other as his superior'; and Peter 1 Pet. 1, 5: 'Be subject one [<MH 311>](#) to another'. This is also what Christ wants Luc 14:8: 'When you are invited to a wedding, place yourself at the very bottom'. There is no ruler among Christians except Christ himself and Christ alone. And what kind of authority can there be, since they are all equal and have the same right, power, property and honor, and no one desires to be the superior of another, but each wants to be the inferior of the other? If, where there are such people, one could not establish an authority, even if one would like to do so, because it does not suffer the species and nature to have rulers, since no one wants to or can be ruler. But where there are no such people, there are no true Christians." (Writings on secular authority from 1523. X, 465.)

Behold, such wonderful people are the Christians! No one wants to be supreme among them, but everyone wants to be subject to everyone else. Yes, that's the way it is. Even a president, a visitor, is not an authority, but merely a man chosen for the sake of order, who must serve us. In another place

Luther compares the presidents, visitors etc. to coachmen. Of course, they sit in the front and drive the carriage. Whoever wants to be such a coachman can be more proud than the coachman of the whole synod. If he only drives properly, that's good. But if he wants to play the master and drive on wooden roads, we will fall into his hands. —

Elsewhere, Luther also compares the ecclesiastical superiors to a domestic servant. His master says to him: "You can wake me up at three o'clock. The servant has to get up at two o'clock, and when it is time, he shakes his master and wakes him up. The master does not say: "What have you commanded me to do? That is the servant's office, to wake the sleeping master. It is your office, then, to remind, rebuke, awaken and encourage. —

Luther also applies all this to the visitation order in Chursachsen. It is most important that Luther acknowledges this freedom, even [<page 99>](#) towards the Elector. One can see from this that he had no idea of consistories as they were later. Luther thought that the consistory was only an office of love, to which one only submitted for the sake of peace.

Luther writes: "Although we cannot let this" (the written visitation order) "go forth as a strict commandment, so that we do not raise new papal decrees, but as a history or story, and as a testimony and confession of our faith, we nevertheless hope that all pious, peaceful pastors, to whom the gospel pleases with earnestness and desire, will unanimously and equally hold with us, as St. Paul teaches Phil. 2, 2. Paul teaches in Phil. 2:2 that we should do, will not proudly despise such diligence on the part of our sovereign and most gracious Lord, nor our love and good will, but will willingly submit to such visitation without compulsion, after the manner of love, and [<MH 312>](#) will live peaceably with us until God's Holy Spirit has done better things through them or us. But where some would willfully set themselves against it and without reason want to make a special thing (as one finds wild heads, who out of sheer malice cannot bear anything common or like, but are unequal and stubborn in heart and life): we must leave them from us as the chaff from the threshing floor, but for their sake not leave our like." (Instruction of the Visitors of 1538. Preface. X, 1909 f.)

Luther thus presents his written visitation order "as a history and as a testimony and confession of our faith". Those who had accepted Luther's teaching at the time would have had the freedom to say: "Now I want to remain completely alone with my congregation [[Gemeinde](#)]; now that we are rid of the pope, we do not want a new pope, whether he is called Luther or Prince Elector. They could have said that, but only a fool would have said so. They certainly had the outward right to do so, but such a person would have sinned horribly against love. For what would have become of the Church of Saxony if everyone had

acted as they saw fit? There would have been no Lutheran church in Germany and after Luther's death everything would have perished. No, as Luther says, the pious are sure to say: The visitor may come, I will be glad and gladly accept good advice. A preacher who does not wish to belong to any synod cannot, of course, be said to act contrary to God's expressed commandment; but it is evident that he has no love for the kingdom of God, or no insight into how God's kingdom is built; otherwise he would also lend a hand and pull with us in one yoke.

As earnestly as our Lutheran church testifies against all priestly and human rule within the church, it also testifies to the necessity that among the preachers there should be some who [<page 100>](#) stand at the head, not to rule but to serve. No fellowship can flourish if everyone can determine that this is how it should be. No, one must be at the top, and in our case that is the presidents. In the Smalcald Articles [[Treatise](#)], too, it is first quite decidedly affirmed that [there is no difference between a preacher and a bishop, that in the New Testament](#) *πρεβήτεροι* (pastors) means bishops, and bishops means *πρείβύτεροι*, and yet it is approved that the Church has appointed bishops. Thus we read in the

Smalcald Articles [[in Treatise](#)] goes on to say:

"But the fact that one man alone is chosen, and others under him, is done to prevent division, so that one man here and another there does not take over a church and the congregation is thus torn apart. For at Alexandria (he says) from the time of Mark the Evangelist until Heraclam and Dionysium, [<MH 313>](#) the presbyters (the pastors) have always chosen one of them and held him up and called him episcopum (a bishop), just as a nation of war chooses one to be its captain." ([Second Appendix. p. 340 f. \[Trigl. 523\]](#))

This, then, was the main reason why from the beginning the pastors were not allowed to stand next to each other without connection and unconnected, but that one was chosen from among the pastors to take charge so that no divisions would arise. The latter had to be vigilant that none of the pastors should fall away from the doctrine or introduce a false practice into the church, or usurp the office of others and cause divisions; "for," says Jerome, "in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist until Heraclam and Dionysium, the presbyters have always chosen one of them and held him higher and called him episcopum, just as a people of war choose one to be their captain." (Among the Romans, the soldiers had the power to choose their own captain, and they chose him from among their peers). The Schmalkaldic Articles therefore mean to say that the bishop is not in a higher state, but is taken from the Christian state, namely from the teaching state, and is equal to the others, except that even more duties are imposed on him. This is therefore not at all contrary to Christian freedom and does not feed the imperiousness of the preachers. Therefore also says

