

Hoenecke's Theses on the Church (Proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, 1869-1871)

1869, p. 23f.

- I. There is only one church, which is the congregation of those who are sanctified through the true faith and united with Christ, the Head.
- II. This congregation is gathered through the means of grace of the Word and sacraments and is at the same time the possessor of the same; and the pure preaching of the Gospel and right administration of the sacrament are therefore the marks by which we perceive the presence of the church.
- III. Not all, however, who are gathered around the Word and sacrament as perceived by the human eye are also those truly sanctified in faith; but the holy members of the church are hidden in that group and known to God alone.
- IV. The group of those who at any place are gathered around the Word as hearers in an outward way and who use the sacraments, in other words, an individual church (Particularkirche) is given the name "church" even though many false Christians are in the same; and indeed it is given this name because of the true members of Christ that are hidden in it.
- V. None of the larger or smaller bodies of individual churches embraces the one so-called church of Christ in the narrow sense; but there is also none in which the church of Christ is not hidden if it still possesses the seed from which the children of God are begotten.

1870, p. 23

Discussion: In answer to the question what really is meant by an individual church (Particularkirche), the reply was given that the teachers of the church understood this term to refer to a local congregation, the church in a province, or the church in a whole country, as well as a church identified with a particular confession.

1871, p. 11f.

Thesis V is elaborated in the following five statements:

- Statement 1. No individual church (Particularkirche) is the church, that is, no individual church is the congregation of all believers outside which there is no salvation.
- Statement 2. The Lutheran Church has neither in its public Confessions nor in the private writings of its pure teachers ever claimed that it is the one church outside which there is no salvation (or at least no church).
- Statement 3. Also in impure churches, that is, in such churches which have a false confession, there are still true children of God if the seed is still present there from which they are begotten.
- Statement 4. The preceding statements do not set aside Article VII of the Augsburg Confession.

Statement 5. The preceding statements do not establish nor advocate unionism (that is, a mingling of religions).