

The Difference  
between the  
Wisconsin Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
and the  
Lutheran Churches  
of the Reformation

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by  
Pastor K. K. Miller

*Public Doctrine of  
The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS)*

JUSTIFICATION

"There are some who assume that *katallassein*\* points to a change in God, that during the process He changed from an irate into a placated God, that some sort of appeasement took place. - But no, not the least change took place in the heart of God. It was His love which was active during the entire process of *katallassein*.\* The change was effected in our status before our Judge."

J.P.Meyer, *Ministers of Christ*, p. 112 (on Rom 5:10)

\* reconciliation

"The *nature* of the sinner has not been changed. *God* did not undergo a change, did not experience a change of heart. The *status* of the sinner was changed."

Page 107, on II Cor. 5:18-21.

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JUSTIFICATION

(Christ) "truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us ...."  
*Augsburg Confession*, Art. III

"For the heart, truly feeling that God is angry (*irasci*), cannot love God, unless he be shown to have been reconciled (*placatus*)."  
*Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, IV, 36.

"A great many theologians refuse to say that 'a change was produced in the mind and disposition of God.' They say with Ihmels: 'That term would necessarily create the impression as though reconciliation were extorted from God and, what is more serious, the impression as though God were subject to a change in His sentiments.' 'Extorted?' One who knows the teaching of Scripture and of the church should not use such a term. Scripture and the Church teach that God was not affected by any external influence, but was moved by His love to forego His wrath against the children of wrath, on account of the Vicarious Satisfaction. See John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10. Luther: God's Lamb (John 1:29) is 'the Sacrifice ordained by God Himself for the sins of the world.' And Ihmels' second argument, taken from the changelessness of God, directly charges the Holy Ghost with using misleading language in Scripture. To be sure, God is not subject to change (Ps. 102:24-47). But since we mortals, due to the finiteness of our powers of comprehension, cannot grasp the 'eternal immutability' of God and can think only in terms of time and space, Scripture itself instructs us to think of a *before* and an *after* in the immutable God. Thus God has revealed Himself, graciously condescending to our human power of understanding. Dare any mortal, pleading the 'eternal immutability' of God, brush aside this self-revelation of God?

... According to Scripture, a change took place in the mind of God, His wrath changing into grace, 1900 years ago, when Christ died for us (although God's counsel to reconcile the world through Christ belongs to unchangeable eternity). At that time the wrath of the changeless God was replaced 'before His forum' by His grace. One who calls these thought 'misleading' renounces the teaching of Scripture concerning the redemption which Christ accomplished in the fulness of time."  
F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, II, 367.

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"Nineteen hundred years ago God reconciled the world unto Himself. We know what it means to be reconciled to someone. A person is reconciled to someone when he has dismissed from his heart all wrath against him. Now, just so God has for Christ's sake dismissed from his heart all wrath against men, with whom He was angry because of their sins. God now feels toward men as though they had never offended Him by sinning, as though never a disagreement between God and men had occurred." *Ibid.*, II, 348

See Isaiah 12:1. Psalm 85:3-4.

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THE CHURCH

“The specific forms in which believers group themselves together for the fellowship and work of the Church, the specific forms in which they arrange for the use of the means of grace in public worship, have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church.”

“We hold it to be untenable to say that the local congregation is *specifically* instituted by God in contrast to other groupings of believers in Jesus’ name; that the ministry of the keys has been given exclusively to the local congregation.”

W.E.L.S. Convention *Proceedings*, 1961, pp. 189-190

“We find no instructions to the believers to organize local congregations.”

*Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Oct. 1964, “Synod and Congregation,” p. 256.

“No divine institution [of congregation or of synod] is ever hinted.” *Ibid.*, p. 258.

“Both [congregation and synod] are equally divine.” *Ibid.*, p. 265.

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THE CHURCH

“... therefore the formation of Christian congregations, and membership in them, is not a human, but a divine mandate.

“On the other hand, the union of congregations into larger church bodies, such as conferences, synods, etc., has not been ordained by God. The command, ‘Tell it unto the church,’ according to the context, pertains to the local church or congregation, and it must be restricted to the local church. ‘Tell it unto the synod,’ etc., is a human device.”

F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 421.

See Matthew 18:17

Acts 2:42-47

Titus 1:5

Hebrews 10:25

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CHURCH DISCIPLINE

“If the whole church admonishes him [the sinner], that should make an impression, should make him come to his senses. Jesus does not say that the church should take any further action, the final step of declaring the sinner to be outside the brotherhood is left to the individual brother: ‘Let him be unto *thee*.’”

“‘Tell it unto the church’ evidently means, Call in the brotherhood for a last attempt to rescue the sinner, whatever brethren may come into consideration or may be available.”

*Ibid.*, pp. 259-260



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CHURCH DISCIPLINE

“For this reason we rightly insist that the ban, or excommunication, Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor 5:13, should be declared by local churches and not by assemblies of Christians which have not been divinely instituted. Among such bodies we may classify all conferences, synods, and similar convocations which are established for the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom and cause.”

J. T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 556.

“God has given the church the power of the keys and the mandate to call. *Principaliter* (in the prime sense) both of these lie, self-evidently, only with the *Church in the strict sense*, for only believers are the royal priesthood and possess all gifts, while the unbelievers have nothing, neither gifts nor rights. However, as a specific visible congregation, which includes the ungodly who are not yet revealed and excluded, is yet and is rightly named a church, so the exercise of the power, which is given *only* to the believers, belongs to it. This Matthew 18 teaches. Here the power of the keys is given to the specific visible congregation, for when ‘Tell it to the church’ is enjoined, I am not directed to the invisible church. For no one infallibly knows the believers and cannot therefore tell it to them. Thus the concept is of the specific visible congregation. And this particular visible congregation is given the authority to declare as heathen and publicans, that is, to exercise the power of the keys. In addition, v. 19 and 20 state that even only two or three hold such power.”

Ad. Hoenecke, *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik*, translated in *The Faithful Word*, Vol. III, no. 2, p. 11.

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MINISTRY

A. "Christ instituted one office in His Church, the ministry of the Gospel." ... "This office or service, the ministry of the keys, has been given to the Church, i.e., to the believers, individually and collectively." ... "D. This public ministry [exercised by men specially appointed] is not generically different from that of the common priesthood of all Christians. It is merely a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel."  
W.E.L.S. Convention *Proceedings*, 1967, 288-289.

B. "There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry." *Ibid.*, p. 289.

C. "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." *Ibid.*

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MINISTRY

A. "The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers." "Although Holy Scripture testifies to us that all believing Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), nevertheless at the same time it teaches us explicitly that there is in the Church the office for teaching, shepherding, governing, etc., which does not belong to all Christians by reason of their general calling. For thus it is written, 'Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?' 1 Cor. 12:29."

C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, Thesis I.

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

John 21:15-17

Acts 20:28

Ephesians 4:11

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

C. "For the ministry is the highest office in the Church."  
*Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Art. XV, 42.

"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.

"... this power by divine right is common to all who preside over churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops."

*Smalcald Articles*, On the Power of the Pope, 60-61

"The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching..."  
*Walther and the Church*, page 79.

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“By the public ministry we mean the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered *by order and in the name* of a Christian congregation. Concerning this office we teach that it is a *divine ordinance*; that is, the Christians of a certain locality must apply the means of grace not only privately and within the circle of their families nor merely in their common intercourse with fellow Christians, John 5:39; Eph. 6:14; Col. 3:16, but they are also required by the divine order, to make provision that the Word of God be publicly preached in their midst, and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, by persons qualified for such work, whose qualifications and official functions are exactly defined in Scripture, Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2.”

