

The Specific Functions of the Church in the World

by Harold H. Eckert

The world is not just existing. It is being preserved. The Triune God who created it is preserving it. In this divinely preserved world is the Church. And the Church has a definite mission in the same. Yes, it has more than a definite one. It has a changeless one, an unchanging mission in a changing world. Its mission is to perform specific functions. These functions are not self-assigned. The Lord assigned them to the Church. And this essay, as its theme reveals, is a discourse on these functions.

The Specific Functions of the Church in the World

If one desires to gain a clear picture of the specific functions of the Church in this world for one's self, it is of utmost importance to acquire a true picture of the Church itself first. Without the latter the former cannot be had. Likewise if one wishes to give a clear picture of the specific functions of the Church to others, it is necessary to give a true picture of the Church to them first.

I. The Church

1. What is the Church?

The word, Church, *Ekklesia*, appears twice in the four gospels. In both instances it is the Lord Jesus who uses the term. In Matthew 16 He speaks to Peter of the Church. In Matthew 18 He instructs His disciples to go to the Church, to "tell it to the Church."

One reading of these two passages suffices to make one Scripturally sure that *the Church is no development in history after the time of Christ*. These passages reveal that the Church was on earth when Christ sojourned here. It was here in such reality and in such a concrete form that Christ could not only and did not only speak of it, but actually could and did direct His disciples to it. "Tell it to the Church."

The papacy claims to be the Church. A leaflet, "Why", Answers to Questions On Religion, printed November 12, 1944, Vol. 1, No. 46, states this claim clearly:

"Any church that claims to be the Church of Christ today must be able to trace its lineage back to Christ and to him upon whom Christ built His Church. And Christ built His Church upon Peter saying to him, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church." (Matthew 16, 18). That Church alone, therefore, whose genealogy goes back in unbroken line to Peter and his Divine Master is truly the one and only Church of Christ. So much would seem conclusive.

"What Church then, does go back in unbroken line to Peter and his Divine Master? Here we are concerned with a simple fact of history. Study the history of the different denominations, and what do you find? When were they founded? By whom were they founded? They were founded, all of them, not by Christ, but by men. They were founded not at the time of Christ and His Apostles, but quite recently; some of them within the past four hundred years; none of them within a thousand five hundred years of Christ. Compared with the Catholic Church they are as of yesterday.

"The Catholic Church alone was founded not by man but by God. She alone goes back

historically to Christ. Just as history vindicates to Franklin Delano Roosevelt the sole right to sit in the presidential chair of our nation by tracing his ancestry in that office back through the legitimate incumbents who have succeeded immortal Washington; so too, in like manner, does history bear witness to the claims of the Catholics that Pius XII is the legitimate head of Christ's Church on earth, by tracing his prerogative to that office through the two hundred and sixty-one popes who have preceded him in the Chair of St. Peter. History, therefore, tells us of but one Church that has come down through the centuries direct from the hands of Christ, of but one Church that goes back in unbroken line to Christ in proof of her divine mission and authority. No fact of history stands out so unmistakable as this. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the Catholic Church is the one outstanding fact of history. From the day of her foundation, she has been the central fact around which all the facts of history have revolved and without which most of them would be inexplicable and without meaning. She is a continuous, ever-present fact; men come and go; the Church endures; amid all the changes of succeeding generations, she alone stands intact, one in prayer, one in doctrine, one in the same Sacraments and Sacrifice, one in continuity and identical in delegated power with the Church of the Apostles, as truly the depository of Revelation and the living dispenser of the gifts of the Gospel today as were the Apostles themselves."

Yes, there we have Rome's claim stated clearly, emphatically. Is it true? Is the Roman Catholic Church the Church? If so, then it is high time for us to discontinue the celebration of the Reformation and to return to Rome's bosom, for we then are not in the Church. We know from the Scriptures that only those who are in the Church are saved. If it is true it is high time that we recognize Luther not as a gift of God to us, but as a servant of the devil whom Satan used to lead thousands and still more thousands from the circle of the Church to damnation.

Let us, however, not turn against Luther, neither return to Rome. Rome is just that which Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 reveal that the Church is not. *Rome is a development in history after Christ.* Rome's claim is built upon a subtle line of argumentation, and at the same time upon a suicidal line also. When Rome resorts to history to prove its claim, it hangs its claim in history with history. There was no Roman Catholic Church at the time of Christ or immediately thereafter. The papacy developed in history after the break between Constantinople and Rome. Rome cannot be identified with the Church, either historically or Scripturally. Scripturally the papacy, however, can be identified with the Anti-Christ. Rome is a culmination of the Anti-Christ movement which according to the Scriptures was already in progress at Paul's time. And Rome is "a continuous, ever-present fact" though "men and nations come and go," not because Rome is the Church, but because the Lord's Word, 2 Thessalonians 2, must go into fulfillment. The Lord will "let" the Anti-Christ "until he be taken out of the way" on Judgment Day; "and then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

It, however, is alarming to note that the number in conservative Lutheran bodies is increasing which is wavering on the question of the Anti-Christ. The reason can hardly be a more sound and thorough exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2 than the Fathers made, or a Scripturally sound rethinking of our Confessions. A sound and thorough exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2 tends to do but one thing, to establish the fact in one's mind more and more, Rome is the Anti-Christ, our Confessions are Truth. Not sounder and more thorough exegesis than of old, but unionistic trends within Lutheran bodies no doubt move some to behold Rome otherwise than the Scriptures

depict it and our Confessions point it out. May our stand against Rome, the Anti-Christ, which undermines the doctrine which is the heart and foundation of Christ's teaching, full and complete justification by grace through faith, and proclaims additional offerings for sin necessary for salvation, which dishonors Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice, and teaches men to trust in the works of saints to the loss of their souls, remain firm and unchanged, to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

As Rome, so *all denominations are developments in history after the time of Christ*. Hence it is clear in the light of Matthew 16 and Matthew 18 that no denomination is the Church.

But what then is the Church? Synods? Can any Synod truthfully claim to be "*Die allein seligmachende Kirche*"? *Synods also are a development in history after Christ*.

How about the local organized congregation? *The local, organized congregation is a development in history after Christ also*. "*Die erste Christen gemeinde war die Gemeinde zu Jerusalem*." (Stoockhardt, Synodal-Bericht, Nebraska-Districts, 1895). The Christian congregation appeared first after Pentecost, and in the form in which we have it today much later than Pentecost. If the expression the Church could be restricted to the local organized congregation, and is restricted to the same, then the disciples at Christ's time were "churchless", and could not have heeded Christ's words, Matthew 18, no matter how much they desired to do so.

But what then is the Church? Let us seek the answer in the Scriptures. The first passage in the N.T. in which the word, Church, *Ekklesia*, appears is found Matthew 16, as already stated. This passage contains a detailed description of the Church. We shall study this description, and then determine with the aid of the Scriptures where the description fits.

Matthew 16 the Lord says to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." This passage clearly points out two things about the Church. First, *the Church has a foundation*. It is built on a rock. Secondly, *the Church is a building*. It is something that is built.

What kind of foundation has the Church? The Scriptures answer, one specific, definite foundation, for Jesus says: "Upon this rock." The Church is not built on any rock, or on different rocks.

Who or what could this one specific, definite rock be? Rome claims that Peter is "this rock." It asserts that Peter and rock are one and the same. It maintains that Jesus made Peter the foundation of the Church when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." But let us examine the words of Jesus closely before we agree with Rome and accept Peter as the foundation. Jesus says: "*Su ei Petro*"—"Thou art Peter." Peter in Greek is "*petros*." And then Jesus adds: "*Epi taute te petra*"—"upon this rock." Rock is "*petra*." Jesus, therefore, does not use "*petros*" twice. This is significant, for "*petros*" and "*petra*" are not one and the same in Greek. "*Petra*" is a firm, fixed, solid cliff. "*Petros*" is a boulder. There is a big difference between a cliff and a boulder. Stand first before one and then before the other and you will feel the difference between a cliff and a boulder, between "*petros*" and "*petra*." You are at ease as you stand before a cliff and admire it in its firm, massive immovable strength. But that is not true in the case of the boulder. Have you not seen sight-seers move with hurried steps out of the path of a boulder? Perhaps you have even done so yourself. Why? It stands there huge and towering, but not with the firmness and solidity of a cliff. You just feel that boulder could fall. It could roll down upon me. It is not standing in its own strength. Something is holding it up. Perhaps only a small prop is doing so. And if that would give way down it would go strengthless to hold itself up, and with no strength of its own to raise itself up again, and if you would be in its path it would mean certain destruction.—A study of these two words then shows that the

foundation of the Church and Peter are distinctly different. The foundation of the Church is “*petra*”, a definite “*petra*”, a firm, massive, solid foundation. Peter is “*petros*”, a huge towering boulder standing not in his own strength.—And Peter indeed was a huge, towering boulder when Jesus asked: “But whom say ye that I am?” Mighty and towering in faith he answered: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” He was no unbeliever, He was no little pebble in faith. But he was no more than a boulder. He was no cliff, He stood firm and towering, not in his own strength, but in the strength of his faith, which was not of him but of the Holy Ghost. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” His “I” was not holding him up and in place. Faith was doing so. In faith he stood. And when his faith weakened and he thought that he could stand in the strength of his inflated ego, down fell Peter, the boulder, into the valley of denial, nothing but a strengthless, helpless mass of old evil flesh cursing and swearing: “I know not the man,” and lay impotent in impenitence until the Lord in His grace lifted him up again with a gracious glance to repentance and restored him to his place.

