

# CTQ

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## The Office of the Holy Ministry

Joel P. Okamoto

The office of the holy ministry remains a significant topic in important discussions and debates within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. From our standpoints, the topic arises most frequently in discussions about lay ministers, mission and evangelism, and the relationship of congregations with their ministers. But questions and issues involving the office arise elsewhere, including conversations on the responsibilities of the priesthood of the baptized, absolution and church discipline, the nature of ordination (e.g., whether it ought to be numbered as a sacrament), pastoral education (e.g., field education, vicarage, alternate routes, and teachers of theology), the tenure of calls, auxiliary offices, and the duties of elders.

Each of us has his own particular concerns and level of discomfort with matters in the LCMS, but all of us are concerned that some of our disagreements and confusions are about doctrine. To be sure, there is no disagreement and confusion about what constitutes the Lutheran articles of doctrine. There is, however, much disagreement and confusion about how we should embody these articles in our lives, including how we should embody the Lutheran doctrine of the office of the holy ministry.

We recognize that embodying a doctrine or a principle in our lives is much more difficult than merely stating it or agreeing with it. This is the case with the distinction of law and gospel. Embracing it is quite simple; learning to do it faithfully is a lifelong venture. This is the case with the Athanasian Creed's central trinitarian claim: "We worship one God in three persons and three persons in one God, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance." Confessing it in the liturgy on the festival of the Holy Trinity is straightforward; observing it straightforwardly in our theological reflection often proves difficult. This is the case with the relationship of justification and sanctification. Stating that sanctification

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*This paper was presented at two joint meetings of the Systematics departments of both LCMS seminaries and represents a consensus of these departments on the subject. It will also appear in Concordia Journal, published by the faculty of Concordia Seminary, Saint, Louis.*



follows justification is easy; reflecting their relationship properly in preaching and pastoral care can strain even pastors who have seen it all. This is also the case with the office of the holy ministry in the life of the church. For instance, it is one thing to confess: "no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call" (CA XIV).<sup>1</sup> But it is another thing to discern what courses of action properly embody this doctrine when no pastor is available for God's people, or when considering how seminarians might acquire skill in preaching and teaching, or when a congregation has many homebound in need of preaching and the Lord's Supper.

Difficult or not, however, discerning faithful ways of embodying our doctrine is just as basic a Christian responsibility as confessing our doctrine. To help us all in this task, we offer the following affirmations.

**I. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions locate the office of the holy ministry within God's plan and work of salvation through Jesus Christ.**

All reflection on the office of the holy ministry and every embodiment of the doctrine of the office should be faithful to the ways in which the Scriptures make known the office and to which the Lutheran Confessions testify. These, in turn, rightly begin by acknowledging that the Lord Jesus Christ himself instituted and commanded the office:

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld." (John 20:21-23)<sup>2</sup>

The office of the ministry does not exist simply by virtue of apostolic precedence or for the sake of good order, but by virtue of Christ's will and for the sake of the salvation of sinners.

However, our thinking and conversation as well as our practices and policies should be consistent not only with particular passages in the New Testament (e.g., John 20; Matt 28) and the Confessions (e.g., CA V; XIV) but also should be consistent with the ways the Scriptures and the Confessions present and discuss the office.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of the Lutheran Confessions are from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

These ways are not difficult to determine. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions locate the office of the ministry within God's plan and work of salvation through Jesus Christ.

*The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions locate the doctrine of the office of the holy within the divine economy of salvation.*

The most basic and familiar way of locating the office of the holy ministry (and therefore the doctrine of the office) is within God's economy of salvation, that is, within God's plan and work of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus himself does this in the Gospels. These accounts serve as the basis for teaching that Christ himself instituted and commanded the office, along with all that his institution and command entail.<sup>3</sup> From these accounts, we also can discern the scope or the power of the office, namely, "to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sin, and to administer and distribute the sacraments" (CA XXVIII, 5).<sup>4</sup>

The New Testament teaches us that Christ is not only the one who authorizes the office and calls men to service but also serves as the paradigm for those whom he calls and sends: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). Those called to the office are called to continue the work that God gave his Son. Ministers do not merely speak about God's grace and salvation; they are called to convey God's grace and offer salvation. Their calling is to act, as our liturgical orders put it, "in the stead and by the command" of the Lord. Their office is not simply to talk about God's reign or God's forgiveness or God's justification; their office is to announce the coming of God's reign, to forgive sins, and to justify sinners (see also John 15:18-16:15; 17:6-26). It is further reflected in the appointing and sending of the twelve (Matt 10:1-42; Mark 3:13-19; 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6) and the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-20). Here Christ commissions them for work that he himself is doing—proclaiming the coming of God's reign, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons—and work that Christ himself understands as characterizing him as "the one who is to come" (Matt 11:2-6). To be sure, the service to which Jesus Christ calls ministers of the word is not identical to the service to which God called Christ. For instance, it was given to Christ alone to atone for the sins of the world. Those in the office that Christ instituted do not participate in a sacrificial office. And the service to which ministers of the word are called today does not necessarily involve raising the dead or healing the sick, as it did for the twelve and the seventy-two in the

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<sup>3</sup> For the institution and command of the office, see Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-49, and John 20:21-23. See also John 21:15-17 and Acts 1:8.

<sup>4</sup> The article then quotes John 20:21-23 to justify this position.

Gospels. The point is that Christ gave the same office that the Father had given him. Paul and Timothy convey the same conception of the office when they speak about the ministry and message that God has given them:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 5:17-6:2)

The Lutheran Confessions adopt this approach to characterizing the office of the ministry, especially when they establish and delimit the power or authority of those who have been called to the office. In CA/Ap XXVIII, this power is contrasted to the power of civil authorities. In Ap XIII, this power is established against the Roman conception of the priesthood as a sacrificial office on the one hand (Ap XIII, 7-9), and against the Enthusiasts who set aside the word entirely on the other hand (Ap XIII, 11-13). In the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, this power is shown to be given equally to all the apostles and to all who succeed them, not principally to Peter and his successors in the Roman church. We can see their concern to show that ministers represent Christ and do his work from their repeated citations of the words of Jesus recorded in Luke's Gospel: "He who hears you hears me" (10:16; see CA XXVIII, 22; Ap VII/VIII, 28, 47; cf. Ap XII, 40 and Ap XXVIII, 18).