*A Brief Statement, # 31*

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THE LAW

“Where is God’s command?... “God does not do His work in the Church by law and command. Christ is the end of the law. If God still worked results in the Church by means of the Law, then Christ would have died in vain - and only dead works would result, because there is no law given that can produce life. The letter killeth. All spiritual life in the Church is the result of the fact that we are no longer under the Law but under grace.

“God did not give a command to synods to seek fellowship with one another. He did not give a command to congregations to organize synods. Nor did He give a command to the individual Christians to unite in local congregations ... . Just as the children of the same parents do not have to establish family relations with each other, but merely enjoy and express already existing relations: so also the Christians. They confess their faith, and where they meet with the same confession they recognize each other as brothers and sisters, and practice the brotherhood as the circumstances may suggest. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He thus by the means of grace unites individual Christians into local congregations; He unites congregations into larger brotherhoods, like synods; He leads synods operating in the same field to combine for joint work.” *Continuing in His Word*, p. 70.

“What method are we to employ in carrying out our assignments? We scan the New Testament in vain for a word of institution prescribing some form, nor do we find any record that such an institution ever took place. In answer to our question for mode or manner or form we are told, ‘All things are yours.’ Use any means at your disposal. Do so as an expression of your faith and love. Do it decently and in order. Do it as effectively as you know how with the ability and the special gifts which the Lord provides.... In the New Testament we find no such uniformity enforced, in fact we find no instructions whatever beyond those of love and order.” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Oct. 1964, 255.

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THE LAW

“For although they (believers) are regenerate and renewed in the spirit of their mind, yet in the present life this regeneration is not complete, but only begun, and believers are, by the spirit of their mind, in a constant struggle against the flesh, that is, against the corrupt nature and disposition which cleaves to us unto death. On account of this old Adam, which still inheres in the understanding, the will, and all the powers of man, it is needful that the Law of the Lord always shine before them, in order that they may not from human devotion institute wanton and self-elected cults (that they may frame nothing in a matter of religion from the desire of private devotion, and may not choose divine services not instituted by God’s Word); likewise, that the old Adam also may not employ his own will, but may be subdued against his will, not only by the admonition of the Law, but also by punishments and blows, so that he may follow and surrender himself captive to the Spirit, 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 6:14; Ps. 119:1ff; Heb. 13:21 (Heb. 12:1).”

*Formula of Concord*, Ep. VI, 4.

“Christians dwelling together in the same place *are bound* to unite also in external fellowship for the purpose of preaching and hearing the Word of God, etc., and they *may* enter into a larger ecclesiastical organization with other churches....”

F. Pieper, *Distinctive Doctrines and Usages*, p. 120

“Since the Christian because of his flesh is inclined to err in regard to the good works desired of him by God, he must daily learn from the Law, as the unchanging norm of a God-pleasing life, what God would have him do. So, too, this doctrine of the Law is needful for believers, in order that they may not hit upon a holiness and devotion of their own, and under the pretext of the Spirit of God set up a self-chosen worship, without God’s Word and command, as it is written, Deut. 12:8,28,32: ‘Ye shall not do ... every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes,’ etc., but ‘observe and hear all these words which I command thee. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom.’”

*Formula of Concord*, S.D., VI, 20.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2    Hebrews 5:12

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“It should not be difficult to apply the principles followed by the early Church in organizing its work and in providing for the needs of its members to our modern conditions. A basic fact to be remembered is that there are no rules, hard and fast iron-clad rules, in fact no rules of any type at all. Any attempt to regulate the life of the church by rules is contrary to its very nature. The Church consists, not of a group of slaves under the lash, but of brethren, children of God, whom God, moreover, does not consider as babes, but as mature sons, who with understanding, with loving and earnest zeal have the welfare of the kingdom at heart.” *Ibid.*, p. 262.



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NEW DOCTRINES

"It would appear that the Wisconsin Synod's teaching regarding the functioning forms of the Church was almost identical to Missouri's during the days of Dr. Hoenecke, Wisconsin's great, pioneer dogmatician, who died in 1908. However, this has not been officially taught at our seminary for perhaps fifty years or more. On the contrary, Wisconsin has stated publicly and repeatedly that, while the local congregation will always remain the primary grouping of Christians, the Holy Spirit also draws believers together in other groupings, such as a synod, a federation, and the like. Those groupings are also functioning forms of the Church in essence the same plane as a local congregation."

*The Holy Christian Church and True Ecumenicity* (3rd Free Conference), p. 91. 1966.

"Gradually the position of the Seminary faculty was widely accepted and has now become the recognized doctrinal position of the Wisconsin Synod."

*Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, July 1963, p. 218.

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NEW DOCTRINES

“We have wished ... in no way to devise what is new, or to depart from the truth of the heavenly doctrine which our ancestors, renowned for their piety, as well as we ourselves, have acknowledged and professed.... We also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves, or from the phrases which are found in them.”

*Preface to the Christian Book of Concord*

“We therefore do not change from one doctrine to another, as our adversaries falsely assert, but earnestly desire to be found loyal to the once-delivered Augsburg Confession and its unanimously accepted Christian sense.”

*Formula of Concord, Comprehensive Summary, 19.*

## SUMMARY

“Those who are weak in the faith are offended, and some of them doubt whether, amid such dissensions, the pure doctrine is with us, and others do not know with whom to side with respect to the articles in controversy. For the controversies which have occurred are not, as some would regard them, mere misunderstandings or disputes concerning words, one side not having grasped sufficiently the meaning of the other, and the difficulty lying thus in a few words which are not of great moment; but here the subject of controversy are important and great, and of such a nature that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the Church of God, much less be excused or defended.”

*Formula of Concord, S.D.*, Preface, 8-9.

I. CHURCH AND MINISTRY

In 1873 the Synodical Conference, of which Wisconsin was a member, adopted the thesis that "The public ministry is not a human, but a divine arrangement (1 Cor. 12:28-30) and indeed, an ordering for the edification of the body of Christ or the Church for all time until the Last Day (Eph. 4:11-13); it is therefore God's will that every Christian make use of this public ministry (1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-13), as indeed the Third Commandments enjoins." The explanation was added that the word "ministry is here taken in the narrower sense and thus as synonymous with 'pastoral office.'"

In 1908, shortly after the controversy on church and ministry began, the Synodical Conference adopted without any dissent the statement:

As already mentioned, it is not divine order that local congregations unite themselves with other local congregations to form larger church bodies, such as our synods are. These alliances are a matter of Christian liberty. The local congregation is the only divinely instituted association in the Christian Church. All other associations and alliances are only human arrangements. We will not permit the synodical organization to be regarded as a divine order.