No, “*petros*” is not “*petra*.” There is a tremendous difference between a “*petros*” and a “*petra*”; and so there must be and is a tremendous difference between Peter and “this rock” which is the foundation of the Church. A study of “*petros*” and “*petra*” found in Matthew 16 does not prop up Rome’s Petrine doctrine. In fact there is not one single passage in the entire Scriptures which does. For that reason we shall without further ado leave Rome’s Petrine doctrine there where the Scriptures do, namely, in the valley of false doctrine.

There it was from the moment of its conception in time. There it will ever remain, There all doctrines conceived in time are from the moment of their conception. No true doctrine was ever conceived in time by men. All true doctrine is of God and eternal. “Thou, O Lord, are our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting” Isaiah 63, 16b.

Before moving on, it, however, might be of interest to add that Rome ought not to be teaching and preaching its Petrine doctrine on the basis of Rome’s own rule of explaining the Scriptures and determining doctrine. Rome’s rule for explaining the Scriptures and determining doctrine is the Creed of Pius IV. This Creed binds Rome to explain the Scriptures only according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. In the year 1870 when the Fathers gathered and the pope declared his infallibility, the cardinals were not in agreement on Matthew 16, 18. They had five different interpretations. Seventeen insisted, Peter is the rock. Sixteen held that Christ is the rock. Eight were emphatic that the whole apostolic college is the rock. Forty-four said, Peter’s faith is the rock, The remainder looked upon the whole body of believers as the rock.—And yet Rome taught and still teaches that Peter is the rock. That is the Anti-Christ at work. He has no respect for God’s Word; and he has no regard even for his own word when he desires to score a point. The pope, the vicar of Christ on earth? Nay, he is “that man of sin”, “the son of perdition.” “that Wicked,” “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

But who or what is “this rock”, “*he petra*” of Matthew 16? “1 Corinthians 10, 4 speaks to us of a most definite rock, of “*he petra*.” It informs us that that rock (“*petra*,” firm, massive, immovable) followed the children of Israel in the desert. Strange, is it not? An immovable “*petra*,” yet it moves! And yet not so strange when we read on, for 1 Corinthians 10, 4 continues “*he petra*” was Christ. The firm, immovable, changeless Christ (Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever), followed the children of Israel. Christ is a “*petra*”. Yea, Christ is “*he Petra*”. the rock. Christ did not make Peter the foundation of the Church in Matthew 16 when He used the terms “*petros*” and “*petra*”. He employed a play upon words. He spoke to Peter, “*petros*,” and said: “Thou art “*Petros*”, and My Church is built upon “*he petra*”.

But some perhaps insist that the immediate context be taken into consideration in the

exegesis of “*petra*” before Christ is declared definitely to be the “*petra*”, the foundation of the Church. Their line of argumentation no doubt is that sound exegesis busies itself with the immediate context, and especially in this case in view of the “*taute te*”, the demonstrative and the article. “*Taute te*” has the force of a double demonstrative and is anaphoric. It refers to what has been previously mentioned.—To satisfy them let us look at the immediate context. What has already been said about “*petros*” and “*petra*” clearly eliminates the possibility that “*Taute te*” can go back and does go back to “*Petros*”, Peter. One thing alone then remains in the immediate context to which “*taute te*” can refer. That is Peter’s confession, the foundation on which Peter’s faith rested, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”—Our Confessions (Art. Sm., p. 510, 26-27, Triglotta) explain this passage thus also.—Now what is the sum and substance of Peter’s confession? The answer is Christ, the eternal Son of God, Christ, very God of very God from eternity, who became man; not a Christ who was and is a mere man, a noble character, a great teacher. Peter’s faith rested not on the Christ of the modernists, but the Christ of the Scriptures, that Christ, the “*he petra*”, who is from eternity and was in His grace with the children of Israel in the desert. And Matthew 16 tells us that Christ’s Church would rest on the same, be built on the same, on Christ. Therefore, “*The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.*”

But what now is the building which is the Church? We have located the foundation, but after all our aim is to find the building which is the Church. Let us study the building which is the Church in the light of Matthew 16, and see if such a study will not aid us in locating the Church. As we do so we note the following:

First, the building which is *the Church is a building which is Christ’s workmanship*. Jesus says: Matthew 16 “*I will build my church.*” The Church clearly is not the work of human hands, reason or mind. It is not something which men make, organize. It is Christ’s workmanship. “*She is His new creation.*”

Secondly, the building which is *the Church is a building which is in the continuous process of being built and nothing can hinder its erection*. Jesus states Matthew 16 “*Oikodomeso*”, “*I will build.*” “*Oikodomeso*” is durative future with volative action. Durative future denotes that the Church is something that Jesus continues to build, to add to unto the end of time. It is not a completed structure in this sense of the word, that all its stones are in place already. Volative action denotes that the Church is something that *shall* be built. There are no “ifs” and “buts” about this building program. Christ *shall* build, Peter hears. He is not waiting for sealed bids to be opened to decide if the price is too high. He is not asking have I the price to build. All is settled. He knows the price. He must pay for His Church. He has the price. He can pay it. He shall. The building is going up at all costs and despite all costs. “*I will build.*”

Thirdly, the building which is *the Church is a building which is Christ’s possession*. Jesus says Matthew 16: “*I will build my church.*”

Fourthly, the building which is *the Church is a building of living stone, of people*. It is not a building of wood stone. Attic Greek points to this fact. Jesus calls His Church, “*Ekklesia*,” in Matthew 16. He says: “*Oikodomeso mou ten Ekklesian.*” And in Attic Greek the original meaning of “*Ekklesia*” was free men, citizens assembled in a definite manner, at a definite place. A herald passed through the streets and called out, (“*Ek*”, out, and “*kaleo*”, call). He had a message, informative to give. This call did not go out to all people, to slaves, men in bondage, foreigners, free men and citizens. It was directed only to the free men, citizens. The free men and citizens who heeded this call and were called out of their homes and gathered where the herald led them were known as the “*Ekklesia*.” Such a group of people called and gathered was an

“*Ekklesia*.” The original meaning of “*Ekklesia*” in Attic Greek, therefore, leads us to seek Jesus “*Ekklesia*” not in the realm of wood and stone, but in the realm of people. In time “*Ekklesia*” acquired another meaning in Attic Greek. The term was applied to the constitutional assembly at Athens. This assembly was made up of people. This meaning, therefore, also leads us to seek the “*Ekklesia*” not in the realm of wood and stone, but in the realm of people.

The Septuagint also leads us to seek His Church in the realm of people. “*Ekklesia*” appears in the Septuagint. The term is applied to the children of Israel, in the Septuagint, in other words, not wood and stone but people again.

What clinches the argument, however, that the Church is a building of living stone, of people, is the usage of “*Ekklesia*” in the N.T. itself. Attic Greek and the Septuagint usages after all have not too much authority in the N.T. The Septuagint is not the basis of N.T. Greek. The N.T. is not Hebraized Greek, not derived from the Septuagint. At the most 150 out of more than 4800 words of the N.T. (proper names not included) are strictly peculiar to the N.T. and the Septuagint. Papyri and inscriptions by now no doubt have revealed the number to be far less than 150. And Attic Greek and Koine are not one and the same. Here is what a study of “*Ekklesia*” in the N.T. itself reveals. In one instance, Acts 19, 32, 39, 41, “*Ekklesia*” is used in the Attic sense. In two passages, Acts 7, 38 and Hebrews 2, 12, “*Ekklesia*” has the Septuagint meaning, children of Israel. In a few cases, for example, 1 Corinthians 11, 18 and 1 Corinthians 14, 19, it means an assembly of Christians. And finally it has the meaning of the believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the Living God; people like unto Peter, who rest in faith on Christ Jesus. The writer believes he is stating truth, if he adds that “*Ekklesia*” in the N.T., with but the few exceptions mentioned, always means the believers in Christ either in a local or universal sense. For example in a local sense; in a house, Romans 16, 5; 1 Corinthians 16, 19; Colossians 4, 15; Philemon 2—in a city, 1 Corinthians 1, 2; 2 Corinthians 1, 1; 1 Thessalonians 1, 1, 2 Thessalonians 1, 1—in a province, 1 Corinthians 16, 1; 2 Corinthians 8, 1-19; Galatians 1, 2, 22; Titus 1, 5; Acts 9, 31; 2 Corinthians 9, 2. In a universal sense, Ephesians and Matthew 16, 18,

Finally, the building which is *the Church is a lasting, indestructible structure*. Jesus concludes: “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “The Church will never perish. Tho’ there be those who hate her, false sons within her pale, against both foe and traitor, she ever will prevail.”

