

*Your word is true from the beginning... therefore your servant loves it.
I am a companion of all them that fear you, and of them that keep your precepts.*

Psalm 119,140.160.63



I know of no greater gift that we have, ... as the unity in doctrine ... If I had the gift that I could raise the dead, what would it be worth if the other preachers would all teach against me?

Luther

The Wauwatosa-Theology in the light of hermeneutical principles

1 The term "hermeneutics"

1. I am going to explain the topic hermeneutics from the greek word (ἐρμηνεύειν): explain, interpret, translate. Hermeneutics is the theory or instruction for scriptural interpretation (exegesis). It is the teaching of the principles and rules, to find and to illustrate *the* meaning which the Holy Spirit has put into the words of the Holy Scripture.

2. **"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."** Luke. 24.27 (καὶ ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ Μωσέως καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν προφητῶν διηρμήνευεν αὐτοῖς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς γραφαῖς τὰ περὶ ἑαυτοῦ)

3. Everything we believe, teach and confess, is set against the background of the word: **Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.** (1 Cor. 2,12.13)

4. For us the prerequisite must be and remain: The literal inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit (verbal inspiration) and the consequent (sola scriptura) "Scripture Alone". This must apply to the interpretation of biblical texts as well as to negotiations between churches.

2 Preliminary thoughts

5. Höfling¹ had almost the same position regarding the ministry as does the WELS and the CLC today. Within the WELS Prof. Philipp Koehler was first influenced by him and the "Erlangen school". In his Ecclesiastical History Koehler writes about the controversy over "Church and Ministry" in Germany: "All free and correctly according to Scripture was only Höfling with a few comrades"²

6. Koehler convinced (or misled) Professors J. Schaller and Aug, Pieper³ for this kind of exegesis according to the "Erlangen school", which is odd to the Lutheran Church. These three taught in

¹ Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling, 1802-1853, mit Adolf Harleß Mitbegründer der "Erlanger Schule", Neuluthertum, Ursprünge in der Erweckungsbewegung, Bestrebungen: nicht rationale Erkenntnis oder kritischer Erforschung der Schrift, sondern ausgehend von der Wiedergeburt im Glauben, wichtig für Erkenntnisprozess: Erfahrung des Glaubens

² Koehler, Johannes Philipp, Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, Milwaukee, NPH 1917, S. 659, § 271 g

³ **J. P. Koehler** (1859-1951) war Professor am damaligen Seminar der WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) in Wauwatosa (1900-1929). Koehler ist neben **August Pieper** (1858-1946) und **John Schaller** (1859-1920) einer der Hauptvertreter der sogenannten Wauwatosa-Theologie

Wauwatosa where WELS theologians studied. Therefore it is called Wauwatosa- theology. On the other side there was the WELS dogmatic Adolf Hoenecke for example.

7. After the end of the German Democratic Republic in 1990 (with new contacts to the WELS) these differences, which were forgotten in the ELFK, were brought up again, especially because of a paper by J. Schaller from 1914 which was republished in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly in 1989. Also the paper by August Pieper "Are there legal regulations in the New Testament?"

8. Until the 1940s the Missouri-Synod with the WELS had discussed the teachings of "church and ministry". The status controversiae was then formulated clearly.⁴

9. The WELS wanted us to believe that there were only different definitions of terms. Therefore there would be misunderstandings. However, the actual differences in the teachings became ever clearer. We learned that even Sunday school teachers are ordained. Gottfried Wachler writes: "*If suddenly ordination also applies to other ministries, this must result in blurring the distinction between jure divino and humano.*"⁵

10. A change of the generation of pastors within the Theological Commission of the ELFK changed everything: The new chairman, Martin Hoffmann, took on the WELS teaching for himself, finally followed by almost all pastors. In the end 4 theologians, one congregation and elsewhere parts of congregations left the synod. Since 2001 the Immanuel congregation in Steeden no longer belongs to the synod convention of the ELFK.

11. In 1992 the ELFK resigned the fellowship to different synods of the ILC and to the STLK in order to found the CELC with the WELS and the ELS. Otherwise there would have been "triangle-fellowships". Having left the synod of the ELFK the Immanuel congregation in Steeden is now continuing the fellowship in belief and confession with the STLK. We are very grateful to the Lord!

Restriction

12. In the 10 years of dogmatic talks a large amount of documents was written. On the subject of "church" and "Ministry" there are many single exegeses and essays on subthemes. The wrong approach of Wauwatosa Theology leads to differences in countless individual questions. Therefore exemplarily especially Titus 1,5.7 should be considered.

13. For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: ...For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God... (Titus 1,5.7)⁶

14. Based on these verses the differences of Wauwatosa-theology and the biblical-lutheran exegesis are shown.

15. In the first part of this essay the WELS' (or Wauwatosa theologians) position on the topic is illustrated. The second part shows explanations on the Lutheran position respecting Scripture and Confession.

16. We must be especially grateful to Dr. theol. Gottfried Wachler DD. and P. Stephan Müller who has gathered the biblical references in our confessions regarding "Church" and "Ministry".

3 WELS-Antithesis to ministry

17. The antithesis of the WELS to "ministry" illustrates the problem short and concise:
*We hold it to be untenable to say that the pastorate of the local congregation (Pfarramt) as a specific form of the public ministry is specifically instituted by the Lord in contrast to other forms of the public ministry.*⁷

⁴ siehe Anhang „Der status controversia von 1930/ 1932“

⁵ Wachler, Gottfried, D.D., Der Niederschlag lutherischer Amtslehre in Agenden und Kirchenordnungen, Leipzig (Januar 2000), S. 8

⁶ Τούτου χάριν κατέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃς κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους ὡς ἐγὼ σοὶ διαταξάμην... δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον

⁷ Wir achten es für unhaltbar zu sagen, dass das Pfarramt in der Ortsgemeinde als spezifische Form des öffentlichen Predigtamtes spezifisch vom Herrn eingesetzt sei im Gegensatz zu anderen Formen des öffentlichen

18. The opposite position, which is the biblical Lutheran attitude: *The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.* ⁸ [Please also refer to scriptures that indicates Walther.]

19. Our confession teaches: *"The ministry has the command of God" - Ministerium verbi habet mandatum Dei.* (Apol. CA 23,11)

20. The reason for the discrepancy in the teaching position seems to be primarily in the misled approach of Wauwatosa theologians to God's Word. They neglect hermeneutical principles. According to them the scripture is not clear enough. The way they interpret certain verses prevents dogmatic conclusions because they seem to believe that the degree of certainty in the respective verses is very low. With two premises they force themselves into an unbiblical, non-Lutheran direction.

3.1 Positioning of points: Two premises

3.1.1 The first premise: Derivation of the specific preaching ministry from the general priesthood of all believers

21. The Wauwatosa Theology also says that God has established the ministry. But it refers to the ministry in abstracto (that God generally commanded to proclaim his word, to administer the sacraments, etc.). The ministry in abstracto is the collection or summary of all actions and functions which are meant for the salvation of the believers (not a really concrete office – for example: pastor) Otherwise a ceremonial-law-character would be implemented into the New Testament.

