

“Office of the Ministry: Tension and Balance”
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Fellow Redeemed in Christ: Thank you for the invitation to speak at this Free Conference sponsored by the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (ACELC). According to the historic understanding of a free conference, speakers and participants are not official representatives of any entity, but represent only themselves in an effort to address and discuss relevant issues. It is with that understanding that I am here today. Our LCMS pastors and laypeople have a long history of involvement in such free conferences, dating back to those called by C.F.W. Walther in 1855 as a response to the Definite Synodical Platform or rewriting of the Augsburg Confession by certain eastern Lutherans.¹

If I understand my assignment correctly, you have asked me to address the topic of the Office of the Holy Ministry as an identified error by the ACELC in the document “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

Before I specifically address this topic, however, let me first talk about Lutheran theology in general. In his book, *Spirituality of the Cross*, Gene Veith observes:

The distinctive characteristic of Lutheran theology is its affirmation of paradox. Calvin and Arminius both constructed systematic theologies, explaining away any contrary biblical data in a rationalistic system of belief. Luther developed his theology in Bible commentaries, following the contours of Scripture wherever they led and developing its most profound polarities: Law and Gospel; Christ as both true God and true Man; the Christian as simultaneously saint and sinner; justification by faith and baptismal regeneration; Holy Communion as the real presence of Christ in material bread and wine.²

¹ Erwin Lueker, “Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences, 1856-1859,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 15 (August 1944):529-563.

² Gene Edward Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, revised edition 2010), pp. 147-148.

Holding to theological paradox involves tension and balance. If one side is emphasized over against or to the exclusion of the other, the result is false teaching. Furthermore, putting theology into practice involves even greater tension and balance. This was noted by the Departments of Systematic Theology from both of our LCMS seminaries:

We recognize that embodying a doctrine or principle in our lives is much more difficult than merely stating it or agreeing with it. This is the way with the distinction of Law and Gospel. Embracing it is quite simple; learning to do it faithfully is a lifelong venture.... Confessing [the doctrine of the Trinity] ... is straightforward; observing it straightforwardly in our theological reflection often proves difficult. This is the way with the relationship of justification and sanctification. Stating that sanctification follows justification is easy; reflecting their relationship properly in preaching and pastoral care can strain even pastors who have seen it all. This is also the way with the office of the ministry and the life of the church. For instance, it is one thing to confess, "no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call" (AC XIV). But it is another thing to discern what courses of action properly embody this doctrine when no pastor is available for God's people, or when considering how seminarians might acquire skill in preaching and teaching, or when a congregation has many shut-ins.³

Think of it as the tension and balance required in a special contest of tug-of-war. As with all analogies, this one is by no means perfect. But hopefully, it proves helpful. In this contest, the flag tied at the center of the rope, hanging over the trench or large mud puddle, is the Gospel, Word and Sacraments, the means whereby the Holy Spirit works saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Office of the Keys. The mud puddle is the filthy, fallen world. One team represents the Church, the gathering of all believers who constitute a royal priesthood. The other team constitutes those men called out among the royal priesthood to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry. Both teams are entrusted with the Office of the Keys by Christ our Lord, one immediately and one mediately. The object of the contest is not for one team to pull the other into the mire of the trench but to keep the rope taut so that the banner of the Gospel remains

³ Departments of Systematic Theology, "The Office of the Holy Ministry," *Concordia Journal* 33 (July 2007): 242-243.

fully displayed and clearly visible. If one team pulls too hard, not only does it drag the other team into the mire of the fallen world, but the banner of the Gospel is no longer clearly manifest.

The challenge of maintaining the proper tension and balance is seen throughout the history of Lutheranism. More importantly to our topic today, it is seen throughout the history of our own church body. Three differing views on the public ministry can be identified.⁴

On the one extreme are those who hold to a functional view of the office of the ministry. According to this view, Christ did not institute a specific office of the ministry, only the functions of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. There is no specific mandate to appoint pastors. The Office of the Keys is given only to the Church, the priesthood of all believers, and the church delegates the functions and creates offices as it sees fit. In early 19th Century Germany, Richard Rothe and J.W.F. Hoefling of the Erlangen School, influenced by Frederick Schleiermacher and what has become known as historical-criticism, maintained that the church emerged gradually and that the ministry grew out of the needs of the church. The functional view places the church over ministry. The public office of the ministry as a distinct office instituted by Christ is rejected and discarded. There is a great concern that much of what is taught and practiced in the Missouri Synod today comes out of this functional view of the ministry, including such talk of “everyone a minister or missionary,” “lay ministers,” the regular appearance of non-ordained persons in pulpits, and non-ordained people consecrating or administering Sacraments.

⁴ Identified by E. W. Janetzki, “The Doctrine of the Office of The Holy Ministry in The Lutheran Church of Australia Today,” *Lutheran Theological Quarterly* (November, 1979) pp. 68-81; Karl L. Barth, “The Doctrine of the Ministry: Some Practical Dimensions,” *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988) pp. 204-214; John C. Wohlrabe, Jr., “An Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of the Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod until 1962,” Unpublished Th.D. dissertation presented to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, May 1987; *Ministry in Missouri until 1962* (Private Printing, 1992); “Walther’s Doctrine of the Ministry: A Distinctly Mediating Position,” *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays on C.F.W. Walther in Memory of August R. Suelflow* (Private Printing: Thomas Manteufel and Robert Kolb, 2000), pp. 203-221.