[Gerhard](#): "We most earnestly disapprove of the anarchy" (a state in which no one is set over another, — riotous rule) "of those who abolish order in the church

office, since it is a source of discord and all evil; but we maintain in our churches the order among the church ministers and hold that the same should be maintained, so that some bishops" (overseers), "other presbyters" (pastors), "other deacons, etc." are "other bishops" (overseers), "other presbyters" (pastors), "other deacons, etc.... ... The establishment of an order among the ministers promotes harmony and <page 101> unity, prevents disruptions that are to be feared from the self-love and ambition of lower ministers, and restricts the audacity of those who want to disturb the peace of the church." (Loc. de minist. eccles. § 205.)

What Gerhard writes here about "anarchy", i.e. the reign of the "rioters", happened in England at that time with the so-called Independents. At first the only national church in England was the Episcopal Church. But many Englishmen became convinced that, according to the Scriptures, the office of bishop was not a higher office, and therefore they separated from the Episcopal Church and established the Presbyterian Church, according to which the church had only pastors alongside certain laymen as its elders, leaders <MH 314> and rulers. But then the Independents arose and threw out the baby with the bathwater, saying that no one should be made a superior, for all were equal, each congregation [*Gemeinde*] should be independent of the other, no one outside the congregation [*Gemeinde*] should have anything to do within the congregation [*Gemeinde*]: hence the name: Independents.

We Missourians have sometimes been called that in Germany. But this description is an untruth. We do claim that no church [*Gemeinde*] is dependent on the other according to divine law. One has as much right as the other. Neither can rule over the other. That would be pontifical, for the Roman Church wants to rule over all the churches of the world. Our church has said: No, all churches are equal, therefore independent. But this does not mean that one may not unite for the sake of the welfare of the Church. We solemnly declare that our synod has no power over the congregations [*Gemeinden*], but that we only serve one another. It is not a false independentism that we say: "Each congregation [*Gemeinde*] is free from the other in conscience", if we add at the same time: "Nevertheless we unite and elect officers." God has not instituted this, but he has left it to the freedom of the Christian church whether it wants to set one preacher above another, senior pastor, pastor, assistant pastor. Before God, however, they are all equal. A president cannot do the least more than the least bush pastor before God, but an order is made for the salvation of the church, so that the dear church does not become a Babel. It would be a disgrace to the name of Christ if his people were to go away in confusion. No, the church should be beautifully united by the bond of love, it should work together in the best order.

For a correct understanding of this action, it is only necessary to note that there is a twofold government: one that at the same time gives a law binding the conscience, according to which it should go, and insists on the execution of this

law: that is, to rule, that should not be in the church; for we have only One Lawgiver and Lord, Jesus Christ.

<page 102>

Another kind of government is that which sees to it that the law which a community has given itself is observed and carried out: this is servant government. This is what we want in the Church.

We go further and see that another piece of the fifth primary duty is in a confessionally faithful synod:

b. "that one bear another's burdens in brotherly love".

There are more Christians, even Lutherans, than one might think, who are filled with the idea that the true church must have only perfect people among them; that no Christian should have anything about him that is annoying to others; that nothing sinful should be visible about him. And that is impossible. As long as the church lives in the flesh, so <MH 315> long does sin show itself in its members, and that is why God's Word says: "Bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the law of Christ", Gal. 6:2.

He will have some things that you do not like, sometimes he will do things that offend and insult you, but you must mean that you do the same to him. He must also bear your burden, and so it is part of the right nature of an ecclesial community that one should bear another's burden; not that the others should only bear his naughtiness and that they, the others themselves, should be angels.

For this is precisely the great cunning of the devil: if he cannot plunge an ecclesial community into false doctrine, if he cannot break the unity of confession, he tries to do so with his life. He divides the members; one insults the other, perhaps without intending to do so; the other becomes enraged and now casts ill will on him; and if the insult has been great, perhaps even with the conscious fault of the other, the true fraternal fellowship is thus torn apart, and the consequence is that he no longer has any real joy in standing in confessional fellowship with the insulter. And that is what the devil wants.

In particular, if those who are at the top do something that offends or irritates another, then Satan can easily put the thought into the mind of a member of the synod: yes, who knows whether he teaches rightly, and if you could find something in him that he teaches wrongly, then you would have thoroughly avenged yourself. That is why our confession testifies quite gloriously that we should be patient with one another in the church.

In particular, the two passages Col. 3:14 and 1 Pet. 4:8 are used to prove that the church cannot exist if its members do not have patience with one another. The papists have distorted these two passages, as if a person were perfect if he had love, and as if someone could cover his own sins through his love. But this is wrong. No, says our Church, that is not the right mind.