On the basis of this study what then is the Church? *The Church is people, and not any and all people, but all believers in this world whose faith rests on Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God*. The Church is a spiritual building of living stones resting on Him who is Life itself. It is Christ’s workmanship, His possession. And it is most interesting to go into the Scriptures and to find the believers in Christ to be exactly what Jesus describes Matthew 16. For example, Ephesians 2, 10 informs us that believers are the work of the “I” of Matthew 16, of Jesus, We read there: “We (the saints in Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 1, 1) are His workmanship.” 1 Peter 2, 4-8 and Colossians 2, 7 call believers “living stones,” “a spiritual house” built upon Christ the living stone. Acts 4, 11 points out Jesus as the “Headstone of the corner”, the sure foundation of the believers. And 1 Corinthians 3, 23 Christians, believers, are labeled as Christ’s possession. And a study of the usage of “*oikodomeo*” in its various forms in the N.T. clearly fits into the picture of Matthew 16 and supports the fact that Jesus speaks Matthew 16, not of piling up wood and stone, but of bringing people to faith, keeping and strengthening them in faith; for the meaning of “*oikodomeo*” in its various forms in any number of Scripture passages in its final analysis is none other than bringing to, keeping and strengthening in faith (Cf. Acts 20, 32; Ephesians 2, 22; Colossians 2, 17; 1 Peter 2, 5; Jude 20).

2. Who knows the Church?

No man knows the Church. No man can say: “Lo here! Lo there!” Faith is invisible, The Church is invisible. (Luke 17, 20-21; Judas; Romans 10, 9-10; 1 Corinthians 4, 5; 1 Peter 3, 4).

The Lord alone knows His Church. He ever has, now does, and always will know His Church (Romans 8, 29; 2 Timothy 2, 9; John 10, 14-27, Matthew 25, 12; Matthew 25, 31-46).

We therefore, must be satisfied to be such who know, *what* the Church is, but not *who* the Church is. And if we ever bear in mind what the Church is, that it is the body of believers in Christ Jesus, known only to God, we shall not confuse the Church Invisible with visible church organizations. We shall not be drawn into the circle of those who today aim at world prominence and world dominion, holding world conventions for world movements, not on the basis of sound doctrine but by compromising doctrine, all in the name of the Church, and think that we actually are building the Church on earth thereby, and are the Church at work. The Church is not built by such conventions, such unions. Anti-Christ movements are the result of such action. And such who attempt to make it a matter of conscience unto us for not participating in such movements will fail in their efforts, if we remain clear on the Church. Neither will anyone be able to do to us what Grabau did with the consciences of the Lutherans in Perry Co., Mo., and the pope did to Luther for a time, if we but cling to the truth of what the Church is. The last chain that fettered Luther to the papacy was the pope’s false teaching that Rome is the Church. Luther for a time thought that his salvation was dependent upon the Roman Catholic Church to this degree, that it was the Church, and to be saved he, therefore, had to remain in it or attached to it. Once he, however, learned that the Church is not Rome, but a spiritual house, the body of believers, the chain was broken and he was free, completely free from Rome in the eternal truth: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” And Grabau had the Lutherans in Perry. Co., Mo., all upset with his false teaching of the Church, namely, that the Church is a “visible aggregate composed of ministers, whose function was to instruct their parishioners and direct all church affairs, and laymen, whose duty it was to hear and obey.” Once the Lord through His servant Walther taught these people, that the believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, are the Church, and that the Church is not only in a Grabau organization, but also in congregations organized individually, because believers are there, were they in doubt any longer about their status as Church.—Yes, let us remain clear on the matter of the Church. Next to the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of the Church is of utmost importance. The confusion in Lutheran Church circles today and the wild union efforts on the part of some in many instances without a doubt is to be attributed to a wrong conception of the Church. A Lutheran ecclesiastical empire is no more the Church than the Roman See. To build a Lutheran ecclesiastical empire, and at the expense of sound doctrine, is not building the Church. We Lutherans, who by God’s grace still have the Word in its truth and purity, and know the Bible only as that which it is (The Bible is the Word of God), are not here to compromise the Word and build an ecclesiastical empire, but to remain steadfast and true to the Word, and to bring it to others in its truth and purity. If doing that great and glorious work has lost its greatness and glamour for us, and ecclesiastical empires mean more to us than every last word of Holy Writ then we as organizations are fast moving into the circle of anti-christian organizations, and should take particular note of what true discipleship of Christ consists. “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The welfare of the Church is not served by the creation of and living in a mammoth synodical utopia at the expense of Christian doctrine and practice. The devil, the world, and the

flesh are. The welfare of the Church is not served by Petrine fellowshiping and spineless confessionalism. Withstanding to the face in faith and love on the basis of true doctrine and practice, though not a popular mode of procedure, is truly Christian, and though it disrupts many a “lovely” relationship, is true love. One Paul serves the Church in dark days of unionism more than an entire synod of Peters. Let us all strive for purity in doctrine, for truth. With purity of doctrine, agreement on the Scriptures, union movements will not be necessary, unity will be there, and truth will bring together, not to form an ecclesiastical empire, but to proclaim the Truth to all to the glory and greatness of Christ, and the salvation of souls, and to strengthen one another in the Truth, not to weaken one another in our stand toward the Truth, the Bible.

II. The Specific Functions of the Church in the World

The Church not only is a work (Christ’s workmanship), it also has its work. The believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, have functions to perform on earth. Matthew 18, 17, the second, and at the same time, the last passage in the Gospels in which the word, “*Ekklesia*,” appears, reveals this. The Matthew 18 passage in its entire context leaves no room for doubt that the believers are on earth to perform functions individually and jointly. The functions are not self-assigned. Christ assigned them to His Church. These are specific functions peculiar to the Church. And these functions are the very same as those of Christ, the Lord of the Church, namely, the functions of a priest, a prophet, and a king. Christ and His Church are one in this respect that every believer like unto Christ is a priest, prophet, and king. These specific functions of the Church on earth will now engage our attention.

The Church has the specific functions of a priest

Why are the specific functions of the Church those of a priest?

1 Peter 2, 9 points out that believers in contrast to unbelievers, are a priesthood, that is, every believer is a priest, and the sum and total of all believers is a priesthood, 1 Peter 2, 9 states: “Ye,” namely, the “you therefore which believe” of 1 Peter 2, 7, in contrast to “them which be disobedient” v. 7 and “stumble at the word” v. 8, the unbelievers, “Ye are a priesthood.” Believers, not unbelievers, are a priesthood, a body of priests with all the priestly rights and privileges.

1 Peter 2, 5 reveals that believers in all their weakness are an holy priesthood. “Ye are built up an holy priesthood.” The “Ye” again are believers; believers whose life is not perfection. Believers to whom the Lord must speak thus: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”, 1 Peter 2, 1. The believer, the holy believer in spite of all his weakness (Romans 7, 18-19) is a priest, a holy priest.

Revelations 1, 6 states that we, the believers, have been made priests. “And hath made us priests.”

Revelation 5, 10 repeats: “And hath made us unto God priests.”

What are the specific functions of the Church in the light, of the fact that they are those of a priest?

The specific functions of a priest are threefold.

A priest is ordained *to offer gifts and sacrifices*. “For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices,” Hebrews 8, 3.

A priest lives *to make intercession*. “Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”, Hebrews 7, 25.

A priest *teaches and preaches the Lord’s Message*. “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts,” Malachi 2, 7.

The priestly functions of the Church, therefore, are:
The bringing of sacrifices.

Sin sacrifices? Christ Jesus, our high priest, “Who His own self bare our sins in His body on the tree,” 1 Peter 2, 24, once and for all time brought an offering for our sins, “one sacrifice for sins forever”, Hebrews 10, 12, “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” Hebrews 10, 14. No more sin offering is necessary for us. “Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin,” Hebrews 10, 18. Anyone who proclaims that additional offerings for sin are necessary dishonors Christ’s all-sufficient sacrifice, no longer preaches truth, is a false prophet, a tool of satan, an antichrist.

Spiritual sacrifices? “Ye are an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices,” 1 Peter 2, 5: Yes, spiritual sacrifices, which are:

Penitent heart. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise”, Psalm 51, 17.

Praising lips. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High”, Psalm 50, 14. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me”, Psalm 50, 23. “And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints,” Revelation 5, 8.

Thankful hands. “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”, Hebrews 13, 16.

Acceptable bodies. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”, Romans 12, 1.

The making of intercession.

For whom? For all! 1 Timothy 2, 1.—Kings and all in authority (1 Timothy 2, 2); Pastors, servants of the Word (1 Thessalonians 5, 25); Sick (James 5, 14-16); Saints (Ephesians 6, 18); Enemies (Matthew 5, 44).

To whom? The Triune God only! (Exodus 20, 4-5; Revelation 22, 9).

