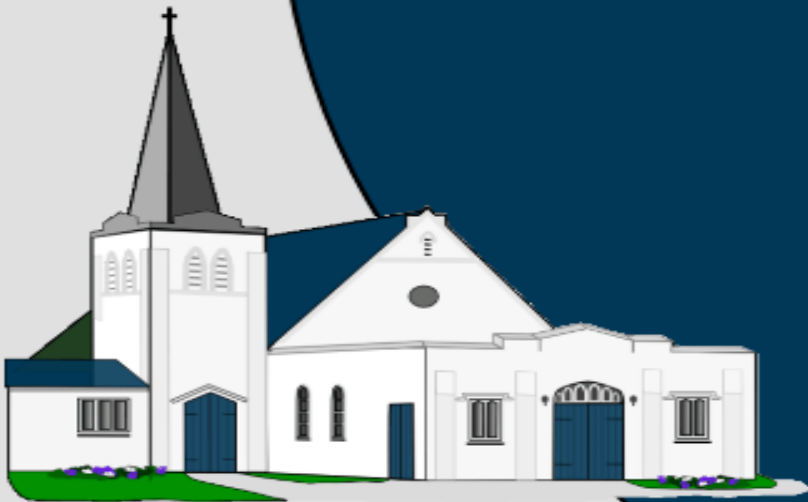


Church and Ministry

Week 5: Walther and Church



Warm up question

What metaphors can you come up with for the church?



1850

The year was 1850. Carl Ferdinand Wilhem Walther (CFW) was finishing up his 3rd and final term year of being president of the newly formed German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (later to become the LCMS). He had been under attack by a Pastor Grabau of Buffalo NY due to a disagreement about who “made” a new pastor - was it the congregation or was it other pastors?

Walter was encouraged to write down his responses and have them presented to the Synod (although Walther’s position had been already affirmed by the Synod). The result of that writing was a booklet entitled “Church and Ministry”



Church and Ministry

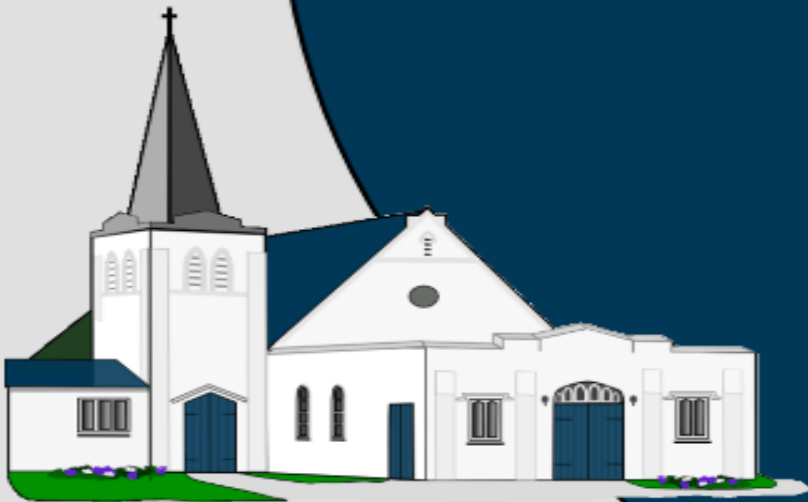
Church and Ministry was divided into two parts. First Walther explored the nature of the Church, and then of the Pastoral Office. Walther wrote 9 theses on the Church and 10 on the pastoral ministry.

Under each of these theses, he compiled proofs under 3 headings: 1. Scriptural proofs, 2. Witnesses of the Church in Its Official Confessions (i.e. the Book of Concord), and 3. Witnesses of the Church in Private Writings of Its Teachers (e.g. What did Luther write? Chrysostom (~300's AD)).



Church - Thesis 1

The church in the proper sense of the term is the congregation [Gemeinde] of saints, that is, the aggregate of all those who, called out of the lost and condemned human race by the Holy Spirit through the Word, truly believe in Christ and by faith are sanctified and incorporated into Christ.



Church Theses 2 & 3

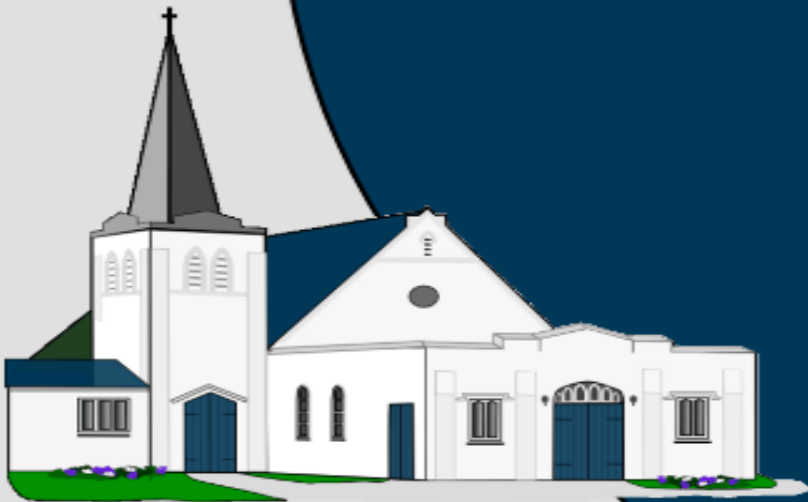
To the church in the proper sense of the term belongs no wicked person, no hypocrite, no unregenerate, no heretic.