Thus it says in the <page 103> Apology:

"That he (Paul) says (Col. 3, 14.): 'Love is a bond of perfection,' that is, it binds, joins, and holds together the many members of the church under itself. For

just as in a city or in a house unity is maintained by one man's doing good to another, and there can be no peace or tranquillity unless one man bears with the other:

So Paul wants to exhort Christian love, that one should bear and bear with the faults and infirmities of the other, that they should forgive one another, so that unity may be maintained in the church, lest the Christian ranks be torn apart and divided into all kinds of factions and sects, from which there may arise great unrest, hatred and envy, all kinds of bitterness and evil poison, and finally public heresies. For unity cannot remain if the bishops impose too heavy a burden on the people for no good reason. It is also easy for riots to arise when the people want to master **<MH 316>** everything in the quickest possible way and to take advantage of the bishops' or preachers' conduct and lives, and when they soon tire of the preachers, for example because of a minor ailment; much great evil follows. Then soon, out of the same bitterness, one seeks other teachers and other preachers. — Again, perfection and unity are obtained, that is, the church remains undivided and whole, if the strong tolerate and bear the weak, if the people are also patient with their preachers, if the bishops and preachers in turn know how to make amends to the people for all kinds of weaknesses and infirmities. —

Many heresies have arisen from the fact that preachers have become embittered against one another:

"Love covers the multitude of sins," that is, love covers the sin of one's neighbor. That is, even if there is ill-will among Christians, love bears everything, gladly overlooks, gives way to the neighbor, tolerates and bears his infirmities fraternally and does not seek everything in the strongest terms.

So Peter does not want love to merit forgiveness of sins before God, or for love to reconcile us to God without the mediator Christ, or for us to be acceptable to God through love without the mediator Christ: That in whom there is Christian love, he is not self-willed, not harsh and unkind, but easily reproves his neighbor for his faults and wrongs, forgives his neighbor in brotherly kindness, pacifies, rebukes, and softens for the sake of peace; just as the saying teaches: *Amici vitia noris, non oderis*, that is, I should learn my friend's ways, but not hate him for that reason. And it is not without reason that the apostles exhort to such love, which the philosophers have called *ἡπιείκεϊαν* [*epieikeia*].

For if people are to be or remain in unity with one another, whether in the church or in secular government, they must not weigh all their afflictions against one another on the gold scale, **<page 104>** they must let each other pass with the water almost as much as possible and always keep good, as much as possible, brotherly patience with one another." (Art. IV, p. 126 f. 128 f.)

That is the correct interpretation of these biblical passages. Love ensures that the community is not torn apart. — If someone in the synod has been offended, perhaps even by superiors or even by those who have special

influence in the synod, a grudge against the man easily arises and the grudge turns into such behavior that poisons the fraternal community.

O dear brothers, let us beware! Satan is cunning. Now we are brothers together in peace and love; but Satan will certainly lay nets for us so that our sweet, brotherly love will be erased from our hearts. We must not think that it is enough if we only remain united in faith and doctrine. No, if love is **<MH 317>** eradicated, it will not be long before one believes what the other rejects, and the other teaches what the one calls error. Quarrels and discord over personal sins can easily turn into heresy, as the Apology testifies.

Now, for example, one has asserted something and the other asserts the opposite; the one is perhaps somewhat hated by the other, cannot stand him, and for this very reason he sticks to his assertion. It is terrible what mischief results when the members of the church community do not watch over their brotherly love. — Let us watch, let us watch, Satan will try to destroy this sweet and loving fellowship here too. Once he has separated the hearts, he will think: now I want to separate them in faith and doctrine as well.

Even the pastors must not impose too much on the people, according to our quotation. One does not have to want to turn everything into bolts; for it is not possible; not every wood is suitable for bolts. So not every oversight is such that a church discipline procedure would be necessary. But once the devil has aroused aversion and aversion to a member, he makes one much more severe for his offense than for another who has shown nothing like love and good.

"It is also easy for riots to form when the people want to master and expose everything about the bishops' or preachers' conduct and lives in the quickest possible way," says the Apology; the dear congregations should also remember this. If the preacher makes a mistake here and there, they must not immediately judge the matter in the highest terms, but they should reflect: Did it happen out of weakness, and is it important enough to make a noise about it or not? And if one sees that it was done out of weakness and that it is of little importance, then one must either not mention it or say in a friendly manner: You did not act correctly. Otherwise, if the congregation [**Gemeinde**] wants to "cover everything up", **<page 105>** then the beautiful relationship between the spiritual father and his spiritual children also comes to an end. Then the devil laughs into his fist when people no longer give a damn about the preacher's word; then he has torn the members away from the orthodox preacher. We must carry one another. The preacher should not think of the members of the congregation [**Gemeindegliedern**] that they must be all angels; but neither should the members of the congregation [**Gemeindeglieder**] demand that their preacher be an angel, for he cannot be.

"Because of the same bitterness, people soon look for other teachers and other preachers." We have often experienced this. The congregation [**Gemeinde**] does not want to carry anything, so it writes everywhere to get rid of the preacher. Rather, if a rift has occurred, perhaps through the preacher's fault, it should try to come to terms with him again. For if he says: I have done wrong,

everything can quickly be put back in the best order. We cannot prevent ourselves from offending one another, but we can reconcile, and then everything is over. Otherwise God also says: "I will do as you have done. I am reconciled with <MH 318> you, but you must go to hell, because you have done the same; you will be measured again with the same measure that you have used." Just look at church history: in the beginning there was often nothing but a personal struggle and dispute; finally, in the heat of the argument, one person put forward a false doctrine and would not back down, for he had become angry with the other and would not back down.

"So Peter's saying is to be understood thus: love covers the multitude of sins, that is, love covers the sin of the neighbor."