How? In Jesus’ name (John 16, 23); with clean hands (Isaiah 1, 15-17; 1 Timothy 2, 8); not as hypocrites (Matthew 6, 5-8); in faith (Mark 11, 24; Matthew 21, 22; James 1, 6-8).

When and where? Without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5, 17). Everywhere (1 Timothy 2, 8), but not with everyone. We pray for all as Christians but we are not to pray with all. The command to preach the Gospel is not to be confused with the command to pray. They are distinctively different commands. We are to preach to all, but not pray with all. Prayer fellowship with such who are not one in doctrine

with us cannot be justified by claiming the right to preach the Gospel in this manner and in all the world. In fact, no prayer-fellowship with any heretics, and if the prayer is pure Gospel, is a preaching of the Gospel. It is merely sending an uncertain, confusing sound into a unionistic world which rejoices. Actions in such a case speak louder than all the words. The cause of pure doctrine is not helped by promiscuous prayer-fellowship, but injured. A humble country pastor standing firm on prayer-fellowship is doing more for the reign of Truth than renowned radio speakers reaching thousands who waver on the same, and practice promiscuous prayer-fellowship to gain people for Truth.

The teaching and preaching of the Lord's Message.

What is the Lord's Message? "Praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light", 1 Peter 2, 9; "All things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matthew 28, 20; "Gospel", Mark 16, 15; "Good tidings", "Behold your God", Isaiah 40, 9.

Where to be preached? Family (Colossians 3, 16; Ephesians 5, 19; 5, 22ff; Ephesians 6, 4); Among brethren (Colossians 3, 16; Ephesians 5, 19; Matthew 18, 15-18); To world (Matthew 28, 19; Mark 16, 15; Acts 13, 2-3).

How to be preached? In word, Matthew 28; in deed, (1 Peter 2, 11-12; Matthew 5, 16). To what end? THE SALVATION OF SINNERS, THE EDIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

The teaching and preaching of the Church is the greatest cultural factor on earth. Nothing means more for good citizenship to a country than the teaching and preaching of the Church. And wherever the Gospel is preached material blessings follow. The teaching and preaching of the Church are not to these ends, however. The Gospel is not social but saving. Its preaching has as its aim not social but saving reform (repentance). As Christ, so His Gospel (Matthew 9, 13; 10, 34; John 6, 26, 35); so the preaching of the same (Luke 24, 46-49). Christ came, established His Gospel, commanded us to preach it, not to the salvation of the temporal (cities, Jerusalem, not one stone was left upon another; nations, Roman Empire, decayed, gone; armies), but to the salvation of the eternal, the soul, bought with His blood. The preaching of the Gospel is not unto civic but saving righteousness, not unto morale or morals but unto repentance, faith, life and salvation, unto building Zion by bringing lost souls to faith and edifying souls that are in faith.

The Church has the specific functions of a prophet

Why has the Church the specific functions of a prophet?

Christ today in exaltation is performing His prophetic function on earth through the Church. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you," John 20, 21. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations—; And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world," Matthew 28. "He that heareth you, heareth me", Luke 10, 16. The Church employed by Christ as His minister and ambassador, therefore, has the specific functions of a prophet.

What are the specific prophetic functions of the Church?

Prophet, priest, and king are three distinct terms and offices; and in our dogmatics we clearly distinguish these offices. A study of the Scriptures, however, makes clear that the activity of these three offices coincide at various points so, that though we clearly distinguish the three offices, yet scripturally we cannot assign certain functions, certain activity, just to one office and not to another. For example, a prophet preaches, is a preacher. But that is also true of a priest. Malachi 2, 7 leaves no room for doubt about this in one's mind. There we read: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts". 1 Peter 2, 9 the Lord states, the priesthood, that is, every priest, is there to "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness". "To show forth" means to preach, in German, "*verkuendigen*". Likewise a king is a preacher. To rule as king, the king must preach. 1 Peter 2, 9 reveals that the three offices, prophet, priest, king, in activity are so related, that their activities coincide at some points to such an extent that the Lord is able to speak in one breath of the activity of a prophet as a function of kings and priests.

We, therefore, shall not go in on a discussion of the specific prophetic functions of the Church, since these functions have been touched upon to some extent in the discussion of the priesthood, and they will be touched upon and explained to a far greater degree when we now treat the kingly functions of the Church.

The Church has the specific functions of a king.

Why has the Church the specific functions of a king?

All believers are kings. All believers according to 1 Peter 2, 9 are "a royal priesthood", that is, every priest is royal, a king. Revelation 1, 6 and Revelation 5, 10 clearly state we are kings and priests.

How are believers kings?

Not by birth, by nature! By birth, by nature we are the children of wrath, Ephesians 2, 3.

By rebirth! The believers as kings are His creation by Water and the Word. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", be a king among other kings, with Christ the King of kings. Christ "hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father," Revelation 1, 6; Revelation 5, 10. Yes, the believers, the kings, are His workmanship. (Ephesians 2, 10) "*I will build my Church*", Matthew 16, 19.

What kind of kings are the believers?

Kings of peace!

Believers live in peace. It is not an external peace. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles," Matthew 10, 16-18. "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" John 16, 33. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14, 22. "And I said unto him, Sir,

thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation,” Revelation 7, 14. No, believers have not external peace in the world, but internal peace in Christ Jesus. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace,” John 16, 33. “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, John 14, 27.

Believers live to spread peace on earth. It is not the peace for which the world is crying. The world wants peace on earth, an external peace; swords should become plough shares. Why? That it might live its life of sin and serve the flesh undisturbed. But that is not the peace believers live to spread, peace with sin, peace in sin. They live to spread the peace within which they have peace with God through Christ, the peace which Christ brought the sinner with God.

Believers die in peace. “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,” Luke 2, 29.

And the end of all believers is eternal peace in heaven. “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes, believers are kings of peace. The functions of the Church are in the hands of kings of peace.

And yet the functions of the Church are in the hands of warriors; for believers are:

Kings of peace always at war:

The Church on earth is the Church Militant. Believers are fighters The Lord exhorts them to fight. And they fight. Hard battles are fought internally in the believer’s life. His life is a lining up of the flesh against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. The believer is at war with his own flesh. And he is no ally of the devil and the world. And the believers spread warfare. This is self-evident. Christ brought peace. He came to earth for the very purpose of bringing the sinner peace with God. Yet the Prince of Peace lived a life of warfare on earth and brought the world warfare. He fought the forces of darkness from Bethlehem to Calvary. He came not to their peace. He came to overcome them for us, that we might have peace with God. And he brought the world the fiercest warfare in all history. There never was any like it before His coming. There never has been any like it, since He came. And never again will there be any like it, like the battle of Calvary. It was fierce. It was bitter. It was fought all alone by Jesus, at the mercy of all of the enemies of Light. Psalm 22, 1-2; “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why are thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my rearing? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent”.6-8;—“But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him!” 11-18;—“Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou has brought me into the dust of death. For the dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Yes, it was a bitter, a fierce fight; and it cost Jesus His last drop of blood. His all to win it.—And Jesus did not take warfare out of this world when He ascended. In fact, He sent the world a sword when He commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel of Peace in all the world after His ascension. The Gospel of Peace spreads war. Preachers of this gospel spread warfare. “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword.” Matthew 10, 34. Christ’s Gospel sets men at variance with one another. It even divides families and sets their

members at variance with one another—(Matthew 10, 35-36). And whenever a man receives it into his heart, by the grace of God through the strength of the Spirit, it leads to war in that man's life, flesh against the spirit, spirit against the flesh.

And what are the weapons of warfare of these kings? They are not carnal, 2 Corinthians 10, 4. They are not force, Matthew 13, 24-30. They are not numbers (unionism). They are not renowned men in Church offices. They are not a Tower of Babel. Away with the carnal! "Put up again thy sword." Matthew 26, 52. Woe unto the Church when it reaches for carnal weapons or allies itself with carnal forces to fight its battles and extend the boundaries of Zion. That means disaster. "For *all* they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."—The Church's weapons are: "The armour of God, having your loins girt about with truth; having on the breastplate of righteousness; your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,*" Ephesians 6, 13-17. Truth, the Word, is the Church's defensive and offensive weapon.

And the history of the warfare of these kings? *Many battles are lost* by the kings due to their flesh, the Old Adam. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" Romans 7, 17-19. *But* the believer *never* loses *the war*. There are no believers in hell. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8, 1. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us," Romans 8, 37. Yes, many a battle lost in the weakness of the flesh, but the final victory always won in Christ by the kings.

All believers as kings have a kingdom in which to rule.
The believers are not kings without a kingdom.

The origin of the Church's, the believers', kingdom.
Its origin is not the human mind.

Its origin is Divine. It is from, by, and through Jesus to the Church. Luke 22, 29 Jesus said to the Church: "I appoint unto you a kingdom."

The essence of the Church's, the believers', kingdom.