Adolf Hoenecke, dogmatician of the Wisconsin Synod, wrote in his dogmatics text, IV, 186, "Matt. 18:17. Here the power of the keys is given to the visible congregation (Partikulargemeinde), for when it says: 'Tell it unto the church,' I am not directed to the invisible Church. No one knows the believers with infallible certainty, and can therefore tell them nothing. We must, therefore, think of the visible congregation." He also says as his first thesis on the Ministry: "The teaching ministry, by which we here mean the position of the servants of the Word, the pastors, is of divine institution." (175)

But that was old Wisconsin. New Wisconsin officially teaches that it is untenable to say that the local congregation "is specifically instituted by God in contrast to other groupings of believers in Jesus' name; and that the public ministry of the keys has been given exclusively to the local congregations." Likewise, that it is 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.”  
- from “Theses on Church and Ministry”

Although there are attempts to show that Walther was really a good Wisconsinian, there is no denying that Wisconsin changed its doctrinal position and specifically rejected the position it once maintained in contrast to all other forms of the doctrine. This position has already been converted into legislation. In the book, The Shepherd Under Christ, the Synod's textbook on pastoral theology, appeal is made to Heb. 10:25, “not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together,” in this way:

This command of the Lord finds its primary and most complete application and fulfillment when Christians locally in a congregation gather to hear God's Word, to find edification in the Gospel, to carry out the responsibilities that are incumbent on a Christian. This command finds further application when Christians are gathered into larger groupings like Synods, united by their common confession to Christ and the joint work of proclaiming His saving message. P. 353

This is not the Scripture teaching; it is the result of placing the synod and congregation “on the same plane,” along with all other groupings of Christians. Is it also a moral duty, then, to join the Ladies' Aid, Men's Club, and every other grouping, including retreats? The Bible teaches that we are required to join only one group, one organization in all the world: the local congregation. All others are voluntary.

Wisconsin insists that neither synod nor congregation is divinely instituted, i.e., has no command to form as such; yet both are equally divine, because of the Christians therein. This can only mean that they are divinely permitted organizations, but it also means such tolerated organizations also possess, eo ipso, divine authority, again by reason of the Christians therein. And how do we know they are permitted? Because they are not forbidden, and they are chosen by Christians and established by them to do the Lord's work. But that is precisely the rationale of the ad hoc groups today, like the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and many others, organized by some man who wants to get backers for his project in evangelism. Such was also the rationale, at least in part, for the monastics of the Middle Ages, who ignored the authority of the local priest, preached and baptized and absolved under his nose, aroused opposition to him, and caused endless confusion, all in the name of Christ. “I have not sent them, yet they ran,” complains the Lord in Jeremiah 23:21. But they would answer: We are sent by the lawful order of brother superior, etc. Who

authorized him to send them or anyone to form a society apart from the local churches? No one. Certainly not God. Again, the Pope and some Cardinals have authority to preach, call, baptize, give the Sacrament, and excommunicate, but only where they are pastors of churches, as the Pope is pastor of all the congregations of the church of the city of Rome. Yet that does not give him authority over all Roman Catholics.

There is a line between that which is commanded and that which is not forbidden. Both are found in the Christian life. "We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:10. Yet there is also the principle of Christian liberty: "All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." 1 Cor. 10:23. Both principles are at work in church life. A congregation is commanded, a synod is lawful, being not forbidden. Wisconsin says both are lawful, being not forbidden, and neither is commanded. So what is the difference? The difference is that something merely permitted does not carry divine authority. The Jews were commanded to celebrate Passover, but not Purim. It was no sin to miss the Purim festival, but it was a sin to miss the Passover. It was commanded to sacrifice at Jerusalem and forbidden to offer elsewhere as a divine service; yet they could slaughter animals and eat them to their hearts' content wherever they wished, Deut. 12:11-14, 15, but these were not sacrifices. So also Deut. 14:22-26, on eating the tithe. So it is commanded to adhere to an orthodox congregation in your locale, Heb. 10:25, and it is a sin not to do so. It is not commanded to join a synod, and it is no sin not to do so. To the congregation, which is commanded, is spiritual authority given by Christ, for He commands it to do these things. To the synod there is no such command, hence no such authority; however, the congregations have the authority, and they may delegate it to the synod or some other orthodox Christian person or group to exercise in their name. The disciples baptized for Jesus, John 4:1-2; the congregation commissioned Paul to be their missionary; Peter and John visited the Samaritan converts for all the disciples. Through a synod, congregations are still acting. It is in the Roman, not the Biblical, tradition to let the "church" set up divine institutions, like the five extra Sacraments, and imbue them with divine authority and efficacy. The true Church has only two Sacraments to administer. Those others are free, but are only ecclesiastical, not divine.

#### RECONCILIATION

As important as the doctrine of the church, if not more so, is the article on the reconciliation of the world. Wisconsin authorities repeatedly reject the idea that God's attitude toward the sinner has been



changed by virtue of the atoning death of Christ and insist that there has been only a change in relationship, status, or standing. This they support with the superficial observation that God is never the direct object of the verb "reconcile." It is true that He is not, but the reason He is not lies in the nature of reconciliation. It is a personal, attitudinal occurrence. Wrath is eliminated and replaced by favor, or good pleasure. Without and before Christ, God hates sinners; by virtue of the atonement, which is a propitiation or appeasement, God is delighted with them, since their sins are removed from His sight, and He bids them be reconciled to Him. How can they be reconciled, if reconciliation is only a change of status: "change your status with respect to God"? If it is merely a change of status or relationship, how can Wisconsin insist on objective justification when Paul writes, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself?" For he then goes on to say, "Be ye reconciled to God," which would certainly imply that the status of relationship is not really changed at all until the sinner comes to faith. God changed the status of the world; now you change yours - that is gibberish!

The simplest example of the use of the word "reconcile" is in Matt. 5:23f., "If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Surely this has to mean your brother is angry with you, so go and appease his anger, so that he is friendly to you again. Apologize to him and make any amends necessary. To define it as having your status or relationship with your brother changed sounds like a mere court, and not like persons. God is a Person. He is not merely a Person, but the Person, and He is angry with us. His wrath is kindled and burns like a consuming fire, and that is the fire that burned like hell itself when Jesus so suffered on the cross that He thirsted with a mighty thirst, suffering the full fury of Divine wrath in His own body and soul to appease that wrath for us. Therefore God's wrath was set aside and changed to grace, delight, and good pleasure.

How, though, could the relation or status change if God's attitude were not changed toward us? Is this a mere anthropopathism when the Bible uses such language, as in Ps. 85:1-4,

Isaiah 12:1, and other passages (see Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Winter, 1984)? If so, then so is justification, a term drawn from the picture of a courtroom. Why is one a picture and the other not? The anthropopathism is not in the reconciling, but in the concepts of before and after in God, who is above time, and perhaps in the concepts of cause and effect in God, who is not caused to do anything, but is the

Prime Mover.

John Schaller of Wisconsin wrote in the 1910 *Quartalschrift* (see WLQ, 1975, 309ff. for the translation by Gerald Hoenecke, pp. 312 and 314 here cited), "God, offended by sin, was incensed against (men) with a wrath that burned to the deepest hell. If a change in their relationship has set in, men have peace with God (Ro 5:1) and grace has taken the place of wrath." "Through what Christ did in man's stead God is now reconciled so that factually there is peace on earth, the peace of God, that God's wrath toward men is stilled when He sees them in Christ." By all clear concepts of reconciliation, he writes, "the non-imputation of guilt is conceivable only after the appeasement of the offended," and it is "an established fact in the heart of God." That is our doctrine, too.

