

C.F.W. Walther

Theses on the Ministry

With the Scripture-Proof

1852

Walther and the Church, by WM. Dallmann, W.H.T. Dau, and TH. Engelder. St. Louis, CPH 1938, pages 71-86

Thesis I

The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.

Proof From the Word of God

Although the Holy Scripture testifies to us that all believing Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), nevertheless at the same time it teaches us explicitly that there is in the Church an office for teaching, shepherding, governing, etc., which does not belong to Christians by reason of their general Christian calling. For thus it is written: "Are all apostles: Are all prophets: Are all teachers:" 1 Cor. 12:29. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. 10:15. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation," Jas. 3:1. [Luther: "Unterwinde sich nicht jedermann, Lehrer zu sein."]

Thesis II

The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.

Proof from the Word of God

That the holy ministry, or the ministry of the New Testament, is not a human ordinance, not an institution established by the Church, but a work of divine wisdom, an establishment of God Himself, appears

- From the Old Testament prophecies to the effect that God Himself would give to the Church of the New Testament shepherds and teachers: "The Lord gave the Word; great was the company of those that published it," Psalm 68:11. "I will give you pastors according to Mine hearts which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," Jer. 3:15. "Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord, your God, [who giveth you teachers unto righteousness," This

clause in Luther's translation has been dropped from the English version and is referred to only in the margin], Joel 2:23.

- The divine institution of the ministry of the New Testament appears from the call of the holy apostles to the ministry of teaching by the Son of God, as recorded Matt. 10; 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21-23; 21:15-17 ("Feed My sheep"), and of the seventy disciples, as recorded Luke 10:1-22.
- Finally, the divine origin of the ministry of the Gospel in the Church appears from all those passages in which also those who have been mediately called are represented as having been called by God: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28. "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?" 1 Cor. 12:28,29. "And He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," Eph. 4:11.
- Accordingly, the holy Apostles coordinate themselves with the ministers of the Church who were called mediately as with their colleagues in office: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder," 1 Pet. 5:1. Compare 2 John 1; 3 John 1, where John calls himself a presbyter, or elder; again, Col. 4:7, where Paul calls Tychicus "fellow-servant"; again, Phil 2:25, where Paul calls Epaphroditus his "companion in labor and fellow soldier"; finally, 1 Cor. 4:1; 1:1, where Paul calls himself and Sosthenes "ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Thesis III

The ministry of preaching is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it until the end of days.

Proof from the Word of God

Thus speaks the Lord, Matt. 28:19,20: "Go ye and teach all nations," etc., "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." From this it is evident that by the command of Christ the apostles' ministry of preaching was to endure to the end of days. Now, if this is to be the case, the Church must continually to the end of days establish the orderly public ministry of preaching and in this ordinance administer to its members the means of grace.

Thesis IV

The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the later, like the priesthood of the Levites, but it is an office of service.

Proof from the Word of God

According to God's Word all believing Christians- and only these- are priests (of priestly estate). Compare 1 Pet 2:9; Rev. 1:6. There is no difference of order among them; they are "all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. 3:28; they are all brethren," Matt. 23:8-12. However, as in the Old Covenant all sons of Aaron were indeed of priestly descent and order, while only some were engaged in the priestly office and ministered, so in the New Covenant also those who are in charge of the public ministry of preaching are not priests on that account or priests before others, but they are only the ministering persons among a priestly people. Therefore the holy apostle writes: "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" 1 Cor. 3:5. Again: "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus, the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," 2 Cor. 4:5. Again: "For His body's sake, which is the Church, whereof I am a minister according to the dispensation of God which is given me for you to fulfill the Word of God," Col.1:24,25.

Thesis V

The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.

