

International Seminar on *Unitatis Redintegratio*
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Lutheran Prospective

ABSTRACT: This lecture at first (I) gives account of the topics of *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR). UR refers back to the definition of the church in ‚*Lumen gentium*‘, where it is said, that the church is the assembly of “all those who [...] believe in Christ“, and that it „subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him“. This definition is contrasted to that of the Lutheran *Confessio Augustana*, that „The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.“

Secondly (II) the thesis is proposed, that UR has a double ecclesiology. On the one hand, it admits, that also the churches separated from Rome are means of salvation and that faith, hope and charity are found in them. On the other hand it insists on the centrality, even exclusiveness of the church of Rome. The mediation is this, that the elements of sanctification and of truth impell to unity and this unity is only found in the Roman church. Therefore the church *subsists* in the church, which is governed by the pope.

Thirdly (III) a response to this position is proclaimed according to Luther’s sentence: the whole substance of the church is in the word of God. Therefore, there is no church – regarded as an organization – which can claim, that the church – as an assembly of the believers – subsists in it. Rather, the church exists only in the participation of the word of God and the sacraments.

Coming from this point, the question of the government of the church has to be addressed. The church should be governed by a community of bishops. This joint government would have to warrant that the teaching of the church remains in the truth according to the word of God, and it has to warrant the unity of the church.

However we have to face also the problems. At first that a church is governed by a bishop in this way, is a divine charisma, and it needs a consciousness of this divine charisma and assignement among the laymen. Then we have to clarify, what the true doctrine and the right praxis of the sacraments is.

Subsequently it has to be questioned, if a unity of the churches can be found without the centrality of Rome. Finally the specific charismas of the churches represented here are collocated: that of the Roman-Catholic church is that of unity, of the Orthodox churches is the constancy, that of the Reformation churches the consciousness to listen to the word of God.