22. *In a general sense also our confession uses the word "ministry". In the Apology we read: "And we are not talking about a fictitious church ..." but "we say that this same church shows this external signs: The ministry or the Gospel and the Sacraments"* ⁹

23. and: *"For we have said above that faith is conceived from the Word, and we honor the ministry and the Word higher and more than the enemies do."* ¹⁰

24. But beyond that, it uses the word "ministry" also for the specific office which God has endowed with the extraordinary ministry of the apostles and which continues in the ministry that God has established: *That the office of the ministry comes from the general call of the apostles, and that it is not necessary for all to have the call or confirmation of this one person, Peter, alone.* (Tract. 10)

25. And Walther says in his first thesis on the ministry: *„The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.“* ¹¹

26. Therefore, for example, also C.F.W. Walther considers equal the „*holy ministry*“ and the *"pastoral office"*. For Lutheran theology the „*holy ministry*“ and the *"pastoral office"* they are the same. But not for the WELS. As I said: Although the WELS considers the *ministry in abstracto* (general sense) as established by God, the *ministry in concreto*, however, is not considered as established by God. WELS claims that the church can freely decide on establishing and implementing specific forms of the ministry in concreto as circumstances require.

27. August Pieper writes: *„But one thing is nowhere to be found in Scripture: an explicit, specific legal or evangelical... divine precept concerning a specific form of the ministry, also not of the form of the congregational pastorate (Pfarramt)... Paul's mandate to Titus (1:5ff), given through the Holy Spirit, can, considered by itself, be generalized as little as the command addressed to Timothy (1 Tm 5:9 and 14) concerning the young and sixty year old widows.“* ¹²

Predigtamtes. <http://wels.net/about-wels/what-we-believe/doctrinal-statements/church-and-ministry/>

⁸ Walther, C.F.W., Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt, These II. zum Predigtamt

⁹ Apologie 7, § 20 "Von der Kirchen."

¹⁰ Apol. 4, § 73

¹¹ Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt, Thesis 1

¹² Pieper, August, Gibt es im Neuen Testament gesetzliche Verordnungen?, Theologische Quartalschrift, 13, No.3 pp. 175

28. J. Schaller writes: „If, therefore, we want to gain a correct understanding of the forms of the ministry as we find them in the church of all times, we have to free ourselves from the thought that only official public proclaiming is gospel preaching... Our studies, which have adhered strictly to what is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, incontrovertibly show that the ministry, that is, the commission to preach the gospel, is given to every Christian... that at conversion not only the ability but also the impetus for this preaching is implanted in him; and that the gospel by its very nature as a message presupposes this preaching activity and at the same time by the effect it has guarantees it will occur.“¹³

29. In the so-called "Interim Report" P. Martin Hoffmann (ELFK) informed about the doctrinal discussions with the WELS:

30. *The public ministry is equal to the common priesthood...A one-sided emphasis of the pastoral ministry can lead to the misunderstanding that the public ministry is a more specific or even holier form beside the ministry of the common priesthood, maybe even:*

(1) continued by the apostles through succession;

(2) as a form of salvation-mediator for the common Christians;

(3) whose working and preaching shall therefore be considered as God-given without being checked¹⁴

31. P. Martin Hoffmann claims that the public ministry and the common priesthood are generically the same. That may be true because as the ministry of God proclaims God's good deeds also all believers shall do the same according to (1 Pet. 2.9). But the quote contains even more, namely that the ministry respecting the common priesthood must not be emphasized one-sidedly. Doing so the God-given difference is already blurred! They claim that could lead to the *"misunderstanding that the public ministry is a more specific or even holier form beside the ministry of the common priesthood."*

32. Not only here they work by unfair means. It is symptomatic for the WELS to establish a counterpart we do not identify with. They mention wrong issues and reject them. At the same time they deny the right confession. In the above quote they are against "one-sided emphasis" of the ministry because they say it is not directly established by God. Now the Catholic doctrine of succession, high ecclesiastical thinking and a wrong understanding of the pastoral office are mentioned. This we also reject. But at the same time the specific preaching or pastoral office, as commanded by God, and is taught according to the scripture by Luther, Walther, Franz Pieper and us- is negated .

33. This is the first premise that affects all exegesis of the Bible verses of the ministry: *The ministry is generically the same as the general priesthood of all believers*. From this they derive far-reaching conclusions which I am going to explain now.

3.1.2 The second premise: ceremonial law

34. The Lutheran doctrine, as C. F.W. Walther explains it, is considered to have a ceremonial law-character by Wauwatosa Theology. The ELFK adopted this position.

35. Martin Hoffmann (ELFK) writes: *"For the New Covenant God has not given any ceremonial law ... He has poured rather his spirit in abundance..., so that the faithful by his instructions ... can find themselves forms of church and of worship which serve the kingdom of God. ... God's word admonishes us not to give up this freedom of God's children ... and fall back into the legislative attitude : neither into the old Jewish law... nor ever in slavery under the commandments of men "*¹⁵

36. August Pieper writes: *"Whoever introduces a legalistic spirit into the external establishment of*

¹³ Schaller, John, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamts (The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry), 1914, S.22 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1)

¹⁴ Theologische Kommission der ELFK, Die Lehre von Kirche und Amt, Stand der Lehrgespräche zwischen ELFK und WELS, Verschiedener Ausgangspunkt in der Darstellung der Lehre vom öffentlichen Predigtamt, 1993-2000

¹⁵ Die Lehre von Kirche und Amt, Stand der Lehrgespräche zwischen ELFK und WELS (1991 - 1994), Theologische Kommission (Fassung vom 23. Mai 1995 – mit den Anmerkungen vom 25. September 1995)

*the New Testament church has already corrupted and destroyed the doctrine of the Church, and as far as he is concerned, the Church also.*¹⁶

37. He concludes: *"But nowhere is it stated as a permanent regulation of the Lord, valid for all times and circumstances that every local congregation is to have a pastor!"*¹⁷

38. And Schaller says that if one would infer from Tit 1,5, each local church should have a pastor: *"We could then speak of a divinely ordained office of fund raiser and of a God-ordained Sunday offering (1 Cor 15, 16¹⁸), of a divinely instituted office of almoner (Ac 6), of a divinely commanded deaconess ministry (1 Tm 3:11), of a divine institution of the use of certain widows in the service of the church (1 Tm 5), perhaps even of the divine institution of Christian slavery (Col 3:24; Phm; etc.), and many other examples which could be cited. Whoever properly will not agree to such conclusions because in fact an express command of God in these matters is lacking, dare also not draw the conclusion from Acts 14:23 or Titus 1:5, for example: It is a divine command that every congregation have elders or bishops..."*¹⁹

39. Luther writes to **Titus 1.5**: *"Whoever believes that here the Spirit of Christ speaks in Paulo and arranges that recognizes well that this is a divine institution and order that in every city there are many bishops, or at least one..."*²⁰

40. *"In the New Testament there is no ceremonial law."* - Based on the arrangement of the Apostle in Tit 1.5 (. Et al words of holy scripture), is a premise which is then applied to each of the core points on the subject. An appropriate exegesis is thereby no longer possible.

3.2 The first result is the neglect of the Lutheran theology

41. The distinction between the ministry and the common priesthood of all believers is blurred.

42. So John Schaller writes: *"When, therefore, a Christian takes part in congregational singing, he is preaching the Word of Christ as it is contained in our precious hymns. When the Lord's Prayer, the confession of sins, and the Creed are spoken by the entire assembly, this is in each instance for those who truly participate from their hearts a part of the public preaching in which they personally engage... We are so free in this in practice that under certain conditions we permit the public preaching of the gospel even by children. It may perhaps not immediately be clear to everyone that in the Christian catechetical instruction, in the examination for confirmation, and in the vow made by confirmands, the children are in fact preaching the Word of Christ. Nevertheless, no one can deny that in the children's service at Christmas the little ones, too, proclaim the praises of the Lord."*²¹

43. According to the Wauwatosa theologians there is no command of God for a specific form of the preaching ministry in the congregation. They say God only wants generally his word to be proclaimed.