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Proof from the Word of God

Inasmuch as the congregation, or church, of Christ, that is, the assembly of believers, possesses the keys and the priestly office immediately, Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Pet. 2:5-10 (compare what was stated above, under Thesis IV, on the church), it is likewise the congregation- and it can be only the congregation- by which, namely, by its election, call and commission, the ministry of preaching, which publicly administers the office of the keys and all priestly offices in the congregation, is conferred on certain persons qualified for the same. Accordingly we read that even the Apostle Matthias was not elected to his exalted office only by the eleven apostles but by the entire gathering of the assembled believers, about a hundred and twenty of whom were present, Acts 1:15-26.

Again, we read that also the deacons were elected by "the whole multitude," Acts 6:1-6.

If the congregation calling has among its members also pastors in active service, naturally these, too, and- by reason of the office which they already hold in the Church- these before all, belong to the parties issuing the call, so much so that, when the cooperation in this act due to their office is denied them, the call of "the multitude" in such a case has no validity,

for the plain reason that it is issued in that case not by the congregation but by individuals in the congregation, which, when properly constituted, consists of preachers and hearers. However, if no persons already in office belong to the congregation issuing the call, the call of the multitude is induced valid also without the cooperation of the former. But the following points require consideration: 1. Love and unity, which according to the will of Christ is to exist among, and be manifested by, all members of His body; 2. The honor which believers owe to faithful incumbents of the office; 3. The sanctity and importance of the matter itself. For these reasons also an isolated congregation should not act in this matter solely according to its own understanding, but if it can secure the aid of ministers of the Church already in office, it should surely invite them, avail itself of their counsel and instruction in this matter, and, in particular, leave to them the examination and the proper, public, and solemn installation of the person it has called. The model for all this, to be patterned after by the Church to the end of time, is presented to us in Acts 6:1-6.

- *The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.*

Proof from the Word of God

Whatever cannot be proved by God's Word as having been instituted by God cannot without idolatry be declared to be, and accepted as, an establishment of God Himself. Now, Scripture is silent regarding a divine institution of ordination; it merely testifies that the apostles made use of it and that at that time the communication of glorious gifts was connected with the laying of hands. However, according to the Word of God there is indeed no question but that even now ordination, when it is joined with a prayer of the church, based on the glorious promises that have been specially given to the ministry of preaching, is not an empty ceremony but is accompanied by an outpouring of heavenly gifts on the person ordained.

Thesis VII

The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.

Proof from the Word of God

It was shown from the Word of God in Theses I-IV that the spiritual priesthood which all truly believing Christians possess, and the holy ministry, or the pastoral office, are not identical; that neither is an ordinary Christian a pastor for the reason that he is a spiritual priest,

nor is a pastor a priest for the reason that he holds the public office of a preacher; that neither is the spiritual priesthood a public office in the Church, nor is the public ministry and order different from that of Christians; but it is a ministry of service (however, ordained by Christ Himself when He established the apostolic office).

It was shown, furthermore, in Thesis V that ministers discharge publicly, in behalf of all, the very offices which the Church, as the real royal, priestly race, and therefore every truly believing Christian, possessed originally.

Lastly, it was shown in Thesis VI that ministers have their office and their authority conferred on them by God through the congregation, as the original possessor of these, and by the call which the congregation, according to the will of God, has issued to them.

In the light of all this evidence, the ministry, as to its essence, cannot be anything else than the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as the possessor of the priesthood and of all church power, to exercise in the public office, in behalf of all, the common rights of the spiritual priesthood.

The proof for this from the Word of God has already been presented under Theses IV and VII, on the Church, and theses I, IV, V and VI on the Ministry.

A reminder may be in place here that Holy Scripture exhibits to us the Church, that is, the believers, as the bride of the Lord and the mistress of His house, to whom have been committed the keys and therewith the right and the access to all courts, sanctuaries, and treasures of the house of Gold and the authority to appoint stewards over it; furthermore, that every true Christian, according to Holy Scripture, is a spiritual priest and hence is entitled and called not only to use the means of grace for himself but also to dispense them to those who as yet have them not, and hence do not as yet possess like priestly rights with himself. Scripture, however, teaches that, where all possess these rights, no one may arrogate these rights as inhering in him exclusively; but wherever Christians dwell together in a community, the priestly rights of all are to be administered publicly in the common interest only by those who have been called by the communion in the manner prescribed by God.