I cannot cover my sins with my love, but I can cover the sins of another and, if he confesses them penitently, let them be buried for time and eternity. I should rather have my tongue cut out of my throat before I reveal a hidden sin of my brother, if he accepts my punishment. In the other case, of course, if he does not accept the punishment, I must go further and then say to him kindly: it is your own fault that it has been revealed; why did you not accept the brotherly punishment?

"But this is Peter's will: that the one in whom there is Christian love is not self-willed, not harsh and unkind, but easily bears with his neighbor in his infirmities and faults."

Dear brethren, let us remember this! That is what our confession says! We are not to be self-willed, not harsh, not unkind; we are to "bear with our neighbor in his infirmities and faults"; but the churches [*Gemeinden*] are to do the same to us and to one another.

Ah, dear brethren, how often does it happen that a dispute and disputation arise! Do I now realize that if I want to bring this dispute to an end at all costs, our whole community will suffer <page 106> as a result; so I should say (unless the glory of God and the salvation of souls demand otherwise): Let us be quiet about it. We see that we do not agree. Let us not allow our dear brotherly peace to be disturbed. Everyone should remember this: when hearts are stirred up at conferences or synods, one must immediately think: what can come of it! Then the officials must say: this is not possible, be quiet, this must not happen; for it is not merely a matter of someone being offended, but the devil wants to take away the jewel of the synod.

As soon as someone says, after he has been absent: "Dear brother, I did not mean it so badly", I should forgive him. But if I immediately say: "Do you also recognize your offence in all its greatness? Do you also repent so and so earnestly for it?", then the gold scale is taken. That is wrong. This should not be done until the one who is lacking proves himself to be a hardened sinner; but then one must say to him earnestly: If you do not repent of your sin, you are lost. This is the right way.

Luther therefore says the following about the words:

"Remain in my love": "It cannot be otherwise, one member must occasionally <MH 319> push the other; just as in our body one foot or toe pushes the other or a person injures himself. Such bumps and temptations do not remain outside, especially because we are all here in the devil's kingdom, who tempts us without ceasing, and our flesh is still weak and full of infirmities. Therefore it happens that even the most pious and dearest friends become divided and suspicious among themselves, that the devil sometimes puts suspicion or poison into their hearts for the sake of a word or a look, so that they create resentment among themselves. He is a master of this, and diligences to the utmost, and has done it before anyone understands or realizes it. As it happened between St. Paulo and Barnaba, Acts 15:39. 15, 39, that they clashed sharply and drew away from each other.

Again, the two men Jerome and Rufinus were the best of friends and like brothers to each other, and yet became so divided over a preface or preface that they could not become friends again. This would also have happened between St. Augustine and Jerome, if Augustine had not been wiser. Thus such quarrels and enmity can arise from minor matters that subsequently bring great harm to an entire group. For the blood soon begins to boil, and the devil shoots his poisoned arrows into the heart through evil tongues, so that no one speaks or thinks well of another, and would like to set people against each other and cause misery and murder. ...

Therefore we Christians should know the devil's art and deceit, and so direct ourselves that we do not allow such poison to grow up in our hearts, but, if we are already moved to suspicion and resentment, fight back and remember that we <PAGE 107> do not allow love to be broken up and extinguished for this reason, but hold fast to it against it; and if any resentment or disagreement arises, that love and friendship may be restored and improved. For to begin to love is not so great an art, but to remain in love, as Christ says here, is the right art and virtue. For just as there are often many who come together in marriage who first want to devour each other with great love and ardor and then become deadly enemies, so it is also the case among Christian brothers that love is divided for a small reason and those who should be the hardest to put together and hold together are torn apart, so that they become the worst, most bitter enemies. As it happened in Christendom after the time of the apostles, when the devil aroused his foul spirits and heretics, so that the bishops and preachers burned against one another, and afterward divided the people into various sects and divisions; thereby Christendom suffered mortal damage, **for where there is no love, the doctrine cannot remain pure.**" (On John 15:9: "Abide in my love". VIII, 390-393.)<MH 320>

How many a man, as Luther says here, has struck his right foot against his left, his hand against his eye, and yet all the members are good friends, for they need one another. For if the eye were to say: I no longer look, why did you push me? or one foot to the other: I no longer walk, why did you hurt me? that would

be foolish. Now we are also members of the body of Christ; so if the brother offends me once, I think: that's the right foot, it pushed the left one a little, etc.

You wouldn't believe it, some people can have had the most intimate friendship for years, and then all of a sudden one of them does something that greatly displeases the other, which he interprets in the most terrible way. Now the heart becomes embittered and it is the devil's most shameful trick to bring this about so that the synod gradually collapses. Sometimes a single glance does the trick. Something awkward happens to one person while another is at fault. It seems to him as if the latter were laughing at it, and he now says with indignation: What, he is laughing at you ? showing his contempt? - and it may not have occurred to him. But the devil shoots this arrow into the heart. That is why we must watch, for the devil sneaks around us to steal what we have. Thus, as Luther says, Jerome and Rufinus were so divided over a preface that they could never again become friends. And it could also have come to this between Augustine and Jerome if Augustine had not been wiser. But the latter maintained their friendship.

Two men in a synod can first disagree alone, and it can finally become a fire that sets the whole synod on fire; for each of the two then often seeks to recruit a [<page 108>](#) party for himself. We cannot prevent bitter thoughts from arising. Unfortunately, we have such tinder in our hearts that such sparks begin to burn immediately; but we should quickly fetch water and extinguish them.