44. Schaller takes to compare the governance of the State and writes: *"In the same way he clearly shows in Romans 13 that God has of course instituted no specific form of government; but where government exists, in whatever way it has been established and in whatever form people under God's guidance or permission have chosen, such government is ordained of God... When, moreover, we continue to hold firmly to the truth that whatever involves a preaching of the gospel is a form of the New Testament ministry, we will see clearly how these forms come into existence without God's*

¹⁶ Pieper, August, Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Synod and its discipline, This essay was read to the pastoral conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District early in the summer 1929

¹⁷ Pieper, August, Gibt es im Neuen Testament gesetzliche Verordnungen?, Theologische Quartalschrift, 13, No.3 pp. 167

¹⁸ 1 Cor 16.2

¹⁹ Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamtes, 1914, Seite ??? (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1)

²⁰ Luther zu Tit 1,5 in W2 XIX, 1093,53

²¹ Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamtes, 1914, S.24 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1)

special command and then are recognized by him."²²

45. But how is it, that also the WELS still has a Pastor in every church? Answer: *"As soon as a group of Christians gather together in any manner and at any place and the existing congregation can in that way be recognized... Through the fact that a number of Christians are together, however, the need for mutual confession and mutual edification quite naturally arises. From this an obligation arises for the whole group which the individual Christian does not have: because of its own need it must make provisions to let the Word of Christ ring out in its gathering. That this takes place is essential; how it takes place is incidental and depends in the circumstances of the congregation and on the opportunity... Among us it usually delegates to a single individual the responsibility to do the formal, solemn preaching on a regular basis, to conduct the public worship services, and in addition to serve the individual members of the congregation with the Word according to their needs. These things could also be arranged in an entirely different way since the pastorate in the form which is customary among us was very likely totally unknown in apostolic times..."*²³

46. Koehler writes: *"The Wauwatosa faculty considers that the pastoral ministry [Pfarramt] is a species of the preaching ministry [Predigtamt] that first originated in the German Middle Ages, and that likewise the local congregation is a species of the concept of church..."*²⁴

47. Already around 1930 the status controversiae was formulated between the Missouri-Synod and the WELS: *"The preaching in the local congregation, closely connected with the local congregation is instituted and ordained by God in a specific way. - This is the field of confrontation "*²⁵ And: *„St.Louis (LCMS): The ministry of the local church is a divine institution. Offices of the Synod are instituted by human law. Thiensville (WELS): Both offices are on one level.*"²⁶

3.3 The second result is religious enthusiasm (Schwärmerei)

48. So there is, in the opinion of the WELS, no word of God which establishes a specific ministry commanded by God, until the end of the days.

49. *"There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry. The one public ministry of the Gospel may assume various forms, as circumstances demand. Ac 6:1-6. The specific forms in which Christians establish the public ministry have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church. It is the Holy Spirit who through the gift of their common faith leads the believers to establish the adequate and wholesome forms which fit every circumstance, situation, and need."*²⁷

50. *„What the office in the public ministry in the narrow sense has to look like respectively, cannot be found in God's word. To find and develop appropriate forms, the Church can be guided through the gift of the common faith by the Holy Spirit."*²⁸

51. But this is religious enthusiasm (Schwärmerei!) The "guidance of the Holy Spirit" replaces the clear order of God as in Tit. 1.5 or Acts 14.23.

52. Franz Pieper refers to Höfling: *"The Erlanger theologian Hoefling wanted the ministry indeed to be divine order, but only in the sense in which "could be called everything rational, purposeful, morally necessary" is a divine order, not in the sense there is a divine command for the public ministry. From Acts. 14,23 and Tit. 1, 5 it's not allowed (as he thinks) "to draw dogmatic*

²² Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamtes, 1914, S.33 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1), S. 24

²³ Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamtes, 1914, S.33 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1), S. 36

²⁴ Koehler, Philipp, Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, S.712, zitiert bei Nass, Prof. Thomas P., What is "divinely instituted" and what is "necessary" in regard to the public ministry?, South Atlantic District Pastor/Teacher Conference January 31, 2003

²⁵ LCMS-WELS, status controversiae von 1930 - 1932

²⁶ Präses Pfothenhauer (LCMS) in einem Brief vom 24. März 1932

²⁷ Doctrinal Statements der WELS 1970

²⁸ Theologische Kommission der ELFK, Die Lehre von Kirche und Amt, Stand der Lehrgespräche zwischen ELFK und WELS, Pkt. „Die Einrichtung des Predigtamtes in christlicher Freiheit“

*conclusions for all future" ... He means when a divine commandment for the administration of the means of grace is accepted a legalistic element would be carried in the new Testament church."*²⁹
(Please read the the appendix, Copies of the full text)

53. Now the WELS insists repeatedly, Höfling fits their antithesis. Nevertheless their representatives repeat his false teachings - almost literally in their essays. A closer look reveals indeed also that they always contradict Höfling only in this one point, namely "*... that the origin of the public ministry in the narrow sense, which is serving by the preaching of the gospel and by administrating the means of grace, comes from mere expediency, but not from a divine establishment. (Höfling)*"³⁰

54. "*Divine establishment of the public ministry*", not only mere expediency. "That sounds good to our ears. But it has to be considered that WELS believes that the ministry established by God only means the totality of all functions of the ministry (functions = word preaching, administering the sacraments, confession and absolution, etc.), and thereby mean the ministry in abstracto. In the concrete sense (in concreto) the local congregation does not call by virtue of the command of God. It calls "*through the gift of common faith and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit*" into individual functions. Therefore the WELS sees the ministry only as one possible form of the concrete "ministry" among many other possible forms, but to which especially many functions are given, which serves "comprisingly".

55. Schaller writes: „*These things could also be arranged in an entirely different way...*"³¹

3.4 The third result is uncertainty

56. To Titus 1,5ff. P. Martin Hoffmann writes³²: "*We see how different the degree of certainty of statements is when we do biblical exegesis. With which degree of certainty these questions must be answered, which are quite meaningful for the doctrine of the office of ministry?*"

57. a) *In which inner context is verse 5 to verse 6 and to the verses 7 and following?*

b) *Which ministry or office respectively does Paul mean here when he has eldest instituted into office?*

c) *How must the relationship between eldest and bishop be understood?*

d) *To what extend does this verse say something about the divine establishment of the public ministry? ...*

58... What- at least now³³ – remains in the dark for us, was probably out of question for Titus. He knew the circumstances and knew what Paul means by 'bishop' and 'eldest'...³⁴

59. Also Schaller: "*That conclusion would, moreover, be of precious little use to us since we have no information about how the ministry of the elders was organized, what exactly the bishops had to do, how many elders and bishops each congregation must have, etc.; in short, we would be in the precarious situation of having a divine command without knowing exactly what really is required.*"³⁵

60. The result of such an approach to the Word of God is uncertainty! Thereby the power of God's words is being robbed. And the Christians, even entire congregations, do not know if they are supposed to believe and follow what they read in God's word.

61. Especially in temptations the devil tries to make the words of God uncertain to the Christians. The devil wants to finally make Christians unsure of their salvation and fall into despair!

²⁹ Pieper, Franz, D., Christliche Dogmatik, hrsg. von D.Dr. J.T. Mueller, LCMS St. Louis 1946, S. 727f.

