

Church and Ministry in the Light of I Timothy 1-3

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“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the gracious will of our Savior God and of Christ Jesus who is our hope, to Timothy his own dear child in faith: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus who is our Lord.”

Paul composed this greeting at the beginning of his first epistle to Timothy with a view to the entire message of the letter. That he verifies his apostleship with unimpeachable references; that he gives tender expression to his filial relationship over against Timothy, anticipated the nature and intent of the whole letter. Timothy stood in need of mature evangelical counsel for problems and dangers that confronted him at Ephesus in matters regarding church and ministry. Paul's letter, in the very form of its greeting, would reassure Timothy; it would set his feet on the Rock and point out a path of action for meeting the problems at Ephesus evangelically and decisively.

This epistle previews subsequent history relating to matters of church and ministry. The problems that occasioned the letter have remained with the church through the ages, and the letter continues to furnish God's answer to those questions and needs for all time. The first-century history of our Lutheran synods in America bears witness to the recurring nature of the problems. During this span of time, two decades stand out when special attention had to be given to questions of church and ministry. It was a timely topic in the first decade of our synodical

history. Then the controversy was chiefly the concern of Missouri's founding fathers. Under new circumstances a second controversy developed at the beginning of the present century. Now Wisconsin became partner to the issue and furnished a penetrating analysis of and new approach to the question. The history of these two controversies in the first century of our Lutheran synodical life in America is interwoven with present-day approaches and problems.

We are living at the beginning of the second century of Lutheran synodical life in America. An investigation into the articles of church and ministry is again timely, and that for several reasons. Missouri and Wisconsin's failure to reach agreement on church and ministry in the early 1900's has some bearing on the present intersynodical situation insofar as it aggravated the difficulty of the two synods to pursue similar courses of action in meeting church problems and in exercising church discipline. The timeliness of our topic becomes apparent again when pastoral and delegate conferences within our Wisconsin communion debate the proper procedure whereby churches or synods may separate from each other. Questions are raised and doubts expressed whether delegates at a convention of the synod may rightfully speak and decide for all congregations whom they represent, an issue of such grave consequences as church separation. Within the past twelve months the newly-organized Church of the Lutheran Confession has accentuated the timeliness of our topic with its indictment of Wisconsin's doctrine and practice in matters of church and ministry. The subject merits careful investigation because ultimately what is believed and taught about church and ministry belongs to the core of the Gospel. We are not dealing with adiaphora but with truths for the sake of which Luther contended against the papacy. In its essence, "the doctrine of church and ministry is an exposition, oriented toward practical, congregational life, of the heart of the New Testament: the good news of justification and the Gospel of Christian freedom."

I

I Timothy 1: New Testament Liberty

In the letter to Timothy, Paul does not come with his counsels about church and ministry until this vital chord of the New Testament has been sounded. The Gospel tone must ring clearly before the practical considerations of life under the Gospel may be investigated and applied. At the bottom of Timothy's trouble in Ephesus was a theology which insinuates itself wherever the Gospel is preached: the amalgam of Law and Gospel. Paul contended against it throughout his ministry. His opponents have been named Judaizers. At the time of Timothy's pastorate in Ephesus this Judaizing theology had taken on a more pronounced Gnostic stripe. Its proponents prided themselves in a superior knowledge or science on a plane high above that of Paul the erstwhile blasphemer, scorner, and persecutor. With the penetrating insight born of the Holy Spirit Paul cuts to the quick of these falsehoods. It is the same old leaven of externals shrouding spiritual things, of the outward superseding the inward, of the Law commingled with Gospel. Until the way has been cleared of this legalistic debris, the evangelical counsels which Paul would offer for Timothy's teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness must remain out of focus.

There is an abrupt change from the quiet tone of Paul's introductory greeting. With a mighty, rushing sound of exhortation, Paul fairly bursts into the room with the door; "As I urged you to stay at Ephesus when I started for Macedonia"—thus far Paul comes with this thought. He leaves it unfinished, hurrying on to the next. Timothy will understand. Paul's former exhortation still holds, Timothy should stay put where he is. His divine call remains at Ephesus. Meanwhile, Paul has launched into the next matter: the contrary winds that had enervated Timothy's hands and enfeebled his knees; the harping, by those new spirits at Ephesus, on other

matters that do not belong with the Gospel, specifically, myths—which may have been rationalizations to explain matters of faith—and interminable genealogies which may tickle the intellect but do not edify in matters that belong to the realm of faith. It seems that these purveyors of knowledge were making much of outward forms and outward works related to church and ministry, such as the person of the preacher, his conformance to Old Testament usages, as well as the orderly generation from apostle to apostle, the apostolic pedigree: institutions, outward forms, all of them, and harbingers of incipient apostolic succession.

In this fashion Paul sketches two great hindrances to the Gospel: on the one hand, that outward forms which pertain to works and law are laid on people's conscience; on the other hand, that useless questions are propounded which do not belong to the sphere of faith and love. This is the nub of Paul's objection. The knowledge or "science" peddled by the Gnostics at Ephesus does not edify in matters pertaining to the Gospel, to the church and ministry. In this sense Paul's exhortation to Timothy at the close of the epistle may also be interpreted. There Paul speaks of knowledge, gnosis, or science as being "falsely so called." Let such statements be kept in their proper context. The science or knowledge of which those men boast is a misnomer not because it is scientifically or rationally inaccurate according to the scientifically exact measurements and standards of a modern physics or chemistry laboratory. It is pseudo-scientific because this knowledge belongs to the elements (stoicheia) of this world which passeth away with the lusts thereof. It is pseudoscientific because it has insinuated itself into the sphere of ultimate Truth which vaults above science, reason, and fine formulation of logic, and is received not by sight, nor by mind, nor by rational harmonizations but solely by faith. Note the absence of legalism as Paul handles the matter. The legalist might be quick to raise charges of heresy against the teachers at Ephesus on the strength of their fables and genealogies. Paul's spirit is refreshingly different. The danger need not be in the myths or genealogies of themselves. The heterodoxy is in the fusing these earthy elements with the preachment of salvation. The heterodoxy is in the admixture of outward form, of law, with the Gospel.