*The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions locate the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry within the context of justification by faith in the gospel.*

Some of the confessional witnesses already cited point to another significant way to characterize the office of the ministry: within the context of justification by faith in the gospel. CA V directs us to this context when it connects justification with the means of grace: "To obtain such faith [i.e., faith that "God will regard and reckon . . . as righteousness in his sight" (AC IV, 3)] God instituted the office of preaching [*das Predigtamt*], giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives



the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel" (CA V, 1-2). This article emphasizes that the Holy Spirit gives justifying faith through the means of grace.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the understanding that the keys have been given immediately to the church is consistent with this teaching.<sup>6</sup>

The Confessions, however, also understand that these means of grace are to be administered publicly only by those who have been properly called. This is asserted plainly in CA XIV: "Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call." This office of teaching, preaching, and administering the sacraments is held not simply as a matter of good order, but, as we have already seen, because the office has Christ's institution and command. As we see in Ap XIII, the Confessions hold together both the emphasis that justification comes through the means of grace and the acknowledgement that God has given the office of the ministry so that these means might be administered and sinners thereby justified. When discussing whether ordination may be understood as a sacrament, the article first distinguishes the evangelical understanding of the office of the holy ministry as a calling to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments from the Roman Catholic conception of a sacrificial office (Ap XIII, 7-9). But if ordination is rightly understood as having reference to the ministry of the Word, then the Apology has no objection to calling it a sacrament. Why? Two reasons are given: first, because "the ministry of the Word has the command of God and has magnificent promises like Romans 1[:16]: the gospel 'is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith'" (Ap XIII, 11); second, because "the church has the mandate to appoint ministers" (Ap XIII, 12).

Although the Confessions nowhere cite this passage, this way of locating the office of the holy ministry in God's work is reflected in Romans 10. In this section of the letter (chs 9-11), Paul deals with the theological problems of the many Jews who have rejected Christ and the righteousness of faith. In chapter 9 he addresses the question of whether salvation is by

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<sup>5</sup> This point is made repeatedly in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology (see especially XIII, as will be discussed in the next paragraph, and XXVIII), and also in the Smalcald Articles (see SA III, viii on Confession) and in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (see especially Tr 60-61, which addresses the issue of ecclesiastical power).

<sup>6</sup> "Moreover, it must be acknowledged that the keys do not belong to one particular person but to the church, as many clear and irrefutable arguments show. For having spoken of the keys in Matthew 18[:18], Christ goes on to say: "Wherever two or three agree on earth..." [Matt. 18:19-20]. Thus, he grants the power of the keys principally and without mediation to the church..." (Tr 24; cf. Tr 68) Also see below, affirmation IV.

grace if so many of the chosen people are not in fact saved. In chapter 10, he establishes that righteousness comes not by works but through faith. Paul begins by announcing that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (v 4), and he argues this with a Christological reading of the Old Testament:

For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with his heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth he confesses is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:5-13).

But this still leaves the problem of hearing about the Lord and his righteousness in the first place. Paul answers this problem by tracing out a theology of the word of God:

But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Rom 10:14-17)

Jesus Christ means "the end of the law for righteousness."<sup>7</sup> The way of salvation lies not by hearing and doing the law, but by hearing and believing the gospel, and the true righteousness of life comes as a consequence of faith. But, as Paul explains, there is no righteousness of life without faith, no faith without hearing, no hearing without preachers, and no preachers without sending. In this way, Paul locates the ministry of the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

word and the office of this ministry within the context of justification by faith in the gospel.

## **II. Jesus Christ instituted and commanded the office of the holy ministry to save sinners.**

As the New Testament teaches and the Lutheran Confessions testify, God has not only established the office of the ministry, but he has established it for a definite purpose. Both ways of characterizing the office of the ministry stress that Christ instituted and commanded the office for a particular purpose, namely, to save. Seen in the context of God's economy of salvation through Jesus Christ, the office of the holy ministry consists of men appointed and sent by Christ as God his Father had sent him. Seen in the context of justification by faith, the ministerial office has been established for the justification of sinners through their preaching of the gospel, their forgiveness of sins, and their administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Therefore, the fact that the Scriptures and the Confessions locate the office of the holy ministry within God's plan and work of salvation also directs us always to reflect upon and talk about this office in that context. Accordingly, a basic test of any understanding of the office of the holy ministry is whether it is consistent with God's plan and work of salvation and with his activity of justification through his means of grace.

The testimony of the Lutheran Confessions shows the importance of seeing the saving purpose of the office. The Confessions usually and most significantly discuss the ministry of the word (i.e., the activity of preaching the gospel, forgiving sins, and administering the sacraments) and the ministerial office (i.e., the office responsible for conducting this activity) with the interest that God's saving work be accomplished. We cite several occasions. One arises in connection with justification by faith. In CA V, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is confessed as given for the working of justifying faith. Another comes in connection with the distinction of the two powers. In CA XXVIII, the evangelicals "have been compelled, for the sake of comforting consciences, to indicate the difference between spiritual and secular power, sword, and authority" (CA XXVIII, 4). When the Confutation misses the point of this article, the Apology answers: "If the opponents would only listen to the complaints of churches and pious hearts! The opponents valiantly defend their own position and wealth. Meanwhile, they neglect the state of the churches, and they do not care if there is correct preaching and proper administration of the sacraments in the churches" (Ap XXVIII, 3). A third is seen in the Apology's discussion of the definition of a "sacrament." When Ap XIII has "no objection to calling



ordination a sacrament," it is because "the ministry of the Word has the command of God and magnificent promises like Romans 1[:16]: the gospel 'is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith'" (Ap XIII, 4). A fourth comes when the Treatise challenges papal primacy. Here it stresses, "certainly the church is not built upon the authority of a human being but upon the ministry of that confession Peter made, in which he proclaimed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God" (Tr 25), and it charges that the Roman confusion about the authority of the pope "brought horrible darkness upon the church and afterward precipitated great tumult in Europe. For the ministry of the gospel was neglected" (Tr 34).<sup>8</sup>

### **III. The saving activity for which Christ instituted and commanded the office of the ministry raises the question of authority or power (nature and scope of authority).**

Since the fundamental purpose of the office of the ministry is to save sinners, the existence of the office itself will naturally lead to questions and challenges about its authority or power, because salvation is the prerogative of God alone. Ministers in the exercise of their calling perform deeds that God alone has the right and power to perform. By what right do they do such things?

In answering this question, it is important to remember not only that Jesus Christ instituted and commanded the office, but also that he himself is the paradigmatic minister. Acting as the Christ and Son of God, Jesus himself also prompted questions about and challenges to authority. We see this not only in the particular instance when he forgave the sins of a paralytic (Matt 9:1-8, where he proved his authority to forgive sins by healing the man), but in his ministry as a whole. Jesus gave signs of his authority: healing the paralytic; telling the Samaritan woman all about her life; being attested to "by God with mighty works and signs that God did through him"; and, above all, the sign of Jonah. His saving words and deeds led ultimately to his rejection and crucifixion, but his resurrection from the dead vindicated his identity and authority as the Christ and the Son of God.

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<sup>8</sup> It may be helpful further to observe that here the Treatise is retaining the medieval categories of the "power of the order" and the "power of jurisdiction," as did the Apology (which the Treatise cites as the Evangelicals' general treatment of ecclesiastical power; see Ap XXVIII, 13-14). But both the Apology and the Treatise appropriated the categories critically, and they removed from their definitions any confusion of the two powers and oriented their definitions for the service of conveying God's grace. Both the Apology and the Treatise, moreover, criticize Roman Catholic doctrine and practice because they amount to a compromise of justification by grace alone.