The kingdom is not the Church itself. The believers are not the kingdom. *Ekklesia* and *Basileia* are not synonymous terms. *Ekklesia* and *Basileia* are definitely different. Luke 22, 29 clearly reveals this. Jesus speaking to the believers Luke 22, 29 said: "I appoint unto you a kingdom: that is, "I assign unto you a kingdom", He did not say: "I make you believers, the Church, to be a kingdom. From now on you believers, the Church, are a kingdom." He said: "I assign unto you believers, the Church, a kingdom."

After the appointment the Church, *Ekklesia*, was not a kingdom, *Basileia*, but the *Ekklesia* had a *Basileia*, the Church had a kingdom.

The essence of the Church's kingdom is the same as the essence of the kingdom of Christ. Luke 22, 29 reveals this clearly also, for Jesus there adds: "I appoint unto you a kingdom even as my Father has appointed it unto me."

In essence the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the Church, therefore, are the same.

What is the essence of Christ's kingdom?

In Luther's day, Luther's opponent thought the essence of Christ's kingdom to be people, the visible realm of believers and unbelievers, good and evil, the visible church, to use that expression. Today some still look upon Christ's kingdom as that.

The essayist for a time thought of the essence of the kingdom of Christ in terms of people also. To him the kingdom of Christ, *Basileia*, and the Church, *Ekklesia*, were synonymous. In other words, he thought the believers were the kingdom of Christ. And the essayist is sure that he stood not alone among his brethren with this interpretation of the essence of Christ's kingdom.

That the essayist and others should have had such an opinion, is not surprising, for time after time one reads articles which present *Ekklesia* and *Basileia* as synonymous. That is ecclesiastical usage in our midst. And if one does not read some portions of our Confessions carefully it appears as if they at times speak of *Ekklesia* and *Basileia* as synonymous. (Cf. Apol. p. 230,16-18). Gausewitz's Catechism also uses kingdom of God now and then as if it is a synonym of the Church.

As long as the essayist thought of *Basileia* in terms of *Ekklesia*, the Church, believers, people, he experienced difficulty in his exegesis of passages in which the expression appears, and naturally so, for the essence of Christ's kingdom is not people, but it is the exercising of Christ's kingly authority. Christ's kingdom is His gracious activity. Christ's kingdom is action. *Basileia tou theou* and *Ekklesia* are not synonymous. *Basileia tou theou* if applied at all to the Church in the Scriptures, can be applied in a restricted sense only. *Basileia* is a noun with verbal usage. A verb is a noun in action. A noun is a verb at rest. That is rule of grammar, but all rules have their exceptions, and *Basileia* is one exception. Kingdom is actually a kingdoming. The Father appointed unto Jesus a kingdoming, an activity, kingdom activity. The fact that *Basileia* and *Ekklesia* are not synonymous, however, does not mean that there is no relationship between the two. The two are like the concave and convex in a convexo-concave lens, they start from the same point, end at one and the same point, and where the one is the other is, where the convex is there the concave is, and vice versa; so with the *Basileia* and *Ekklesia*, the two are never one and the same thing, always distinctively different, yet where one is there the other is; one cannot be without the other.—This does not mean that the ecclesiastical usage of *Basileia* in our midst as pointed to before must be discarded, but let us not carry this usage into the Scriptures. It is not there. And doing so brings us into exegetical difficulties.

That the kingdom of Christ is not people, but the Lord's gracious activity Jesus pointed out to Pilate, John 18, 36-37. The Lord Jesus, when asked about His kingdom, informed Pilate that His kingdom was a gracious, royal rule of the Truth in the hearts of the sinners. It is that that He came to suffer and to die for and establish. Matthew 20, 21-22 relates that the mother of the sons of Zebedee desired special honor in Christ's kingdom for her sons. She knew not what she asked. She knew not what the kingdom was. Christ's answer to her and His words to all the disciples revealed that His kingdom was drinking the cup etc., activity, to the salvation of souls, ministering. The inspired Paul wrote Romans 14, 17: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And 1 Corinthians 4, 20: "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." Parable after parable pictures the kingdom not as people, but it depicts and explains the Lord's ways of exercising His kingly authority, how He performs His kingdom, how He "kingdoms". This concept of the kingdom in dogmatical language can be called the active concept of the kingdom of God.

Basileia tou theou is used in a figurative and not in its proper or original sense at times in the Scriptures. In such cases it, however, is never used synonymously with *Ekklesia* but

a) as a place one may enter—Matthew 5, 20; 18, 3; 19, 23; 8, 11; 16, 19; Luke 13, 28-29; Luke 14, 15; John 3, 5; Acts 14, 22; Ephesians 5, 5; Colossians 1, 13; 2 Timothy 4, 18—

b) as a possession one may have—Matthew 5, 3; Matthew 19, 14; Mark 10, 14-15; Luke 18, 16; 1 Corinthians 6, 9; Galatians 5, 21.

In both instances the kingdom is a living in and an enjoying of the kingly blessings. This concept of the kingdom in dogmatical language is called the receptive concept of the kingdom of God.

Some may object to this explanation of the kingdom, and be in total disagreement. But if we pick up Luther's Small Catechism we see that he is not. His explanation of the second petition teaches the kingdom not as people, but as God's gracious activity, as a God-toward-man activity. Yes, if we teach the words of the second petition as Luther wrote them we must teach God's kingdom as a God-toward-man activity. We must teach our youngsters that God's kingdom comes to them when what happens? When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word, and lead a godly life here in time and hereafter in eternity.—In other words, God's kingdom comes into their life and is in their life when the gracious saving activity of God comes into and is in their life. And Luther's Large Catechism clearly reveals that *Basileia* to him was royal activity, God's gracious rulership, the Savior's redemptive work, the Spirit's reign in the hearts of men; for there his explanation of the second petition is: (Cf. *Triglotta* 711, 51-54).

“But what is the kingdom of God? Answer: Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for which end He has also bestowed His Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power.

“Therefore, we pray here in the first place that this may become effective with us, and that His name be so praised through the holy Word of God and a Christian life that both we who have accepted it may abide and daily grow therein, and that it may gain approbation and adherence among other people and proceed with power throughout the world, that many may find entrance into the Kingdom of Grace, be made partakers of redemption, being let thereto by the Holy Ghost, in order that thus we may all together remain forever in the one kingdom now begun.

“For the coming of God's Kingdom to us occurs in two ways; first, here in time through the Word and faith; and secondly, in eternity forever through revelation. Now we pray for both these things, that it may come to those who are not yet in it, and, by daily increase, to us who have received the same, and hereafter in eternal life. All this is nothing else than saying: Dear Father, we pray, give us first Thy Word, that the Gospel be preached properly throughout the world; and secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Ghost Thy kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be put down, that he may have no right or power over us, until at last it shall be exterminated, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness.”

Several of Luther's sermons clearly reveal that *Basileia* to Luther was royal activity.

Shaller (cf. his Christology), Meyer (cf. Outline, p. 102) are not in disagreement on this point. Lenski explains Kingdom as activity, Harper's Analytical Greek Lexicon, and Kittel, *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum N.T.*—Stuttgart, 1933, as well as other Greek lexicons permit the translation of *Basilein* as a noun with verbal usage.

The believers' kingdom, therefore, since Jesus assigned the same kingdom to the Church that the Father assigned to Him, is nothing other than the actual exercise of their priestly and prophetic rights and privileges, the ministry of the Word, exclusive and peculiar to the believers, the Church, only. A believer's kingdom, kingdoming, kingdom activity, is the carrying out of Matthew 28, 18-20: "And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen." It is the performing of the mission spoken of John 20, 21-23, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.—Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Christ spoke to His disciples of this kingdom shortly before He ascended into heaven, when He rebuked His disciples who had a completely erroneous conception of the kingdom. He said: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

The Church's kingdom is not outward world power and dominion. Like the Jews of old who dreamt that the Church's kingdom was world dominion for them, so today many dream that the Church's kingdom is outward power and dominion, and they strive for the same in the name of the Church. And some Christians, even whole church bodies, are misled by the same, and caught up by the spirit of these men, strive and build and establish, not the kingdom, but a great Diana of the Ephesians in this world.

The Church's kingdom is not the joining of hands with organizations of this world to further civic righteousness. The Church's kingdom is not the building up of a nation's morale with "canned" sermons or religious pep talks. The Church's kingdom is not the setting of the things of this world in order. The Church's kingdom is not the lining up of the powers of this world against Stalin and communism. When the Church busies itself with these things, it no longer is in its kingdom. It is a busybody in another man's affairs. It is unfaithful to its calling, turning from its kingdom. The Church's kingdom is exercising the ministry of the Word to the salvation of souls. And this kingdom is exclusively and peculiarly the Church's. It is not the kingdom of unbelievers. ("But ye (in contrast to unbelievers) are a royal priesthood.") It is not the kingdom of the State (Matthew 22, 21).