"To begin to love is not so great an art, but to remain in love," says Luther. Let us remember this, dear brothers! It is not an art that we love one another now; but it is an art that we remain in this brotherly love, for Satan will do everything to destroy this love. - Finally, let us also remember this extremely important Lutheran axiom: "Where there is no love, the doctrine cannot remain pure." —

Now follows a passage from Luther's Table Talk:

"In the year 40, Doctor Martin received a supplement from a parish priest who complained about the disobedience of his chaplain. Then Dr. M. Luther said: Oh, dear Lord God, how hostile the devil is to us! He causes dissension even among the ministers of the Word, so that one hates the other; he always lights one fire after another. Oh, let us extinguish it with prayer, reconciliation and looking through our fingers, so that one may be kind to <MH 321> and tolerate the other! Let it be the same that we are not united in life and conduct, and that this one and that one has a different way and is strange: that must be allowed to go and happen (but it also has its measure). For it will not be possible to turn everything into bolts and make them identical as far as morals and life are concerned. If only one is united in the right pure doctrine." (Walch 1, XXII, 820 f. (~~St.L.~~ 22: 820f. [*Table Talk*]))

Oh yes, dear brothers, let us extinguish as often as a small fire wants to start! —

Finally, according to the fifth main duty, a synod faithful to the confession should take care of this,

- c. "that no unnecessary disputes break out and are maintained, whether they concern doctrine or practice."

As important as zeal for pure doctrine is, we must not zeal for pure doctrine without understanding it. If someone says something wrong within a community, we must not immediately attack him as a heretic. It is not right for members of a congregation [*Gemeinde*], so to speak, to literally hunt for false doctrine that a preacher is supposed to have; if they go to church to find something false; if they find their greatest pleasure in constantly hearing doctrinal disputes in the congregation [*Gemeinde*], and if the poor preacher has to be the slaughter sheep so that they have something to do; and if they then even go to the grocery store with the symbolic books under their arms and argue there. No, we should not quarrel with <page 109> them! As soon as a dispute arises, the matter must be handled with great care.

We have already heard in Thesis I. that Luther, when he and his fellow ministers had demanded that those who wished to be inducted and ordained into the pastoral office by the Wittenberg theologians must first undertake to teach according to the general Christian symbols and the Augsburg Confession, they also stipulated that those to be inducted and ordained should first "affirm: if disputes should arise about which there are no clear judgments, that they should take counsel with other elders (senioribus) in our and in the associated churches". (Corpus Reformatorum XII, 7.)

This was not because every member of an ecclesiastical community had to submit to the majority, or the younger to the older, but out of wisdom and caution on the part of Luther and his comrades.

For if I now believe that this is wrong, and it really is wrong, but I am obliged to speak to the elders about it before I raise the alarm, I still hold that it is error if they cannot convince me; but I should think that perhaps they can also convince me that I have erred, and then they can set me right, so that for God's sake no dispute arises that would divide the church of God.

"Let there be no divisions among you," says the apostle with great earnestness, rebuking the fact that there were already divisions and saying that the dividers are carnal. Let us also remember this. Let us watch and pray that unnecessary <MH 322> disputes are never aroused and cultivated among this synod, but that individuals do not begin to come forward with uncertain matters until they have informed the others, so that the fire may be extinguished. They have no faithful heart who think: Now I have found out something; and out of sheer arrogance they seek an attachment and light a fire which burns quickly, but which they may not be able to extinguish even if they wanted to.

Luther writes:

"I know of no greater donum (gift) that we have than concordiam docentium" (unity of teachers), "that now and then in the principalities and in the imperial cities one teaches in unison with us. Even if I had the donum that I could raise the dead, what would it be if the other preachers all taught against me? I would not take the Turkish Empire for this consensus. Münzer did us great harm in the First. The Gospel was going so well that it was a pleasure, but soon the Muenzer came along! Then the pope says: "Well, among us it was all under one head and finely quiet, but now everything is ambivalent." (Erlangen edition, vol. LIX, 210.)

<page 110>

Shortly before his death, Luther also wrote to the preachers in Nordhausen:

"Dear Sirs, you can see for yourselves the noise that Satan has caused everywhere in the church, because there are almost as many opinions as there are preachers. That is why I have heard that some questions have arisen among you about minor matters. . . Wherefore I beseech you for Christ's sake, in whom we live and are governed, in whose Spirit we are one, that ye recognize and consider the grace of God, whereby he hath made us of one mind, and hath hitherto preserved us in the chief things of godliness, and in the most excellent articles, and, as Paul saith, be ye vexatious and offensive to no man in those things which are outward and liberal. "*) (XXI, 1346 f.)

*) The dispute concerned the choir shirts and the boys holding the cloths at communion. S. Innocence. Nachrr. 1728. S. 500.

So everyone should consider that the fact that this synod now stands in doctrinal unity is such a great treasure that "the Turkish empire" is nothing against it. Therefore it is not to be joked with; and nothing is to be done that could disturb this unity. Only if the honor of God or the salvation of the soul clearly requires it, then one must fight, even if a synod that has been blessed up to that point is destroyed. What does God ask for synod when it is a matter of the truth that saves?