On the other extreme are those who emphasize the institution and character of the public office of the ministry, elevating it over the church and the priesthood of all believers. In 19th Century Germany, promoters of this view included Julius Stahl and A.F.C. Vilmar. According to this understanding, the public office of the ministry is self-perpetuating by way of ordination and is completely autonomous from the priesthood of all believers. Some who held to this view maintained that it is the duty of pastors to instruct and direct all church affairs, and lay people are merely to hear and obey. With respect to the history of the Missouri Synod, various aspects of this view were held by Wilhelm Loehe, Martin Stephan, together with many of the Saxon immigrants who followed him, and J.A.A. Grabau who formed the Buffalo Synod. This view places the ministry over the church. There is concern that some within the Missouri Synod today espouse this elevated view of the office.

C.F.W. Walther, and by adopting “Kirche und Amt” as its official position – the Missouri Synod, took a mediating position that is both Scriptural and Confessional, which allows church and ministry, office and function, to stand in balance and tension. Permit me to give some historical background as to how this developed, followed by an articulating of this position according to Scripture and the Confessions. Then we will look at some of the struggles in maintaining this position of tension and balance over the course of the Synod’s history. And finally, I will consider some of the specific charges in the document “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

Without getting too in-depth, the group of Saxons who followed the leadership of Pastor Martin Stephan to Missouri in the winter of 1838 and spring of 1839 emphasized the office of the ministry over the church. The ecclesiastical structure of the colony they founded was strictly hierarchical. Martin Stephan was declared Bishop, and within the ministerium, the final authority

rested with him. Not only did the Bishop have ecclesiastical authority, but the colonists pledged subjection to him in all temporal affairs as well. Only a few months after their arrival in Missouri, the Saxon deposed and expelled Bishop Stephan. This resulted in difficult and turbulent times for the Saxons that would last approximately two years.⁵

What followed were confessions of guilt, the resignation of some pastorates, and persistent questions: Did their pastors have valid calls? Were they a church or not? Did their congregations have the right to call pastors? An influential layman, Carl Vehse, came forward with a set of six propositions. Here he asserted the Lutheran doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. He argued that the office of the ministry is only a public service delegated by a congregation. Vehse asserted the supremacy of the congregation over the pastoral office.⁶ Because he had the means, Vehse then returned to Germany. However, another leading layman, Franz Marbach, continued Vehse's protests. A public debate was arranged between Marbach and Pastor C.F.W. Walther at Altenburg, MO in April 1841. Walther proceeded to show that the colonists were indeed a church, that they could call pastors, and that they could function as the church. Walther acknowledged his indebtedness to Vehse, but he did not adopt the same line of argumentation. Like Vehse, Walther started with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, but he did not place the church over the ministry, instead stating that among them the ministry can be established, the Sacraments validly administered, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven exercised.⁷ In the Altenburg Theses, Walther did not set forth his complete understanding of the

⁵ A detailed analysis of the Stephanite Emigration is set forth in Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), passim.

⁶ Forster, pp. 463-464. Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 97-109.

⁷ The German original of Walther's Altenburg Theses can be found in J.F. Koesterling, *Auswanderung der saechsischen Lutheraner im Jahre 1839, ihre Niederlassung in Perry-Co., Mo., und damit zusammenhaegende interessante Nachrichten* (St. Louis: A. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1867), pp. 51-52. Translations may be found in Forster, pp. 523-525; and Louis Fuerbringer, Theodore Engelder, and Paul E. Kretzmann, eds., *The Concordia Encyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927), p. 15.

doctrine of the ministry. This came a little later. Yet, the propositions established and accepted at Altenburg provided an acceptable solution.

About the same time the Saxons were settling in Missouri, a group of Prussians under the leadership of Pastor J.A.A. Grabau and a group of Silesians under the leadership of Pastor L.F.E. Krause were immigrating to the United States. The Prussians settled around Buffalo, N.Y., while the Silesians chose the territory of Wisconsin near Milwaukee. While the Silesians were settling, Krause had to make a sudden return to Germany. With their pastor gone, a letter was written to Grabau asking permission to elect a layman who would temporarily conduct services and administer the Sacraments. Grabau gave a negative response in the form of his so-called *Hirtenbrief* (Pastoral Letter) dated December 1, 1840.⁸ Grabau rejected the request of the Silesians on the basis of Augsburg Confession, Article XIV. He maintained that both the call and ordination were indispensable for the proper administration of the Sacraments, but a layman selected by a congregation would only dispense the physical elements and not a proper Sacrament. He further maintained that according to the old Lutheran church ordinances only an Episcopal form of church government was proper for the ordering of the church, and that a congregation was to be obedient to their pastor in all things not against God's Word.

On June 22, 1843, a group of the Saxon pastors met in St. Louis to discuss Grabau's *Hirtenbrief*. The response was drafted by Pastor G.H. Loeber who wrote:

In the first place, should we give a summary opinion of the contents of the *Hirtenbrief*, it appears to us that one part, in view of so much stress on the old church ordinance, the essentials are confused with the non-essentials, and the divine with the human, so that Christian freedom is curtailed. In the other part, more is ascribed to the preaching office than is proper, so that the spiritual priesthood of the congregation becomes neglected.⁹

⁸ Roy Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 27 (April 194) pp. 4-14; 27 (July 1954), pp. 61-69.

⁹ *Der Hirtenbrief des Herrn Pastors Grabau zu Buffalo vom Jahre 1840* (New York: H. Ludwig and Co., 1849) This is apparently the only edition of the *Hirtenbrief* extant and is an edition published by the Saxons with their response. The translation is my own.

Ordination, wrote Loeber, is not a divine command, nor is ordination according to an old Lutheran order part of the essence of a proper call. To prescribe a certain order is a violation of Christian freedom. In addition, rather than saying that the congregation is to be obedient to the pastor in all things not against God's Word, it should instead be that the congregation owes obedience only when and so far as the pastor proclaims God's Word. God deals with man in his Word, Loeber wrote, by means of the ministry. The Sacraments, therefore, have their power in the Word, not in the office of the ministry. Finally, Loeber asserted that the congregation has every right to issue a proper call, even without the necessity of help or advice from other pastors.¹⁰

Grabau replied to the Saxons of Missouri on July 12, 1844. Here he admitted that the congregation has the right to call a pastor and that this right is connected with the priesthood of all believers. But, Grabau insisted that the call from the congregation was not enough to make a man validly called. For this ordination by another pastor was necessary. Responses continued back and forth between St. Louis and Buffalo.