How different the message which Paul enjoined on Timothy. It does not provoke questions that stimulate the intellect. It is not a logically-constructed system of parts and sub-parts. It is simply a preachment: exhortation, declaration. And the purpose for which it has its being, Paul writes, is love. Paul describes this love as one which is formed from a threefold source: the pure heart, the good conscience, and faith unfeigned (v. 5). The pure heart generates love because it is different from the purity that conforms to outward works and regulation. It is inwardly pure. It sees God for what He is in truth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The good conscience knows and generates genuine love because it exults in the forgiveness of sins that belongs with the right knowledge of God; and faith unfeigned bears the same spiritual fruit because, trusting wholly in Christ, it has nothing to fear. It need not wear the mask—that deadly thing which is characteristic of the craven, natural man as he is. It need not wear the mask of sham-life. Faith unfeigned is perfectly frank. It is naive in the eyes of the world. It takes precept and example from Jesus who ever spake openly before men and in secret said nothing

From this Gospel, as Paul had committed it to Timothy, the supposedly-scientific authorities at Ephesus had swerved aside, intermingling Law with Gospel. Not that the Law is rescinded. But it must be properly used. Now Paul comes to the heart of the matter (v.8). The law "is not laid down for the righteous man but for the disobedient." Here rings the liberty bell of the New Testament. We are to make a distinction between righteous and lawless, between old man and new man; and this distinction is not only to remain apart from or beside us but is to be applied also within us. The law is not made for the new man, The new man possesses everything

that is contained in the law by the strength of the Spirit dwelling in him. To impose law on the new man, to mix law-constraint with Gospel liberty, destroys the harmony. When a thing is functioning as it ought, outward forms and regulations need not be added. When respiration is right, the imposition of mechanical breathing apparatus and a breathing schedule will upset everything. The natural disappears and the artificial takes its place. A regulation must be added from the outside only when there is malfunction; and as soon as the malfunction disappears, the outward rules must go with it. If this truth is obscured or adulterated, the New Testament remains under a cloud. The meaning of the cross, of justification by grace, of election to faith, cannot be received. Life with the Gospel must be separated from the law, like east from west. Then the conscience may find peace. Then there is fullness of joy of the kind to which Paul gives expression in the closing verses of this first, major section of his letter to Timothy. Let the detractors call him a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. That too shall redound to the glory of God and the Gospel. God uses Paul for a pattern to those who should believe (v.16). If Paul could receive God's mercy, then no sinner is too bad for the same blessing. The very thought of it moves Paul to doxology (v.17). Then follows a solemn reinvestment of the Gospel message and the Gospel ministry to Timothy: "This ministry I commit to your charge, my son Timothy, that you may wage a good warfare by keeping a firm hold on faith and a firm hold on a good conscience." The good conscience together with the conviction and confidence that belong to faith: this comes only with the proper division or separation of Law and Gospel. If the two are confused, the confidence disappears. If the two are commingled, the article of justification is gone. Then Christian liberty loses its meaning and then the whole article of church and ministry goes under a cloud. To know what the Gospel is apart from the Law, to know that the new man is apart from the old, means to know the doctrine of church and ministry in its essence and in its truth.

II

Wisconsin and Missouri on Church and Ministry

There is no difference between Wisconsin and Missouri on what the church is. The difference revolves around which group of people constitute the church, of whom it may be said: They have the ministry of the Keys and the full use of Gospel and Sacraments. These differences between Wisconsin and Missouri have not followed clearcut synodical divisions. One meets with expressions of the Wisconsin position as the private conviction of some Missourians as well as in unofficial Missouri publications. (Cf. A.C. Stellhorn, *The Lutheran Teacher's Position in the Ministry of the Congregation*.) On the other hand, the Missouri position at one time was evidently Synodical Conference doctrine, approved by the large majority of Wisconsin clergy.

As usually happens in the history of controversy, important issues are simplified through use of catchwords and slogans. In the Arian Controversy, for example, the issues moved around a diphthong, and the diphthong was as important as the insertion or omission of a not in a sentence: Is Christ God or is He not? But contention not for single words or slogans also tends to obscure real issues. Disputants become embroiled in word battles and lose sight of the living background and perspective to a situation without which there can be no proper evangelical understanding.

In our controversy over church and ministry the issue has often been circumscribed by the words *synod* and *teacher*. Wisconsin affirms that synod is church, Missouri disagrees. Wisconsin holds that the ministry of a teacher or professor is essentially identical to that of a pastor, Missouri denies it. These differences come into view when the article of church—which may be apprehended only by faith—is analyzed and dissected for purposes of practical

application. Tangible indications or demonstrations for the article of faith are sought. Distinctions are made between church in its proper sense and in its improper sense, the former referring to the *Una Sancta*, the latter designating the visible communion. Scriptural testimony is sought and found for these distinctions. By further process of thought, the concept of a true, visible church is crystallized, and this true visible church is then isolated and identified by name. From processes of this kind there has developed a doctrine of church and ministry to which Missouri is officially committed and from which Wisconsin is not entirely free.

The Missouri position is this. As there is but one true Church on earth, invisible and universal, to which has been given the Ministry of the Keys, there is also but one true, visible form of the church. This is the local congregation. It is the single, true, visible form of the church because it has been ordained by God, being the form to which God directs us in Scripture. Among the more pertinent passages which are cited to support this position are Matt. 18, 17 and Acts 20, 28, together with many passages at the beginning and end of the New Testament letters. In all these passages the word *church* is interpreted as a local congregation “which can be addressed, to which one can go, with which one can deal and consult, which has elders, pastors, or bishops ministering to it.” This form of the church is called “the sovereign unit in the visible church” (*Abiding Word*, I, 279) which alone possesses the plenary privileges and powers that Christ entrusted to His Church. All other communions of Christians are by human arrangement. They enjoy the prerogatives of the Gospel only insofar as they partake of the nature and authority of the local congregation. A person’s relationship to these other communions is therefore a matter of Christian liberty. Not so the local congregation. Having been divinely instituted to be the primary dispenser of the Means of Grace, every Christian, in obedience to Luke 11, 28 and other passages which exhort attendance on the Word, will hold himself to a local congregation. In this one, true, visible form of the church there is furthermore, from the attestation of Scripture, but one, divinely-instituted ministry, namely, the parish pastorate. Only the parish pastor in and with the local congregation may properly dispense all the Means of Grace. All other offices and ministries of the church may exercise these privileges only insofar as they are auxiliary to or partake of the rights and privileges which have been ordained to the parish pastor in and with the local congregation, To this position Missouri is officially committed. The concept of church has taken on the character of an institution.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, affirms that church in Scriptural usage means communion. It has its name and becomes church not by reason of a divinely-instituted outward form but because it consists of a communion of Christians, The specific form may vary with the changing circumstances. It is an inherent characteristic of New Testament liberty that the Gospel creates its own forms, The form is not important, but rather the content and the purpose which the form pursues. There is no single, divinely-instituted form of the ministry. Better to say, there is one New Testament ministry all the forms and aspects of which are called into being as the church meets the varying needs of the Gospel. The parish pastorate is one of these forms; the Gospel ministry of a teacher, or tutor, or instructor, or coach, or professor is another.