The keys and the authority to use them are not given in the Scriptures to any and everyone, but to believers only. Matthew 16, 16-19, Peter received the keys and the authority to use them. A study of the passage reveals, that as a believer in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, he was qualified to administer the keys. John 20, the keys and the authority to use them were given. The recipients were ten apostles (Thomas was absent, Judas dead), women and others, all believing souls, who received the keys and had them in connection with the Holy Ghost, (Receive ye the Holy Ghost), and no special group of these received and had the keys. Each and everyone received the keys, and the same keys, in like manner and measure.

In this day and age when the hands of many Christians are reaching out to join hands with such an organization as Boy Scoutism, when the chaplaincy institution in the Army, a mixture of Church and State, contrary to the doctrine of the call, unionistic in character with

morale and morals as its aim, has the blessing of our sister synod, when more and more are becoming social gospel minded, and a deemphasis of the Word is setting in for the sake of unionism, not unity, many no doubt will not care to hear what the Church's kingdom is not. Tell us what the kingdom is, but not what it is not, they will perhaps say. Bring the positive side, that is enough. Forget the negative, that confuses.—Does Christ confuse men when He brings not only the positive but also the negative side of a question? For example, the Lord gives the husbands the positive side of marriage—you should love your wives. But He also brings the negative side—you should not commit adultery, run around with other women. Does that confuse? Must the poor husband stand there all confused, and not know what is what because the negative side is brought? Indeed not! The negative side does not confuse. It irks some, that is all. It irks that husband who wants to run around with other women. He does not want to hear it. Thou shalt love thy wife, that he does not object to; but no running around with other women, that he does not care to hear. And so it is with a presentation of the negative side of the kingdom. Such a presentation does not confuse, but it irks him who has a heart for Scoutism, etc. Such a thing, however, should not move us to be silent. Love should move us to bring both the positive and the negative, though the negative at times puts a finger on a sore tooth. Out with the tooth, not diplomatic silence is to the welfare of the kingdom.

And how should the Church carry out its kingly functions?

How should the Christians kingdom?

a) Singly, individually.

By that we mean every believer should kingdom, that is, exercise the ministry of the Word. And when we say every Christian, we mean just that. Female as well as male should kingdom, exercise the royal priesthood, “show forth the glory of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.” When it comes to exercising the Ministry of the Word given by Christ to all Christians, the question should not be asked, am I a boy or girl Christian, a man or lady Christian. Here the words Galatians 3, 28 apply: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” All Christians are priests, and they are kingly priests, and as kingly priests their privilege and duty is to teach, preach, forgive and retain sins, etc. The Scriptures clearly reveal that the Lord desires and commands individual kingdoming.

The first passage in the Gospels in which the Word, Church, appears clearly reveals this for there Jesus gave one believer the kingdom. Matthew 16, 16-19 is not proof that Peter was the first pope etc. as pointed out before in this essay. Matthew 16 proves that what all Christians have one has, the right to forgive and retain sins. And this act of the one is valid and certain in heaven. How easy it is to stumble over Matthew 16, 16-19 and fail to see one of the main truths in it simply because Rome through misinterpretation has placed a stumbling block before it. In Matthew 16 Jesus gives the keys to heaven to one Christian, Peter, which He on other occasions gave to all; and he gave that one Christian not only the keys, but the right to use them, and put His seal upon the use of the keys by one single Christian. One single Christian has the power to bind and loose as well as a group of Christians; and when that one Christian binds and looses it is as valid and certain as if a group did, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself. All Christians jointly have no more power to exercise than the individual believer has singly. When my Christian brother speaks the absolution to me, that is just as valid and certain as if a group of

Christians does so. When my Christian brother binds, that is as valid and certain as if a group of Christians binds. When my Christian brother retains my sins to me in my impenitence, that is binding. When I have sinned against him and refuse to repent and he tells me in my impenitence you are out of the Church, that is true. Argue all I desire, I am out, out because of my impenitence, even though I am a member of a local congregation established as yet.

But, some will say, is that not going too far? When we go as far as the Scriptures go we do not go too far. We sin not. When we go beyond the Scriptures or cut the Scriptures short and do not permit them to speak to the end we sin. We are doing neither. Matthew 16 proves this. Luther does not stop short of where we do in the priestly and prophetic privileges and power of the individual priest and king. Luther on the one hand fights the papacy with the Scriptures, on the other hand he with the same Scriptures pictures the individual Christian as a kingly priest, never as a pope, but as a kingly priest, subject to no word and no one save to his King of kings and High Priest, Jesus Christ, and His eternal Word. The Bible dethrones the pope and enthrones the priest. In Walther's *Brosamen*, page 375 ff., we find a funeral sermon with the theme: "*Das Koenigliche Priestertum einer glaeubigen Christin*", which pictures the individual Christian as a kingly priest most beautifully. And if we read the 1932 agreement reached between the St. Louis and Thiensville faculties in Thiensville we learn that these faculties agreed with what has been said about the keys and the individual Christian. Here are their words: *weil jeder Christ die Schluessel des Himmelreichs besitzt, so gilt ein von einem einzelnen oder auch mehreren Christen in irgendwelcher Zusammensetzung nach Gottes Wort ausgesprochenes Urteil auch im Himmel.*

The second and last passage in the Gospels, Matthew 18, 15-20, in which the word *Ekklesia*, appears also clearly reveals that the Lord desires, yea commands, kingdoming, the performance of the priestly and prophetic rights, by the individual Christian. There He directs the individual Christian how to act, function, when his brother sins against him. And how should he? There are two ways to check, restrain a brother when he wrongs you. The one is the sword of the government; the other is the spiritual sword, the kingdoming in the erring brother's life, calling him to repentance.

When a brother sins against you, you could run to the government and have him punished, and there by check his wrong-doing over against you. Your thought could be, I shall bring him in line with punishment. Or you could call him to repentance, thinking not of punishment, but of his soul, The Lord desires the latter and not the former in a Christian's life in such a case. A Christian should live Matthew 18 and take heed of 1 Corinthians 7. And living Matthew 18 means kingdoming on the part of the individual Christian. Living Matthew 18 means that the individual Christian must leave the ninety-nine and follow the one that has sinned against him. He must be a good shepherd to him, his brother's keeper. First, he should follow him alone, Matthew 18, 15. Love should prompt him to do this. (No publication of sin at once). If this is in vain, then with one or two, Matthew 18, 16. If this bears no fruit, then with the Church locally, Matthew 18, 17. He should truly be a good shepherd who goes not one mile or two to find and restore a sheep, but who goes the limit, exhausts all possibilities. It is just this point that Matthew 18 wishes to drive home. It does not wish to drive home the point that one group of believers has a greater or special power that other groups or the individual have not. Two or three believers have no more and no better keys than the individual. And a body of believers has no more and no better keys than two or three (Matthew 18, 20). Not the fact that two or three or the Church (the body) have better keys should lead the seeking one to them (they have not), but love of the lost. "I have failed alone. Shall I give up? No, I shall try with two or

three. I shall follow with two or three.”—“I have failed with two or three, shall I give up on him? No, I shall go to the Church locally and follow him with the whole body, calling out in all love: Sinner, repent. I shall exhaust all possibilities. I shall enlist the help of all my fellow-believers to gain his blood-bought soul.” An individual should not, yes, has no right to deal with a straying lamb hurriedly and heartlessly, and to bind in such manner. “Follow Me,” Jesus says. That means fellow in shepherding also. Exhaust all possibilities to seek and save that which is lost. Live Matthew 18.

Matthew 18, as no other passage, proves the personal, individual aspect of kingdoming. The first step and also the last step of Matthew 18 stress nothing but personal action, the action of one person. *Step one* is most personal—“against thee”—“between thee and him alone.” *The last step* is most personal. “Let him be unto thee.” *Esto soi*. Robertson has this *Esto soi* listed under *Dativus Commodi vel Incommodi* and points out that no usage of the dative stresses the personal aspect as this one. Step four, therefore, stresses not group action, but individual action; not group resolution, but individual action, not group resolution, but individual conduct over against an impenitent brother. (538-539) And the personal is not missing in steps two and three. Matthew 18 points out joint action, but stresses the personal.