Meanwhile, another group of Lutheran pastors that included Friedrich Wynecken and emissaries or "*Sendlinge*" from Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Bavaria, Germany contacted the Saxons of Missouri, and in April 1847, the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States was formed. Loehe developed an extensive training program for young pastors who were willing to leave Germany for America. In addition, he helped start a seminary in Fort Wayne, IN, and assisted in developing mission colonies in Michigan to evangelize Native Americans. Yet, Loehe never traveled to America himself.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-36.

When Loehe read the constitution of the newly formed Missouri Synod, he was unhappy. He believed that it was too democratic. He also did not believe that a congregation had the right to call its own pastor. Soon Loehe began publishing his disagreements in his monthly newsletter and in two books. He maintained that no clear text of Scripture speaks of the office in any way derived from the congregation. He stated that the congregation does not and cannot hand its authority over to the office of the ministry. The office does not originate from the congregation, but rather the congregation originates from the office, which the Lord Jesus himself instituted. This office is above every human calling. Furthermore, ordination is necessary for the public office of the ministry. It is the rite by which the office is conferred upon qualified individuals, and that rite can only be performed by holders of the public office of the ministry.¹¹

In the face of opposition from both Germany and America, the Missouri Synod attempted to deal with the situation at their 1850 synodical convention. Walther, as synodical president, opened the convention with a synodical address, which lamented the diverging views on the doctrine of the ministry. He stated that this was not a matter of adiaphora, but concerned doctrine which was not in their power to dismiss. It was decided to have a book written and published which would represent the Missouri Synod's position. Walther was chosen to author this work.¹² By 1851, Walther had prepared an outline for the book which was then presented to the convention in the form of theses. These were adopted by the synodical convention and the Synod

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis of Loehe's understanding see Kenneth Frederick Korby, "The Theology of Pastoral Care in Wilhelm Loehe with Special Attention to the Function of the Liturgy and the Laity," Unpublished Th.D. Dissertation, Concordia Seminary in Exile in Cooperation with Lutheran School of Theology, pp. 222-235; also Carl Bergan, "Loehe's Concept of the Ministry," *Una Sancta* 12 (St. Michael's Day, 1955) pp. 18-24.

¹² *Vierter Synodal-Bericht der deutschen Ev. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u.a. Staaten vom Jarhe 1850. Zweite Auflage.* (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, 1876), pp. 144-145.

resolved to have the book published in Germany, together with sending Walther to address the theological faculties and meet with Loehe.¹³

Part One of *Die Stimme Unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt (Kirche und Amt)* offered nine theses on the doctrine of the church. In the second part, Walther treated the Office of the Ministry. After each thesis was stated, Walther set forth support in three parts: proof from the Word of God, testimonies of the church in its official confessions, and testimonies of the church in the private writings of its teachers.¹⁴ In discussing “On the Holy Preaching Office or Ministerial Office,” we will focus primarily on the support from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Thesis 1 states: “The holy preaching office or ministerial office is a distinct office from the priestly office which all believers have.” Walther cited three Scripture passages as support for this (1 Cor. 12:29; Romans 10:15; and James 3:1). Confession proof was Augsburg Confession Article XIV: “It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” (Tappert, p. 36).

Thesis 2 holds: “The preaching office or ministerial office is no human ordinance, but an office instituted by God Himself.” Here Walther categorizes four Scriptural categories as proof: 1) the predictions of the prophets that God would give pastors and teachers of the Church of the new covenant (Psalm 68:11; Jer. 3:15; and Joel 2:23); 2) the call of the holy apostles into the ministry by the Son of God (Matt. 10; 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-10; 10:1-22; Mark 16:15; John 20:21-

¹³ *Fuenfter Synodal-Bericht der deutschen Ev. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u.a. staaten vom Jarhe 1851. Zweite Auflage.* (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, 1876), pp. 169-173.

¹⁴ The book was published as *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* (Erlangen: Verlag von Andreas Deichert, 1852). Translations may be found in *Selected Writings of C.F.W. Walther*, 6 vols., August Suelflow, Series Editor (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), *Walther on the Church*, translated by John M. Drickamer; and *Walther and the Church*, translated by Wm. Dallman, W.H.T. Dau, and Th. Engelder, eds. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938). Translations of the theses on the Ministry here are my own. For another analysis, consider Norman Nagel, “The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions and in Walther’s *Kirche und Amt*,” *Concordia Journal* 15 (October 1989), pp. 423-446.

23; 21:15-17); 3) those called mediately are represented as those called by God (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11); and 4) the apostles consider the mediately called servants of the church as their colleagues in the ministry (1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Col. 4:7; Phil. 2:25; 1 Cor. 1:1; 4:1). Testimonies of the Confessions include Augsburg Confession V: “In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted.” (Tappert, p. 31). Here Walther notes that Louis Hartmann identified Article V of the Augustana as establishing the ministry *in abstracto* (in the abstract) and not *in concreto* (in the concrete). This is important because some would make the pastoral office itself a means of grace, when the true power is in the Word and Sacraments. Still, Walther believes that A.C. V intends to attest also to the divine institution of the pastoral office in a concrete form. Walther also cites the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, paragraphs 9-10 to show that the office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles, and that there is no rank or levels of power among them.