III

Historical Development of the Two Positions

The article of church and ministry to which Wisconsin holds was rescued five decades ago from the obscurity into which it had fallen within a generation after Luther. Having received from our fathers this fresh insight—a heritage for which they vigorously contended, at the outset in a minority of one and two men—the danger now is that we accept and treat our inheritance as

an official concept, a hardened, finished thing. When that happens, although the doctrine remains in our possession, its vitality drains away and we lose it, holding a husk whose living contents are gone.

There is a history and theology behind each of the two different positions that was taken by Wisconsin and Missouri. To know that history and to understand that theology is to see the controversy in clearer perspective and thus to form a more accurate appraisal of all things. We should recognize that Missouri's stand on church and ministry is partly or predominantly the result of an embattled early career and a valiant contention for truth against error. We should know that the doctrine of church and ministry to which Wisconsin holds was brought to light by reason of a theology fresh and unique in American Lutheranism. If the doctrine of church and ministry, as we have received it, is to remain healthy and vigorous among us; if we would contend for this truth in proper fashion, we should know the events and circumstances out of which it came to light. We should be conversant with the form of theology through which this truth was brought out of eclipse.

In the last verse of I Timothy 1, Paul mentions a case of church discipline to which he had given personal attention. The reference is indirect and almost parenthetical. There is no evidence that this case moved Paul to write his letter to Timothy. It was different in the history of our synods and in the great debate over church and ministry. The practical issue of a case of church discipline triggered the questions and problems which had been heretofore debated in abstracto or had not yet been ironed out in previous controversies. The issue in question is named the *Cincinnati Case*.

In the fall of 1899 a staunch member of the Missouri Synod congregation at Cincinnati had withdrawn his eleven-year-old son from the Christian school with a plea that the boy was not learning English. The man proposed that after his son's deficiencies had been rectified in public school, he would be returned to the church school to complete his Christian education and confirmation instruction. These proposals were rejected by the congregation and its two pastors and the father was declared self-excommunicate. This action of the congregation met with disapproval both among the synodical District officials and in the theological faculty at St. Louis. When attempts at reconciliation failed and when other problems insinuated themselves to complicate the original issue, the congregation with its two pastors was suspended from the synod. In 1904, the suspended congregation made application for membership in the Wisconsin Synod. During the next seven years there followed the usual round of meetings between praesidia, committees, and commissions of both synods. Several controversial figures in both synods having meanwhile died, the Cincinnati Case was terminated in 1911 with the ouster of the surviving pastor and the readmittance of the suspended congregation into the Missouri Synod. The father, whose action had precipitated the controversy, was reinstated with the understanding that the congregation's judgment against him had been invalid. (Koehler, "History of the Wisconsin Synod," *Faith-Life* XVI, 5 - May, 1943)

The deeper issue stirred up by the Cincinnati Case, however, was not settled after the case had been laid to rest. It revolved around the authority of a synod to exercise church discipline. Granted that the officers of a synod-district on the basis of human ordinances could suspend a local congregation and its pastors from synodical fellowship, the real question was whether the suspension exercised by a synod could be of the same quality with excommunication that is valid before God. It was argued that God had entrusted the Keys of His Church on earth and, according to the generally-accepted views on church and ministry in both Wisconsin and Missouri, the only true, visible form of the church which could exercise this ministry was the

local congregation. The controversy, as it developed, is interesting for its several paradoxes. In the first place, the Missouri Synod participated in a disciplinary action which from the superficial view of things would not seem entirely consistent to its official position on the article of church and ministry. In the second place, there was an upsurge of protest against the Missouri action in prominent Wisconsin circles among the evidently anti-Missouri clergymen who took their stand on the good Missouri principle—the only one which they knew at that time—of the primacy of the local congregation to handle matters of church discipline. Thus, in a sense, these Wisconsin men were out Missouring Missouri. In the third place, two of Wisconsin's seminary professors who stepped into the breach and who, having returned to exegetical fundamentals, offered an evangelical approach to the whole question of church and ministry found themselves in the anomalous position of being the strongest defenders of the Missouri action in the Cincinnati Case and therefore of being stigmatized among the Wisconsin clergy for their pro-Missourianism, while in fact they were bringing to light a theology of church and ministry that was fundamentally different from the traditional Missouri and Synodical Conference position.

The traditional stand on church and ministry, as previously mentioned, was partly or predominantly the result of Missouri's embattled early history and a vigorous contention for truth against error. The first two decades of Missouri history are punctuated by several synodical and intersynodical disputes respecting church and ministry. At the root of the trouble were high church ideas which had been brought over from Prussia and Saxony. Within the Missouri Synod, for example, Pastor Martin Stephan, one of the expeditionary leaders from Saxony, held to Romanizing ideas of church and ministry. Among his followers in the state of Missouri he introduced a Roman form of episcopacy, as if the validity of church depended on this office. In the spring of 1839 personal scandals cut short his high-handed ministry. The congregations which were attached to his leadership were thrown into confusion by the resulting vacancy. Peace and order came with C. F. Walther's emergence as champion of orthodox Lutheranism. At a public debate in 1841, called the Altenburger Disputation, Walther laid down the principles which would become the official position of Missouri and which were later (1852) organized and expanded into the famous treatise on Church and Ministry. (Koehler, "History of the Wisconsin Synod," *Faith-Life Life* XI, 11, p. 6 - November, 1938)

The other major controversy which helped fashion Missouri's position on church and ministry involved Walther in dispute with Pastor J. A. Grabau of Buffalo. Grabau was another Lutheran pioneer who had protested the Prussian Union of 1817, left his homeland in the late 1830's, and with a considerable following had settled at Buffalo. His views on church and ministry were more grossly papistic, aimed toward establishing a hierarchical church organization. Resorting to a pastoral letter that reached as far as St. Louis, Grabau circulated his views that church consisted of the organized clergy. Walther countered this Romish position in the *Lutheraner*, which he had founded in 1844 to proclaim orthodox Lutheranism. The principles of congregational sovereignty were enunciated. It was furthermore stated that the Lutheran Church as the church of the pure Word may consequently be called the true, visible church on earth. After the Missouri Synod was organized in 1847 and the *Lutheraner* adopted as official synodical organ, the controversy between Walther and Grabau assumed larger, geographical dimensions and even reach back to the motherland in Germany. On account of its congregational organization, Missouri was accused of catering to American ideals of democracy. Walther was criticized for moving into the direction of the Anabaptists, for taking a derogatory attitude toward the office of the pastor, and for positing a doctrine of church that was more Platonic than evangelical. (Pieper, "Die Stimme unserer Kirche, usw." *Quartalschrift*, January, 1912, p. 21ff.;

Engelder a.c., *Walther and the Church*, St. Louis, 1938, p. 47ff; Koehler, *Kirchengeschichte*, pg. 264 o, 270 i. k.)