So about unimportant things, which have no relation at all to the salvation of immortal souls, let us never start a serious dispute; but if a disputant starts it, let us put him in his place. Here belongs 2 Timothy 2:14, "that they should not quarrel over words. Someone can say something completely wrong and still mean the right thing. Therefore writes <MH 323>

Gerhard: "It is ungodly, if one knows that someone's opinion is godly and pious, to make error out of inconveniently spoken words." (Loc. de bonis opp. § 38.)

So let that also be far away in this synod! If someone needs "uncomfortable words", let him not immediately be made a heretic or a false teacher, but only, where necessary, be kindly reminded of them.

And finally, how should the members of the congregation [*Gemeindeglieder*] behave when their preacher preaches something misguided from the pulpit? We hear about this again

Luther: "A pious Christian does not do so, but, even if he hears something wrong being preached, he proceeds with humility and admonishes the preacher kindly and fraternally, does not defy or harass in the same way." (On 1 Cor. 15, 8-10. VIII, 1193.)

The churches [*Gemeinden*] must remember this! Just as a preacher can easily do or speak something sinful, so he can also preach something erroneous, and indeed something quite alarmingly erroneous. Now the one who has [<page 111>](#) good knowledge must not immediately say: Now let the pastor admit that he is a false prophet! No, but one should "proceed with humility" and admonish with kindness and brotherly love, not "defy and paw", not take pleasure in the fact that one has caught him, so that one does not irritate him, but gets him around and he finally says: Yes, you are right; I have said something quite wrong. Yes, a discerning member must do what it can, lest a pernicious fire arise from it.

But some are of such a mind that, no matter how terrible a thing they have done, they rejoice that they have done it! They rejoice that they are such important people who accomplish such things. But we should not take credit for harming our brothers; even if we could, we should not do so, but should try to set them right in all kindness and modesty. This pleases God well.

The Synod then also adopted Thesis V. and its above explanation and moved on to the discussion of **<MH 324>**

Thesis VI.

So which is:

A sixth main duty is that they should not seek their own glory but only God's glory, that they should not be concerned with their own expansion but with the expansion of Christ's kingdom and the salvation of souls, and therefore

- a. not by dishonest means, but above all through the gospel in its purity and fullness, to win souls and keep them with him;
- b. does not seek to bring about in its members both zeal for their special community and living faith, uncolored love and true godliness;
- c. take a lively and, as far as possible, active part in all God-pleasing events for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world.

The most important thing about this thesis is that it tells us that as much zeal as we should use to elevate our synod here in every respect, the welfare and growth of the synod should not be our real goal, but our real goal should be: To spread God's glory, to save souls and bring them salvation. From this it follows that we should refrain from everything by which we could make our synod great, but from which the Lord Christ would not benefit in his kingdom, by which the glory of God [<page 112>](#) would not be promoted, by which immortal souls would

not be saved. This must be our purpose. As soon as we look more to our synod than to the invisible kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace and salvation, we begin to become a sect. For that is actually sectarian nature, that one has one's small community in mind above all else, even if the kingdom of God suffers damage as a result. So it was with the Corinthians, one calling itself Pauline, the other Apollonian, the third Cephic. They did not want to work together, but the Pauline wanted to work for Paul, the Apollonian for Apollo and the Cephastian for Cephas. But when the apostle heard this, he rebuked them and asked whether Paul had been crucified for them. They should all keep the one great main purpose in mind: To confess Christ, to increase Christ's kingdom, and not such small sects of people who hold to Paul or Apollos or Cephas. A synod or a concilium (both are essentially the same, the only difference is that the former takes place every year, the latter less frequently) should guard against this. Therefore say

The Smalcald Articles:

"And that I may return to the matter at hand, I would indeed like to see a proper concilium, so that many things and people might be helped. Not that we need it but we see many parishes in the dioceses everywhere empty and desolate, so that one's heart might break, and yet neither bishop nor rector ask how the poor people live or die, for whom Christ died, and should not hear him speak to them as the true shepherd speaks to his sheep, so that I dread and fear that he might one day let an angelic conciliarism go over Germany, which would ruin us all like Sodom and Gomorrah, because we mock him so freely with the concilio. <MH 325>

"About such necessary ecclesiastical matters, there are also innumerable great things to be improved in the secular state: there is disunity among princes and estates; usury and avarice have been torn down like a flood of sin and have become vain law; wantonness, fornication, wantonness with clothes, eating, gambling, flaunting with all sorts of vices and wickedness; disobedience of the subjects, servants and workers; all trades, including the peasants' translation (and who can tell it all?) have gotten so out of hand that ten conciliations and twenty imperial days will not be able to put it right. If we were to deal with such major issues of the ecclesiastical and secular state, which are against God, in the Concilio, we would have our hands full, so that in the meantime we would probably forget the children's game and fool's work of long skirts, large plates, wide belts, bishops' and cardinals' hats or staffs and similar jugglery. If we had first obeyed God's commandment and order in the spiritual and secular state, we would <page 113> find time enough to reform the food, clothes, plates and casel. But if we were to devour such camels, and for this we would fence gnats, leave the beams standing and straighten the splinters, then we would be satisfied with the Concilio." (SA Preface. p. 297 f.)

Our confession says: A council should not be held because the Lutherans needed one, but for completely different purposes. "So that many things and

people would be helped. ... We see many parishes in the dioceses everywhere, empty and desolate, that one's heart might break." ...