Thesis 3 maintains: “The preaching office is no optional office, but one which the church is commanded to establish and to which the church is ordinarily bound to the end of days.” The only Scriptural support for this statement is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). For Confessional support, Walther cites the Apology, Article XIII, paragraphs 11-13, which says that ordination can be called a sacrament if it is understood that it has God’s command and promise through the Word. Walther also cites Augsburg Confession XXVIII (paragraphs 8-9): “This power of the keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments.... In this way are imparted not bodily but eternal things and gifts, namely, external righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These gifts

cannot be obtained except through the office of preaching and of administering the holy sacraments...” (Tappert, p. 82)

In opposition to those who hold a functional view of the ministry, the first three theses on the ministry are very firm in maintaining that the office of the public ministry exists solely by virtue of an explicit command of God. It is distinct from the priestly office which all believers have. Because it is divinely mandated, it is not optional but must be established within a congregation.

Thesis 4 says: “The preaching office is no particular, holier estate over against the ordinary Christian estate, as was the Levitical priesthood, but is an office of service.” Proof from the Word of God includes 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; Galatians 3:26; Matthew 23:8-12; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 4:5; and Colossians 1:24-25. From the Apology, Article XXII (paragraph 9), Walther quoted: “Among the reasons why both kinds are not given, Gabriel says that a distinction should be made between laity and clergy. This is no doubt the main reason for defending the denial of one part: to elevate the position of the clergy by a religious rite. To put as mildly as possible, this is a human device and its purpose is quite evident.” (Tappert, p. 237).

Thesis 5 states: “The preaching office has the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the holy sacraments and the authority of spiritual judgment.” As evidence from God’s Word, Walther refers again to Matthew 28:19-20, as well as John 20:21, 23; 21:15-16; and 1 Corinthians 4:1. Testimonies from the Confessions again included the Augsburg Confession and Apology on the Power of Bishops (A.C. Article XXVIII, paragraphs 5-8, 21; Apology Article XXVIII, paragraphs 12-13) as well as the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope: “The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those

who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confessions of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops.” (Paragraphs 60-61, Tappert, p. 330)

With Theses 6 and 7, Walther takes issues with those who hold that the office of the ministry is self-perpetuating or who would place the ministry over the church. Thesis 6 was divided into two parts. The first part states: “The preaching office is conferred [*uebertragen*] by God through the congregation, as possessor of all churchly authority, or the Keys, and through its call as prescribed by God.” The second part held: “The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not a divine institution, but an apostolic, churchly ordinance and only a public solemn confirmation of the call.”

Walther showed that the church of Christ is given the power of the keys immediately by Christ in Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Peter 2:5-10. On the other hand, Walther points to Acts 1:15-26 to show that Matthias was chosen not merely by the Eleven, but by the multitude of believers. In Acts 6:1-6, deacons were similarly chosen by the whole multitude. From the Confessions, Walther gave extensive quotes from the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (Paragraphs 13-15, 20, 24, 26, 67-70).

That ordination is not by divine institution, but an apostolic ordinance and public confirmation of the call, Walther states that Scripture is silent regarding a divine institution of ordination, but merely testifies that the apostles made use of it. From the Confessions, Walther cites Article XIII from the Apology: “If ordination is interpreted in relation to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. The ministry of the Word has God’s command and glorious promises... If ordination is interpreted this way, we shall not

object either to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament. The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it....” (Paragraphs 11-13, Tappert, pp. 212-213)

Walther explained his position on ordination more fully in an essay he gave at the 1863 synodical convention entitled “The Proper Form of Calling a Pastor”:

If ordination is a prerequisite to valid administration of the office of the public ministry, then I can never know if my pastor is a true pastor. For if I want to know that, I must know if he is properly ordained; if I want to know if he is properly ordained, I must know if his ordinator was properly ordained, and so on, back to the apostles. And so I could never be certain if I was [properly] baptized, [properly] absolved, [and] properly communed, unless an unbroken chain of proper ordinations from my pastor all the way back to the apostles could be established. If this chain were once broken, then I would have no proper Baptism, no proper preaching, and no proper Communion.¹⁵

Thesis 7 of “On the Ministry” states: “The holy preaching office is the authority conferred [*uebertragen*] by God through the congregation, as possessor of the priesthood and of all churchly authority, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office for the community fellowship [*Gemeinshafis*].” Here Walther believed he had already given sufficient proof from God’s Word under Theses IV and VII in the section “On the Church” and under Theses I, IV, V, and VI in the section “On the Ministry.” As testimony from the Confessions, he again quotes extensively from The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (Paragraphs 24, 25, 26, 33, 34, 67-69). In a sermon on Matthew 16:13-19, Walther gives extensive explanation for his position:

Then, according to the doctrine of our Church, it is not the ministers or clergymen to whom Christ has given the Keys or the ministry of the Gospel originally and immediately...but, on the contrary, immediately this office is given by Christ to the Church, through whom only the ministers or clergymen receive this high authority, so that consequently they have it only mediately. Therefore also our Lutheran Catechism does not say “The Office of the Keys is that special authority of the ministers,” but “The

¹⁵ C.F.W. Walther, “The Proper Form of Calling a Pastor” 11th Synodical Convention, October 14, 1863, in *Essays for the Church: C.F.W. Walther*, vol. I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House), pp. 83-84.

Office of the Keys is that especial church-authority, which Christ gave to His church on earth....¹⁶

Thesis 8 of “On the Ministry” maintains: “The preaching office is the highest office in the church, from which all other churchly offices flow.” As proof from God’s Word, Walther notes that since incumbents of the public ministry have been entrusted with the Keys to administer them publicly and officially on behalf of the congregation, their office must of necessity be the highest in the church. He notes that the church is free to establish other offices, like that of deacons, but they are subordinate. The pastor is given spiritual oversight and complete responsibility for the public preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments. Scriptural support includes Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 4:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 5, 7; 5:17, Titus 1:7; Heb. 13:17. Additional helping or auxiliary offices, which Walther lists include parochial teacher, almoners, sextons, and choir directors. They take over a part of the ministry of the Word and support the pastoral office. The primary quote from the Confessions comes from the Apology, Article XV (Paragraph 43): “The ministry is the highest office in the church.” Other Confessional support is given as well (Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article IV, Paragraph 9; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Paragraphs 10-11, 60-65; Solid Declaration Article X, Paragraph 10).