From these controversies and in rebuttal to the charges leveled against its leaders, Missouri, building on Walther's orthodox theology, developed the doctrine of church and ministry to which she officially holds. The local congregation is the one, true, visible form of the church; the parish pastorate is the one divinely instituted ministry; the Evangelical Lutheran Church which teaches the Word of God in truth and purity is the true, visible church on earth, and the Scripture passages cited in support of these articles, Matt. 18, Acts 20, and others, where the term *church* occurs in a localized sense.

Wisconsin, in the meantime, was not greatly affected by the mid-nineteenth century controversies over church and ministry chiefly because of Wisconsin's antecedents from the western part of Germany where high churchism had not penetrated. But in the late 1870's and mid 80's at mixed conferences in the Watertown, Oshkosh, and Sheboygan areas, Wisconsin participated in a study of church and ministry from a different angle than that which came to a head in the Cincinnati Case. These investigations concerned themselves with the office of parochial school teacher. The point of the debate was whether this office might be classified with the parish ministry as of divine origin or whether it existed by mere human arrangement. Several practical considerations lay behind the differing viewpoints. The one opinion, for example, which held the teacher's office to be of mere human arrangement, was advocated by Herbartian-oriented pedagogues from Germany who took a dim view of the pastor's teaching ability. They did not care to be placed under his educational jurisdiction and regarded their work in the Christian school as a purely secular profession. Perhaps the most extreme public pronouncement in behalf of this idea was made in a paper read to a mixed conference of pastors and teachers in the Manitowoc area in the mid 1880's. The essayist, taking his cue from the doctrine of church and ministry that was current in the Synodical Conference, stated that the Christian school was little more than an extension of parental authority. Hence, the teacher's office was like any other secular calling and belonged into the same category of the Christian tailor and cobbler.

Opposed to this opinion was another view which proceeded from other practical considerations. Was a teacher's call permanent like that of a pastor, or could teachers resign from office at will and go flitting from job to job? And what about the expediency of a teacher's taking other work outside of congregational responsibilities to supplement the chronically astringent salary? Although no ordinance relating to the Christian school could be found in Scripture, majority opinion inclined toward a higher valuation of the teacher's call than a mere secular profession. This was supported from Scripture in a roundabout way. Since the parish pastorate was still regarded as the only divinely-instituted office in the church, the teacher's call might merit similar recognition if it could shine by the reflected glory of the pastorate. In the traditional, dogmatic fashion of the day, which employed Scripture as a set of proof passages, Acts 13,1 and Ephesians 4,11 were cited as opening a way to the possible divine nature of a teacher's work because these passages contain a word which in translation from the Greek *didaskaloi* sounds like the term that is presently employed for those who are charged with educating children in the Christian school. More apropos to the argument seemed to be Jesus, words in Matt. 19,14 and in John 21, 15 which speak of the little ones and the lambs. These passages taken together, it was said, show that children also belong to the pastor's care. By virtue of attachment to and incorporation with the divinely-instituted pastorate, the teacher's call could therefore also be regarded as divine. A similar interpretation of the teacher's call was also expounded by the directors of our theological seminary at Wauwatosa in papers which they read

before synodical and mixed pastoral groups in Milwaukee, the first paper in 1892 and the second as late as 1909. The divine character of the teacher's office was established by detouring it through the pastor's office. (Koehler, "History of the Wisconsin Synod," *Faith-Life* XVI, 4, p. 7 - April, 1943)

Missing in all these methods of Bible interpretation was a study of Scripture in word and sentence according to the historical context and setting. The main interest seemed to be in the direction of setting up, with appropriate proof passages, a dogma that would meet the requirements of an authoritative, doctrinal system. In the written records of the Wisconsin Synod, the new wine of theology which moved away from the traditional, dogmatic approach and therewith again brought to light Luther's evangelical understanding of church and ministry first showed itself at the mixed, pastor-teacher conference previously referred to, that was held in the Manitowoc area during the mid 1880's. Exception was there taken to the use of passages in Acts 13, Ephesians 4, Matthew 19, and John 21, which were cited to support the conviction that a teacher's call must be more than a secular profession. It was said that the first two passages, speaking of teachers in the apostolic church, had the sound but not necessarily the content of what they were being made to prove, and the other two passages, dealing with lambs and little ones, were spoken by Jesus for a reason entirely different from that for which they were being used and therefore were also not well chosen. It was suggested in a positive way that when the New Testament ministry is investigated, one must distinguish between office and service. When Scripture speaks of ministry in the New Testament, it refers to many gifts which are created and which exist for the sake of that which is to be proclaimed. In the New Testament dispensation not the office but its content and its purpose is important. (Koehler, *Faith-Life* V, 10, p.1ff. - October, 1932)

At first, not much came of these views. They were tolerantly received and were regarded as novel and worthy of careful study. Then the Cincinnati Case broke. While this case was running its course, a considerable number of Wisconsin clergy was taken aback by the apparently pro-Missouri theology of our seminary faculty as was being aired in the *Quartalschrift*. A special synod-wide convention was called, coincidentally at Manitowoc, in September of 1911. The debate got around to the Bible passages commonly used to support what had become traditional, synodical conference doctrine of church and ministry. At this Manitowoc convention, the new chord of Wisconsin theology was again sounded with a clear note. The gist of it was this:

Christ commissioned His disciples with the ministry of Word and Sacraments to the end that all believers will be saved. These believers are His Church, so named in Matthew 16,18 and in Matthew 18,17. In the first passage Christ speaks of His entire Church, in the second passage of a localized church of Christians directly concerned in the matter of a brother who has erred. That group may be a synod, or it may be a local congregation served by its pastor. Matthew 18, 17 refers to all believers who are affected by the sin under consideration inasmuch as the sin is an offense to them and they want to help the erring brother. As a matter of Christian tact and in pursuance of decency and good order a larger church group such as synod, if it must exercise discipline on an individual or a group, will not ride roughshod over the smaller church group, such as a local congregation, which is involved in further ties of fellowship with the erring. But this cannot mean that a righteous judgment pronounced by the larger church body is not honored in heaven until the smaller body has had its say. It is the effectiveness in heaven around which Matthew 18 revolves, not the outward organization-membership here on

earth. The distinction between local congregation and synod has no place in the Lord's discourse in Matthew 18. The Savior nowhere indicates an interest in concrete forms of church organization. He is concerned about warning the individual who may either omit all possible means for bringing a sinner around or who by fellowshiping with the sinner may interfere in the efforts of his brethren.