It is not quite the doctrine of Wisconsin today. In the Winter, 1984, WLQ, reviewing the Missouri Synod theses on justification, it is observed that these theses say both that Christ made God gracious and that God sent Christ, and that these do not contradict; but then it is noted: "The latter (God sent Christ) is sometimes forgotten or even denied by some who view reconciliation as a change from wrath to love as a result of Christ's redemptive work." "To speak of Christ as propitiating, that is, appeasing, the wrath of God is, of course, an anthropopathism." The sense of the *hilas-* words is "expiation," "and this results in propitiation." "Since the antithesis emphasizes that it is unscriptural to teach 'that Christ has not propitiated the wrath of God,' it would have been well to support this statement with references to such passages as Psa. 85:3; Isa. 12:1 and cf. Isa. 54:7-10." What this garbled statement appears to mean is that the appeasement of wrath should be downplayed, as it is in Wisconsin theology, or perhaps given lip-service, and the change of relationship or status should be emphasized instead, since the fact that God sent Christ shows that He loved mankind from the beginning and was not our enemy. The whole range of passages that speaks of God hating sinners or being our enemy because of sin would thus be de-emphasized, and the preaching of the Law would fade, while the Gospel crowds it out, the Gospel of justification or change of status.

What difference does this make to the man in the pew? Even if the Law is preached in all its severity, we need to know that God in His heart is appeased and retains no anger toward us, as the Apology states (IV,36): "For the heart, truly feeling that God is angry, cannot love God, unless he be shown to have been reconciled (*placatus*)."  
God is not merely a Judge, but a Person; He is not a computer that spells out "Correct," but a Father that "makes His countenance shine upon us,"



i.e., smiles upon us, and is gracious unto us, and lifts up His countenance upon us, and gives us peace.

#### FORBIDDEN DEGREES AND THE LAW OF MOSES

About a hundred years ago the Missouri Synod discussed the question of "Schwagerehe," a widower's marrying the sister of his late wife. To this day there continue to be opposing opinions on the question among those with Missouri backgrounds, but the differences are exegetical. One says the text of Leviticus 18 forbids it, the other claims it does not say that.

With Wisconsin there is a different approach, namely, that the rule does not apply to begin with. The textbook, *The Shepherd Under Christ*, says (p. 271): "Since there is nothing outside the Mosaic code that leads to the conclusion that such a marriage must be avoided, and since Deut. 25:5 presents the circumstances under which such a marriage was in fact commanded, the prohibition of marriage with an in-law can hardly be considered part of God's immutable will for all men." A page earlier it also says, speaking of consanguinity and the forbidden degrees in general, "The New Testament in speaking of marriage nowhere refers to Lev. 18. The Mosaic code, of which Lev. 18 is a part, has no direct application for New Testament Christians (cf. Luther's "How Christians Should Regard Moses")." The tract of Luther does not address the issue in question, namely, whether the laws of Moses, any of them, are in effect or not. He simply says (p. 165), "Even the Ten Commandments do not pertain to us." He is speaking of the freedom of a Christian from the whole Law because of our being under grace. Yet this freedom from the Law does not do away with the Third Use of the Law, namely, that it serves as a guide for Christians to direct them to those works in which their behavior may be God-pleasing. For this the Commandments, the Law, serve.

The regulations concerning forbidden degrees have hitherto been considered as being Moral Law for Christians today because the 18th chapter of Leviticus applies them not to Israel alone, but

even to the heathen; hence they are universal in their application. In other words, it is a sin to break them.

The Wisconsin textbook seems to assume that any Old Testament law that is not repeated in the New Testament is abolished and not in force. We might point out in this connection that the New Testament contains no legislation forbidding incest or bestiality. Surely they would



not say these are permitted, would they?

There are, in fact, two New Testament instances of incest. In Matt. 14:4 we read that John the Baptist said to Herod (who was no Christian nor a Jew), "It is not lawful for thee to have her (his brother's wife, Herodias)." The other is 1 Cor. 5:1, where a man had his father's wife. It is not said whether the man married her or committed adultery or fornication with her, but it was so shameful a case that it is "not so much as named among the Gentiles." The textbook instructs us, however:

Here was a transgression not against the Mosaic code as imposed on Israel, but against the sense of right and wrong which even the gentiles through their natural knowledge of the law had. Beyond this, the New Testament is silent on forbidden degrees. By and large, the pastor will not go wrong by simply following the prohibitions as found in the state laws; they are generally stricter than those imposed on Israel in Leviticus 18.

So that leaves it up to the state and to the natural knowledge of the Law, and in that way makes it universally binding, just as Lev. 18 said it is, but Lev. 18 "can hardly be considered part of God's immutable will for all men."

#### BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Wisconsin Synod authorities consistently reject the authority of any *textus receptus* and advocate the use of the New International Version (NIV), which is based on an eclectic text, the Nestle-Aland being the current edition. In a review of the NIV in the WLQ, October, 1978, pp. 296-300, J. Jeske observes that the translation has some deficiencies, such as these: Gen. 2:7, "a living being," Gen. 4:1, "with the help of the Lord," and in Gen. 49:10 Shiloh is not retained as a proper name.

The upshot of it all is that it is nevertheless the best modern version, because it was translated by conservative scholars, including WELS representatives, even though not all their recommendations were accepted and they are still working for them.

It is not hard to find other flaws. The Woman in Adultery, John 8, is included, but with the remark, "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have" it. Then why did they print it? In Phil. 2:6, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped," is not adequate. Calvinists must love it, because

it separates the two natures of Christ and rejects the genus maiestaticum, the Biblical teaching that the human nature is invested with the Divine attributes. Then we have Luke 2:14, "on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." I thought Wisconsin insisted on objective justification!

Millennialists will love Isaiah 65:17, "I will create new heavens and a new earth," as though it were not already created them; see Heb. 12:22. Isaiah 55:10-11 is inadequate and garbled. In Isa. 53:11, not only is a reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint inserted, but it is even expanded. Job 19:25 correctly has "in my flesh shall I see God," but then a footnote takes it away by making the translation doubtful: "Or/apart from."

Certainly the NIV is better than many modern translations, and certainly the KJV is not beyond improvement either, but the NIV is based on a poor text type, the eclectic, and it still has Calvinistic and modernistic flaws, and is not enough of an improvement to command our respect. But now they're stuck with it.

It is the eclectic approach to the text that is especially disturbing. Articles appear in the WLQ defending it and some of its advocates, such as Tischendorf, but it remains unsound. The use of the KJV's text, the Majority text, is considered unscholarly and a downright menace; but the eclectic approach, resting mostly on Aleph and Vaticanus, is the real menace. Those two manuscripts differ in many places from the majority and do not even agree with each other, and both are doctrinally corrupt and consistently opposed to the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

#### MARK AND AVOID

Wisconsin is well-known for being strict about fellowship, yet it stands accused by the Church of the Lutheran Confession for holding and practicing a lax position in that regard. When in the 'Fifties the Missouri Synod began to run headlong into left field, Wisconsin patiently grieved and admonished. In 1955 she marked Missouri as heterodox; in 1961 she suspended, i.e., severed fellowship, i.e., avoided Missouri. We can understand and perhaps even applaud her patience, for her admonitions and her people were ignored and ill-treated by Missouri.

But is there an interval between marking and avoiding, during which

admonition or protest should be made? We do not find any such in Rom. 16:17. When one notes that someone, such as a church body, is making, i.e., continuing to make (present participle) divisions and offenses that are contrary to the doctrine, then the matter is closed, and one can only avoid such. The time of admonition is already past by then, for it says, "a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition, reject." Titus 3:10.

In the 1955 convention Wisconsin resolved:

A church body which operates divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture also becomes subject to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies, and practice created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference. Such divisions and offenses are of long standing.