³⁰ Bericht über den Stand der Lehrgespräche zwischen ELFK und WELS vom 25.09.1995

³¹ Schaller, John, The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry, S. 51 (zitiert in WSQ 1994/4)

³² Dozent für Systematische Theologie am Luth. Theol. Seminar der ELFK zu Leipzig

³³ Anm. MB: Es ist allerdings auch später in diesen Punkten nie „heller“ geworden.

³⁴ Martin Hoffmann, Titus 1,5 - Welches Amt hat Paulus hier aufzurichten befohlen?, September 1997 Seite 2f.

³⁵ Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigamtes, 1914, S.33 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1)

62. By contrast, the Scripture says: **Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace...** (Hebrews 13.9) and: **Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD ponders the hearts.** (Proverbs 21.2)

63. By denying the ministry in concreto as established by God and by making its establishment dependant at human's discretion, the WELS has no biblical foundation against the abolishment of the ministry. This circumstance is known to some people. Therefor for example P. Nass writes: *"Among us I feel a great unanimity in the existence of 4 parts of the public ministry which are normally only taken by pastors (sermon, doctrinal supervision, administration of the sacraments, conducting the church-services)..But I can hear nobody among us who stands up for the sharing of these parts with others, under usual circumstances...Inside our church there is the significantly recognizable belief that the spiritual supervision over the congregations, which is according to the teachings, shall remain with the PASTORAL MINISTRY... "Following the general practice the administration of the sacraments in our congregations is committed to those in the pastoral ministry Others can naturally be in charge of administering the Lord's Supper...I don't even know one person who is in favor of giving this responsibility to others...Committing this office to the pastor preserves also a good rule in the congregation...Surely noone of us will be delighted if a couple says they went to the front to baptize their child..."³⁶*

3.5 The most serious result is the abandonment of SOLA SCRIPTURA

64. How should we call it else than turn that they are turning away from "Scripture Alone"? - when they use their own considerations for what is written, for what is the "need of the Christians" and for the "instructions through the Holy Spirit", and all this "outside of" the written word of God?

65. Koehler wrote: *"What, moreover, the apostles arranged by the Holy Spirit or following the good christian sense or what they have set temporary or local or according to existing circumstances - from which may not be a general law be made, unless it's on, in fact, it is based on the nature of the Church or on the commandment of love."³⁷*

66. But who is to decide about that? How is then still valid **"Scripture Alone!"**?

67. Aug. Pieper also writes: *"... nor does a practical directive of the apostles automatically have universal validity and divine authority like a general precept of the Lord." ³⁸*

68. We respond with Luther: *„To this we answer therefore with Paul that **‘a little leaven maketh sour the whole lump.’** In philosophy, a small fault in the beginning, is a great [and a foul] fault in the end. So in divinity, one little error overthroweth the whole doctrine..."*

69. *The doctrine is not ours, but God's whose ministers only we are called; therefore we may not change or diminish one tittle thereof...*

70. *Therefore, when they make this matter of so little account, they do sufficiently witness what store they set by the Word of God. Which if they did believe to be the Word of God, they would not so trifle with it, but would hold it in high honor, and without any disputing or doubting would put their faith in it, knowing that one word of God is all and all are one."³⁹*

71. The fact that there are arrangements in the New Testament that apply to only one person or a specific group of people ⁴⁰, does not make the divine institution of the preaching ineffective.

72. There are calls that we should not fail to fulfill, because they are not addressed to us. And yet, God teaches us through them.⁴¹ But there are apostolic instructions we should follow very well.

³⁶ Nass, Thomas P., Das Hirtenamt als eine bestimmte Form des öffentlichen Amtes, WLQ 1994/ 4, S. 257ff.

³⁷ Theologischen Quartalschrift (Okt. 1929 - zitiert und rückübersetzt aus: WELS Ministry Compendium, S. 32f; "Betreffs der Lehre von der Kirche und ihrem Amt" von Pfr. Th. Voigt

³⁸ Pieper, August, Gibt es im Neuen Testament gesetzliche Verordnungen?, Theologische Quartalschrift, 13, No.3 pp. 167

³⁹ Luther, Auslegung des Briefes an die Gal. 5,9-12. Vom J. 1535, Walch² VIII, 2652 ff.

⁴⁰ z.B. Ein Wort, das uns gegenseitige Unterstützung, aber auch Nachsicht lehrt: 2.Tim. 4,13: Den Mantel, den ich in Troas ließ bei Karpus, bringe mit, wenn du kommst, und die Bücher, besonders die Pergamente.

⁴¹ Ein feines Wort gegen die Schwärmer, 1.Tim. 5,23: Trinke nicht mehr nur Wasser, sondern nimm ein wenig Wein

Therefore, we ask:

3.6 Digression: Correct discrimination of the instructions of the Apostle

73. Christ said to his apostles appointed by him: „**The one who hears you hears me**“ (Luke 10,16). Now we can also find instructions of the apostles, which obviously should follow only those who received his letter as the first. An example: „**Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do you. On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.**“ (1Cor 16,1.2). Should we conclude that it is God's explicit wish to gather money on Sundays? In other words, is there a collection commanded by God through the apostles, or is it just one way that we can imitate, but not necessarily?

74. Paul writes so: „**I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.**“ (2. Cor. 8,8). So it is not a command (2. Cor. 8,8) that we should do that for the Jerusalem congregation (as it was at that time no law). But we practice this when we see brothers and sisters in faith in need.

75. Luther writes: „*Far be it, far be it that there is even a single letter in the whole Paul, which the general church not should follow and preserve.*“⁴²

76. When the apostle does not refer to an outspoken sentence by Christ, he writes: „**To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.**“ (1. Cor. 7,12). When he refers to an outspoken sentence by Christ, he says: „**To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband.**“ (1. Cor. 7,10).

77. „**Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.**“ (1. Cor. 7,25). Here God himself gives through Paul a well-intended advice, on a specific request "to the present distress" (persecution of Christians or the like) (See verse 26). Here, as everywhere applies the word: „**The one who hears you hears me.**“

78. As Luther formulates appropriately: „*The Spirit of Christ speaks in Paul .*“ and „*Far be it, far be it that there is even a single letter in the whole Paul, which the general church not should follow and preserve!*“

3.7 The application to the instruction of the apostle in Tit. 1.5

79. The difference is clear. Which position is the biblical one?

80. Luther writes: "*Whoever believes that here the Spirit of Christ speaks in Paulo and arranges that recognizes well that this is a divine institution and order that in every city there are many bishops, or at least one.*"⁴³

81. Against that August Pieper writes: „*But nowhere is it stated as a permanent regulation of the Lord, valid for all times and circumstances that every local congregation is to have a pastor! Even this is nowhere stated either as a general regulation of the Lord or of the apostles: Every congregation is to have a bishop. Moreover, our present-day congregational pastorate is as to form not yet the same as the bishop office of the apostolic age, nor does a practical directive of the apostles automatically have universal validity and divine authority like a general precept of the Lord*"⁴⁴

dazu um des Magens willen und weil du oft krank bist.

⁴² Luther, Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche W² XIX, 19 (zitiert nach „Luther deutsch, Bd. 2, 177)

⁴³ zu Tit 1,5 in W² XIX, 1093,53

⁴⁴ Pieper, August, Gibt es im Neuen Testament gesetzliche Verordnungen?, Theologische Quartalschrift, 13, No.3 pp. 167

4 Hermeneutics and exegesis to Titus 1.5

For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you... For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God... (Titus 1.5+7)⁴⁵

4.1 „The Eldest“ (πρεσβύτερος | πρεσβυτέρους)

82. Fürbringer writes in his 'Theological Hermeneutics': „Every word has an original etymological meaning and a meaning in actual popular usage (*usus loquendi*)... however, his first and chief aim should be to understand the meaning of words according to the *usus loquendi*, because in interpreting Scripture he always deals with words as they were actually used to convey a certain sense.“⁴⁶

83. The term „the eldest“ can simply mean an elderly man. This is the etymological meaning. According to 1 Timothy 5.17 an “eldest“ can also be someone who “presides over the congregation“ In this verse the apostle also speaks of such eldest who “work in the Word and in the doctrine“. This last point is also mentioned here in Titus 1.5. Titus is supposed to care for the “institution“ of the eldest.