The New Testament ministry must be understood in like fashion. It is the ministry and not the creation of a certain office attached to certain ordained persons about which the Savior is concerned. Christians are free to organize and carry on their ministry according to the best interests of Christian fellowship. (Koehler, "History of the Wisconsin Synod," *Faith-Life* XVI, 6, p.9ff. - June 1943)

This seems to be the first clearcut and carefully-documented expression of a theology which—after much subsequent contention within our synod and without would—become the Wisconsin position on church and ministry. It should be added that the original thought and impetus for this approach to church and ministry came from Professor Koehler of our seminary; its popularization through a series of articles in the *Quartalschrift* between 1910 and 1920 was chiefly Professor Pieper's work.

IV

I Timothy 2: Historical-Exegetical Theology

A theology new in American Lutheranism was the paramount factor in searching out the truth about church and ministry. The name given to this theology has become such a familiar byword in Wisconsin circles that to mention it has the effect of shutting off further thought. There is the danger. It becomes a term, a concept to which lip service is paid, but not being carefully pondered, it is not always understood nor put into practice. Yet this was essentially the method and theology of Luther, hidden under a bushel not long after the Reformer's death.

The second chapter of I Timothy furnishes an ideal situation for analyzing and reappraising this theological method which we deem our Wisconsin Synod heritage. The whole chapter seems to be concerned with liturgical matters related to proper conduct in public worship. The first part of the chapter touches on matter of liturgical content, the second part of the chapter on matters of liturgical form. Paul is pursuing the good news proclaimed through the closing verses of chapter one, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He begins the second chapter with an exhortation. The truth about Christ Jesus must be more than a concept. It is truth to be lived and applied, and in public worship that may be done through the medium of prayer. And let this prayer reflect the all-inclusiveness of the Gospel. Let it embrace all men in all conditions and stations of life. In further testimony of these catholic objectives of the Gospel Paul, as it were, runs through the gamut of terms for prayer: supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings. The motivation for his plea to prayer in behalf of all men comes to light in the statements that follow. Despite human reason's estimate of prayer as a useless thing, it is precious and pleasing in the sight of our Savior God because all people belong into the sphere of His will to save and bring to knowledge of truth. Then follows the verse which is our particular concern. "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In its regular, present-day use, separated from the context, this has become a standard proof passage for ruling out the hagiolatrous prayers of the papacy. When studied in context, however, with careful attention given to the inspired meaning and inspired position of individual words, the passage is seen to be written for a different purpose. The emphasis is on the singleness of God's gracious will to mankind and on the corresponding singleness of the Mediator's will. In other words, the truth of God's desire to save all men is a firm foundation on

which we may build with all boldness and confidence. That desire is not changeable like the elements of this world. It is one, single, steadfast, constant; and the same holds for God's Son. Father and Son are one regarding their will to save all men. They are in one identical relationship to man. The Father wills salvation to all men and the Son mediates that will. Through the Son the Father's will becomes effective. Emphatically, Paul names this Son *man* without the article. A man He is. He does not belong to a special caste, class, or race. He is *a* man whose mediation embraces all.

This is the larger meaning of a Bible passage that is usually employed without context to maintain a tenet for which the passage was not written. The richness of the inspired Word does not prohibit the possibility that certain passages may be used to undergird several divine truths. The point of our position may be clarified by way of a homely analogy. The carpenter's plane is a tool that is constructed of a certain metal, according to a certain shape, to do a certain kind of work. Self-evidently therefore, it will do the type of work for which it was intended. No one will deny, however, that a carpenter's plane might occasionally be called into service like a hammer for pounding nails. But it is not suited for this, and—if as frequently happens with Bible passages—it is given wholly to such other use for which it was not originally constructed, it will not only be unnatural but may also work harm. To contend that a certain Bible passage may also serve another purpose and teach a different truth from that for which it was written seems as pointless and profitless as to insist that a carpenter's plane, or chisel, or saw, may also take the place of a hammer. The plea is that a Bible passage be used according to the purpose for which it was intended, as careful exegetical and contextual study can bring that purpose to light. This theological method is our heritage and lies behind the article on church and ministry as we have it.

The other important aspect of this theological method is demonstrated in the second part of the chapter under study. Here Paul himself, in treating a formal principle of public worship, furnishes us with an example of that method. The section speaks of woman's place in public worship. From the very first, Paul would have woman take a subordinate position. He begins his counsel with the strongly-expressed wish that the men—here not the generic but the specific, the masculine gender—men should lead in the public praying. This wish is intensified when Paul declares: "Nor do I commit to woman the business of teaching." Separated from context, this passage can be and has been made to say much more than was intended by the writer. As the entire section bears out, Paul is concerned that authority in formal affairs of Christian life be maintained according to natural order. In formal matters that pertain to station and office—the German word would be *Amt*—woman should not place herself in equality with man; she should guard against every occasion or avenue which could lead to her becoming an autocrat (authentees) of men. This principle applies at all places, in the home as well as in the affairs of church organization and public worship. It is the principle, the natural order, that Paul would have defended and safeguarded. More interesting for our present study, however, is the method that Paul employs to support this position. Instead of investigating the differing physiologies or psychologies of the two sexes, Paul reverts to history, to events from life as it is and as it was from the beginning. First there is a positive statement from history: "Adam was first formed, then Eve." This is the natural order, ordained by God for the blessing and the well-being of man from the beginning—yea, before the advent of sin. Man goes before woman, and any rearrangement of this order runs counter to the perfect designs of an all-wise God. Then Paul adds a negative statement from history, lending emphasis to and buttressing the truth of the positive. When woman subverted the natural, God-ordained order and took leadership into her

own hands, mankind came to grief. Adam was the real aim of Satan's evil designs (Rom. 5, 12) but Adam was not deceived *ouk eepateethee*. It was the woman—here Paul stresses the feminine gender—woman was *eks eepateethee*, completely deceived. The next sentence in the chapter, although not relevant to our study, needs to be added for its own sake, a lovely, evangelical touch. Paul does not break off his arguments from history with the mention of woman's deception but immediately proceeds with a "nevertheless" to that which is woman's special glory, her highest ideal. "She shall be saved in childbearing." This is her element. Herein she gives expression to her own divine gift, and that includes the caring for and the nurturing of little ones in the fear and admonition of the Lord as they grow to maturity. In these matters woman has no peer.