Thesis 9 is also addressed to those who would place the ministry over the church. It is divided into three parts, although I will read it altogether: “To the preaching office belongs respect and absolute obedience when the preacher expounds God’s Word; yet the preacher has no lordship in the church. He therefore has no right to make new laws, arbitrarily to arrange adiaphora and ceremonies in the church, and to impose and carry out the ban alone, without prior

¹⁶ C.F.W. Walther, “The Keys Are Given to the Church of Believers” in *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, edited by Matthew C. Harrison (Lutheran Legacy, 2009), p. 183.

acknowledgement of the whole congregation.” Walther shows from Scripture that although incumbents of the public ministry are not in a holier estate, distinct from all Christians, but are called to administer the rights of all Christians, still they are not servants of men. The ministry is not a human arrangement, but instituted by God. When the pastor presents God’s Word, then the congregation hears out of his mouth Christ Himself (Luke 10:16; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; Gal. 6:6-10; Matt. 10:12-15). Yet, Jesus told his disciples that they were not to be involved with the exercise of worldly authority (Matt. 20:25-26; John 18:36; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:35). Concerning the ban or excommunication, Walther cites Matthew 18:15-20, which involves telling it to the church. Extensive support from the Confessions for all three points is given as well (A.C., Article XXVIII, Paragraph 4, 21-22; Large Catechism, The Ten Commandments, Paragraph 141, 158-166; A.C., Article XXVIII, Paragraphs 8, 18-21, 24; Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Paragraphs 24, 74-76).

Finally, Thesis 10 states: “To the preaching office indeed belongs by divine right also the office to judge doctrine; yet laymen also have this right as well. Therefore these same also have seat and vote in ecclesiastical courts and councils with the preachers.” Walther believed that the duty of preachers to judge doctrine required no proof. It is their most sacred duty. Instead he referred to the Scripture passages that command ordinary Christians to judge doctrine (1 Cor. 10:15; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10, 11; 1 Thess. 5:12) as well as the command to beware of false prophets (Matt. 7:15-16; John 10:5). In the book of Acts, Walther refers to the Bereans (Acts 17:11) and the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). From the Confessions, Walther cites the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (Paragraphs 51 and 56).

After the publication of *Kirche und Amt*, the controversy between Buffalo and Missouri continued. Wilhelm Loehe withdrew support from the Missouri Synod on August 4, 1853, and became instrumental in the formation of the Iowa Synod.

Let's now consider how the tension and balance involved in the doctrine of the ministry was maintained over the course of the Synod's history. Already in 1847 the newly organized Missouri Synod confronted a challenge with respect to missions, growth, and its understanding of the doctrine of the ministry. After 1850, German immigration in the United States often exceeded 100,000 persons per year. Various methods were attempted to reach out to the scattered German Lutherans, including missionaries at port cities and mother congregations starting preaching stations across the frontier. These methods were considered acceptable because pastors who were already called to congregations served also in these mission capacities.

Other methods proved more controversial. Experiments were made with the offices of *Besucher* (Visitor or Explorer) and *Reiseprediger* (Riding Preacher). At the 1863 synodical convention a lively discussion arose during Walther's essay on "The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State."¹⁷ One side believed that an itinerant minister could perform most if not all acts of the pastoral office, including the administration of both sacraments, provided he did not usurp someone else's office. The basis for this position was "the call of love." The opponents to this view rejected any broadening of the traveling preacher's job description except in the case of the most extreme emergencies.¹⁸

After the 1863 synodical convention, the discussion and resolution of the itinerant ministry controversy moved to the district conventions. At the 1865 Western District convention,

¹⁷ LCMS, *Elfter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutsche Evang. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u.a. Staaten vom Jahre 1863* (St. Louis: Synodaldruckerei von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1863), 56-58.

¹⁸Karl Wyneken, "Missouri Molds a Ministry for Mission," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 45 (1972), pp. 82-83.

of which Walther was a member, “Twenty-eight Theses Concerning the Call and Position of a *Reiseprediger*” were discussed. Here it was asserted that love is the queen of all laws, and in cases of necessity it knows no other regulations. There are cases of necessity in which the regulation or order of the public office of the ministry cannot and should not be observe. A case of necessity occurs when, by legalistic observance of the regulation, souls would be lost instead of saved and love would thereby be violated.¹⁹ Thus, it was expressed that strict adherence to the idea of transference (*uebertragung*) by way of an established congregation could result in an incongruity where the very goal for which God had established the order for the ministry would be discarded, namely, the salvation of souls. When that happens, the transference of a call through a local congregation is to be set aside. The call is extended through a collection of congregations in a district or synod to an itinerant minister so that the Word can be proclaimed to the unchurched.

It was during this period that Walther was called on to mediate a dispute within the Norwegian Synod regarding the ministry and lay preachers. In theses presented at a special convention of the Norwegian Synod, Walther suggested that the ministry was to be seen from three vantage-points: 1) as belonging to the universal priesthood, 2) as being the special office of the ministry established by God in the congregation, and 3) as conditioned by necessity which knows no law, that is, as in an emergency ministry.²⁰ Basically, Walther’s solution was a combination of the position set forth in *Kirche und Amt* and the resolution which was then reached within the Western District of the Missouri Synod over itinerant ministries. This then

¹⁹ LCMS, Western District, *Verhandlungen der Elften Jahresversammlung des Westlichen Districts der deutschen ev.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u.a. Staaten im Jahre 1865* (St. Louis: Druck von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1865) pp. 57-72. Karl Wyneken, “The Development of the Itinerant Ministries in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1847-1865,” unpublished S.T.M. Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1963, pp. 158-168.