Luther St. L. Ausgab. XIX ff. has this to say in connection with Matthew 18,

Christus giebt hier einem jeden Christen die Gewalt und den Gebrauch der Schluessel, da er sagt, Er sei dir als ein Heide. Wer ist der, er sei dir? Wen redet Christus an mit dem Woertlein, dir? den Pabst? Ja, er redet einen jeglichen Christen insonderheit an. So er aber spricht, Er sei dir, gibt er nicht allein das Recht oder Gewalt, sondern befiehlt und gebeut ihm den Gebrauch und die Ausrichtung desselben. Denn was ists, so er spricht, Er sei dir als ein Heide, oder, du sollst ihn halten dafuer? ist es nicht so viel, als spraeche er: du sollst nicht bei ihm wohnen und du sollst mit ihm keine Gemeinschaft haben. Nun ist das in der Wahrheit nichts anders, denn in Bann thun, binden und den Himmel zusperren. Denn die Schluessel sind der ganzen Gemeinde aller Christen und eines jeden, der ein Glied ist derselben Gemeinde und dasselbn nicht allein nach der Gewalt, sondern auch nach dem Gebrauch und nach jederlei Weise, die da sein mag, auf dass wir den Worten Christi keine Gewalt thun, der strackshin und insgemein zu allen redet, Er soll dir sein; item, Du hast gewonnen deinen Bruder, item, Alles was ihr binden werdet. Ich mochte auch diesen Spruch: Dir will ich geben die Schluessel des Himmelreiches, den Christus zu St. Petrus allein hat geredet, hier zu einer Bekräftigung handeln, item den Matth. 18, 19. “Wo zwei eins werden auf Erden”, item V. 20. “We zwei versammelt sind in meinem Namen, da bin ich mitten unter ihnen”. In welchen Spruechen das allervollkommenste Recht und der Gebrauch aufs allervölligste zugoeignet und bekraeftigt, das sie binden und auflösen mogen; es wäre denn, dass wir wollten Christo selbst das Recht und den Gebrauch der Schluessel versagen, wenn er mitten unter zweien wohnt. Aber diese Sprueche habe ich ueberfluessig an andern Orten gehandelt. Auch haben wir droben gesagt, das Amt des Wortes sei allen gemeinsam. Es ist aber das Binden und Entbinden Gaenzlich nichts anders, denn predigen das Evangelium und dasselbe in Gebrauch zu wenden. Denn was heisst, auflösen anders, denn verkuendigen, das die Sunden von Gott erlassen sind? Was heisst, binden denn das Evangelium weggenommen und verkuendigen, das die Sunden behalten werden? Darum sie wollen oder wollen nicht, so erhalten wir, das die Schluessel allen mit einander gemeinsam sind; diewel sie nichts anders sind, denn das Amt, dadurch man das Wort in

Brauch und Uebung kehrt.

Matthew 18 in its entire context teaches not so much the art, the technique, of excommunication, but the spirit and manner in which a Christian should deal with an erring brother to save his soul. It takes the believer by the hand and leads him, not to the pope in Rome with his excommunication and ban and says: “*So sollst Du es machen*, Rome’s popery is the spirit and manner of dealing with erring brethren,” but it leads the Christian to the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety and nine and seeks and follows the one, not one step, but He takes every step possible in love in seeking to keep the straying sheep within the fold, even if need be, such an apparently cruel one as breaking the stray’s leg, and says: “So you should deal.” Matthew 18 rightly read has imprinted on it as our example not the figure of the pope, but the picture of The Good Shepherd.

The reason Matthew 18, 15-20 is fast becoming something in our midst that is in the Bible but not in our practice is not because there is weakness of organization and too little love and respect for organization in our midst. We have enough organization in the Lutheran church today, and it is to be feared, too much love for organization, in fact so much love for organization, that we hesitate at times to take steps we ought to, lest we in anyway disrupt an organization of ours by so doing. The organization has become our love.

No, the weakness of the individual Christian in our midst is the reason for the neglect of Matthew 18, 15-20. Matthew 18 begins with the action of one Christian. And it ends with the action of the individual Christian. “*Esto soli*” the Lord says. Matthew 18 will be practiced to the welfare of souls in our midst to a greater extent, not when we become greater in number and name in this world, but when the smallest number, number one, the individual priest, grows stronger in faith and love, and realizes, I as a priest am my keeper, his shepherd, and as such duty-bound to exercise my royal priesthood in his life, and to go, not one step, but to take every step possible in accord with God’s Word to save his soul. When individual kingdoming increases in our midst, there will be more good shepherds in our midst.

Matthew 18 in its entire context also teaches that the work of calling a sinner to repentance in every phase and in all its phases is to be done by the Christian only with the aid of the Church if he needs help. In no step of Matthew 18 can you find anyone but believers. No steps are to be taken beyond and outside of the circles of the Church. The last telling is, “Tell it to the Church” period. If the efforts of the Church fail, then only one thing remains: “Let him be unto thee as a heathen and publican.” Treat such an one then as Jesus treated heathen and publicans “so that all your treatment of him will ever point out one thing, one need in his life, repentance.

Another passage that stresses the kingdoming of the individual believer, the exercise of the Ministry of the Word individually, is Matthew 10, 32: “Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father in heaven.” Confessing, preaching, is not a believer’s in theory only, but in practice also. The individual Christian is to be a preacher not in name only, but also in action and not just now and then. The Lord says 1 Corinthians 10, 31: “Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” A Christian should be kingdoming wherever he goes. He should at all times be a walking letter of Christ, confessing Christ, denying and condemning salvation by character etc., never doing anything that will take glory from Christ. As such he cannot lead a life in which he compromises Christ without sinning. He cannot have prayer—fellowship with such who deny the truth without sinning; he cannot be a member of an organization which acknowledges any God as the true God, and stresses not having the one and true God, the Triune God, as the important thing in life,

but the doing of a good turn, civic righteousness, without sinning.

Jointly—The kingdoming, the exercising of the ministry of the Word, should be performed jointly by the believers also.

Where does the Bible reveal this?

Matthew 18, 15-20 clearly reveals this. The word, “*Ekklesia*,” appears for the second and the last time in the Gospels Matthew 18, 15-20. In that passage which stresses the individual kingdoming of the priest, the individual Christian is directed by the Lord Jesus to enlist the help of the Church in seeking to win an erring brother if need be. He should never stop short of enlisting the help of the Church if he fails in the first two steps. “Tell it to the Church.” The Church then should act. Now what is the Church here? In its wider, universal sense, the Church is as we pointed out in the first part of this paper: The believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, scattered over the face of the earth. But the word, Church, here surely cannot mean all those believers, because you could not tell the Church Universal. First of all, the geographic difficulty would make it impossible. Secondly, the fact that the Church Universal is invisible to man and known to God alone rules out such exegesis. Church here is used in a limited sense. The meaning of the word, Church, here is Church local, that is believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God, assembled locally. A local assembly of Christians therefore should act, should kingdom in the life of the erring brother. Jointly Christians, therefore, should kingdom according to Matthew 18, 17. Matthew 18, 18 also points out joint kingdoming. “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” What Peter, the individual Christian, should do according to Matthew 16, that Christians should also do jointly according to Matthew 18, 18. Matthew 18, 19 points out joint prayer fellowship, Matthew 18, 20, a gathering in Jesus’ name.

1 Corinthians 1, 2 reveals to us that the first epistle to the Corinthians was written to the believers in Corinth. Paul there writes to the “*te Ekklesia tou theou te ouse en Korinthe, egiasmenois en Christo Jesou*,” that is, to the Church of God in Corinth, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, in fewer words, the believers in Corinth. Ramsay in *St. Paul the Traveler*, page 124, speaks of just this verse and shows how in Pauline language “*te Ekklesia tou theou te ouse en Korinthe*” does not as such denote the assembly of an organized society in Corinth to which any Corinthian could belong if he qualified, but has in it the meaning of the “Unified Church”, the believers in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God. What therefore is 1 Corinthians? It is an exhortation to joint kingdoming on the part of these believers in Corinth.

2 Corinthians according to 2 Corinthians 1, 1 was written to the believers in Corinth and all Achaia. All these believers were urged jointly to act in the case of the incestuous person who had repented. And in the light of Romans 16 it is clear that Paul with 2 Corinthians exhorted groups of Christians in various localities to kingdom jointly, for Romans 16 reveals that there was a Church in Cenchrea, Achaia as well as in Corinth, Achaia.

Hebrews 10, 23-25 is a command to do the work of the kingdom jointly. Hebrews was written not to one Christian, not to one congregation, but to the unmixed Jewish Christian congregations in the synagogues in Rome, to the Jewish Christians in the diaspora. They were addressed as a compact whole and admonished to have *episunagogai*, gatherings fellowship meetings, to confess jointly all the Christian hope, fearlessly and courageously, despite persecution, and not to deny, to fellowship for the sake of preaching the Word, acknowledging confession, keeping the faith, confession, and love active and strong, especially in view of the

fact that they were living in perilous times when people in the congregations were thinking of, not mere withdrawal from a Christian organization, but of apostasy.

1 Peter is an exhortation to joint kingdoming. 1 Peter was written to the elect, “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia”. Collectively they were called “chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, peculiar people” (1 Peter 2, 9) and exhorted to kingdom.

Surely these are enough passages to prove that the Lord wills, yea, commands joint kingdoming. As the individual believer has no right to determine any more if he should kingdom as an individual because God already has determined that for him, so the believers have no more right to determine if they should do the work of the Lord jointly, because the Lord of the Church has already determined this. We are not to be free-lancer. Where more Christians are we are to do the work of the Lord jointly, that is God’s will and order.

And what kind of joint kingdoming do we find in the Bible?