The incumbents, then, of the ministerial office in the Church are for this reason also called in God's Word not only servants and stewards of God, but also servants and stewards of the church, or congregation, and are thus represented as persons who administer, not their own, but the rights, authorities, possessions, treasures, and office of the Church, hence are acting, not only in the name of Christ, but also in the name and in the place of His bride, the Church of the believers.

True, Christ Himself has established in His Church the ordinance of the public ministry of preaching and has defined the rights and authorities which it is to have. But these are not rights and authorities which the incumbents of the office are to possess to the exclusion of the Church, but the rights and authorities which Christ, together with the keys, has given to His Church of its own. However, by His express command and will (Compare Theses II and III on the Ministry) these are to be publicly administered in the Church, not by the multitude promiscuously but by distinct men qualified for it and quipped with the necessary gifts, who

by these gifts are bequeathed to the Church and appointed by the Lord Himself and are hence to be called and actually are called. Hence, although the universal spiritual priesthood and the public ministry of preaching are not identical, the latter nevertheless is the fruit of the former, because, as our fathers put it, it “has its roots” in the former. Notwithstanding this, the incumbent of the ministry of the Church does not thereby become a priest (he is rather to be chosen from the royal priests, the Christians), still he administers the holy offices of the priest-Christians. Accordingly, the holy apostle writes concerning himself: “I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable,” Rom. 15:16.

Thesis VIII

The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.

Proof from the Word of God

Since the incumbents of the public ministry have in their public office, for the sake of the common interests of their congregations, John 20:21-23, the administration of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which the Church possesses originally and immediately, Matt. 16:19; 18:18, their office must necessarily be the highest office in the Church, and from it, as from the stem, all other offices must issue, inasmuch as the keys embrace the entire authority of the Church. In accordance with this the incumbents of this office are in the Holy Scriptures called elders, bishops, rulers, stewards, etc.; and the incumbents of an inferior office are called deacons, that is, servants, not only of God, but also of the congregation and of the bishop; and it is stated regarding the latter in particular that they must care for the congregation and must watch over all souls, as those that must render an account for them, 1 Tim. 3:1,5,7; 5:17; 1 Cor. 4:1; Titus 1:7; Heb. 13:17. We see from this that the holy apostles in the beginning discharged, together with their ministry of preaching, also the office of deacons in Jerusalem, until the growth of the congregation required that for their relief this latter office be assigned to special persons, Acts 6:1-6. For with the apostolate the Lord has established in the Church only one office, which embraces all offices of the Church, and by which the congregation of God is to be provided for in every respect. The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching whether it be the eldership of such as do not labor in the Word and doctrine, 1 Tim. 1:15, or that of rulers, Rom. 12:8, or the diaconate (ministry of service in the narrower sense) or the administration of whatever office in the Church may be assigned to particular persons. Accordingly, the office of schoolteachers who have to teach the Word of God in their schools, of almoners, of sextons, of precentors in public worship, etc., are all to be regarded as sacred offices of the Church, which exercise a part of the one office of the church and are aids to the ministry of preaching.

Thesis IX

Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. However, the preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has, accordingly, no right to make new laws, to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication ALONE, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.