²⁰ E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, *The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), p. 165.

brings in a new factor into maintaining the tension and balance in the doctrine of the ministry: the tension between legalism and antinomianism.

Education of clergy has always been an issue for the Missouri Synod. While the Saxons of Missouri were familiar with only a thorough classical university and seminary education, the *Sendlinge* of Loehe were trained as *Nothhelfer* (emergency helpers). They received a rudimentary education in Germany and then sent to America to alleviate the dire spiritual needs of German immigrants.²¹ When in 1846, Loehe helped start the seminary in Fort Wayne, it was intended to train pastors as quickly and practically as possible. It was known as the “practical seminary.”²² During the Civil War, the Missouri Synod moved the “practical” seminary to St. Louis because Indiana had a draft for the military that included theological students. Both seminaries remained in St. Louis under Walther’s supervision for fourteen years. When the “practical seminary” was moved to Springfield, IL, it was with the hope that this was temporary and eventually only the classical, theoretical education would be the preferred route into the ministry. Walther believed that the “practical” preachers in the Synod were a weak link.²³ Yet, this hope never fully materialized.

Even before the Missouri Synod was formed, both the Loehe *Sendlinge* and the Saxon colonists had professional educators. In its first constitution, the Synod classified teachers as advisory ministerial members of the Synod.²⁴ In *Kirche und Amt*, Walther maintained that the office of teacher was an auxiliary of the one public office of the ministry. Between 1865 and 1871, Walther published a series of articles in *Lehre und Wehre* which were then published as *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie* in 1875. Here Walther stressed that a pastor should

²¹ Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 97.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98, 213-214.

²³ Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 43, including foot note 1.

²⁴ Meyer, pp. 149-161.

never forget that a teacher also has a divine office (*Schulamt*) in the church, which is an auxiliary office branched off of the pastoral office.²⁵ Nevertheless, a differing view began to emerge through J.C.W. Lindemann, the director of the Synod's teachers seminary in Addison, Illinois. Lindemann introduced the idea of a two-fold calling which split the calling and service of the teacher into partially divine and partially secular aspects.²⁶ At a pastoral conference of the Synodical Conference in the 1880s, Reinhold Pieper, older brother of Francis and August, gave a paper in which he stated that the pastoral office is the one and only office of the ministry in the church. The office of the teacher stems entirely from the parents on whom God has enjoined the training of their children.²⁷ Herman Speckhard put forward a similar view.²⁸ Yet, the majority of articles on the office of the school teacher in the Missouri Synod corresponded to the position put forward by Walther.

The question of the teacher's office and call was an issue also raised within the Wisconsin Synod, a member of the Synodical Conference and then in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Missouri Synod. Beginning in 1911, August Pieper, a professor at the Wisconsin Synod's seminary, put forward a series of articles in which he questioned Walther's *Kirche und Amt*. August Pieper maintained that the pastoral office was not THE true and only form of the public office of the ministry. For him, there was no one form. Rather, it was up to the discretion of the church to decide what form and function it would take in a given time and situation.²⁹ In

²⁵ C.F.W. Walther, *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 4th edition, 1897), p. 391.

²⁶ "Pastor and Schullerhrer," Part 3 [This series of articles was unsigned, but is apparently by J.C.W. Lindemann] *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Schulblatt* 2 (January 1867), pp. 133-138.

²⁷ John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod, translated and edited by Leigh D. Jordahl* (St. Cloud, MN: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 231.

²⁸ H. Speckhard, "Thesen, den Beruf der Gemeindegullehrer unserer Synode die Anstellung von Lehrerinnen innerhalb derselben betreffend," *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Schulblatt* 32 November 1897): pp. 330-332.

²⁹ August Pieper, "Zur Verstaendigung in der gegenwaertigen Diskussion ueber Kirche und Amt," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 9 (Juli 1912), pp. 182-208; "Die Lehre on der Kirche und ihren Keuntzeichen in Anwendung auf die Synod," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 9 (April 1912), pp. 83-106.

time this became the established position of the Wisconsin Synod. Discussions were held between officials and theologians of both synods over this issue for many years. Yet, church fellowship was not broken until 1961, and that was done by the Wisconsin Synod over what they considered to be issues regarding their doctrine of church fellowship.

Increased confusion came into the Missouri Synod when Arnold C. Mueller, the Editor of Religious Literature (1933-1966) and August C. Stellhorn, Secretary of Schools for the Missouri Synod (1921-1960), advocated the Wisconsin Synod's position on the doctrine of the ministry within the Missouri Synod – what is characterized as the functional view of the ministry. Furthermore, in a civil case involving a Missouri Synod parochial school teacher and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Mueller and Stellhorn set forth this functional view as representative of the Missouri Synod's position before the U.S. government and published it throughout the Synod as the only proper and correct understanding.³⁰

While some held to the functional view of the ministry, others began putting forward a high view of the office the ministry similar to that of Wilhelm Loehe and J.A.A. Grabau. The rise of the Liturgical Movement within the Missouri Synod was also linked to several leading pastors and theologians involved in further movements for change through the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, its publication *The American Lutheran*, the issuing of “A Statement of the 44” in 1945, and various liturgical societies. Leaders included Berthold von Schenk, Fred Lindemann, Paul Lindemann, Theodore Graebner, O.P. Kretzmann, and Arthur Carl Piepkorn.³¹

Meanwhile, between 1952 and 1962, the Synod's Council of Presidents (COP) worked on changing the Synod's definition of ordination. Prior to 1962, ordination in the Missouri Synod

³⁰For documentation, see Wohlrabe “An Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of the Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod until 1962,” pp. 222-283; *Ministry in Missouri*, pp. 39-47.