Christ did not act on his own authority, but according to God's dispensation and in the power of the Spirit. When Christ instituted and commanded the office, he did so in the same way. He did so because "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18) and in the same way "as the Father has sent me" (John 20:21), and he did so with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; John 20:22; see also Acts 1:8; 2:1-21). In this way, namely, through Christ's calling and ordaining, the apostles were given not only the responsibility but also the authority to speak and act in God's name. Through call and ordination, ministers are given not only the responsibility to speak and act in God's name, but also the power.

**IV. The whole church's possession of the power of the keys relativizes neither the necessity nor the authority of the office of the holy ministry, but it confers to the church both the right and the responsibility to call and ordain ministers.**

As we noted in the Introduction, the topic of the office of the ministry arises "in discussions about lay ministers, mission and evangelism, and the relationship of congregations with their ministers." Looking further into all of these discussions, one frequently finds contentions over the relationship between the church as possessing the power of the keys and the office of the ministry also as possessing this power.<sup>9</sup> These contentions make this relationship an important issue today.

To sort out such issues faithfully, we should acknowledge both that Christ instituted the office of the holy ministry and gave it the power of the keys (John 20:21-23; Matt 16:13-19), and also that Christ gave the power of the keys to the whole church (Matt 18:18-20). The Lutheran Confessions affirm both testimonies. The Treatise affirms explicitly both when it refutes arguments for papal primacy (Tr 22-24). The Roman opponents insisted that its claims about the primacy of the bishop of Rome derived from Christ giving the keys to Peter in particular (Matt 16:18-19; John 21:17). The Treatise counters with two arguments: one that Christ had given the power of the keys equally to all the apostles, and another that Christ gave the keys also to the whole church. The Confessions, moreover, testify to the keys granted to the whole church in other ways, notably when the Smalcald Articles speak about "the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters" (SA III, iv) and when the Large Catechism identifies a "secret confession that takes place privately before a single brother or sister" (LC Conf 13). These citations show that the Confessions understood that Christ gave the power of the keys both to the entire church and to the office of the ministry. To be sure, the Confessions themselves do not

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<sup>9</sup> As significant as it may be, however, it is only *one* key point of contention.

articulate a precise distinction of the possession of the keys. Nevertheless, it is a clear conclusion from the fact that they recognize and argue that Christ gave the power of keys both to the church and to the office. Their use of the New Testament witness substantiates this conclusion. Particularly in their repeated use of the Lord's words recorded in John 20, the Confessions reflect the understanding that Christ instituted the ministerial office as a distinct office within the church. They do not understand that the office derives from the church as the holder of the keys. At the same time, however, the Confessions also see the church as possessor of the keys by virtue of another of Christ's teachings: "Where two or three are gathered in my name" (Matt 18:20). They do not see the office as sole location of the power of the keys nor those in the office as the sole possessors of the keys. Accordingly, we also must recognize that the power of the keys is neither the exclusive possession of those called to the office nor granted to the office simply by way of derivation from the church.

The assertion that Christ established the ministerial office is significant because it shows that the authority of the office derives from Christ's own authority. It is true that Christ places men into the office and conferred this authority through the call of the church, whose right to call and ordain ministers stems from her possession of the keys. Ministers, however, exercise authority by virtue of the office that Christ himself instituted.<sup>10</sup> When they act according to Christ's institution, those put into the office act "in the stead and by the command of" Christ, and so that those who hear them, hear Christ (Luke 10:16). Ministers do not serve at the pleasure of the congregation, as a servant or an employee, but serve as deputies of Christ.

Christ's institution, however, not only establishes the authority or power of the office but also qualifies it. What Christ established and commanded defines both what is and what is not within the scope of the authority of this office. The Confessions recognize this qualification particularly in CA/Ap XXVIII on the power of bishops, which are concerned to articulate the range of the powers proper to the office.

Consequently, according to divine right it is the office of the bishop to preach the gospel, to forgive sin, to judge doctrine and reject doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, and to exclude from the Christian

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<sup>10</sup> This truth is embodied in some orders for absolution, including this one from *The Lutheran Hymnal*: "Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."



community the ungodly whose ungodly life is manifest—not with human power but with God’s Word alone. (CA XXVIII, 21).

In the Confession we have said what power the gospel grants to bishops. Those who are now bishops do not perform the duties of bishops according to the gospel, even though they may well be bishops according to canonical orders, about which we are not disputing. But we are talking about a bishop according to the gospel. We like the old division of power into the “power of the order” and the “power of jurisdiction.” Therefore, bishops have the power of the order, namely, the ministry of Word and sacraments [*ministerium verbi et sacramentorum*]. They also have the power of jurisdiction, namely, the authority to excommunicate those who are guilty of public offenses or to absolve them if they are repentant and ask for absolution (Ap XXVIII, 12–13).

When pastors act “according to the gospel” (i.e., according to the institution and command of Christ), Christians should hear them and should obey them. “That is why parishioners and churches owe obedience to bishops, according to this saying of Christ (Luke 10[16]): “Whoever listens to you listens to me” (CA XXVIII, 22). On the other hand, “whenever they teach, institute, or introduce something contrary to the gospel,” they must not be obeyed (CA XXVIII, 23). To be sure, those who occupy the office may exercise other kinds of authority, but if they do so, they do so according to human agreements and for the sake of order, not because they have a divinely given right.

The assertion that Christ gave the keys to the whole church is significant for at least two reasons. First, this claim is the basis for recognizing that in certain circumstances any Christian might administer God’s grace.<sup>11</sup> Because Christ gave the power of the keys to the whole church, the Confessions recognize situations in which any Christian could convey God’s grace to another Christian brother or sister (Tr 67). One situation is an emergency, that is, a situation of imminent danger of death where no pastor is available. In such situations, “even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another” (Tr 67). Another situation includes instances when brothers and sisters in Christ deal with one another’s sins and burdens. Such instances include “the secret confession that takes place privately before a single brother or sister” (LC Conf 13) and the “mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters” (SA III, iv).

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<sup>11</sup> In support of this position, Tr 68 cites the words of Christ, “For where two or three are gathered in my name . . .” (Matt 18:20) as pertinent. Again, see also Tr 22–24.

We can see from this that the truth that Christ gave the keys to the church often does not speak to some questions about evangelism commonly asked today: Are all Christians missionaries? Does the Great Commission apply to ministers alone or to all Christians? Can any Christian share the gospel, or is this only for pastors? When these questions are dealt with, they usually are referring to speaking about the one true God, his Son, his will, his forgiveness, his love, etc. Both Old and New Testaments show that the one true God's identity, actions, and will may be made known by any of God's people, from the greatest to the least, from Moses and Elijah to the captive girl who lets it be known that the master should visit the prophet in Israel, from John and Paul to the Samaritan woman and the women at the empty tomb. If a slogan like "every Christian is a missionary" refers only to this much, then we should all acknowledge not only that any Christian may speak about God, Christ, judgment, and salvation as they live out their callings, but that Christians as a community in the world do testify to all these things by their very lives.<sup>12</sup> But the fact that Christ has given the keys to the whole church bears on different situations. It addresses situations where it is necessary not simply to speak about God and Christ and forgiveness but to speak in the name of Christ and actually to forgive.