If that is the judgment Wisconsin made, the avoiding should not have been delayed. If Wisconsin thought it prudent to admonish instead, then she should have said it was too early to make that judgment. As it is, the application colors the doctrine. A state of protest cannot be fitted between "mark" and "avoid," nor does Titus 3:10 come in after the marking. Hence we must take issue with Wisconsin on this matter, too.

#### CONCLUSION

The Wisconsin Lutheran Synod simply does not qualify as an orthodox church body, and we still cannot join it in fellowship.



APPENDIX

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS  
CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY  
by Pastor Kenneth K. Miller

Q: Is the local congregation a divine institution, i.e., ordained and commanded by God?

A: Matt. 18:17 If he neglect to hear the 2 or 3, tell it unto the church.

Titus 1:5 Set in order the things lacking and elect pastors in every city, as I had appointed (commanded) thee. (Literally translated)

Luke 24:49 Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high. Acts 1:4.

Acts 1:14, these all continued in prayer and supplication.

Election of Matthias follows.

Acts 2:41 There were added 3000 souls. 44, all that believed were together. 46, continuing daily with one accord in the temple.

Acts 3:13 When he was baptized, Simon continued with Philip.

Q: Is a congregation a mixed assembly of believers and often of unbelievers, i.e., a visible entity?

A: 3 John 10 Diotrephes cast them out of the church.

Rev. 2:14f. Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.

Rev. 3:2-4 Thou hast a few names ... they are worthy.

Rev. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14. Write to the angel of the church in ...

Q: To whom alone is spiritual authority given to exercise it publicly?

A: 1 Cor. 5:2-5 When ye are gathered, and my spirit, deliver such an one to Satan.

1 Cor. 5:13 Put away from among your selves that wicked person.

Q: Can 2 or 3 be a congregation?

A: Matt. 18:16 Not if they are already part of one. Tell it unto the church.

Matt. 18:20 Where 2 or 3 gather (present tense= keep gathering, regularly)

Isa. 55:10-11 As rain and snow [regularly] fall to earth and water it, so shall My Word be with goeth forth (imperfect tense - ongoing action) out of my mouth (mouthpieces, pastors and teachers), and shall prosper whereto (adverb of place) I sent it.

Q: Is any other ecclesiastical entity divinely instituted?

A: None. Even if Acts 15 did describe a synod, which it does not, there is still no command to organize it. It is a human institution.

Q: Is there any church other than the invisible Church and the congregation to be found in the Bible?

A: There is none other.

Q: Whom do pastors represent?

A: 2 Cor. 4:5 We preach not ourselves, but the Lord Jesus Christ, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Luke 10:16 He that heareth you, heareth me.

Q: Are all Christians priests?

A: Yes. 2 Peter 2:5,9. An holy priesthood, a royal priesthood.

Q: Are all Christians pastors?

A: No. Eph. 4:11 He gave some, pastors and teachers.

1 Cor. 12:28-30 God hath set some. Are all prophets, apostles, teachers?

14:34 Women keep silence.

Q: Who may spread the Gospel and baptize?

A: Pastors.

2 Tim. 4:2,5. Preach the word. Do the work of an evangelist.

All Christians

Jas. 5:20 He which converteth the sinner.

Q: Are all Christians qualified to be pastors and teachers?

A: No. Their qualifications are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:2-7 and Tit. 1:6-9.

Q: Who may preach, teach, and supervise the spiritual lives of others?

A: Called pastors, whom the Holy Ghost appointed by election of the church.

Titus 1:5 Elect pastors.

Acts 20:28 over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers

1 Peter 5:2-4 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight.

Q: Whose spiritual lives may they oversee?

A: Those in the flock in the place where the Holy Ghost appointed them.



Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2-4 above.

Heb. 13:17 Obey them that are over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls and must give account.

Q: Who above all must answer for the souls of others?

A: Heb. 13:17 they that must give account

Q: To whom must Christians adhere?

A: John 8:31-32,47 To the Triune God and His Word.

Acts 17:4 consorted with Paul and Silas

Acts 18:34 Certain men clave unto him and believed.

Heb. 13:7 Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God.

Q: Must they adhere to any other?

A: None, but they should receive and help those who carry the truth, 3 John 8,10.

Q: Who alone may excommunicate manifest and impenitent sinners?

A: Matt. 18:17 If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man

1 Cor. 5:4-5 When ye are gathered together, deliver such an one to Satan.

Q: Who may make the judgment that a professed Christian is a manifest and impenitent sinner?

A: Matt. 18:17 Tell it unto the church.

1 Cor. 5:4-5,12 Do not ye judge them that are within?

Q: Must other Christians abide by such a decision of the congregation?

A: 1 Cor. 5:4 When ye are gathered together and my spirit.

Matt. 18:18 Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.

Q: Must Christians abide by such a decision of any other individual or assembly?

A: No. Matt. 18:17 Tell it unto the church.

Luke 9:49f. We saw one casting out devils and forbade him. Forbid him not.

3 John 9-10 Diotrephes casteth them out of the church. I will remember his deeds.

Q: To whom is the administration of the Sacraments committed?

A: 1 Cor. 4:1 Let a man account of us as stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Tim. 2:15 Rightly dividing the word of truth.

Q: Does any synod have members who are not members of one of its congregations?

A: None. A synod is an association of churches. It is not a church. Pastors and teachers are often considered members, but laymen never are.

Q: Is a congregation a local institution?

A: Isa. 55:11 My word shall prosper whereto I sent it.

Rev. 2:1,8,etc To the angel of the church which is at ...

3 John 10 Neither doth he receive the brethren (6) on their journey, and forbiddeth them that would and casteth them out of the church.

Q: What is meant by "local?"

A: Titus 1:5 in every city

Rev. 2:1, etc one city, one church

Matt. 18:17 Tell it unto the church.

## REPLY TO WISCONSIN'S ANSWER

The following is part of a longer letter from 1978, apparently from the late Oscar J. Naumann, President of the Wisconsin Synod, in answer to an inquiry from a congregation in Queensland, Australia. It is an analysis of "The Difference between L.C.R. and W.E.L.S." by Pastor K. K. Miller, and was prepared by a subcommittee of Wisconsin's Commission on Interchurch Relations. It is dated November, 1978, but has only come to our attention in the summer of 1992. Our reply will follow.

### W.E.L.S.'s ANSWER

It is our conviction that this booklet by Pastor Kenneth K. Miller of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation misstates the WELS position in almost every point. Most quotations are taken out of context or contrasts are implied that are simply not valid. However, we do not expect you to take our say-so for it. Permit us to submit the evidence.

#### God's Wrath

The position of the LCR, quoting Psalms 5:5, 11:5, and 139:21, only present half of the picture given us in Scripture. According to John 3:16 God also loves the world of sinners.

Its quoting from the WELS Meditations of March 23, 1965, but not quoting the meditation of March 27, 1965 — a part of the same series in the same week — is a falsification of our WELS position. Yes, we do teach that the sanctified Christian will love all his fellow men and seek their eternal good. But we also uphold the truth of the wrath of God against sin and the sinner. The devotion of March 27 takes up that point. We are including copies of both meditations for your perusal.

#### Justification

The way in which theologians write about the process of "katallassein" (reconcile) depends on the point of view from which the writer speaks about it. Ignoring this, the author of this tract is able to set up a contrast which is illegitimate. In addition to that, some of the quotations which he cites for his position do not uphold what he tries to make them say.