The church in the proper sense of the word is invisible



Church Thesis 4

It is to this true church of believers and saints that Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and it is the proper and only possessor and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly gifts, rights, powers, offices, and the like that Christ has procured and are found in His church.



Church - Thesis 5

Though the true church in the proper sense of the term is essentially [according to its true nature] invisible, its existence can nevertheless be definitely recognized, namely, by the marks of the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution.



Church - Thesis 6

In an improper sense, Scripture also calls the visible aggregate of all the called, that is, of all who confess and adhere to the proclaimed Word and use the holy sacraments, which consists of good and evil persons, “church”; so also it calls its several divisions, that is, the congregations that are found here and there, in which the Word of God is preached and the holy sacraments administered “churches” (particular or individual churches). This it does especially because in this visible assembly the invisible true, and properly so-called church of believers, saints, and children of God is hidden; outside this assembly of the called no elect are to be looked for [anywhere].



Church - Thesis 7

As visible congregations that still have the Word and the sacraments essentially according to God's Word bear the name "church" because of the true invisible church of sincere believers that is found in them, so also they possess the power [authority] that Christ has given to His whole church, on account of the true invisible church hidden in them, even if there were only two or three believers.



Church - Thesis 8

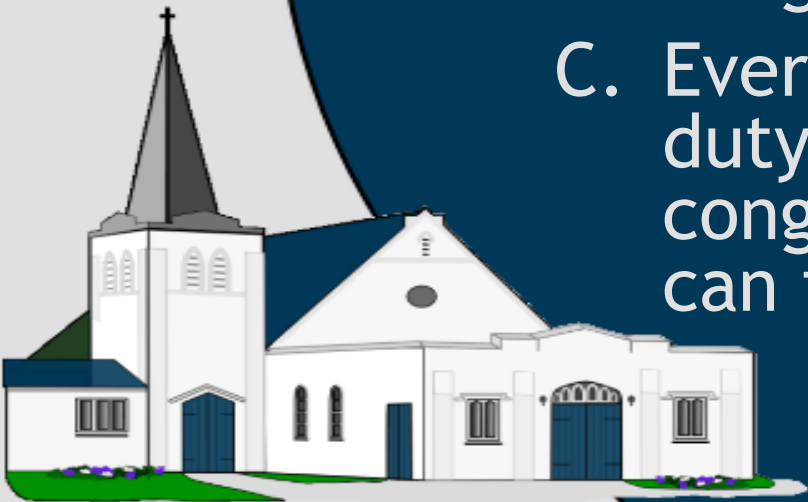
Although God gathers for Himself a holy church of elect also where His Word is not taught in its perfect purity and the sacraments are not administered altogether according to the institution of Jesus Christ, if only God's Word and the sacraments are not denied entirely but both remain in their essential parts, nevertheless, every believer must, at the peril of losing his salvation, flee all false teachers, avoid all heterodox congregations or sects, and acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and their orthodox pastors wherever such may be found.

[But wait...there's more....]



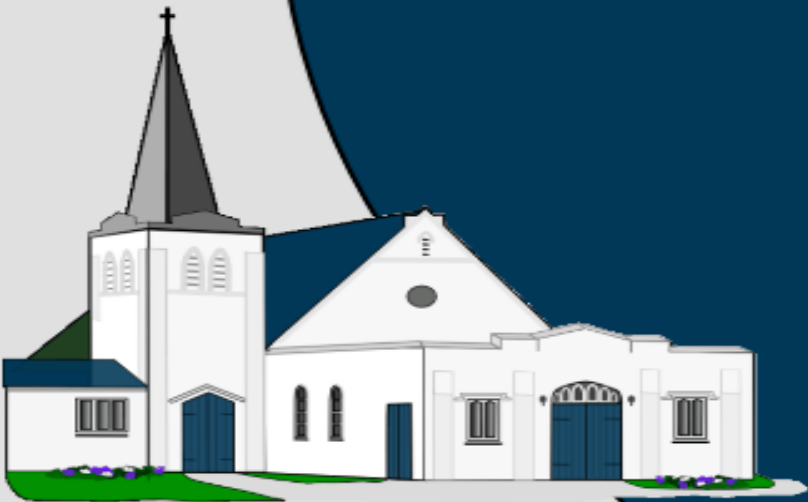
The Church - Thesis 8 Additional

- A. Also in heterodox and heretical churches there are children of God and also there the true church is made manifest by the pure Word and the sacraments that still remain.
- B. Every believer for the sake of his salvation must flee all false teachers and avoid all heterodox congregations and sects
- C. Every Christian for the sake of his salvation is in duty bound to acknowledge and adhere to orthodox congregations and orthodox pastors, wherever he can find such.



The Church - Thesis 9

To obtain salvation, only fellowship in the invisible church, to which alone all the glorious promises regarding the church were originally given, is absolutely necessary.



Next week

Next week we will look at Walther's theses on the Pastoral Office and wrap up our study.