The assertion that Christ gave the keys to the whole church is significant also because it gives to the church the right and the responsibility to call and ordain ministers. The Confessions never use the truth that the whole church possesses the power of the keys to make the office of the holy ministry unnecessary or merely useful. On the contrary, this truth serves as the basis for the church's right to call, choose, and ordain ministers (Tr 60-72). Exercising this right by calling those who are placed in the office is one significant way that the church keeps Christ's institution and command.

The Treatise demonstrates this line of thinking. It acknowledges some difficulties and challenges that churches may face with respect to their ministers. Some churches may be confronted by ministers who abuse their power or lead ungodly lives. Other churches may find ministers unavailable in time of need. These kinds of situations, however, do not lead the confessors to suggest that Christians might do without men called and ordained to the ministerial office. On the contrary, the fact that the church possesses the keys gives them not only the right but also the obligation to ordain ministers if necessary: "[W]hen bishops either become heretical or are unwilling to ordain, the churches are compelled by divine

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, it is a pertinent question to ask whether this witness is faithful, but this, too, is a question for another occasion.

right to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves" (Tr 72). It might be said that this right holds even in an emergency and conclude that such situations do not show that ordination is optional, but necessary. But this way of putting the understanding of the Confessions fails to acknowledge that the confessors took this sort of right and responsibility *for granted*. We can see that the confessors regarded ordination as necessary by the way that the Treatise uses the emergency situation in its argument. It was unnecessary for them to prove this; in fact, they could use it as a part of a proof. The Treatise uses it as a premise in order to prove that the church must have the right to choose, call, and ordain ministers.

This right is a gift bestowed exclusively on the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church, as Paul testifies to the Ephesians [4:8, 11, 12] when he says: "When he ascended on high . . . he gave gifts to his people." Among those gifts belonging to the church he lists pastors and teachers and adds that such are given for serving and building up the body of Christ. Therefore, where the true church is, there must also be the right of choosing and ordaining ministers, just as in an emergency even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another. So Augustine tells the story of two Christians in a boat, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen) and then the latter, having been baptized, absolved the former. (Tr 67)

In an emergency situation, the fact that the whole church has been given the power of the keys makes ordination appropriate, not irrelevant. Persons who act in such emergencies are not thereby put into the office. Simply because one is thrust into such a situation, or simply because one might possibly be thrust into such a situation, that one should not be understood as being put into the office. But the point is that the Treatise does not imagine churches without ordained ministers of some kind, even in emergency situations or when no one else will call and ordain men for the office. As confessors of the same doctrine, neither should we.

**V. We should observe both a clear distinction between  
aptitude for serving in the office and the authority of those in  
the office and also a definite relationship between them.**

The question of aptitude comes up regularly in conversations involving the office of the holy ministry. One argument for the ordination of women is that women are supposed to be more likely to have dispositions suited for pastoral ministry. One concern about non-residential pastoral education programs such as DELTO is that they may not always provide adequate training and formation for pastors. One reason that the category of "teacher of theology" has been recently discussed is that there are

women willing and able to teach theology in LCMS institutions of higher education. Whether such arguments, concerns, or reasons have validity is a question for another occasion; for our purposes, they illustrate how readily the issue of aptitude enters when a conversation involves the ministerial office.

Aptitude is a necessary category for thinking about ministers and their office, because they are expected to have certain qualities and capacities, and because they are given definite responsibilities to fulfill.<sup>13</sup> For instance, they must be “apt to teach” (1 Tim 3:2). But we should be careful not to let aptitude be the primary category for reflection and discussion of ministers and their office. Knowledge alone is not enough. Skill and wisdom to put knowledge to use are not sufficient. Authority or power to act is also needed. As we have already emphasized, Christ established this office for acts that convey God’s forgiveness and promises of life and salvation. Such acts require not only a certain aptitude, but they require divine authorization, which is given a man when he is called and ordained to the office. Accordingly, authority or power is also a necessary category for reflection on the responsibilities of the office of the ministry and on the expectations for those called to the office. We have already observed that the ministry of Jesus Christ shows that “authority” is a significant concept for the doctrine of the ministry.<sup>14</sup> At this point we would say more specifically that his ministry shows that the concept is significant for thinking about such issues as call and ordination as well as education of candidates for the ministry (pastoral education) and their certification.

First, it shows that call and ordination are essential for conduct of the ministry. Ministers do things in the place of Christ. They forgive and retain sins. They judge doctrine. They administer the signs of God’s favor. They warn and admonish against sin and error. They exclude and include particular persons. In all these things they stand over against others, and so the question follows naturally: By what right? On whose authority? When Moses went to Pharaoh, he had his staff. When Elijah stood off against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he could call down fire from the heavens. When Jesus was challenged for a sign, he gave them the sign of Jonah. These indicated their God-given authority. What is the sign of authority for ministers today? It is their call and ordination, which assure that they act by divine right and on the authority of Christ. This truth makes such ideas as lay ministers invitations for difficulties and

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<sup>13</sup> Therefore, education, certification, and oversight should neither be relativized as *adiaphora* nor dismissed as legalistic.

<sup>14</sup> See above, §3.

troubles to ministers whose authority is doubtful and to laypersons whose assurance of God's grace may be questioned.

Second, the concept of authority is significant for the formation and certification of candidates to the office of the ministry. In short, it defines questions of character and makes them essential. Of course, issues of character for ministers have been much discussed in recent years, and often for good reason. But the relevant issues go beyond the qualities expected broadly of professionals or certain interpersonal skills. The requirements of proclaiming the gospel and judging doctrine require boldness and confidence. Excommunication of manifest sinners and the absolution of the penitent, especially in the face of opposition, require integrity and courage. Staying within the powers granted to the office requires humility and patience. Every level and every kind of pastoral education should seek to instill and encourage these qualities and should lead students to appreciate them, while certification of candidates should pay definite attention to discerning them.



## **The Office of the Ministry According to the Gospels and the Augsburg Confession**

**David P. Scaer**

J. A. O. Preus is reputed to have remarked that ministry issues among Lutherans will have to wait for heaven to be resolved. Up for discussion is regularizing lay celebration of the sacrament in both the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), where it is called lay presidency. Earlier related issues are women serving as public readers of the Scriptures and eucharistic assistants. Ordination of homosexuals in California not long ago led to an ELCA congregation's expulsion, but despite official policy such ordinations have taken place and may eventually be legalized.<sup>1</sup> This issue threatens schism in the ELCA and the Anglican communion. Ordination of women is a settled issue in the ELCA, but some, including women clergy, are dissatisfied with the arguments offered for it.<sup>2</sup> Since the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) sees schoolteachers sharing the same ministry as pastors, it began to ordain its male (why not female?) parochial school teachers, but has since rescinded the practice. The ministry issue has boiled up in the northern European churches when bishops refused ordination to those who oppose the ordination of women while also removing others for the same reason. This is front-page news.