84. The fact that the word “eldest“ is used in this way, is probably because among the first Christians no man under 50 years was called to be the pastor of a congregation or into other offices. Obviously there were expectations, for example Timothy: **Let no man despise your youth; but be you an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.** (1 Timothy 4.12).

85. Luther says: "Thus it is clear from this text that Paul means this man to be a bishop, a brave, old, and honest man who has a chaste wife and devout children. He should provide the church with preaching and sacraments. That is why he must be learned and completely blameless. My dear, is there anyone so crude or mischievous that he could misunderstand or deny anything in this text?"⁴⁷

86. The context shows clearly the meaning of “the eldest“ in our verse because Paul goes on: *If any be blameless,... For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God...*“ Here are meant the eldest of a congregation who are called “bishop“ later on.

87. This shows undoubtedly that “eldest“ and “bishop“ have the same meaning and therefore are used exchangeably. (Latin: *promiscue*).

88. St. Paul writes [to] Titus 1.5+6.: “First, St. Paul writes, Titus 1[:5–7], “Appoint an elder in every town, a blameless man, the husband of one wife. For a bishop must be blameless since he is God’s steward.” Here, I think, no one can deny that bishop and elder are one and the same for St. Paul, since he says Titus should appoint an elder in every town, a blameless man because a bishop must be blameless. He calls this same elder “bishop.”⁴⁸

4.2 Equalization of „Eldest“ and „Bishop“ also in Acts 20.17+28

89. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the *elders* of the church... Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you *overseers [bishops]*, to **feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.** (Acts. 20.17+28)

90. Fürbringer points out: „The complete agreement of Scripture with itself must be accepted a priori as a basis in its interpretation. This claim must under no circumstances be surrendered, because the divine origin of the Scriptures makes impossible any inconsistency of thought or

⁴⁵ Τούτου χάριν κατέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ καὶ καταστήσῃ κατὰ πόλιν πρεσβυτέρους ὡς ἐγὼ σοι διαταξάμην... δεῖ γὰρ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνέγκλητον εἶναι ὡς θεοῦ οἰκονόμον

⁴⁶ Fürbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theol. Hermeneutik, Leitfaden für Vorlesungen, als Manuskript gedruckt, CPH St. Louis 1912, § 13 bis 15 || Fuerbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theological Hermeneutics, An Outline for the Classroom

⁴⁷ Luther's Works, Fortress Press 1970, volume 39, page 108 || St.L. W2 XIX, 669ff.

⁴⁸ ebd. || St.L. W2 XIX, 669ff.

speech, any contradiction, or even the smallest error. The inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures carries with it absolute assurance of the fact that all passages from both the Old and the New Testament which deal with the same matter, and to the extent in which they treat of the same matter, must be considered as being in full agreement with one another — analogia (the correct relation, agreement) Scripturae parallelismus realis. “⁴⁹

91. What the apostle, driven by the Holy Spirit, reports here and teaches at the same time, is source and norm of the doctrine which we believe, confess and apply. Therefore we don't consider what is not said here but what can be read here and elsewhere about the same issue. We compare and harmonize. Especially about this Paul admonishes: That Titus shall obey the word of God himself and gain wisdom and strength thereof confessing the right doctrine as well as revealing and refusing the wrong doctrine. That is exactly what not only Titus but every „Eldest“ and „Bishop“, every Pastor (Latin: pastor = shepherd) has to do according to God's will.

92. „Feeding the flock“ and applying God's word to "teach and defend" (Lehre und Wehre). Titus 1.9 says: **Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the disputers.** The ones who Christ calls into the office of the shepherd after his apostles shall serve those who are precious gained through his blood. And this by the means with which Christ -the first shepherd- feeds his precious redeemed souls. These means are „word and sacrament“. So also writes Peter to the eldest: „**Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof**“ (1.Petr. 5,2).

93. Fürbringer mentions another basic rule: „*This analogia Scripturae, however, does not imply that the Scriptures speak in the same plain and complete way of a certain matter in all passages treating of the matter. In view of this fact the general rule results that we must consider the less clear or plain passages in the light of the clearer passages, which method of procedure must never be reversed.*“⁵⁰

4.3 The duties of a bishop

94. Wauwatosa/ WELS claim: „...we would be in the precarious situation of having a divine command without knowing exactly what really is required.“⁵¹ But this is a lie.

95. The Scripture teaches here also clearly and concisely! As a main duty of a bishop Paul mentions here: Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the disputers. (Titus 1,9).

96. The eldest and bishops shall watch over the christian flock and teach it. (Acts 20.28 – “feed”), **"Holding fast the faithful word... to exhort and to convince the disputers.**

97. The apostle Peter teaches about the eldest: The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof** (ἐπισκοποῦντες = watch over them), **not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.** (1.Petr. 5,1-4)

98. The New Testament ministry is described in various terms: **And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers** (Ephesians 4,11) and **And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers...** (1Corinthians 12.28).

99. Peter includes himself naming himself a “fellow-eldest” (1.Petr. 5,1) Therefore we consider the

⁴⁹ Fürbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theol. Hermeneutik, Leitfaden für Vorlesungen, als Manuskript gedruckt, CPH St. Louis 1912, § 28 und 29

⁵⁰ Fürbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theol. Hermeneutik, Leitfaden für Vorlesungen, als Manuskript gedruckt, CPH St. Louis 1912, § 30

⁵¹ Schaller, Über die Entstehung und Ausgestaltung des neutestamentlichen Predigtamtes, 1914, S.33 (neu abgedruckt in WLQ 1989/1)

apostolic office and the New Testament preaching ministry as one and the same. About his apostolic office Paul writes: **For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God.** (Acts 20.27). Just like this the bishops/eldest are supposed to execute their office: **Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.** (Acts 20.28). They are expected to judge wrong doctrines and stand up against it. (verses 29-31).

100. Paul speaks about himself to be "**appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles**" (2 Tim. 1,11). Like this also the bishops of God's word shall teach: Paul writes to Timothy about the prerequisites a bishop must meet: **A bishop then must be blameless, ...apt to teach.** (1 Tim 3.2). This equals Christ's order towards his apostles: **Go you therefore, and teach (μαθητεύσατε) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them(διδάσκοντες) to observe all things whatever I have commanded you...** (Matthew 28.19f.).

101. „**Even to the end of the world...**“ – this they could not carry out. Therefore they arranged the institution of eldest or bishops or shepherds and teachers in the congregations. All of them continued Christ's command, which shall go on until “the end of the world” This is the will of Christ the Lord. That is why Paul writes to Timothy: **And the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit you to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also..** (2 Timothy 2,2). This means nothing else but what he writes to Titus: **For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you:...**

102. These “bishops” and “eldest” are men who the Holy Spirit has ordained into the congregation.⁵² They are to feed the flock that Christ has gained through his own blood. They are „stewards of God's secrets“, i.e. they preach God's word which is concealed to the natural human being (a secret), and they administer the Holy Sacraments.