In this fashion the second chapter of I Timothy furnishes us with precept and example of the theological method whereby Wisconsin arrived at the position to which it holds in matters of church and ministry. To summarize this method: It approaches Holy Scripture as God's story of life in this world as formed by the forces of sin and as it can be changed only by the power of God's grace. It searches out God's truths in the Scriptures, and the meaning of individual words and sentences, in their relationship to the immediate context, to the entire book, to the person of the writer, and to the historical times in which the writer lived. In contrast to this method, there is the other, which is more familiar and more compatible to the human mind. That method treats Scripture primarily as a set of Bible passages which support formulations of religious truth. This kind of theology, at its best, can hold the fort after it has been stormed. It can brandish the weapons of defense that have been fashioned for it. It can stand guard and maintain ground which has been taken, and that too has its important place in the life of the church. But here its potential stops. It is not the creative theology of offense which finds the right, evangelical solution for new problems and dangers which constantly confront and harass the church. As the history of controversy in church and ministry bears out, the dogmatic theology could only stand pat on a position which had been taken in the past or it could solve a new problem in a manner that was contrary to the nature and the spirit of the New Testament Gospel. It was the other theology, burning brightly during the first two decades of the present century, that burst through the shackles of ecclesiastical convention and precedent and once more brought to light what we hold to be a correct presentation of church and ministry.

V

I Timothy 3 3:1 "Church" and "Ministry"

When we investigate the several terms regularly employed in the New Testament for *church* and for *ministry*, it must always be in the light of New Testament liberty that is alien to all *iure divino* forms and ordinances so dear to the mind and heart of natural man; and as befits sound exegesis in every circumstance of life, we must try to understand a word or expression, whether spoken or written, as it was meant to be understood in its time and by its author. The terms which the New Testament chiefly employs for *church* and *ministry* occur in the third chapter of Paul's letter to Timothy, the word for *church* at the end of the chapter, the words for *ministry* in the body of the chapter.

When Paul finally comes to the word *church* in this epistle, the situation seems made to order for defining a visible, local congregation. The counsels that he has penned and will be posting to Timothy should help the young man find a way through his problems and temptations in the divine call—whatever that call may have been—now committed to him. Paul names this trust the "house of God," and then, as if to ward off the idea of a specific ecclesiastical form or institution that can be seen or circumscribed, he hurries on to an exegesis of this "house of God."

He names it the “church of God the Living One, pillar and foundation of the truth.” The house of God is different from a temple of dead idols. It is church—*ecclesia* not a juxtaposition of marble or limestone, not a thing certified by a certain office nor circumscribed by certain forms. *Ecclesia* is simply the assembly or concord of people who have been called, gathered, enlightened, and are seated at the marriage feast of the Lamb. In a double sense, therefore, the church is living. It is living because it is pervaded by God whose Being is life. It is living because it consists of living human beings who, like foundation and pillars of a building, hold up the truth; they raise it aloft so that its light may shine into the world. Paul enlarges on the nature of this truth in the following verse. He names it the godly *Mysterion*, that is, a hidden thing. It is *Mysterion*, hidden, because it belongs into the sphere of faith and may be apprehended only by faith, a wonder-inspiring challenge to faith.” (Koehler) *Mysterion* is the Gospel. *Mysterion* is the inspired Word of Holy Scripture. *Mysterion* is the catalog of events in the life of the Savior: “manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels...received up into glory.” *Mysterion* is the New Testament church, the fruit of God’s grace without respect of persons, compelling them to come in from the highways and hedges that His house may be filled.

This is always the nature of church as the word is used in the New Testament, whether it be the on-this-Rock-built *Una Sancta* of Matthew 16, 18 or a localized group as in Matthew 18, 17 which is concerned with the soul health of an erring member. *Ecclesia* is a matter of faith. Jesus furnishes His own gloss on the church of Matthew 18, 17 when, three verses farther, He declares: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This is church. The outward form is unimportant. It may be a local congregation, a pastoral conference, a body of students at school, two men in the field, two women at the mill. Essential to church is the presence of Christ’s name. Church is *ecclesia*, the body of Christ, unrestricted by forms, creating its own forms as occasion demands in reflection of glorious New Testament liberty.

It is part of this liberty that Christians for practical reasons coin their own ecclesiastical terms and concepts. *Sacrament* is such a word, which may be defined, as Christians please. The expression, visible church, is similar. It cannot be avoided; we have the term and we need it. But it is another matter to find Scriptural support for the concept. We are not aware of its use in Scripture nor in our Lutheran Confessions. The expression should be used with discrimination.

To predicate a doctrine of church which sets up the local congregation as the true, visible form of the church is to clutter and becloud that which ought to remain simple and clear with forms and ordinances that are foreign to the Gospel and its spirit of liberty. A doctrine of this kind moves away from *ecclesia* to institution, from organism to organization, and that spawns a host of practices which carry the stamp of intricate and complicated formalism. For example, that a synodical convention, to enjoy all the privileges of Christian communion, should for the duration of its sessions formally incorporate itself with a local congregation; that teachers or professors, to win a divine status for their call, should be attached or installed as associates to a parish pastorate, and that a practice of this kind is stepped up during wartime: all this belongs to the murky air of outward formality.

It is also a step into the wrong direction when, by processes of human logic, a definition and identification of the so called true, visible church on earth is deduced. To propound such a thesis means immediately to modify it with encumbering conditions and exceptions that do not have the clear Gospel ring. To advance such a thesis means to move away from *ecclesia* as an article of faith to the outward marks of Word and Sacrament by which *ecclesia* is known but

which marks are not of the essence of *ecclesia*. If a true, visible church is deduced in this fashion, it might be possible that this so-called true, visible church contained not a single believer, its membership being outwardly very orthodox but inwardly without true faith. The true, visible church is a specious concept. It injects an external character into an article of faith. To teach a true, visible church on earth is to take another step into the direction of Rome.

The several offices or services that belong to the New Testament ministry must also be investigated in the light of New Testament liberty. Two of these offices are named in I Timothy 3, bishop and deacon, and the deaconate is the Greek word for ministry. Several chapters later Paul mentions the office of presbyter or elder. At the beginning of the letter he names his own office or service as that of apostle. When an attempt is made to categorize and institutionalize these offices or services, one meets with difficulty. In New Testament usage there seems to be no clearcut distinction among ministries. The deacons, appointed for a certain province of church work, are also engaged in the responsibilities of the apostleship (Acts 6). The terms *elder* and *bishop* are used interchangeably. There are differences between elders and elders, some laboring in word and doctrine, others apparently not (I Timothy 5). Even the apostolate, often regarded as *sui generis*, has some flexibility about it. The title seems to be extended to others besides the Twelve who were directly commissioned by the Lord (I Cor. 3,4.22).

There is an almost studied indifference to and calculated vagueness about the exact nature of each ministry which the New Testament presents to us. We might say that the Holy Spirit so ordained and arranged it in anticipation of the incipient, legalistic traditionalism which was about to invade the church. The importance of the New Testament ministry is not in its outward form but in its content. Instead of magnifying the form, let the admonition connected with that form be taken to heart. The office of a bishop is a good work, I Timothy 3,1 but read on. "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior...and likewise the deacons must be grave, not double tongued, not given to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre."