This discussion of the ministry is divided into four parts with an appendix. Material in part one is taken over from an article arguing that CA V addresses the establishment of the office of the ministry and anticipates CA XIV, which speaks on how it is filled. Part two looks at the biblical arguments offered in the Augsburg Confession and the Treatise. A third part looks at the Gospels for specific mandates for the ministry not

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heineken, "Why the Ordinations Were Invalid," *Lutheran Forum* 24 (Pentecost 1990).

<sup>2</sup> "Open Letter: Turning Down 'Stirring Up,'" *Lutheran Forum* 24 (May 1990): 8-9. Here fourteen ELCA women pastors state in an open letter that they are dismayed that hardly any "scripturally sound, confessionally faithful, theological rationale in the defense of the ordination of women" has been found.

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necessarily cited in the Confessions. Creation of faith apart from the ministry in the Gospels is discussed in part four. An appendix looks at 1 Peter 5:1–2a.

### I. The Ministry in the Augsburg Confession

The Augsburg Confession is arranged so that articles after CA XI explicate what precedes it. Melancthon's intentions are evident in their ordering of the articles. CA XIV on church order extends and depends on CA V in which the ministry is established and entrusted with the word and sacraments so that sinners can be justified (CA IV).<sup>3</sup> CA XXVIII on the power of bishops and the Treatise (1536/7) elucidates these two articles on the ministry. Whereas the Augsburg Confession moves from the office of the ministry (CA V) to how this office is filled (CA XIV) and then to its tasks in the article on the bishops (CA XXVIII), the Treatise, which is the appendage to the Augsburg Confession, begins its argument from the opposite pole with the pope. He may be entitled to higher honor, but his authority is the same as any other bishop. In turn bishops have no more divine authority than pastors. Differences are *iure humano*. What is said of bishops in the Augsburg Confession (XXVIII, 8) in exercising the keys, the Treatise applies to pastors.<sup>4</sup>

### II. The Biblical Basis for the Ministry in the Confessions

CA XXVIII cites John 20:21–23, Jesus' Easter eve appearance to the disciples, to demonstrate that bishops are authorized to administer the keys, which is defined as forgiving and retaining sins and also administering the sacraments. In giving them the Holy Spirit, Christ gave them the ministry. The passage again appears in the Treatise (Tr 9).<sup>5</sup> 'In, with, and under' the apostolate, Christ also established the ministry. Later Lutheran theologians used Matthew 28:16–20.<sup>6</sup> Melancthon may have preferred John 20 with its specific reference to the authority to remit and retain sins, which for Lutherans was the chief article. In the Treatise Melancthon uses Matthew 16:18 and John 21:17, pericopes where Jesus

<sup>3</sup> Materials in CA through CA XXVIII explicates the first eleven. Thus the articles on the Sacraments (XIII) is built upon the articles on the church (VII; VIII), Baptism (IX), the Lord's Supper (X), and Confession and Repentance (IX; X).

<sup>4</sup> John F. Brug, "The Meaning of *Predigtamt* in Augsburg Confession V," *Wisconsin Synod Quarterly* 103 (Winter 2006): 29–43. This essay is a classical presentation of the WELS functional view of the ministry. For example, " . . . the *Predigtamt* is the gospel" (31).

<sup>5</sup> Chemnitz cited John 20 in the same way. *Examination of the Council of Trent*, tr. Fred Kramer (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), II:559.

<sup>6</sup> Chemnitz, *Examination*, II:468, 680, 695. The Lutheran Confessions use this passage for their position on Baptism especially infants but not for the ministry.

speaks to Peter to "show that the keys were entrusted equally to all the apostles and that all the apostles were commissioned in like manner" (Tr 22-23). Matthew 18:19-20 shows that Jesus "grants the power of the keys principally and without mediation to the whole church" (Tr 24). Twice it is said that words spoken to Peter apply to all the apostles (Tr 22-23). Melanchthon identifies the rock in Matthew 16:18 on which the church is built as "the ministry of that confession" (Tr 25).<sup>7</sup>

Passages cited by Melanchthon for the ministry are spoken by Jesus both before and after the resurrection and in different places, an issue scholars have addressed. J. A. T. Robinson follows C. H. Dodd in seeing a parallel between the commissioning of the apostles in John 20:21-23 (Jerusalem) and the commission to Peter in Matthew 16:23-24 (near Galilee) and not 28:16-20 (Galilee).<sup>8</sup> Raymond E. Brown recognizes a parallel between John 20 and both Matthean citations, the one to Peter and then all the apostles, both in or near Galilee.<sup>9</sup> It is hardly incidental that Matthew and John alone, who are among the original Twelve, and not Mark and Luke, have commissioning of the apostles to show that Jesus intended the ministry for them. As will be seen, Luke expands the ministry to include others. A few exegetical observations may be helpful. First, though John places the post-resurrection commissioning of the apostles in Jerusalem (20:21-23), and not Galilee as does Matthew, the special commissioning of Peter takes place in Galilee (John 21:15-19). This corresponds to Matthew's commissioning of Peter in Caesarea Philippi (16:23-24), an area bordering Galilee. Both the pre-Easter commissioning of Peter in Matthew 16:23-24 and his post-resurrection commissioning in John 21:15-19 are done within the company of the other apostles, as the Treatise points out. Second, in Matthew 28 the apostles are entrusted with making disciples by teaching and baptizing, which establishes the church. John focuses on how the disciples who have been given the Spirit shall remit sins, thus establishing and confirming the church. Third, John's explicit reference to forgive sins is implied in Matthew's command to baptize, since for him baptism involves confession of sins and repentance (3:1-6).<sup>10</sup> Fourth, apostolic

<sup>7</sup> Melanchthon cites Ephesians 4:11 to classify ministers as "apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers." In the New Testament context the word *apostles* is the usual term for missionaries and *prophets* for preachers (Matt 10:41). Pastors may be resident clergy and teachers those entrusted with the *didache*, that is the teaching or the doctrine.

<sup>8</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John*, ed. J. F. Coakley (Oak Park, IL: Meyerstone Books, 1987), 316-317.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, Anchor Bible 29a (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1987), 1040-1042.