103. In 1 Peter 2.25 the apostle calls Christ the Lord the shepherd and bishop of the souls. In Acts 1.20 the word “bishop“ means the apostolic office. In our verse (like in Acts 20.28) the Pastors are called bishops. This shows clearly that it is the duty of a bishop to guide and feed the christian flock, to preach the right doctrine and to fight the wrong doctrine, namely with God's word, law and gospel. In short this means he serves under the one shepherd Those in the ministry are bishops of the one bishop, Christ; they serve the “first shepherd” as “fellow-shepherds” (sub-shepherds).

4.4 “What is still lacking“ (τὰ λείποντα)

104. The apostle writes to Titus 1.5: „...**that you should set in order the things that are wanting...**“ (ἵνα τὰ λείποντα ἐπιδιορθώσῃ) oder „*dass du in Ordnung bringst, woran es noch mangelt*“.

105. Something is lacking in God's command when in the congregations of the various cities there are no bishops (pastors). It is obviously a crucial necessity for the growth and prospering of Christ's church, that God's word is proclaimed and the sacraments are administered. God wants this to be done according to the order the apostle teaches here.

106. Also in Lystra, Iconia and Antioch this was common practice: **And when they had ordained them elders in every church**⁵³(Acts 14.23). Also here Paul initiated what was lacking but necessary because it is God's command.

107. Such an additional information “what is lacking“ can not be found elsewhere. In Acts 6.1 ff. for example the hardship requires the institution of the alms-keeper (Almosenpfleger) Every congregation can do so if they consider it necessary. But they do not have to. There is no divine command regarding this. Because of that C.F.W. Walther speaks of „Zweig- oder Hilfsämtern“ (supporting offices) which are basically part of the ministry. They can be set up as soon as the

⁵² durch Stimmwahl der Gemeinde, vgl. Apg. 14,23 χειροτονήσαντες

⁵³ χειροτονήσαντες Hand aufheben, Stimmwahl

congregation needs them.

108. „*A bishop is an officer of God to administer the divine and spiritual goods, preach the Gospel and to provide the people with God's word; he must have helping hands that means deacons, who shall also serve the congregation...*“⁵⁴

109. In conclusion, Gottfried Wachler writes about Titus 1.5: „*And exactly this concrete congregational pastoral office is thereby the only concrete office which has an apostolic command in the New Testament and thus is a divine command. Other eldest –except those who are identical with bishops- may of course be elected by the congregations to support the pastors. But there is no apostolic command for that.*“⁵⁵

4.4.1 The confessions of the evangelical lutheran church on this subject

110. [60] "*In our Confession and the Apology we have in general recounted what we have had to say concerning ecclesiastical power. For] The Gospel assigns to those who preside over churches the command to teach the Gospel to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent. 61] And by the confession of all, even of the adversaries, it is clear that this power by divine right is common to all who preside over churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops. 62] And accordingly Jerome openly teaches in the apostolic letters that all who preside over churches are both bishops and elders, and cites from Titus 1, 5f : For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city [and afterwards calls these persons bishops]. Then he adds: A bishop must be the husband of one wife. Likewise Peter and John call themselves elders [or priests] 1 Pet. 5, 1; 2 John 1.*"⁵⁶

111. [14] "*Moreover, since for the preservation of pure doctrine and for thorough, permanent, godly unity in the Church it is necessary, not only that the pure, wholesome doctrine be rightly presented, but also that the opponents who teach otherwise be reproved, 1 Tim. 3 (2 Tim. 3, 16); Titus 1, 9,—for faithful shepherds, as Luther says, should do both, namely, feed or nourish the lambs and resist the wolves, so that the sheep may flee from strange voices, John 10, 12, and may separate the precious from the vile, Jer. 15, 19,—*"⁵⁷

4.5 Luther says: This is the command of God until the end of days

112. [82.] *Furthermore, I ask whether or not St. Paul's word and order are derived from God's word and order?... If, then, everything Paul says and institutes is God's word and the order of the Holy Spirit, we conclude, first, that everything contrary to his word and order is certainly contrary to God and the Holy Spirit. If it is contrary to God and his Spirit, it is certainly of the devil. I think all this is clear enough.*

113. [83.] *Second, it follows that **all Christians** must on pain of God's disfavor and for the salvation of their souls, **keep God's word and order** as taught and instituted by St. Paul. On the other hand, they must tear down and destroy and eradicate all of the devil's order, which is established contrary to God's word and order, even if they should lose body, life, property, honor, friends, and everything else. And if they cannot destroy it, they must still avoid it and flee from it as though it were the devil himself. Is that not clear enough too? For with regard to God's word and commandment, one must either do or leave everything, so that his will may be done in heaven and on earth above all things. But one should either destroy or avoid the devil's order above all things.*

114. [85.] *I shall prove this thoroughly and surely as follows: St. Paul said to Titus that he should appoint a married and blameless bishop in every town [Titus 1:5–7]. That is undoubtedly God's*

⁵⁴ W2, XI, 2754ff.

⁵⁵ Wachler, Gottfried DD, Leipzig, ein Schriftstück vom 27.11.1997

⁵⁶ BSELK, EVA Berlin ⁷1978, Traktatus, Von der Gewalt und Obrigkeit des Papstes (1537), Von der Bischöfe Gewalt und Jurisdiktion

⁵⁷ BSELK, EVA Berlin ⁷1978, Solida Declaratio; Von streitigen Artikeln, was die Antithesis oder Gegenlehre belangt, || Of Articles in Controversy, FC SD 14

order, will, and opinion.

115. [92.] *Second, let us hear more from St. Paul about these divine orders. St. Luke says, Acts 20[:17, 28], "From Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they came to him, he said to them: 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to feed the church of God which he obtained with his own blood.'* " *What does this mean? Ephesus was only one town and St. Paul calls all its elders bishops!*⁵⁸

4.6 The office of the eldest/bishops in Titus 1.5 derives / results from the common call of the apostles

See reference to „The Pastoral Office Derives from the Apostolic Office“ (Vesa Hautala)

116. Our confession teaches: „Wherever there is the church there is the command to preach the Gospel.“ (Traktatus 67) | „The ministry has the command of God“ *Ministerium verbi habet mandatum Dei.* (Apol. CA 23,11) | „We have a firm doctrine that the ministry derives from the common call of the apostles. And it is not necessary that all Pastors have the call or ordination of this one person Peter.“ (Tract. 10)

117. Our confession goes on: "So we teach that the power of the keys or of the bishops is, **according to the Gospel, a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, forgive and keep the sins and administer the sacraments behave accordingly.** Because Christ has sent off the apostles with this command. John 20 'as my Father has sent me, even so send I you. Receive you the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins you remit, they are remitted to them, ...' - The latin text says additionally: "Et Marc. XVI: Ite, praedicate evangelium omni creatures etc."⁵⁹

118. This also confirms the word of Peter to the eldest: **The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.** (1.Petr. 5,2-4).

119. This word already shows the relation between the apostolic and the preaching or pastoral office. Before the eldest Peter considers himself as the **fellow**-eldest, that means he makes no difference between them and himself. Altogether they serve the one good shepherd who himself leads his flock to the green pastures and leads it beside the still waters. (see Psalm 23).

120. The ministry existing according to the New Testament command, is the continuation of the extraordinary apostolic office. The difference between these two is that the apostles were called **directly** by Christ and were writers of the Holy Scripture, **inspired** by the Holy Spirit. This specific command of theirs ended with their death. The transfer of the ministry (starting from the apostles) from one office-bearer to the next (Succession) by laying on of hands is not mentioned and not commanded in the Holy Scripture. Even more so Christ has authorized the congregation to call into the ministry commanded by him.