Look, dear brothers, this is how we should be. We do not come here for our own sake. We have faith and with this faith we hope to be saved! But how many millions there are who still have no faith! and that is why we are here and have founded a synod, in order to bring as many people as possible to salvation, so that the misery in Christendom and the ruin in the poor blind Gentile world may be controlled. And if we do not do this, and do not seek Christ's glory and the salvation of souls, Luther fears, as he says, that the good Lord will make a synod, namely an "angelic concilium", to execute his judgments. —

We should also realize this; the misery and misery in our time is great everywhere. Not only unbelief and false faith, but also sin and all vices, have swept over our country like a flood of sin, and we Lutherans should do as much as we can to hold back this flood.

But now some beautiful passages from Luther about the fact that false Christians use many dishonest means to promote their own party, their little sect above all others. Some seize the office of others, others take in banished ones from others, or willingly take in those who have escaped discipline. If only they profess their sect with all their heart, however worthy of banishment they may have been. Let not that be said of us! Let others, after all, receive those who are banished by us, or the children of the world who, out of love for the world, no longer want to know anything about us, so that they can boast: we have **<MH 326>** Missourian families. Let them go away! No blessing rests on them, least of all God's pleasure, but God's wrath. Let us only use honest means when we seek to promote ourselves in our circle. —

After all, we may have made a Christian out of someone, and when he comes together with a Methodist, the latter will make a pessimistic face and say: "You have not yet broken through completely, even if there are many good things among you. If you want to be saved, you must come to us! **<page 114>**"

Luther says of such people:

"When they (the riotous spirits) came, they looked at you: You have heard many good sermons preached so far; it is true; but you have not yet heard the right reason: I will tell you the right truth. So they can make light of it. If you then have sleepy ears, you may think it is so. This soon puts the other sermon to shame, so that they say, "Oh, I have not heard such things preached all my life; I did not think it was such a small thing." (On John 7:40 ff. VII, 2333.)

Is it not as if one could hear our Methodists speaking out of Luther's "sectarians" [*Rottengeister*]? Even now many a Lutheran has sleepy ears in his church; if he then comes to these enthusiasts and hears their voice, he allows himself to be deceived, and yet he has now become nothing more than an arrogant, spiritually proud person. —

We do not have to seek ourselves in our work for the church, as the following testifies

Luther: "This is the true sign and characteristic by which false teachers are to be recognized, when they draw the listeners to themselves and to their lives, and do not point them away from themselves to Christ. ... Pious Christian teachers point people away from themselves to Christ, as St. John does here and bears his testimony; as we, praise God, and others do much more. For all our preaching is to the effect that you and we should all know and believe that Christ alone is the only Savior and Comforter of the world, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, just as the Gospel definitely points to Christ; therefore it is nothing other than St. John's testimony. For this reason we do not draw people to us, but lead them to Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. Again, false teachers are all those who preach and testify not of Christ but of themselves." (On John 1, 7. 8. VII, 1466. 1479 f.)

This is the true mark of a sectarian union, when the preacher seeks to bind the people above all to his own person, or to the small community to which he belongs, while he should say with John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease," John 3:30. <MH 327> Only then have we gained something, if our congregations [*Gemeinden*] and preachers remain with us because they see that we have the pure, sweet, blessed and saving gospel pure and pure. The preacher is not a real preacher who only seeks to fanaticize his parishioners [*Gemeindeglieder*] for the Lutheran Church, or for the Missouri Synod or, even worse, only for the Iowa District. These are bad preachers. But they must point the people to Christ and say: Behold, we preach the pure Word of God, in which the eternal gospel is contained: therefore you should keep to us, and therefore we say: as soon as we no longer do this, go away from us! for salvation does not depend on us, nor on the Missouri Synod at all. If it no longer preaches <page 115> the pure word of God, then it is worth nothing but to be left.

There follows another passage about the false love that is found in such sectarian communities. Thus writes

Luther: "First of all, you will certainly not feel any real fruits of faith or works of love among such (false prophets), but you will find that they are friendly among their ranks and call each other Christian brothers, but there is poison and devils in them. What their rancor is not, there is no mercy, patience, or friendship; but if they could perish in body and soul in an hour or in a moment, they would." (Church bulletin. Another Sermon on the Gospel on the 8th Sunday,.n. Tr. XI, 1917).

That is true: if you go to such people, you will find a love there that makes inexperienced Christians think: Yes, they are real Christians! It's not like that with us. How cold it is with us! Luther also met such people. But how he has painted them here! that one wonders that such people could have been in these dear sweet persons. Yes, "that which is not their righteousness", they are all given over by them to the devil. Let God preserve us from this; but let God give us a hearty, fervent love for all our fellow-saved, and even for those who are our enemies and show us all hostility.

Here also belongs this exquisite word of our Luther:

"We are not such desperate people (praise and thanks be to God!) that we would let the church perish before we would give way, even in great pieces, unless it is against God; but are ready to perish until there is neither skin nor hair, before any harm or damage should befall the church, as much as is in our knowledge and ability." (Of Conciliis and Churches. 1539. XVI, 2624 f.)

The Missouri Synod must also remember this! It must rather want to perish than that its continued existence should harm the Church. Those who want to see the Synod continue under all circumstances, whether the kingdom of Christ suffers damage or not, are not driven by the spirit of Christ, but by the spirit of selfishness, and instead of being a stone in the building of Christ's kingdom, **<MH 328>** they are God's stumbling block. —

Finally, it is also a primary duty of a confessionally faithful synod that it
c. "take a lively and, as far as possible, active part in all God-pleasing events for
the expansion
of Christ's kingdom in the world".