<sup>10</sup> Matt 3:6, "And they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins."

commissioning in both Matthew and John involves trinitarian revelations. Matthew's ecclesiastical (liturgical) "Father-Son-Holy Spirit" (28:19) is replaced by John's conception of God in action whereby the Son ascends to his Father and gives the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> A complete doctrine of the Trinity must incorporate both realities of what God is in himself (the ontological Trinity; Matthew) and of how he relates to the world (the economic Trinity; John). Fifth, the discrepancy between Matthew's eleven disciples (28:16) and John's ten disciples is resolved by the appearance to Thomas, which raises the apostolic cadre to eleven (John 20:26-28). Both evangelists see the Twelve (Eleven) as a unique witnesses to the resurrection entrusted with Jesus' teachings. Sixth, whereas the Matthean citation obligates the Eleven to speak all the words of Jesus, the Johannine citation designates the apostles as those given the Holy Spirit and, thus, represent Christ in forgiving and remitting sins as he represented his Father.<sup>12</sup>

Though Melanchthon does not use Matthew 28:16-20 to establish the ministry, note well the Latin edition of CA XVIII. After citing John 20, a favorite citation for discussing the ministry, he adds Mark 16:15, "Go and preach the gospel to the whole creation." Putting aside the issues of the authenticity of the longer ending, it is similar to Matthew 28:19, as Raymond Brown notes, and in my opinion is dependent upon it.<sup>13</sup> Both the disputed ending of Mark and Matthew 28:16 limit the audience addressed by Jesus to the Eleven. This apostolic ministry according to CA XVIII belongs to the bishops and, as mentioned, according to the Treatise, it is assigned to the ministers who speak in the stead of Christ in remitting sins. This Melanchthon demonstrates by citing Luke 10:16, another favorite citation for him in (Ap VII, 28, 47).<sup>14</sup> In the first citation, Melanchthon says in preaching and administering the sacraments "[ministers] represent the person of Christ" and "offer them in the stead and place of Christ." A second use of Luke 10:16 shows that evil men can be ministers because they represent Christ and not themselves. Again, now for a third time, Luke 10:16 is used to demonstrate that a minister's absolution is Christ's

<sup>11</sup> John 20:17, 22 "'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' . . . And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

<sup>12</sup> This ministry is from the Holy Spirit and parallels Paul's admonition to Timothy to stir up within himself the gift given him through the laying on of Paul's hands. This gift is identified as the "spirit of power and love and self-control" (2 Tim 1:6, 7), which 'spirit' is none other than the Holy Spirit. Chemnitz uses this passage plus v. 14 and 2 Cor 3:5-6 to show that ministry of the gospel was also one of the Spirit. *Examination*, II:40.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1040-1042.

<sup>14</sup> Latin: "*quia ministri funguntur vice Christi, non representant suam personam.*" German: "*denn sie reichens an Christus statt und nicht fuer ihre Person.*"

(12:40). Melanchthon's use of Luke 10:16 to show that Christ instituted the ministry and that the occupants of this office speak in the name of Christ to those who listen (CA XXVIII, 20) is pure genius (CA XXVIII, 22). Like Matthew, Luke speaks of the sending of the Twelve elsewhere (6:12–16), as does Mark (3:13–19). So the sending of the seventy is not substituted for the sending of the Twelve, but exists along side it (10:1–20). The third evangelist may be challenging notions current then that only the Twelve (Matt: Eleven) spoke for Christ. The seventy are sent directly by Christ, not by the Twelve, and thus accountable to him—the position of the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, and the Treatise.<sup>15</sup> Melanchthon's interpretation obviates the support or need for a historic apostolic succession for the ministry. Unique to the Twelve (Eleven) was their role as witnesses to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection,<sup>16</sup> and as the authenticators of his teachings (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:14–19; Luke 6:13–9); however, the seventy share in the preaching which, like that of the original Twelve, will be the standard for the world judgment.<sup>17</sup> Though Melanchthon uses the sending of the seventy to establish the ministry, the majority of his arguments for the ministry are taken from the pre- and post-Easter calls of the apostles.

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<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:5–9 lists the witnesses of the resurrection in the context of those known to be ministers. "And that [Jesus] appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." The Corinthians knew Peter, the Twelve, James, and Paul as ministers. The apostles are those sent out by churches to establish other churches. Just who are the 500 is not easily resolved. Like the seventy they could be those chosen by Jesus as ministers but who were not included among the Twelve.

<sup>16</sup> Peter claims to be a witness of Christ's suffering (1 Pet 5:1) and of the transfiguration (2 Pet 1:16–18). Even if Second Peter is not authentic, it preserves the tradition that Peter was an eyewitness of that event.

<sup>17</sup> There are no parallels in the other Gospels to Luke 10:1–12 and the seventy are not identified, though later Hippolytus nominated each of them; see *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325*, 10 vols., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 5:254–255. This is, however, strikingly similar but not identical to the commission of the Twelve not only in Luke (9:1–6) but in Matthew (10:5–15) and Mark (6:7–13). Chemnitz explains how ministers forgive sins without God abdicating this authority to do so: "Now this power of forgiving sin must not be understood to have been given to the priests in such a way that God had renounced it for Himself and had simply transferred it to the priests, with the result that in absolution it is not God Himself but the priest who remits sins." *Examination*, II:559.

ministers now exercise Christ's office in proclaiming forgiveness in his place, but in such a way that it remains his.<sup>18</sup>

### III. The Ministry in the Gospels

Melanchthon cites the Gospels to anchor the ministry in the life of Jesus at specific times and places. After his resurrection Jesus was not a Gnostic teaching esoteric things learned beyond the grave but explicated what he taught before his death found in summary form at the end of the Gospels, for example, Matthew 28:16–20. Things taught before his death were interpreted in light of his resurrection (Luke 24:44). What Jesus did before his death was not recorded merely for the sake of having a historical account but also to shape and form the life of the church.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Melanchthon applied Luke 10 to the ministry.<sup>20</sup> Melanchthon cited the pre- and post-Easter commissioning of the Peter and the apostles.<sup>21</sup> The pre-Easter commissioning of Peter, Andrew, James, and John to be fishers of men at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20) also belongs to the content of the post-Easter commissioning of the Eleven (28:16–20). [This matches the commissioning of Peter after the resurrection in John 21:1–11 where the once fisherman and now fisher of men agrees to provide for Jesus' sheep, an event which seems to be reflected in 1 Peter 1:21].<sup>22</sup> Attention should also be given to Matthew's second discourse (9:35–11:1), which is folded into the commissioning of the apostles in

<sup>18</sup> Chemnitz condemns the Novatians, "who taught that reconciliation and remission of sins are to be sought and expected apart from the ministry of the Gospel." By ministry Chemnitz refers not to functions common to all, but to the pastors, as he goes on to say that, "None of the men on our side denies that power to remit and retain sins was given to the ministers of the church by Christ." *Examination*, II:559. Chemnitz also cites Luke 10:1.

<sup>19</sup> John 2: 22 "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken."

<sup>20</sup> For example baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted in one way or another before Jesus' death but were given additional meaning by his resurrection. The complete trinitarian revelation came only after the resurrection, though the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism to which God's voice, i.e., the Father's, gave his approval. Almost inexplicably Matthew has the Johannine thunderbolt that what the Father and the Son know of each other is given by revelation to believers (11:27). A trinitarian expansion with the inclusion of the Spirit comes only at the Gospel's end (28:19).

<sup>21</sup> In Mark 16:6–7, like Matthew 28:7, the women are instructed by the angel to tell the disciples that the commissioning will happen in Galilee, but the commissioning itself is not recorded. Like John 2, Peter is singled out: "'But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'" Matthew has Jesus repeating the message of the angel and no mention of Peter.