121. The two positions "continuation of the apostolic office" and "rights of the common priesthood" meet in the call which **God** gives **through** the local congregation to a candidate. The local congregation calls into an office which already exists although there may not be an "office-bearer" yet. Due to the common priesthood of all believers⁶⁰ through which all Christian are given the spiritual gifts of Jesus for private, family-wise or emergency appliance (for example emergency-baptism), **God himself calls** into the holy ministry **through the congregation.**

122. Thereby the ministry is **not only** a transfer through "bundling" of all rights of the common priesthood of all believers⁶¹. C.F.W. Walther writes in his first thesis on the ministry: "The holy

⁵⁸ W2 XIX, 669ff., Abs. 82.83.85.92 || Luther's Works, Fortress Press 1970, volume 39, page 108 f.

⁵⁹ CA 28, § 5ff; BSLK, S. 121

⁶⁰ 1.Petr 2,9f.; Apg. 14,23 1 Peter 2,9f, Acts 14,23

⁶¹ 1.Petr. 2,9: „Ihr aber seid das auserwählte Geschlecht, das königliche Priestertum, das heilige Volk, das Volk des

ministry or pastoral office is an office different from the priestly office which all believers have. “⁶²

123. The one who is called into the ministry is empowered by God through the congregation to execute all functions which belong to the ministry.

124. „If the office of teaching be entrusted to anyone, then everything accomplished by the Word in the church is entrusted, that is, the office of baptizing, consecrating, binding, loosing, praying, and judging doctrine. Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other functions, which are built upon it, such as the offices of teachers, prophets, governing [the church], speaking with tongues, the gifts of healing and helping, as Paul directs in 1 Cor. 12[:28].“⁶³

125. Through the call of the apostles Christ has already instituted previously which functions the concrete ministry comprehends – and thereby also which duties such a pastor has.

126. Some people like to give counter-arguments by quoting the apostle Paul: “**For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.**“ (1 Cor 1,17). Now nobody will dare to contradict that Paul was an apostle and directly called by Christ. So the command, given to all other apostles, applied also to him: „Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...“ (Matthew 28.19). Paul says that he was called to be an apostle (and by that he was set into the holy ministry) but primarily preached as a missionary. In the apostolic office all functions of this office were confided to him (like to all the other apostles). The specific call of Jesus (Acts 9.15), however, put the emphasis rather on the teaching. In order to prevent all misuse, one would have to add to the above quoted verse: Christ did not sent Paul [primarily] to baptize but to bring the name of Jesus to „**the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel**“ (Acts 9.15). (see also Prof. W. Oesch⁶⁴)

127. Prof. Oesch writes: “*The local office can definitely also be executed by different colleagues. The splitting into specific offices (for example a pastor each for work with children, teenagers, mission, diaconia-pastor, theological teachers as explicit ‘didaskaloi’)* is not a problem. But this is only acceptable as long as the principal full responsibility for the total preaching of the word is guaranteed—even though not in the way of agreed execution according to human right. In an emergency this would immediately result in... In an emergency this would immediately result in the fact that the firstly jure humano limited office, now includes everything of the office.”

See Walthers and Fr. Piepers doctrine of the office „C.F.W. Walther and Franz Pieper on the Divine Institution of the Pastoral Office“ (Dani Puolimatka)

Eigentums, daß ihr verkündigen sollt die Tugenden des, der euch berufen hat von der Finsternis zu seinem wunderbaren Licht.

⁶² Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt, S. 174

⁶³ Luther's Works, Fortress Press 1958, volume 40, page 18

⁶⁴ Oesch, Wilhelm, Lehre von Kirche und Amt in 3 Kapiteln, Abschrift von W. Oesch's Vorlesungsmanuskript für Dogmatik. (bereitgestellt von Roland Sckerl, Durmersheim)

Damit die SOTERIA die Menschen erreiche, stiftete Christus den öffentlichen Dienst der Versöhnung (2 C 5,18ff). Jedoch setzte er diesen nicht nur als Gemeindeauftrag der geistlichen Priester ein, bei dem alles ehrlich und ordentlich zugehen soll (1 C 14,1ff. par 40), sondern zugleich auch als klar umgrenztes Dienstant herausgestellter Personen, als ministerium ecclesiasticum in concreto (CA XIV) a). Dasselbe nahm mit dem "gemeinen Beruf der Apostel" (Tract 10) seinen Anfang und soll im Besitz eines besonderen mandatum Dei bis zum Jüngsten Tage fort dauern (Ap XIII, 11). 2. Anm.: (Stiftungsnachweis für das generelle, bis zum Jüngsten Tag bleibende neutestamentliche Amt) Entscheidend für die Tatsache, daß ein mit der apostole beginnendes, mit ihr zugleich gestiftetes Wortamt weiterläuft (wenn auch nicht unbedingt begleitet von einer ununterbrochenen Kette von am Weiterreichen beteiligten Amtspersonen), ist der an die mittelbar Berufenen ergehende, die Apostelbeauftragung weiterführende Weide- und Lehrauftrag (J 21,15f; Mt 28,19f vgl. mit Act 20,28; 1 P 5,1ff. par; Ti 1,6-9). Auch die Bestimmung, daß ebenso wie die Apostel auch sonstige hauptamtliche Wortverkündiger durch die freien Liebesgaben der Gemeinde zu erhalten sind, im Normalfall mit ihrer Familie, schlägt hier zu Buche (G 6,6; 1 C 9,6-14, zu vgl. mit Mt 10,8ff.; L 10,7 - 1 T 3,1f. 4 par). Schließlich überschreitet auch eine gegen Anfechtung von innen oder außen ausweisbare "Ordinationsgewißheit", wie dieses Amt sie fordert, die Grenzen vorübergehender Beauftragung (1 P 5,1ff; 1 T 1,18; 6,13ff; 2 T 1,6; Kol 4,17).

4.7 The doctrine of the office according to the Scripture is not a new ceremonial law

128. Fürbringer writes: „*In view of all these facts the only authentic expositor of the Bible is the Bible itself. Human reason, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, acts merely as the instrument through which the exposition takes place; it therefore is never to be regarded as the norm or judge according to which the sense of Scripture may be established*“⁶⁵

129. This principle is violated by the WELS' exegesis, for example with the claim that we (this includes also Luther, Chemnitz, Walther, Fr. Pieper and many others) would take a “ceremonial lawful” point of view into the New Testament church.

130. The wrong application of a correct principle leads to an error. The principle is: In the New Testament there is no ceremonial law like in the Old Testament. That is right. In the New Testament God does not command anything concerning specific holidays or about how and where we are supposed to have church-services. But now a wrong conclusion is drawn from this correct principle: *“For the new covenant God has not given any ceremonial laws...he rather poured his Spirit in abundance...so that the believers themselves can find forms of the church and the service, which respectively serve God's realm....God's word admonishes us not to give up this freedom of God's children...and fall back into legalism: neither into the old jewish legalism...nor into slavery under human laws at all.*“⁶⁶

131. This is correct speaking about adiaphora, things which God has neither commanded nor forbidden in his Word. But the ministry is no adiaphoron about which the congregation can decide on as it wishes.