Prof. J. P. Meyer in his Ministers of Christ looks at the matter in



Romans 5:10 from the point of view of God, the changeless and immutable God. God hates sin and the sinner with a righteous wrath; He will finally condemn the unbelieving to eternal hell. At the same time He accepts those who by faith have received His pardon. And these, by the way, do not cease being sinners until they are taken into heaven. It is their status that is changed; their lives are changed through sanctification, but this is never complete as long as they live in this world.

The quotations from the Apology and from Pieper's *Dogmatics* attack the matter from man's point of view. The forgiven man sees God as a God of love whom he previously saw as a God of wrath. Why? Was God's attitude toward sin and sinner changed? Not at all; rather, God covered the sinner's sin with the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus He no longer sees man's sins.

But note that Pieper actually speaks the same language Meyer does. Meyer speaks of a change in man's status. So does Pieper when he says, "At that time the wrath of the changeless God was replaced 'before His forum' by His grace." By what? By the blood of Christ covering man's sins. Now the only one who is lost is the one who rejects that robe of righteousness.

But we would call your attention to a vital omission on the part of the author of "The Difference." The subject matter of the three dots (...) in the quotation on page 2 really undermines what he is seeking to prove by his quotation.

The omitted portion reads: "The old theologians have devoted much time to the study of the 'problem' of the immutability of God and His 'entrance into history,' and the conclusion which they reached, namely: 'In God (that is, God in His unchangeable and to us incomprehensible majesty) there are no causes formaliter causantes; nevertheless, there are causae virtualiter sive in puncto rationis (according to our way of looking at things) causantes,' is in perfect accord with Scripture (see Baier-Walther II, p. 33; J. R. Reusch, *Annotationes*, p. 175sq.)." Meyer writes from the point of view of the unchangeable God; Pieper from man's point of view.

The last sentence in the second quotation on page 2 also fully implies a change in status. Note the underlined words in the following: "God now feels toward men as though they had never offended Him by sinning, as though never a disagreement between God and men had occurred."

## Church

Pieper fails to distinguish between the "essence" and the "form." We would offer the CLC paper as our own answer. [Not included in the copy available to LCR in 1992]

There is no Scriptural evidence that the forms of the ancient church were identical with the forms of today's church, not even when it comes to the "local congregation." We look in vain also for a word of institution for any specific form. It is easy to read the forms of the present organizations into the Scripture, but it is not valid.

## Church Discipline

The contrasts which the author of "The Difference" wishes to establish are not established by his quotations. What is more, a study of "CHURCH" (above) will show that the first quotation from Mueller makes a deduction that cannot be upheld.

The two WELS quotations speak of the work of winning the erring brother. A close look at Matthew 18 shows that this is also what Jesus is speaking of explicitly. Actually not Matthew 18, but other passages of Scripture speak of the steps congregations should take beyond admonition.

The J. T. Mueller quotation reveals the position which has proved almost fatal in the LCMS. Since it insists that only Christians united as congregations have the right to discipline, and not Christians united as Synods or conferences, the LCMS has found it almost impossible to discipline its members these latter years. What discipline was taken was usually not based on Scripture but on the Synod's bylaws and constitution. That's what comes of robbing Christians of the God-given keys when they work together in larger groupings and insisting they only have the right to use them within the confines of the local congregation.

To use the Hoenecke quotation in order to insist that the local congregation alone has the keys, and no other group, goes beyond the actual words of the quote. Besides, these words in Hoenecke's Dogmatics are found in his treatise on the "Lehramt" (ministry), and not on the church as such. They point out that the congregation has the right to call; they do not say that only this grouping of Christians has the right to call. The quotation



is found in Volume IV, page 186, of the German edition.

### Ministry

Again we refer you to the CLC document as our answer in detail.

A. May we submit that there is no real difference between the first Walther quotation and the WELS quotation. Walther states the ministry is an "office distinct from the priestly office" and WELS states that though it is "not generically different," it is "a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel."

B. In quoting, the writer seeks to identify "the ministry, or the pastoral office" with the office we know as pastorate of a congregation (Pfarramt). However, the fact is that we do not know what the specific detailed duties of the "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" and "elders" were. All that we know is that all of them were ministers of the Word. Scripture has no job description.

C. The quotation from the Smalcald Articles fails to make his point, since in those days the specific duties of "pastors, elders, and bishops" differed.

Walther in his quotation freely accepts that the other offices in the church are also part of the "ministry of preaching."

With the Brief Statement we too state that the office of pastor (Pfarramt) is part of the public ministry; we, however, do not state that it is the only form, and neither does the Brief Statement except by deduction. Its quotation of Acts 20:28 is an admission that, since according to verse 17 there was a multiplicity of elders at Ephesus.[sic] Scripture, however, does not state how their work was divided.

### The Law

Again the author contrasts dissimilar statements. The WELS quotation looks at the Law from the viewpoint of justification, and the quotation from the Formula looks at it from the viewpoint of sanctification.

The quote from Pieper does not really belong under this rubric, for it is not the Law that unites Christians, but the Holy Spirit

through the Gospel.

What the Formula states about learning from the moral Law is right; but the motivation to live according to the will of God does not come through the Law, but through the Gospel.

The author uses the quotation from the Formula on "good works" as a contrast to what we say about "form," and thus contrasts two dissimilar things. Good works done according to the Law by faith are a totally different matter from forms according to which we organize our church work and provide for the needs of its members.

#### New Doctrines

Here again the author of this tract insists that the WELS position on the church and the ministry is an innovation, and thus quotes the Confessions against us. The fact of the matter is, it was Pieper's position that was an innovation. When the WELS then gave expression to the truth, that was not an innovation, but it was following the same process that all the creeds did: a truth formally expressed when the necessity for such an expression becomes evident. The Formula did the same.

Pieper had undoubtedly misunderstood Walther. What Walther spoke about the ministry and the congregation was prompted by his stand (correct) against the Buffalo Synod. His purpose was not to insist that no one but the congregation had the power of the keys, but that the congregation also had it. Again, his purpose was not to deny the other forms of the ministry of the Gospel, but to insist that the pastor of the congregation was also indeed a pastor in every sense of the word, in fact, the incumbent of the usual form of the ministry.

The Buffalo Synod mutilated the spiritual priesthood of believers by denying the keys to the individual Christians. In its Informatorium I,37 it stated: "Were the members of the Lutheran congregations to presume that they by virtue of their personal 'anointing' and their state of grace, i.e., by virtue of their spiritual priesthood, possessed the office of the keys, this would be the same enthusiasm which is found in the Pope." Again, in Informatorium II,5-6 it stated: "Not the body of a local congregation, but the body of the apostles and today of those persons

serving in the holy ministry, shall be the highest and final court." And in Synodical Letter 2:28: "Thus the congregation may not judge and order or declare that a sinner be considered as a heathen man and a publican."

It was with this background that Walther wrote as he did, and this Pieper failed to take into account. This is why our own Seminary had to come to grips with it and had to point out that Pieper had drawn some false deductions from the words of Walther and had read them into the Scripture. The author of "The Difference" also ignores this.

We hope that the above statements will meet the concerns of Mr. M. N. Priebbenow and his group of concerned Lutherans in Australia.

The WELS, as well as the CICR, are convinced on the basis of Scripture that what we teach is the truth of God as laid down in His Word and as confessed in the Lutheran Confessions. We welcome all those into fellowship who stand as we do. It would be separatism not to do so. But it would be unionism condemned by God's Word to unite without full agreement in doctrine and practice.