How often it happens that a form, a concept, an outward arrangement or official course of action in the church is given the lion's share of emphasis and attention—it is ventilated and re-ventilated in private clerical conventicles—while the life of Christian courtesy, Christian understanding, and Christian sobriety is hidden under the bench. From such situations—militantly orthodox—the Holy Spirit withdraws Himself. Here also the Lord must say: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouths and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

How different Paul's spirit, He touches on an ecclesiastical form in the case of bishop and deacon, and then he gets down to the business of Christian life.

The importance of the New Testament ministry is not in its form but its purpose. It is the ministry of righteousness (II Cor. 3,9), of reconciliation (II Cor. 5,18). It is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3,14). To set up one aspect of the New Testament ministry—the parish pastorate—as a needful component of *ecclesia* is to damage the singleness and simpleness of *ecclesia*. To set up one form of the ministry as divinely-instituted above others is to let go of New Testament liberty.

As soon as one leaves the canonical books of the New Testament, this liberty disappears. It is gone in the first generation after Paul. The letters of the postapostolic fathers abound in a theology of church and ministry that is distorted by unhealthy emphasis on outward form. With Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, martyred in Rome at the beginning of the second century, *ecclesia* has been beclouded by the bishop idea. "Let no man do anything connected

with the church without the bishop.” (Sm. VIII) “He who does anything apart from the bishop and presbytery and deacons such a man is not pure.” (Tr. VII) “Bishops are so by the will of Christ.” (Eph. III) “Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as where Jesus Christ is, there is the church.” (Sm. VIII) When viewed in context and historical setting, these passages are not quite so damaging as they sound. But separated from context, as happened in the traditional—and dogmatically—oriented Roman Church, statements of this kind become devastating, and out of them grew the whole Roman theology of church and ministry. This process, which is characteristic of the human mind, has been described well in the following manner: “At first sign it appears harmless...and there is no harm, were it not that letter by letter this spirit finds a home, imperceptibly penetrates into manners and customs; whence, issuing with greater force, it invades contracts between man and man and from contracts goes on to laws...in utter recklessness ending at last by an overthrow of all rights.”

The Fellowship of Ecclesia

As the Gospel of New Testament liberty in Christ is adulterated by the leaven of formalism, legalism, and dogmatism, the New Testament fellowship that is part and parcel of *ecclesia* is correspondingly deadened. This fellowship, which manifests itself in the joy of faith and proceeds from strength to strength with Christ, is congealed by misdirected zeal to maintain the strength of a visible fellowship through conformance to canon and rule. That happened in the early Christian church within a generation of the apostles. It happened again after Luther was dead. The Gospel of New Testament liberty in Christ had been a fresh and living thing with Luther. He demonstrated it in a freedom of Christian thought and freedom of Christian fellowship that never became license but which according to the dogmatically-oriented notion of things would be pronounced dangerous and dismissed as unscriptural. In the generation that followed Luther, this free spirit was benumbed by factors that come with overmuch emphasis on formulation and organization of Christian truth and life and when the virus of formalism fastens itself on theology and life, those thereby affected are least aware of it and the last to see it.

New and penetrating insights into our own, present-day way of thought and theology may be gained by re-study of Luther and the Gospel of New Testament liberty in which he lived, moved, and had his being. This kind of study requires more than a return to the familiar Gospel flowers which bloomed in the garden of his remarkable faith. Nor will it avail to isolate single examples and expressions of Luther’s freedom of thought. Such method appeals to the superficial way of things: collecting random evidence, organizing it into categories, and making logical conclusions. One does not get at life in this fashion, as little as one gets at the heart of Holy Scripture. Luther needs to be read according to the whole range of his Christian expression. Then his profound understanding of the Gospel coupled with his evangelical freedom of thought will be seen; and insights will be gained regarding the state of our own theology and way of life.

Formalism, legalism, dogmatism, paralyzing the lively spiritual fellowship that is characteristic of *ecclesia* comes with creeping organization. Organization in itself need not be at fault. Organization is a concomitant of numerical growth. As the church enlarges the place of its tent and lengthens its chords, the need for outward system increases, that all things may be done decently and in order. But there are hidden dangers connected with creeping organization. The outward system gets the best of the individual. Bureaucratic professionalism supplants private initiative. Beset by manifold duties that attend congregational growth, the servant of the Word finds himself separated from intensive contact with the Fountain of Life, which is the *sine qua non* of a healthy church and ministry. Theological shortcuts are employed to mitigate the hard work that the ministry must be. The human mind, following its natural bent, begins to evaluate

and solve matters of the Spirit according to logical formulae. All this leads away from the deep, evangelical understanding of all things.

There is, furthermore, a heightened demand for the services of central agencies to do work which, for the welfare of both church and ministry, is best done by pastor or teacher on the local level. That brings more centralization and with it a growing susceptibility to pass the buck. Instead of meeting a challenge on the local level and threshing out the matter to one's own spiritual edification, it becomes more opportune and expedient to refer the problem to headquarters for the professional solution that should be accorded the wider measure of respect. As centralization waxes stronger, the boldness (*parrhesia*) that goes with faith waxes weaker. It becomes increasingly difficult to venture a course against organizational momentum. The attitude of "conform or get out" creeps in. Spirits are quenched, mouths are muffled. An outward facade is assumed—always on the side of the majority—reserving what is nearest the heart for the ears of a trusted few: the mark of the politician. Centralization does not fasten itself on the church from the top down but from the bottom up, from a constituency relaxing on its vigilancy and its responsibilities.

With growing organization and proliferation of boards and committees, the lively, spiritual fellowship that is characteristic of and essential for *ecclesia* on all levels, local and synodical, is weakened. There is no time for the spontaneous personal contacts between shepherd and sheep, between shepherds and shepherds. The potential of this fellowship for the health and wealth of church and ministry does not come to flower, for example, in the interchange of thought which leads to better acquaintance with one another and therefore better understanding; in the free and frank appraisal of strengths and weaknesses in spiritual life; in the sharing of one another's joys and sorrows. As with everything else, fellowship goes formal. The natural spontaneity of it disappears. Fellowship becomes a duty for which there is an official time and an official place on the official calendar.

The fellowship of *ecclesia* is a Spirit-created thing. Christ is the pivotal point of this fellowship, and as soon as that truth is obscured by the contributions of man—when the meaning of fellowship is made to turn around the qualifications or resolutions of man—the record is thrown off center and the music of fellowship is distorted.

The fellowship of *ecclesia* is created by the Spirit, not by the official resolutions of man. The official resolution may only take note of and rejoice in a fellowship which has become fact through the power of the Word. The Holy Spirit creates and preserves the fellowship of *ecclesia*. Man breaks it. That happens on account of lovelessness. The mutual trust that springs from faith, the boldness that belongs to faith, the sharing of one another's fears and hopes—all this grows cold. Man breaks the fellowship. That comes with spiritual harlotry—the Bride of Christ who ought to be a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, would win the attention of the world by conforming to the ways of the world; the world with its gimmicks brought into the church to help nourish and knit together the joints and bands of fellowship.