- *Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God.*

Proof From the Word of God

Although the incumbents of the public ministry do not form a more holy order, distinct from the ordinary order of Christians, but merely exercise the universal rights of Christians, with the public and orderly administration of which they have been commissioned, still they are not servants of men on that account. The principal efficient cause of the ordinance of the public office of preaching is God, the Most High, Himself. This ordinance is not an arrangement which men in the wisdom have instituted for propriety's sake and for salutary reasons, but is an institution of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Therefore when official authority has been conferred on a person by the congregation by men of a regular, legitimate call, that person has been placed over the congregation by God Himself, although it was done through the congregation, 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28. The person installed is henceforth not only a servant of the congregation but at the same time a servant of God, an ambassador in Christ's stead, by whom God exhorts the congregation, 1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:18-20. Accordingly, when a preacher is ministering God's Word in his congregation, whether he be teaching or admonishing, reproving or comforting publicly or privately, the congregation hears from his mouth Jesus Christ Himself and owes him unconditional obedience as to a person by whom God wants to make known His will to them and guide them to eternal life. The more faithfully the preacher discharges his office, the greater must be the reverence of which the congregation deems him worthy. Nor has the congregation any right to take away his office from such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, the congregation therewith thrusts aside Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name their preacher ruled over them. A congregation can remove an incumbent from office only when it is evident from God's Word that God Himself has removed him as a wolf or a hireling. Accordingly, we are told in the Scriptures;

“He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that ‘sent Me,’” Luke 10:16.

“Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you,” Heb. 13:17.

“We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves,” 1 Thess. 5:12,13.

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive no an accusation but before two or three witnesses,” 1 Tim. 5:17-19. Compare Gal. 6:6-10.

“And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you., And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for that city,” Matt. 10:12-15.

- *The preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has accordingly no right to make new laws and to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily.*

Proof from the Word of God

Thus speaks the Lord to his disciples: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you,” Matt. 20:25,26. “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren,” Matt. 23:8

Again, the Lord testifies before Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,” John 18:36.

We see from this that the Church of Jesus Christ is not a dominion of such as command and such as obey, but is one great, holy brotherhood, in which no one can dominate and exercise force. Now, this necessary equality among Christians is not abolished by the obedience which they render to the preachers when these confront them with the Word of Jesus Christ; for in this case, in obeying the preachers, they do not obey men but Christ Himself. Just as certainly, however, this equality of believers would be abolished and the Church would be changed into a secular state if a preacher would demand obedience also when he presents to the Christians, not the Word of Christ, who is his and all Christians’ Lord and Head, but something which by virtue of his own understanding and experience he considers good and appropriate. Hence the moment there is a discussion in the Church about matters indifferent, that is, such as are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, the preacher may never demand unconditional obedience for something which appears best just to him. In such a case it is

rather the business of the entire congregation, of the preacher together with the hearers, to decide the question whether what has been proposed should be accepted or rejected. It is, however, due the preacher, by reason of his office of teacher, overseer, and watchman, to guide the deliberations that have to be instituted, to instruct the congregation regarding the matter, to see to it that in settling indifferent matters and arranging order and ceremonies of the church nothing is done in a trifling manner and nothing harmful is adopted.

For this reason the holy apostles write: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also and elder...: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage but being ensamples to the flock,” 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

“I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the forwardness of others and to prove the sincerity of your love, 2 Cor. 8:8. Paul had asked the Corinthians previously for a contribution to the poor.

“This I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction,” 1 Cor. 7:35. Paul had previously recommended to the Corinthians the celibate life during the time of persecution.

When the holy apostles, notwithstanding these statements, among other things write this: “The rest will I set in order when I come,” 1 Cor. 11:34, it is evident from the foregoing that they made arrangements in regard to indifferent matters not by way of commands but by offering their advice and with the consent of the entire congregation.

- *The preacher has no right to impose and execute excommunication ALONE, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.*

Proof from the Word of God

It is certain, on the one hand, that to the incumbent of the public ministry is committed also the power of the keys in the narrower sense, namely, the power publicly to loose and to bind. But, on the other hand, it cannot be in the power of the preacher alone, without a previous verdict of the congregation, to exclude a sinner from it; for then the Christian congregation would, besides, have to render blind obedience to the preacher even in matters pertaining to a person’s salvation. For in such an instance the question is not concerning a clear teaching of the divine Word but concerning a verdict on the condition of a person’s soul, and, at that, a verdict of such a nature that to a certain person heaven is closed and he is forbidden brotherly fellowship with Christians and they with him. Therefore, while according to the Word of the Lord and His sacred ordinance the public execution of excommunication belongs to, and must remain with, the incumbent of the public ministry, nevertheless, according to the express prescription and order of the same Lord, the investigation preceding the execution of excommunication and the final judicial verdict must come from the entire congregation, that

is, from the teachers and hearers. For thus it is written: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. 18:15-20.