³¹ For documentation, see Wohlrabe “An Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of the Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod until 1962,” pp. 166-196; *Ministry in Missouri*, pp. 34-39.

could occur only when a man was called to serve as a pastor in a congregation. The 1962 synodical convention passed a resolution put forward by the COP in which any man certified by one of the Synod's seminaries could be ordained to a call to any churchly office, including chaplain, missionary, college or seminary professor, synodical or district offices, as well as other full-time para-congregational positions. One of the main reasons was the growing bureaucracy and the increasing number of district and synodical positions. Secondly, the government held a different understanding of ordination for the commissioning of military chaplains. Thirdly, ordination was considered by many as an adiaphoron. However, it seems that this new definition of ordination separated the office of the public ministry from the function of proclaiming the Word and administering the Sacraments and separated the office of the ministry from a congregation.³²

The denigration of the office of the holy ministry continued through the Mission Affirmations of 1965 where the distinction between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers was blurred:

VI. THE WHOLE CHURCH IS CHRIST'S MISSION:

WHEREAS, Every Christian is commissioned a missionary through baptism, for through the selfsame water and Word the Holy Spirit makes us both God's children and His witness to the world when He says: "Go ye and teach a nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"....³³

Then, in 1974, Oscar Feucht published a book entitled *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy*.³⁴ Feucht stressed that the pastor's main job is equipping the saints for the work of the ministry according to his erroneous exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-12.

³² For documentation, see Wohlrabe "An Historical Analysis of the Doctrine of the Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod until 1962," pp. 339-390; *Ministry in Missouri*, pp. 56-79.

³³ LCMS, *Proceedings of the 46th Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, Detroit, Michigan, June 16-26, 1965, p. 81.

³⁴ Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship for Laity and Clergy* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974).

Everyone is to be taught that they are ministers and have a ministry in the places where they live and work in the world. In order to have an active, living, growing church, the pastor must be a “change-agent” and “dispatcher.”³⁵

The position of *Everyone a Minister* would have a profound impact on the Missouri Synod after the 1974 Seminex Walkout through the Synod’s evangelism programs and support of the Church Growth Movement during the 1980s and following years. Prolific proponents of this view include Dr. Kent Hunter and David Lueke who have written several books on the Church Growth Movement for use in Lutheran churches.³⁶

Meanwhile, a resurgence of a high view of the ministry can be found among some today in the Missouri Synod, placing the office of the ministry as a special estate above the priesthood of all believers, with ordination as more than a public confirmation of the call, and with the efficacy of the Sacraments dependent on one being properly called and ordained.³⁷ In reality, the tug-of-war involving tension and balance in the doctrine of the ministry continues as it has throughout our history; but it continues with what I believe to be the wrong objective in mind. This is not to be a contest intended to pit one against the other: the public office of the ministry or the priesthood of all believers. It is not an either/or but a both/and. The tension and balance are to be maintained. Also, the tension and balance between legalism and antinomianism are to be maintained.

³⁵ Brent Kuhlman noted: “The parallels between *Everyone a Minister* and pietism are unmistakable. Both Spener and Feucht offer proposals for reforming the church. Both of their proposals reflect a shift in theology from God’s objective external gifts [Word and Sacrament] to the subjectivity and activism of the believer. “Brent Kuhlman, “Oscar Feucht’s *Everyone a Minister: Pietism Redivivus*,” *Logia* 8 (Reformation 1999), p. 35.

³⁶ See Klemet Preus, “The Theology of the Church Growth Movement: An Evaluation of Kent Hunter’s *Confessions*,” *Logia* 10 (Epiphany 2001).

³⁷ Consider David Scaer, “Ordination: Human Rite or Divine Ordinance,” (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date); Roger D. Pittelko, “The Office of the Ministry in the Life of the Church: A View from the Parish,” *Logia* 2 (Epiphany 1993), pp. 33-40; or the extreme views of Douglas D. Fusselman, “Only Playing Church? The Lay Minister and The Lord’s Supper,” *Logia* 3 (Epiphany 1994), pp. 43-49; “It’s Jesus!” The Minister as the Embodiment of Christ,” *Logia* 6 (Epiphany 1997), pp. 28-32. Also consider the responses of Paul McCain and Martin Noland in “Colloquium Fratrum,” *Logia* 6 (Trinity 1997), pp. 47-50.

Which finally brings me to addressing some of the charges put forth in the document “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. VI. Office of the Holy Ministry.” First, it is held by the ACELC that the category of “lay ministers” authorized at the 1989 synodical convention in Wichita, KS is erroneous in view of Scripture and Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, specifically that some of these “lay ministers” are authorized to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry to congregations of the Synod without a regular call. It is further held that the Distance Education Leading to Ordination (DELTO) program, which allows some laymen not properly called and ordained to provide Word and Sacrament Ministry while preparing for ordination, is also in error for the same Scriptural and Confessional reasons.³⁸ The document “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” acknowledges that DELTO was an attempt to “salvage” the Confessional integrity of Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession, but notes that not all DELTO men have been ordained. The establishment of the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program at the Synod’s 2007 convention is seen as providing an inadequate preparation for the office of the ministry.³⁹ Of further concern is the authorization of some vicars to administer the Lord’s Supper in certain cases, violating Augsburg Confession Article XIV and the consciences of some vicars. This is also rejected as an error by the ACELC document.⁴⁰

In the response of the Saxon immigrants of Missouri to the *Hirtenbrief* of J.A.A. Grabau, it was noted that the efficacy of the Sacraments does not depend on ordination, or even the office of the ministry, but on the all-efficient Word of God. This was maintained repeatedly in the course of Synod’s history, particularly in objection to those who insisted on ordination and the

³⁸ Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations, “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: VI. Office of the Holy Ministry” dated November 8, 2010, p. 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

office as being necessary. Yet, the office of the public ministry is the proper, Christ-established order. Over the course of the Synod's history, it has been acknowledged that there are times of emergency in which strictly following the established order would violate the Law of Love and neglect the salvation and nurturing of souls. Yet, those emergencies are rare, should be strictly regulated, and should include pastoral oversight. Additionally, throughout its history, the amount of education necessary for the public office of the ministry has been an issue of concern. In all of these instances, there has been a tension and attempted balance between the office of the public ministry and the priesthood of all believers, as well as between legalism and antinomianism.