The Holy Spirit creates and preserves Christian fellowship; with his lovelessness and harlotry man breaks it. The fellowship is broken from the bottom up rather than by official resolution from the top down. The official resolution takes note of a condition that already exists; and if that condition is a fact, if the break in fellowship is real, it need not be modified with an intricate exegesis of conditions, exceptions, and reservations. The great danger in the matter of group separation from fellowship is this, that outward organization supersedes *ecclesia*, bureaucracy does the thinking for diakonia, and demands the suppression of a fellowship which in localized areas is still lively, wholesome, and healthy. And thus a stumbling block is put into

the way of simple Christians who privately continue to practice a wholesome Christian fellowship officially frowned upon, and therefore they do it with consciences accusing them or finding excuses, and that is most dangerous and deadly. Fellowship is a Spirit-created thing, and wherever that fellowship is sound, the formal fiat from above cannot break it, neither in deed nor in truth.

The Fellowship of Diakonia

Christian fellowship is also an integral part of the Christian ministry. It is reflected in the mutual trust that must exist between pastor and the priesthood of believers whom he has been called to serve. Trust is implicit in the divine call, both in the extending of the call and in the exercise thereof. When the trust is gone, the fellowship of diakonia is broken, and the call that is left is but the caricature of a call: an empty, outward form. In such an event, the minister of the Word would seem best advised to recognize the situation which has developed and quietly to make his exit.

The matter becomes difficult of solution when a minister of the Word, insisting on the rightness of a formulated dogma to which he holds and having concentrated his entire ministry and whole Gospel preachment on that one dogma, thereby throws a congregation of simple Christians, who cannot follow all the convolutions of human logic, into confusion and uproar. The mutual trust between shepherd and sheep has shattered. When, in a situation of this kind the divine call which has become a mere shell is used like a club over the heads of the sheep and guilt is laid on their conscience, then the true nature of the theology behind such action thereby comes to view. It is not the theology of the New Testament.

Granted the correctness of the dogma, that is being defended, what shall the Simple and the weak in the congregation do in the face of this overbearing rightness? A deep, Christian common sense, which may be impossible of logical formulation, persuades the simple Christian that something is wrong, but to argue this position is a losing endeavor. All the trump cards of intellectual acumen are in the other hand, with proof passage upon proof passage from Scripture buttressing the scholastic system. It is in a situation of this kind, difficult of solution for the simple and weak, that Paul offers a word of comfort, What shall the weak do? Here it is that Romans 16 may find its proper, historical place and be used according to the sense of the context. Romans 16 is a diatribe against the impatience of loveless orthodoxy rather than a *sedes doctrina* on Christian fellowship. Paul did not write the letter to the Romans in a vacuum. He is not, as it were, canvassing a new residential area and knocking at the doors of complete strangers. As in all his other letters, Paul is familiar with conditions as well as with people in the congregation at Rome. There was a situation of unrest, and perhaps of uproar, in the congregation, brought on by the orthodox who with feet firmly planted in the principles of the Epistle to the Galatians were lovelessly disrupting the weak and leading them astray. Their doctrinal system was right, but their life was wrong—a piece of meat in the belly, to prove the correctness of their orthodox position, dearer to them than the preservation of a flickering flame of faith. What could the weak do in such a situation where the strong held all the trump cards, with scores of passages from Galatians to back them up? Separate yourselves, is Paul's evangelical counsel.

Every word of this counsel, in its very grammatical form and its position in the sentence, is by the will of the Holy Ghost. But when the human mind, endeavoring to get at the core of this counsel, dissects it with canons of human logic, it is like searching for the core of an onion. You begin to remove the skin, you peel and you peel, until nothing is left, nothing but the knife of the peeler: the knife of his intellectual acumen, As with all New Testament commands and counsels,

Romans 16 must be dipped into the article of New Testament liberty and applied in that spirit. We have not plumbed the New Testament in respect to its many other passages which, if subjected to the same logically-microscopic analysis which Romans 16 has endured, might lead to many grave doubts about the proper course that we are pursuing in our every-day Christian life. The legalist, on the other hand, having dogmatized the perspicuity of Scripture, wants an *ex cathedra* interpretation for every Bible passage; but meanwhile, in hundreds of pulpits throughout our synod, passages from the standard pericopes are interpreted in various ways Sunday after Sunday without in any degree damaging or diminishing the single great purpose of all Gospel preaching: to proclaim the One Thing Needful, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all *koinonia*, *diakoni*, and *ecclesia* must be gathered together.

Life that is hidden in Christ cannot help but disclose itself in faith-flowers of fellowship. There is boldness of speech—a putting off of the craven facade: the mark of the politician. There is boldness in one's Christian relationships with others—the courteous boldness that deals directly, person with person, instead of waiting for the impersonal vote of the organization to decide a matter.

Life with Christ reveals itself in faith-flowers that bespeak spontaneous activity in Kingdom-work. Without waiting for the officially-delegated assignment to committee, there is spontaneous zeal in church and ministry to find new means for edifying *ecclesia*. And there is mutual encouragement in behalf of this work. And when the new means are made available, they provoke genuine joy among those to whom they are offered.

Life that is hidden in Christ shows itself by way of enthusiasm over the work—whatever it may be—into which the Lord has called us. There is enthusiasm for one's own work—a constant striving for self-improvement—to the greater glory of God and the better service of fellowman, especially those who are of the household of faith. There is sincere interest in the work of colleagues and fellow-Christians, the very expression of which interest encourages and stimulates the fellow-Christian to greater effort: the farmer making better use of his trust to the glory of God; the pastor laboring with renewed zeal to the glory of God; the scientist searching with heightened diligence into the works of creation to the glory of God. This belongs to Christian fellowship: the mutual interest, the spoken encouragement, the genuine enthusiasm that we evince toward one another regarding the several duties and stations into which the Lord has called us.

Church and ministry have great and manifold things whereof to speak and be glad; and this must not be a matter that is reserved for the official time and occasion only—as when the encouragements and joys, officially promulgated from the rostrum, are then officially disposed of and principal attention is again turned to the mundane trivialities of life—the grist of the daily newspaper—which is of decisive import to the man of the world but not to *ecclesia*. Church and ministry have better things whereof to speak and be glad. And to speak of these matters which ought to be nearest the heart—to do that naturally and spontaneously—this is a genuine mark of life under the Gospel. This is part of Christian fellowship. This belongs with church and ministry. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.