<sup>22</sup> "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

28:16–20. In the second discourse the disciples are described not as fishers of men, but those entrusted with scattered sheep (cf. again 1 Pet 1:21) and a harvest to be gathered (9:36–38). They are to preach the message of John the Baptist and Jesus that the kingdom of the heavens is near (10:7), instructed what to take with them and deserving of fair wages (10:9–11). For what they preach they will be persecuted, but in the hour of persecution the Holy Spirit will speak through them (10:16–20). Refusing to confess Christ releases him from confessing them before his Father (10:32–33). Judgment will come on those who do not accept their message (10:13–15). Those who do will share in the apostles' rewards. In the second discourse Matthew has interwoven pre- and post-Easter circumstances. Only after the resurrection would the disciples, now as apostles, be taken before kings and governors (10:18). Confessing Christ would be required of all (10:32–33). Matthew 28:16–20, commonly called the Great Commission, is not an isolated imperative, but embodies everything previous in this gospel, including what is said about the ministry in the second discourse.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV. The Creation of Faith

The right, or should we say, the obligation for all believers to proclaim the gospel is extrinsic to the universal or general priesthood (1 Pet 2:9). Matthew, which is the most systematically ordered gospel and the one with institutions of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the ministry, provides examples of people believing without direct contact with Jesus or the disciples. Some, indeed all of them, have exemplary faith. I bring this matter up in response to the allegation that some hold that only a word spoken by a minister can convert. Those who believe without an official deputation are the magi, the centurions, the Canaanite woman, those who bring children to Jesus, and Pilate's wife. Most amazing are the magi. Much of what motivated their journey to search for the Jewish king will remain unknown, but it seems that they interpreted a unique celestial event in light of Numbers 24:17 about a star rising from Jacob and concluded that the messianic figure had come. They know the Pentateuch including 2 Samuel but not the prophets because they have no knowledge of Bethlehem. Unlike the Palm Sunday crowds who can acknowledge Jesus as no more than the Son of David (Matt 21:9, 15), the magi actually recognize him as God (Matt 2:2, 11). The healing of the centurion's servant (son) is recorded in Matthew 8:5–13, but Luke provides the additional information that the centurion did not actually converse with Jesus (7:1–10). We are not told how he heard about Jesus, but it was not face to face.

<sup>23</sup> For more see my *Discourses in Matthew* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 265–286.

Since the disciples did not want to have anything to do with the Canaanite woman, it seems that neither they nor Jesus had directly preached to her. She is held up as a great believer, because she understood that in the discourse on bread and the falling crumbs Jesus was speaking about himself and not table manners (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). This the disciples could not figure out, though they had participated in the miraculous feeding as distributors of the bread. Children are brought to Jesus by others (19:13, 14). Pilate's wife, who because of a dream, asks her husband to let nothing stand between him and Jesus (27:19). Like Joseph, the magi, and the Genesis Joseph, she is favored by God with a dream. She may have known of Jesus, but in the dream she learns that he is "the Righteous One," the same confession made by Luke's centurion (23:47).<sup>24</sup> The clue on how these came to faith is provided in Matthew 4:23: "The hearing (rumor) of him went throughout all Syria." The cross centurion hears Jesus, but he is not specifically addressed by him. People to whom the gospel was not proclaimed in a formal way or for whom it was not first intended heard it and believed. Though the Twelve and the Seventy are authorized as Jesus' ministers, faith is created in unexpected ways, often in spite of those given the obligation.

### Appendix: "In, With, and Among"

A major presentation at the LCMS convocation held in Phoenix in August 2006 on how a congregation governs itself centered on the significance of Exodus 19:6 which 1 Peter 2:9 cites, a historically foundational passage for the universal priesthood. Another citation in this epistle shows how congregations and ministers relate to one another. "So I exhort the *elders among you*, as a *fellow elder* and a *witness of the sufferings of Christ* as well as a *partaker in the glory that is to be revealed*. Tend (shepherd) the flock of God [KJV: which is *among you* (omitted in RSV)] that is your charge." (5:1-2a). Both the vocabulary and grammar are significant.

*Πρεσβυτέρους οὖν ἐν ὑμῖν παρακαλῶ ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος καὶ μάρτυς τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός ποιμάνετε τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ποίμνιον τοῦ θεοῦ.*

This passage is addressed to the elders (πρεσβύτεροι) a term carried over from the Greek into Latin version of the Treatise where it used together with pastors of ministers (49). It is used of John and Peter (Tr. 62). With the

<sup>24</sup> English translations offer the word *innocent* in place of *righteous* or *just*. There is no other place in this Gospel where the Greek word means merely innocent. Matthew intends that Pilate's wife is among those Gentiles who recognize Jesus for who he really is, a reality that eludes the Jews.



first use of the phrase "among you," Peter's words to the elders are intended to be heard by all the members of congregations, as are the Pastoral Epistles. By calling himself a συμπρεσβύτερος, he shares a ministry with other elders, that is, pastors, but as an apostle he reserves for himself the title of a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." Elders (ministers) are a distinct group but their place is among and not above or beneath the congregations.<sup>25</sup> In the first case of the "among you," the pastors are among the people and in the second case the people are among the pastors. So pastors are among and not above or beneath the congregations. Apart from his apostleship and ministry, Peter shares with all the letter's recipients a common glory. Similarly Melancthon separates a minister's office from his faith. Apart from the question of an earlier or later dating of the gospels, Judas remains listed among the apostles and at the same time defined by his betrayal of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16 [traitor]; John 6:71; 12:4; 13:2, 21-26). These are warnings to the earliest Christians that even those who preached the gospel to them could fall from the salvation for which God had chosen them to proclaim. The office is not dependent upon the faith of those who hold it. A final note: 1 Peter is addressed not to individual churches but "to the elect in the diaspora" in northwest Asia Minor (1 Pet 1:1).<sup>26</sup> From this one could argue for the WELS position that all members within one fellowship constitute the church. Christians in these congregations constituted a fellowship or church among themselves.

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<sup>25</sup> Peter uses the word *elder* and not *pastor*, but this concept is implied in their feeding "the flock of God," a back reference to Christ's commission to Peter to feed his lambs and sheep (John 21:15-17). God in the phrase "the flock of God" refers to the church as belonging to Jesus. See 2:25: "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

<sup>26</sup> See Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew*, 147.