First, we find joint kingdoming in the Scriptures in the form of the local congregation established. For example, Paul writes 1 Thessalonians 1, 1: “*te Ekklesia Thessalonekeon*”, that is, the Church, the congregation of the Thessalonians. Here we have *Ekklesia* with the genitive. It denotes not “the Unified ‘Church’”, but an assembly of an organized society of Christians in Thessalonica, in other words, a local congregation established. (Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveler, page 124). Likewise we read of “the Churches of Galatia”, namely, selfgoverning bodies if Christians in Galatia organized, local congregations established. 3 John 10 we read of Diotrephes throwing people out of the congregations that is, assembled Christians constituted as a self-governing body. We have the local congregations in Jerusalem, Antioch, etc. Yes, in Scriptures we find local congregations established, Christians of one locality organize jointly kingdoming.

But we find not only joint kingdoming in the Scriptures in the form of the local congregation established; we also find two or more congregations groups of congregations kingdoming together, jointly kingdoming. For example, in Acts 15 we have a record of joint kingdoming on the part of the congregations in Jerusalem and Antioch. In Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8) Paul speaks of the fact that not one but three congregations joined to do the work of the kingdom. In other words we find not only “congregational kingdoming”, but also “synodical kingdoming” in the Scriptures.

Both of these forms of joint kingdoming are the Church at work.

The local congregation established at work is the Church at work.

Why? Because the local congregation rests on a special institution of Christ? The Scriptures nowhere contain a word of institution for the local congregation. The Scriptures nowhere record an occasion when Christ made such institutions. The Scriptures do not as much as refer to an occasion when Christ instituted local congregations. Hence the local congregation at work cannot be the Church at work, because Christ specially instituted it. And it is well for us to note here a word of Walther spoken in a discussion of ordination: 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. Walther and The Church, page 76. And yet the local congregation is the Church at work. Why? Because the Church is in the local congregation established. The Church as already pointed out is invisible. But even though the Church is invisible it is audible and noticeable. The wind is invisible, but it is audible and noticeable; so the

Church. The presence of the Church is discernable. It is discernable by confession, A believer, a penitent sinner, is a confessor. "I believed, therefore have I spoken", Psalm 116, 10. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." Psalm 51, 13-15. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Acts 4, 20. True, there are exceptions. There are believers who are no confessors (John 19, 38). Joseph was a believer before, but not a confessor until after the death of Christ. And there are confessors who are not believers. (Judas: "Not all that say: Lord, Lord.") But these exceptions do not change the rule, that believers are confessors, and the fact, that the invisible Church is audible and noticeable by confession.

The Church is also discernible by the Means of Grace. The Church subsists by the means of grace only (John 8, 31; Romans 10, 14). There can, therefore, be no Church where there are no means of grace. But where the means of grace are there the Church will be (Isaiah 55, 10-11). Hence the Church is discernible by the means of grace also.

In a local congregation established there are both confession and the means of grace. In that form of gathering we hear confession, we find the means of grace. We know, therefore, here is the Church locally. The organization is not the Church locally, but the believers in the local organization are. Who they are, we do not know, since confession may indeed be insincere in some cases (Judas; "Lord, Lord"; 1 Timothy 6, 5; 2 Timothy 3, 1-5). Christian love, however, demands that we accept every confession as sincere (Philippians 1, 6-7), unless a hypocrite becomes manifest. And if a hypocrite does not, it concerns God and not us (Psalm 7, 9; 1 Samuel 16, 7).

That the local congregation established at work is the Church at work is also revealed in the Scriptures by this fact that Scripture recognizes the local congregation at work at the Church at work and makes clear that it is not a mere human institution and arrangement, but Divine institution in so far that it is gathered by the Holy Ghost, in line with God's will and Word and command to gather.

Hoefling, a German theologian, taught that the local congregations are a mere human institution and arrangement, that all that called them into existence was "*Beduerfnis*"; the believers find that a certain need to carry on their work brings them together. Hoenecke labels Hoefling as a false teacher, and rightly so. More than "*Beduerfnis*" brings Christians together. First, there is the work of the Holy Ghost. He not only calls, brings people to faith, but He also gathers the believers. Then there is the distinct command of the Lord Hebrews 10, 25 which reveals that it is God's will and order that believers gather to exercise the Ministry of the Word jointly. It is God's will and order that believers as a body gather around the Word, and made preaching of the Word their chief concern. If we Christians would not jointly, as bodies of believers, gather around the Word and make preaching of the Word our chief concern we would be sinning. Not what Hoefling taught, but Thesis I 1932 Thiensville Agreement, accepted by the St. Louis and Thiensville faculties, is Scriptural: *Es ist Gottes Wille und Ordnung, wie wir aus der Heiligen Schrift erkennen, dass Christen, die zusammen wohnen, auch aeuusserlich in Verbindung treten, um gemeinschaftlich die Pflichten ihres geistlichen Priestertums auszuueben.*

A synodical gathering at work is the Church at work. Why? Because the Scriptures somewhere contain a special word of institution for the synodical gathering and by such a word make the synodical gather the, "*Ekklesia*"? The Scriptures nowhere contain a special word of institution for a synodical gathering. The Scriptures nowhere contain a record of an occasion or a

reference to an occasion when Christ instituted a synodical gathering. The fact is that the Scriptures nowhere contain a word which says, this and this form of gathering only is the Church.—Acts 20, 28 may be looked upon by some as so doing, but it does not. Jesus says Matthew 18: “Tell it to the Church”. But nowhere does He say: This form of gathering of believers and this form of gathering only is “*te Ekklesia*”. He states: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them”.

Hence a synodical gathering at work cannot be the Church at work because the Lord by special institution has made it the Church. And yet it is the Church at work, for the Church is in that synodical gathering as it is in a local congregation. The Church itself is invisible there but nevertheless it is discernible, discernible by confession and the means of grace as well as in the local congregation. And synod at work is the Church at work.

The Scriptures recognize not only a local congregation as the Church, they also speak of a group of congregations as the Church. For example Acts 9, 31 the Scriptures call the congregations throughout all of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria the Church. True, the King James’ Version has “churches”, also the Hebrew translation, and one other of the translations checked by the essayist, but all others had “the Church”. The reason for this variant reading is Codex Bezae has *Ekklesiai*, and a few followed Codex Bezae in translating. Codex Bezae, however, stands as defective and is an inferior reading. Scholars are convinced that *Ekklesiai* in Codex Bezae is not the original of Luke, but an addition by a second century reviser who attempted thereby to put Acts 9, 31 in line with Acts 15, 41 and 16, 5. The Accepted Text found on the great MSS is singular and speaks of the many congregations as the Church. Synods too are not mere human institution and arrangement, but Divine institution in so far that they are gathered by the Holy Ghost, in line with God’s will and Word and command to gather for confession, etc. (2 Corinthians 2, 5 ff. read in light of 2 Corinthians 1, 1; 2 Corinthians 8, 18; 1 Peter 1, 1 read in light of 1 Peter 2, 9, in fact, entire letter; Hebrews 10, 23-25; Acts 15)

To call a synod Church is nothing new. The Smalcald Articles do so. *Triglotta* page 521, 56 we read that the decisions of Synods are the decisions of the Church, and not of the popes. True, Synod there means Council and not a synodical gathering as we, have it in our circles today, but that does not change the picture. The Smalcald Articles were written not against synods but the pope. And the Smalcald Articles nowhere define any special form of gathering as the Church. Here we might note what the Sainted Professor P.C. Pardieck has to say about the use of the word, *Kirchen*, in the Smalcald Articles. He quotes Smalcald Articles, Mueller, p. 333, paragraph 24 which closes: “*Und Christ spricht bei diesen Worten: Was ihr binden werdet etc., und deutet, wem er die Schluessel gegeben Naemlich der Kirchen. We zween oder drei versammelt sein in meinen Namen etc. Item, Christus gibt das hoechste und letzte Gericht der Kirchen, da er spricht: Sag’s der Kirchen.* And then he adds: *Und wenn unser Bekenntniss immer dabei seine Definition von Kirche im Gedaechtniss zu behalten, naemlich: Denn es weiss, Gott Lob, ein Kind von sieben Jahren, was die Kirche sei, naemlich die heiligen Glaebigen und die Schaefflein, die ihres Hirten Stimme hoeren.* Walther called a Synod Church. (Walther’s Brosamen, *Erste Predigt zur Eroeffnung der Synode*, page 391, paragraph one of the sermon).

The Lord nowhere commands organization, a definite organization of the Church in the Scriptures. God is a God of order, and it is God’s Church, but not necessarily in organization, or through a definite organization. God wants order. Order leads to organization, but that does not make organization the order without which there can be and is no Church Local. “Particular *Kirche*”. What promise have we that there will always be local Christian Congregations as we have them today? Concerning the Church Universal we have Christ’s promise Matthew 16, 18:

“Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” But we have no such promise for the local congregation established. Let us ever stay with what the Church is and not tie down the Church to some organization which rests on no special institution of Christ, nor has the promise of “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Let us not despise Christian organizations. But let us also be careful not to make them what they are not. Man, not God, has put organization in Church life to please God who is a God of order. Now let us not make the man-made organization the Church, the order, and elevate it to a position of papacy, that gives orders and alone has the right to keep order in Church circles in carrying out Matthew 18.