In Jesus' name,  
Heinrich J. Vogel  
Harold E. Wicke  
CICR Subcommittee



## IS THERE REALLY A DIFFERENCE?

An Answer to the *Answer to The Difference*

by Pastor Kenneth K. Miller  
Fort Wayne, Indiana U.S.A.  
August 1, 1992

It has recently come to my attention that in 1978 the President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod appointed a committee to prepare an answer to my booklet, *The Difference between W.E.L.S. & L.C.R.* I should like to respond, section by section.

### First Section: God's Wrath

If they say they teach the wrath of God, then they teach the wrath of God. In the Third Edition of the booklet, therefore, I have dropped that quotation.

### Second Section: Justification

A look at the quotation from Pieper will show that the distinction between God's and man's point of view is invalid here. We human beings are not in a position to go behind or above the language of the Bible and view things from a "higher" perspective. That is like saying: "What God is trying to say is ..." Gods says what He means and expresses it in clear words. We need only read those words and accept what they say. If it seems to us to conflict with another Scripture teaching, we must simply maintain both. So if men are chosen and converted by the grace of God and others perish in their sins by their own fault, and if that seems to us to require that men's destinies are decided either entirely by God (Calvinistic double predestination) or entirely or in part by man (Synergism, Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism), we must not try to reconcile the two approaches from some higher standpoint, but must simply let the two truths stand. So when the Bible says God is wroth with sinners and that He is pleased with them through Christ, we must let both statements stand. Likewise, when it says God is unchangeable and when it says He is reconciled to (has changed His attitude toward) sinners, we must let both statements stand and not try to reconcile them from some higher standpoint.

The committee's *Answer* tells us, "God hates sin and the sinner with a righteous wrath; He will finally condemn the unbelieving to eternal hell. At the same time He accepts those who have received His pardon." That is correct on the face of it, but is God originally wroth with all mankind? Did mankind need Christ to atone for its sins before God



could be gracious to it, or did God "so love the world" (John 3:16) that He only loved it and did not hate it as well? Could Wisconsin be leading us into some kind of "Lutheran Supralapsarianism" where Christ is only the means of bringing about the salvation (via a "change of status") of those He intended to save all along?

The logical sequence in the plan of salvation in our Confessions is:

**The Fall > Christ > Election > Faith.**

Because of the Fall, man would have been lost. In His love God ordained His Son to redeem the lost world. Because of His redemption, God ordained some to be saved, and because He chose those people, He bestowed faith upon them by the Gospel of Christ.

In Calvinism (Supralapsarian) the logical sequence is:

**Election > the Fall > Christ > Faith.**

Before all things God chose some to be saved, but not others. Because He chose them, He allowed them to Fall; indeed, ordained that they must fall so the rest might be damned. Because He chose some, He sent Christ to redeem them, but only them. And because he chose some, He gave them faith.

I am not about to call the Wisconsin Synod Calvinistic, but the danger certainly exists in their mode of presentation of this doctrine of reconciliation.

If it is true that "Pieper actually speaks the same language Meyer does," why does Meyer deny that God's wrath was replaced by His grace? Notice that Meyer expressly says, "But no, not the least change took place in the heart of God." And Pieper expressly says, "A great many theologians refuse to say that 'a change was produced in the mind and disposition of God.'" That is hardly speaking the same language. Meyer refused to say what Pieper complains that many theologians refuse to say.

To complain that I have omitted a key portion of the quotation from Pieper is no answer, for their conclusion remains the same: "Meyer writes from the point of view of the unchangeable God; Pieper from man's point of view." What is that supposed to mean? Does it mean: The Bible says God is wroth with all men by reason of the Fall, but if you step back and look from God's unchangeable perspective, you will see that He is not really serious about that because He sees the world through Christ. Is that what it means?

We certainly do not deny that there is a change of status, but reconciliation is more than that. Justification is a forensic (courtroom) term, but reconciliation is a personal term. God, our Creator and King, who indeed loves us all from all eternity, is offended and angered by our wicked, defiant attitude and behavior. Nevertheless, He still loved us, and in such a way that He gave His only Son to bear our guilt voluntarily. He is completely appeased and satisfied by that self-offering, so that now He is pleased with us sinners and justifies us. Reconciliation and justification are two related but distinct acts. When the Answer calls attention to Pieper's words, "God now feels toward men as though ...," it neglects to notice the word "feels." God of course is not subject to emotions, but He does respond or act in a personal way, and He teaches us to see Him so. He says, for example, Isa 1:14, "*Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.*" He does not teach us to rise above His revealed words and view Him from a higher perspective.

### Third Section: Church

Are the gentlemen of the committee saying there is no difference, or that there is and they are correct? They say Pieper failed to distinguish between "essence" and "form." What do they mean by "form?" Is there some other kind of church than a local congregation? Perhaps a non-local one?

Their convention said "The specific forms in which believers group themselves together ... have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church." Pieper says, "... the formation of Christian congregations, and membership in them, is not a human, but a divine mandate." Notice that with Pieper the congregation is the divine institution; it is formed only in the sense that it is assembled and somehow organized, be it loosely or strictly. The same can be done with a Synod, but that is a human institution that is only voluntary, not mandated, whereas the congregation is divinely mandated or instituted. For W.E.L.S., congregation is a subset of the superset "form," which (according to *This We Believe*) includes several kinds of groupings that are called churches. We teach, however, that the congregation is no mere form, but the only divinely mandated assembly of Christians.

The WELS quotations I have adduced say on the one hand that the congregation is not a divine institution, and on the other that the synod is just as divine. I challenge anyone to make sense of that.

So there certainly is a difference on this doctrine, and we have hardly mis-represented the W.E.L.S. position. While we say with Pieper that "the formation of Christian congregations ... is a divine mandate,"



W.E.L.S. says, "We find no instructions to the believers to organize local congregations." Have they not looked at Hebrews 10:25, "the assembling of yourselves together?"

#### Fourth Section: Church Discipline

The *Answer* says, "The contrasts which the author of 'The Difference' wishes to establish are not established by his quotations. What is more, a study of 'CHURCH' (above) will show that the first quotation from Mueller makes a deduction that cannot be upheld." Here is a wonder indeed! There is no contrast at all, but the Mueller position we uphold 'cannot be upheld.' Aristotle, eat your heart out!

The Mueller quotation, it says, "reveals the position which has proved almost fatal in the LCMS." It is not that position that has so proved, but unfaithfulness and deceit, which no position or constitution can prevent. The officers did not do their jobs, but protected false teachers. The entire Old Testament history shows that even God's own theocratic "constitution" and order was not able to protect God's Church from corruption, simply because man is corrupt and loves false doctrine and wickedness by nature. Could that not be the reason God never gave divine authority to synods or church bodies? See the tyranny and arrogance of the Papacy, of the Missouri Synod hierarchy, of the Presbyterian committees that govern their church, and all the rest. If the congregation and synod "lie on the same plane" and have the same divine authority, and there is a conflict of wills between the two, guess which one will prevail! The American Constitutional principle applies just as much in the church as in the state: Limit the power to the smallest unit, closest to the individual. Let the larger group have the power, and you soon have tyranny. Synods are strictly optional groups and have only such powers as the congregations give them, which powers can also be withdrawn and can always be exercised by the individual congregations and their pastors. For example, every congregation is free not to train its ministerial candidates in the approved seminary, but may ask its pastor to train them. Then the congregation may also call such candidates, but if they are to be acknowledged by the synod or called elsewhere they need to pass a colloquy. In fact, they need to pass a colloquy in order to be ordained.