132. The congregation has got the freedom, however, to put aside supporters to the one who is called into the ministry. These supporters can take on various tasks and thereby serve the called pastor and thereby serve the congregation. In this sense the congregation of Jerusalem called supporters who had the task to distribute the alms in place of the apostles. (Acts 6). Therefore Luther says:

133. „*Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed on him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on him. Afterward he may also baptize, celebrate mass, and exercise all pastoral care; or, if he does not wish to do so, he may confine himself to preaching and leave baptizing and other lower offices to others—as Christ and all the apostles did, Acts 4 [6:4].*“⁶⁷

134. The concrete ministry is clearly defined and commanded by Christ. But this does not mean that it is a ceremonial law but an evangelical order as a blessing for Christianity – just like the order to baptize and administer the Holy Supper is not a law because of the command but an order of grace of our Lord.

135. And our confession calls the “preachers“ also “pastors“: *Where there are knowledgeable, God-fearing **pastors and preachers**, they will definitely know what is necessary to ask the young and otherwise unexperienced people during the confession of sins.*“⁶⁸

136. The preaching- or pastoral office is no ceremonial law in the new covenant but an evangelical order of God. Our confession teaches: *“Therefore the bishop has the power of the order, i.e., the ministry of the Word and Sacraments... the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes, and again to absolve them if they are converted and [4] seek absolution. But their power is not to be tyrannical, i.e., without a fixed law; nor regal, i.e., above law; but they have a fixed command and a fixed Word of God...*“⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Fürbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theol. Hermeneutik, Leitfaden für Vorlesungen, als Manuskript gedruckt, CPH St. Louis 1912, § 38

⁶⁶ Die Lehre von Kirche und Amt, Stand der Lehrgespräche zwischen ELFK und WELS (1991 - 1994), Theologische Kommission (Fassung vom 23. Mai 1995 – mit den Anmerkungen vom 25. September 1995)

⁶⁷ Luther's Works, Fortress Press 1970, volume 39, page 122

⁶⁸ Apologie 9. Von der Beicht. § 3ff; BSLK, S. 250f

⁶⁹ Apologie 28, § 13f; BSLK, S. 400

137. And further: *"The ministry does not depend on any specific place or person, as it was the office of the Levites according to the law, but it has been proclaimed in the whole world and is existent where God gives his gifts: apostles, prophets, shepherds, teachers etc. And the person (lat.: personae autoritas) contributes nothing to this word and **office, commanded by Christ**, ..."*⁷⁰

138. Fürbringer writes „*Conclusions of truths from scripture... Many errors, however, have occurred because logically correct conclusions were drawn from an erroneous conception of a particular passage.*“⁷¹

5 Concluding thoughts

139. The WELS-theologists let some words of God undefined and blurred, consider some statements of the Scripture to be unclear so that one can not conclude anything as mandatory. They contradict the confessions of our lutheran church and the correctly believing fathers. They teach what is not written. What is written they don't teach.

140. **I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yes, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart... Behold, I am against the prophets, said the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He said. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, said the LORD and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness...** (Jeremiah 23.25f. and 31f.)

141. The impression we already had years ago, is confirmed by the work of the Wauwatosa-theologist J.P. Koehler⁷² which the ELFK has published on their website since this year and highly recommends: “Gesetzlich Wesen unter uns” [legalism among us]“. (Koehler, Our Own Arts and Practices as an Outgrowth of the Law, Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Thirty-fifth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, August 5-12, 1959)

142. In this work Koehler stands up against legalism. At first this sounds very good because “legalism“ stands against the marvelous Gospel. First Koehler also speaks against a form of legalism which takes out the impetus for activities in the church from the legalism instead of from the Gospel. He writes: *“This proceeds out of our flesh, which injects this trait into every act of the Christian and externalizes it.”* But it astonishes us, however, when we read what Koehler finally understands by “legal character“. In paragraph 2 he writes on: „In the Lutheran churches this characteristic manifests itself first of all and primarily in the noisy self-satisfied to-do about pure doctrine. [*durch Pochen auf Rechtgläubigkeit (sic!)*]“ He stands in for not primarily seeing and emphasizing separating issues but the Gospel and through the Gospel pure actions out of love – also in relation to other confessions. A primary emphasis of the Scripture he calls “insisting on orthodox believing“ and „being stuck in the Word“. The latter Christ teaches explicitly when he says: **If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.** (John 8.31f.).

143. The problem of the WELS-exegesis is that always only single verses are looked at. At every single verse it is shown what is not said in them. Finally no clear doctrine can be formulated. All that is actually taught as concrete and understandable, remains unclear and blurred.

144. This is also due to the premises that they use for their exegesis. But the Wauwatosa-theology has mainly problems with the inspiration of the Scripture and the inherent clarity of God's word. Who considers the obedience of God's commands and the faithfulness towards Jesus' words “legalism“, has left the ground of the biblical, lutheran theology. He is lacking the prerequisites for a sound and especially evangelically-comforting theology or dogmatic.

⁷⁰ Tractatus § 26; BSLK, S. 479

⁷¹ Fürbringer, Ludwig Ernst, Theol. Hermeneutik, Leitfaden für Vorlesungen, als Manuskript gedruckt, CPH St. Louis 1912, § 37

⁷² J. P. Koehler (1859-1951) war Professor am damaligen Seminar der WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod) in Wauwatosa (1900-1929). Koehler ist neben August Pieper (1858-1946) und John Schaller (1859-1920) einer der Hauptvertreter der sogenannten Wauwatosa-Theologie

145. No matter where falsifications come from, whether from papism or from the “Erlangen school“: Primarily it is the devil, who is fighting against the pure doctrine with uncertainty, false doctrines or the dominance of rationality over God's word. In the end his aim is always the fight against the “main article“ which is the comforting doctrine of justification of the sinner *sola gratia* for the sake of Christ.

146. This is our most precious good which needs to be preserved. This can be done by keeping close to the written word. **Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.** (2 Cor. 5,10). Because we are also exposed to great dangers. Also to us applies: **Why let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.** (1 Corinthians 10.12).

147. This is why our Lord and Saviour admonishes through the apostle: **Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. But watch you in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry.** (2 Timothy 4.2-5)

148. The merciful God may help us to do so through Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Because the doctrine is so well-fitted and measured that one cannot add or take away a bit without causing great and detrimental harm."

Luther

Pastor Martin Blechschmidt
for the theological conference in Siitamaja 22/ 23 September, 2016

Translation: Christian und Stefan Kahle, Steeden

Inhaltsverzeichnis

The term "hermeneutics".....	1
Preliminary thoughts.....	1
WELS-Antithesis to ministry.....	2
Positioning of points: Two premises.....	3
The first premise: Derivation of the specific preaching ministry from the general priesthood of all believers.....	3
The second premise: ceremonial law.....	4
The first result is the neglect of the Lutheran theology.....	5
The second result is religious enthusiasm (Schwärmerei).....	6
The third result is uncertainty.....	7
The most serious result is the abandonment of SOLA SCRIPTURA.....	8
Digression: Correct discrimination of the instructions of the Apostle.....	9
The application to the instruction of the apostle in Tit. 1.5.....	9
Hermeneutics and exegesis to Titus 1.5.....	10
„The Eldest“ (πρεσβύτερος πρεσβυτέρους).....	10
Equalization of „Eldest“ and „Bishop“ also in Acts 20.17+28.....	10
The duties of a bishop.....	11
4.4.1 The confessions of the evangelical lutheran church on this subject.....	13
4.5 Luther says: This is the command of God until the end of days.....	13
4.6 The office of the eldest/bishops in Titus 1.5 derives / results from the common call of the apostles.....	14
4.7 The doctrine of the office according to the Scripture is not a new ceremonial law.....	16
Concluding thoughts.....	17
Appendix.....	18