To my way of thinking, the main problem is not with the granting of exceptions in emergency situations, but in the attempt by some within the Synod to make the exception the rule, to push the envelope with respect to the granting of exceptions, and to stretch out the time needed for what is intended to be an appointed emergency church worker to attain the appropriate education and proper examination leading to a call and ordination. An example of this can be seen in a "Request for a Theological Opinion from the South Wisconsin District President Regarding Augsburg Confession Article XIV" and the response of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) dated December 18, 2010. Apparently one or more congregations in Wisconsin were regularly using laymen to publicly preach the Word and administer the Sacraments and lay men and women to proclaim the Word and administer the Sacraments in house church, small group, or cell group settings. Without going into detail, the CTCR responded that this is inappropriate.⁴¹

Concerning vicars being authorized to administer the Lord's Supper, it is my understanding that both seminaries allow this on a case by case basis as an exception for

⁴¹ Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Response to Request for a Theological Opinion from the South Wisconsin District President Regarding Augsburg Confession Article XIV," dated December 18, 2010.

emergency situations. The supervising pastor must request the exception in writing and both the seminary and the district president must give permission. This too is to be only an exception in emergency situations. It may well be that there have been abuses here as well.

Personally, I believe that while the initiation of “lay ministers” for emergency, frontier situations like Alaska may have been well intended, it is fraught with abuse and leads to grave confusion. Licensing “lay ministers” or “deacons” sends a mixed message. If a congregation or a group of congregations ask a man to publicly preach, teach, and administer the Sacraments, then he should be called and ordained to do so. The amount of education is secondary, but certainly open for discussion. The call and affirmation of that call through ordination makes it clear to the man and the people that the man is in the office of the public ministry and that he is supposed to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments among God’s people.

One other error was noted in the ACELC document: “The notion promoted by some that ‘everyone is a minister’ distorts both the use of the term ‘ministry’ in the Lutheran Confessions as well as the royal priesthood of the baptized so that what any Christian does is measured against the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and the doctrine of vocation is lost.”⁴² I would agree completely with this statement. Yet, to my knowledge, the only official adoption of this view was the Mission Affirmations of 1965, which were later relegated to guidelines and ignored.

Furthermore, just as there are some within the Synod putting forward a functional view of the ministry, there are others espousing a high view of the office of the ministry, which places the ministry over the church and the priesthood of all believers. There are those who maintain that ordination is more than a good apostolic practice and public affirmation of the call; those

⁴² Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations, “Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: VI. Office of the Holy Ministry” dated November 8, 2010, p. 4.

who do not believe that God calls a pastor mediately through the call of the church. This too is an error that needs to be identified and discussed. Why didn't the ACELC document note this as an error within the Missouri Synod?

We should acknowledge, hopefully with patience and forbearance, that the Synod is a human organization composed of sinful, fallible human beings. And so, we recognize the possibility that resolutions adopted by majority vote at our conventions may not always be faithful to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Some adopted synodical resolutions may cause or present confusion in doctrine and practice. Therefore, we have made provisions for and have agreed to make use of orderly ways of testing and questioning this, of expressing dissent. I would encourage the use of our agreed upon procedures to do so instead of issuing a document like "Evidence of Errors in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," or perhaps use this document to express dissent within our established procedures. Currently, the document you have issued is seen by many as divisive. Are people who don't sign the admonition considered to be less than orthodox? Are these charges or concerns in this document? Instead of making charges, I urge you to discuss the issues as concerns first within the fellowship of your peers, then bring those issues to your circuits, then to your districts, and then through your districts to the Synod. It is a much slower process, but it is what we have agreed upon, and I believe you will receive a much better hearing using our agreed upon system of dissent than the approach you have chosen.

In addition to adopting "Kirche und Amt" as its official doctrinal position, the 1851 synodical convention sent Walther and Wyneken to Germany to have face-to-face discussions with Loehe. It was considered a "holy obligation of brotherly love." Over the course of several months in 1852, they met and discussed the doctrines of church and ministry. Walther wrote that

although they “did not come to a conclusion in every single expression regarding the points of doctrine in dispute, we can, nonetheless, with merry confidence assure the dear reader that a unifying agreement in the truth and in love has already been attained.”⁴³ Walther was not willing to break with Loehe; instead it was eventually Loehe who broke with the Missouri Synod.

The 2007 synodical convention established a Harmony Task Force which has done extensive work, interviewing 29 different people from across the Synod, plus the written testimony from many more. A preliminary report was submitted to the 2010 synodical convention. The final report of this task force will soon be published. In conjunction with that, a “Koinonia Project” is being formulated which will establish Synod-wide studies of Scripture and the Confessions covering specific topics, including church and ministry, encouraging and involving repentance, confession and absolution, seeking to identify clear statements of the controversies, clear statements of what we affirm together, clear statements of what we reject, and agreements of what we will therefore do together. In the spirit of the trip of Walther and Wyneken to visit Loehe, I hope and pray that all of you will embrace this effort in order to maintain the balance and tension involved in the doctrine of the ministry and its practice.

Soli Deo Gloria

⁴³ Matthew C. Harrison, ed., *At Home in the House of My Fathers (Lutheran Legacy, 2009)*, p. 93.