Evidently here Christ, as our Confessions put it, gives the highest jurisdiction to the church, or congregation, and wants a sinner in a congregation to be regarded as an heathen man and a publican, and the awful judgment of excommunication to be executed upon him, only after several fruitless private admonitions and after he has been admonished in vain also publicly, in the presence of, and by, the whole congregation, and therefore his expulsion from the fellowship has been unanimously resolved upon by them and has been executed by the preacher of the congregation.

In accordance with this procedure, then, even Paul would not excommunicate the incestuous person at Corinth without the congregation, but, spite of his having declared this great sinner worthy of excommunication, he wrote the congregation that this must be done by them, "when they were gathered together," 1 Cor. 5:4.

John, too, in his Third Epistle, vv.9,10, severely reproves the bishop Diotrephes, who had arrogated to himself a supreme position in the congregation and arbitrarily, without the congregation, expelled from it sincere Christians who may have opposed his domineering.

Now, it will go without saying that what the congregation through "many" and "before all" (2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Tim. 5:20) did at the time of the apostles can be validly and legitimately done also where the ruling congregation is represented by a presbytery or consistory, composed of clergymen and laymen, so that the presbytery or consistory alone renders the verdict of excommunications, provided only that this is done with the knowledge and consent of the people.

Thesis X

According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.

Proof for the Word of God

No proof is needed that the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs to the public ministry of preaching; for without this function they could not at all discharge their office.

However, there is irrefutable evidence in God's Word that by the establishment of the special office for passing judgment on doctrine this right has not by any means been taken away from laymen, but the exercise of it has been made their most sacred duty.

This is proved, first, by all those passages of Holy Scripture in which this judging is enjoined also upon ordinary Christians. For instance, thus writes the holy Apostle Paul: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" etc., 1 Cor. 10:15,16. Again: "Try the spirits whether they are of God," 1 John 4:1. Compare 2 John 10:11; 1 Thess. 5:21.

The proof is furnished, furthermore, by all those passages in which Christians are exhorted to beware of false prophets, such as Matt. 7:15,16; John 10:5, and in such passages in which they are praised for their zeal in testing doctrine, for instance, when we are told regarding the Bereans: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so," Acts 17:11.

Lastly, we have an account in the Acts of the Apostles stating that at the first apostolic council laymen were not only present but also spoke, and that the decisions reached on this occasion were made by them as well as by the apostles and elders and were sent in their name as well as that of the apostles. Hence there is no doubt that laymen have a seat and voice in church judicatories and at synods with the public minister of the Church.

Appendix: Citations from Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession

From the Catechism

What is the Office of the Keys? The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth: to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent sinners as long as they do not repent. *Where is this written?* The evangelist writes, John 20, 22-23: "Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'"
What do you believe according to these words? I believe that, when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.

From the Augsburg Confession (Articles V, XIV, and a portion of XXVIII)

In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel. That is to say, it is not on account of our own merits but on account of Christ that God justifies those who believe that they are received into

favor for Christ's sake. Gal. 3:14, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works. (Article V)

Our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called. (Article XIV)

Our teachers hold that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power or command of God to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this command, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." According to Mark 16:15 he also said, "Go and preach the gospel to the whole creation." This power is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and by administering the sacraments either to many or to individuals, depending on one's calling.

(From Article XXVIII)

(I put this on my sermons link, so the "Amen" and my name appear below, but Walther wrote it! RDP)

Amen

Rolf D. Preus

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