As for the Hoenecke quotation, it is cited to show that the W.E.L.S. has departed from its own earlier position. They keep asking for something that specifically empowers with the Office of the Keys the congregation in contrast to other groupings. That is what Hoenecke furnishes. Notice: "... as a *specific* visible congregation ... is yet and is rightly named a church, so the exercise of the power ... belongs to it. ... Here the power of the keys is given to the *specific* visible congregation ... ." Hoenecke mentions only two groups: the invisible Church, which

is everywhere, and the congregation, its visible manifestation in each locale. There is no other church.

It sounds fine to say you should call in the brotherhood - whatever brethren may be available - for a last ditch effort to rescue the sinner. But if it comes down to a matter of excommunication, shall that sinner be excommunicated by "whatever brethren" are available? Where do his own congregation and his pastor fit in? Who has the authority to excommunicate?

Or to call pastors? The *Answer* observes that the Hoenecke quote is from the section on the Ministry, not on the Church. It is from the section on the Ministry because that is where the Office of the Keys should be treated. But who shall call pastors? "Whatever brethren" are available? The Ladies Aid? the men's dart club? the youth league? The Bible class? The couples club? Shall each call its own pastor? And the Synod? How about the District? and the circuit? Who shall be whose pastor? If that doctrine be practiced, the result would be chaos.  
Fifth Section: Ministry

I do not have the CLC document referred to.

A. They certainly may submit that there is no difference between Walther and WELS, but they are incorrect. "Generically different" means different in kind, and the ministry is different in kind from the royal priesthood. It is an office of service and supervision. A shepherd is different in kind from the sheep. Walther makes it clear that this office "does not belong to all Christians by reason of their calling." Walther quotes Luther in *Church and Ministry*, 172, as follows: "Therefore, St. Paul often uses the word 'congregation' in this chapter (1 Cor. 14) to show the difference between the prophets and the people. The prophets speak, but the congregation listens." It is not just a "special, God-ordained way" of acting as priests.

B. "Scripture has no job description"? What are the epistles to Timothy and Titus for? Remember that the ministry is an Office. An Office is not just a function; it is a functioning position with certain authority and responsibility. Furthermore, it is not I but Walther, with whom the *Answer* claims to be in perfect accord, who identifies the ministry as the pastoral office.

"... we do not know what the specific detailed duties of the 'apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers' and 'elders' were." Here they go again with "specific, detailed duties." That seems to be their refuge when they have no answer otherwise. What might they want - St. Timothy's monthly calendar? And are all those different offices so confusing? We might expect that comment from a Presbyterian or an Anglican, but not from a Lutheran, who surely ought to know the dif-



ference.

Notice, by the way, that there is no denial that there is a difference in doctrine here, and that Wisconsin does teach as their quotation indicates; also that there is no attempt to refute Walther's Scriptural doctrine that the pastoral office is divinely established. The only answer we get is: We don't know what office is under consideration!

C. The demand for passages that institute a specific "form," the congregation, in contrast to other forms, or the pastorate in contrast to other offices, reminds one of the Baptist demand for a word that requires infant Baptism in contrast to adult or convert Baptism. There is no such word, but the doctrine of infant Baptism is clearly taught in Scripture.

The objection to quoting the Smalcald Articles is too silly to answer. Let the reader just read it.

Walther does not freely accept "that the other offices in the church are also part of the 'ministry of preaching.'" He says "every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching...."

Note how the next paragraph of the *Answer* turns this around now. Now suddenly the pastorate is only "part of the public ministry." And "part" is made equivalent to "form." But notice the words of the *Brief Statement*, which WELS refused to agree to when the LCR and WELS had meetings in the late 1960's. It defines the public ministry as the pastorate. Is there a difference? There certainly is. If they want to fault the *Brief Statement* for "deduction," then we must fault it also for teaching the Trinity.

The final sentence, about Acts 20:28, is meaningless. What is it supposed to prove? That these were not pastors? that there were other "forms" of the ministry there? or what? There was one church there with several pastors. They may or may not also have had several houses of worship - or none at all. What difference does it make how their work was divided? They were pastors placed as overseers of the spiritual life of the flock at Ephesus. Titus 1:5 prescribes that pastors be elected "city by city" (in the Greek). The Christians of each city were conceived of as one church.

#### Sixth Section: The Law

I am sorry, but the WELS statements are not just from the viewpoint of justification, not when it says, "He leads synods operating in the same field to combine for joint work." That is sanctification.

Does the committee not understand? The WELS quotations are basically saying there is no law; sanctification, good works, and church order are without any rules. The Holy Ghost has not taught anything

of what we are to do. But how dare we do anything this not commanded by God? The fact is that the Holy Ghost only leads us to do what God commands. If God did not tell us to do it, the Holy Ghost did not lead us. To teach otherwise, to teach that the Spirit leads us to do things He has not commanded, is the essence of Enthusiasm.

It is certainly true, of course, that the Law is not our motive for doing any of these things; our appreciation for the love of God in Christ and for our redemption and salvation are our motive. The question is: What are we to do to show that appreciation, not to mention that we might continue to receive His blessings and not displease Him and be lost? God told us what to do. Because of sin we are both contrary-minded and ignorant, and we need His instruction, lest we go the way of self-chosen works which will only anger Him and subvert our own salvation. Hence we need the Third Use of the Law. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The new man loves to hear the Gospel, but the old man wants to stay home in bed; so our Lord gives us orders, that "the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice."

As to the quote from the Formula, we are told that "Good works done according to the Law by faith are a totally different matter from forms according to which we organize our church work and provide for the needs of its members." So joining a church (Continuing in His Word, p. 70) is an adiaphoron, a mere "form" which is optional. The Wisconsin Synod has no right, according to this, to tell anyone that he must or should come to church, or that he is sinning by not doing so.

The WELS quotations are wrong, not because they tell us that the motivation to join the church must be the Gospel, not the Law - for in this we heartily agree; but they are wrong because they say there are no commands at all to do so. That is a grievous error, and the Bible condemns it.

#### Seventh Section: New Doctrines

Notice that there is no attempt to refute the quotations from both official and unofficial sources that WELS changed its doctrine.

Pieper's position was an innovation? Pieper misunderstood Walther? Pieper, who was Walther's best student and his hand-picked successor? If WELS was really correct all along and Missouri innovated, why did Wisconsin agree to the Thiensville and Wauwatosa Theses and then not stick to them?

The Buffalo Synod errors and the errors of the early Perry County critics were indeed the main background of Walther's remarks, but read what Walther actually wrote. Just as with Biblical exegesis, exegesis of Walther's writings deserves to be taken for what it says. We may not allow the words to say only so much as the background or

context says. Otherwise, "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2) cannot mean the just shall live by his faith, because the background says nothing of righteousness or faith, nor of eternal life.

If nothing else in this booklet shows Wisconsin to be in error, this much at least is true: they no longer speak the same language as old Missouri, Luther, or the Confessions. All this talk of "forms," "job description," "special, God-ordained way," "generically different," "lie on the same plane," "no instructions," "no rules," "whatever brethren," is not the old language at all. Yet we are not disputing merely about language; the language is only the clothing of the doctrine. It is the doctrine that is wrong and must be rejected.