<page 116>

This is the duty of every synod, including ours. It should join the great company of Christ's laborers in his harvest, for the seed has long been ripe; it is only a matter of harvesting the seed. So she should cooperate in all institutions for inner and outer (Gentile) mission, for the spreading of the Holy Scriptures. Likewise in the foundation and maintenance of such institutions in which the preachers are prepared. In short, a synod should be a living member of the body of Christ and cooperate with all other living members of this most holy body on the whole earth, so that Christ's kingdom may be spread and possibly all those whom Christ has bought with his blood may be won for Christ, led into his sheepfold and finally saved into eternal life.

Luther therefore writes:

"Help whoever can help, and let mercy be shown to the poor youth, to our dear descendants, and to all God's chosen children who are yet to come and who are not yet all born, who must also come to baptism and to Christ through our ministry and hand, to which we are also called and for the sake of which we live; otherwise our faith would be enough for our person, whatever hour we die. And woe upon all woe, where we throw such service and calling to the wind! God will require it of us and take account of us for all the souls of our descendants who are neglected through us. Therefore I say again, let David be who he may, and do according to his example what everyone can do, especially the princes and lords who have power and good enough from God: and he will give back much more, even a hundredfold, and in addition eternal life, as he abundantly promises Matt. 19:29. And, after all, nothing more can happen: that so much may be done that the schools and pulpits (which may not cost too much) may remain." (On Ps. 101, 4. V, 1246.)

So our dear Luther exclaims: "help whoever can help".

Secondly, we should also think of our descendants. For it is a shameful thought when a congregation [*Gemeinde*] says: "We now have a church and a school, let others take care of them too! No, God demands that we now help others to have churches and schools. A Christian and also a church [*Gemeinde*] is a plant that has grown out of the seed of other Christians and churches [*Gemeinden*], so this church [*Gemeinde*] and every Christian should again be a seed from which new Christians and churches [*Gemeinden*] grow. This is why the apostle says so emphatically that the church is the mother of us all. (Gal 4:26) As surely as we now belong to the church, so surely should we also be a fruitful mother, and if we are unfruitful mothers, that is, if **<MH 329>** we do not beget spiritual children or do not do that by which they are begotten, **<page 117>** then we are not fulfilling our calling and God will not say: "O you pious and faithful servant" — but: "You have not been faithful! God grant that we may not one day have to hear this from his mouth! —

It is as our Luther says: It is only for this reason that God allows Christians to live on earth, so that they may also bring others back to the saving faith; otherwise, as soon as a person has been converted, God would immediately receive him into heaven. For he who has faith is ready to enter heaven. But God says: "First you must do your work on earth so that you may become a leader of others to eternal life.

It is remarkable that Luther is so deeply moved when he thinks of how difficult it is when God begets a church through the heavenly seed of his Word and this church wants to be unfruitful and does not want to become a spiritual mother so that others can also come through her. He says: "God will require it of us, and will take account of us of all the offspring of souls that are neglected through us." Strange and yet true! God will require of us the descendants who could have been saved if only we had taken care of them. So how grievously a church [*Gemeinde*] sins if it does not see to it that its children are instructed in God's Word! if it says: it is enough if we send them to English school and teach them arithmetic, writing and reading! No, dear parents, God requires that the pure teaching also come to the offspring.

"Therefore I say again," writes Luther, "let David be whoever he can be, and follow his example, which everyone can do, especially the princes and lords who have power and good enough from God to do so." We also say this; and even if we are not princes, but only wealthy farmers, we should also do our part to establish good schools, not only parochial schools [*Gemeindeschulen*], but also others in which preachers and teachers are trained for the holy ministry. This was done by the "princes and lords" at that time, who had to serve first. But it was no credit to the other people who did not lend a hand. Oh, whoever has money, what a happy man he is if he uses it properly! He hears that if he does something for the kingdom of God, he will receive it back a hundredfold and eternal life as well. If that doesn't make him happy, we don't know what will.

If "no more can be done", Luther further writes, "so much should be done that the already existing chairs of preaching and teaching should be preserved and not perish". Let that also be said. The Iowa District has done very little to bring the institutions into being; that is no wonder, of course, since it has only been in existence for a short time. But now help that more and more flocks of [<page 118>](#) evangelists go forth from our seminaries, who will finally bring thousands and thousands to the Lord by casting the net of the Gospel into the sea of this world. When the day comes when the Lord will see the net and its contents, **<MH 330>** we will also be there and rejoice with joy unspeakable when the Lord will say: Behold, my beloved, whom I bought with my blood of God, out of love for me you have also done your part so that others have found eternal life, come, come, you shall be with me forever and shall see how your works follow you.

May the faithful God help us all to hear such a voice one day and to be found faithful servants, and not only each individual, but the whole synod as a true daughter of her mother, namely the Lutheran Church of the unaltered Augsburg Confession!

By recognizing this ~~Fourth~~ Sixth Thesis as the expression of its confession, the Synod concluded this year's doctrinal negotiations with resounding thanks and praise to God, who during these eight days had endowed them with such rich treasures from the glorious storehouses of His dear Church.

God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure
Shall to eternity endure!