## Augsburg Confession XIV: Does It Answer Current Questions on the Holy Ministry?

Naomichi Masaki

Questions regarding the ministry occupy an important place in our church. Martin Luther lamented that, though the preaching office (*Predigtamt*) originated in Christ, by the sixteenth century it had been corrupted. The task of the church was not to abolish but to restore it to its proper place.<sup>1</sup> What had been restored through the Reformation, however, was undone once again through the Thirty Years' War, pietism, rationalism, and romanticism. Then, in the nineteenth century, there arose a confessional revival that brought with it liturgical renewal. As always, doctrine, confession, and liturgy go together. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is an heir of this movement. Our church seeks God-pleasing solutions to its understanding of the preaching office. The changing trends in the American religious scene, however, have affected our church's theological thinking and practice, especially in the area of seminary education.<sup>2</sup>

Current questions on the ministry revolve around LCMS convention resolutions from the past twenty-five years. While the 1989 Convention's decision to adopt the Lay Worker Study Committee's recommendations may be seen as key in the development of laity carrying out word-and-

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<sup>1</sup> WA 12:35, 2-18; LW 53:11. The corruption of the *Predigtamt* and the *Gottesdienst* lies in the replacement of Christ as the doer and the giver with what we do (LC V, 7) or what the church performs. Such a thought Luther applies both against Rome and against the enthusiasts/Anabaptists.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., see Charles R. Foster, et al. eds., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006). Part three of this book (187-325; esp., 237-238) identifies the influence of five traditions of seminary education in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America: the mainline Protestant seminaries, the Bible schools and evangelical seminaries, the African American seminaries, the U. S. Roman Catholic seminaries, and the rabbinical seminaries. Also revealing is how the independent discipline of practical theology was added to the traditional categories of Bible, history, and theology by the early twentieth century, to form the fourfold curriculum of theological education in the mainline Protestant seminaries.

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sacrament ministry,<sup>3</sup> their substance may be traced back to 1981 in the Commission on Theology and Church Relations' (CTCR), *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature*.<sup>4</sup> The Lay Worker Study Committee identifies this CTCR document and C. F. W. Walther's theses on the office of the holy ministry as its theological foundation.<sup>5</sup> The publication of *The Ministry* could have been an attempt to justify earlier practice.<sup>6</sup> The 1992 Convention changed the direction of the 1989 decision by providing "ordination for certain laymen involved in word and sacrament ministry,"<sup>7</sup> and the 1995 Convention established a concrete procedure for such

<sup>3</sup> See LCMS, "Resolution 3-05B: To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended," in 1989 *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1989). The report of the Lay Worker Study Committee is found in LCMS, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, 69–73. See also LCMS, "Alive in Christ—the Ministry of the Laity," in 1986 *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1986), 93–95.

<sup>4</sup> The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission of Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981); hereafter *The Ministry*.

<sup>5</sup> LCMS, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, 71. "Prior to making any recommendations in this area, the committee reviewed the Synod's understanding of the doctrine of the ministry. This included the Commission on Theology and Church Relations document *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, and Nomenclature* and also C.F.W. Walther's 'Theses on the Ministry,' which were appended to that report. On the basis of this review, the committee adopted the following summary of the doctrine of the ministry as the overarching guide for the recommendations that follow in this report."

<sup>6</sup> The aforementioned Lay Worker Study Committee report claims that one of their assignments by the LCMS President was to give specific attention to the question: "what's the basic scriptural and ecclesiastical rationale for lay ministry?" LCMS, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, 69. David Luecke gives a good historical overview of the practice of lay ministry in the LCMS in "Lay Leadership Education in the LCMS Today," *Issues in Christian Education* 38 (Spring 2004): 6–11. Luecke mentions lay ministry programs in the Districts of Michigan (1980), Alaska (1983), Pacific Southwest (1988), Mid-South (1997), California-Nevada (1995), Ohio (1998), Kansas (1999), Southeastern (2000), Atlantic (2001), Iowa West (2001), Southern and Nebraska (post 2001). He identifies Oscar Feucht as the leading figure in the 1950s to promote lay ministry training institutes, which became reality through the 1959 Convention and the Lutheran Lay Training Institute at Concordia College, Milwaukee in 1961. Brent Kuhlman traces the thinking of Feucht in the ecumenical movement of 1950s and 1960s in the World Council of Churches in "Oscar Feucht's *Everyone a Minister: Pietismus Redivivus*," *Logia* 8 (Reformation 1999): 31–36. See also John R. Stephenson's "Reflections on the Holy Office of the Ministry for the Scandinavian Diaspora," *Logia* 15 (Epiphany 2006): 43–47, for further historical and theological critique of Feucht's understanding of *diakonia* in the New Testament.

<sup>7</sup> See LCMS, "Resolution 3-08: To Provide for Ordination of Certain Laymen Involved in Word and Sacrament Ministry," in 1992 *Convention Workbook* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1992).

ordinations.<sup>8</sup> The 2001 Convention, however, reversed this and returned to the 1989 Convention position on the basis that the 1995 resolution did not work.<sup>9</sup> Although the training of laity for service that supports the pastoral ministry is valuable and increasing in LCMS districts, also growing are training programs that prepare laity to carry out specific functions of the pastor (i.e., preaching and administration of the sacraments), which obscure the Lutheran understanding of the ministry.<sup>10</sup>

As the LCMS position on the ministry has vacillated recently, parishioners continue to ask questions. *The Lutheran Witness* recently included a Q & A column entitled "Who may consecrate the elements?"<sup>11</sup> Some pastors seek help on how best to clarify parishioners' questions on Augsburg Confession XIV (CA). Even some LCMS laity has expressed apprehension when the church contravenes CA XIV. At the 2005 LCMS Nebraska District Theological Conference, which discussed questions about the priesthood of all believers and the pastoral office, examples abound:

- "Is every man a minister?"
- "What is the relationship of vocation with regard to both the priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry? How are they the same? Different?"

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<sup>8</sup> See LCMS, "Resolution 3-07A: To Establish the Procedure by Which Laymen licensed to Perform Functions of the Pastoral Office Be Called and Ordained into the Ministerium of the LCMS," in *1995 Convention Proceedings* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1995), 121. One of the "Resolved" says: "That any layman who is licensed to perform pastoral functions under the guidelines of said Res. 3-05B be required (if he wishes to continue preaching and leading in public worship) to apply for admission into the pastoral ministry of the Synod in accordance with the following process . . . ."

<sup>9</sup> LCMS, "Resolution 3-08B: To Address Needs and Opportunities for Pastoral Ministry in Specialized Situations," in *2001 Convention Proceedings* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2001), 139. One of the "Resolved" says: "That the Synod authorize its districts to continue training lay deacons as directed by the spirit of the 1989 Wichita Res. 3-05B in which trained lay ministers serve under the supervision of an ordained pastor." Another "Resolved" maintains: "That this convention rescind 1995 St. Louis convention Res. 3-07A (requiring such licensed laymen to complete a seminary program for ordination)."

<sup>10</sup> See note 8 above.

<sup>11</sup> *The Lutheran Witness* 125 (February 2006): 28. After describing the decision of the LCMS at its conventions concerning lay ministers, the answer in this Q & A column concludes: "Ultimately, it is the congregation, the priesthood of believers, that is responsible."

- "Is God's word efficacious when spoken by a lay person? Or is it only effective when spoken by a pastor?"
- "As members of the priesthood of all believers all Christians are supposed to bear witness to Christ. So why do I have to go to the seminary to be a pastor?"
- "Should laity be administering the sacraments?"
- "I am a DCE and view my call to public ministry as part of the 'pastoral ministry' and do present Christ to the people through the word and study of the sacraments. I think some discussion could be done on 'Pastor,' 'DCE,' public ministry roles."
- "Is a layperson preaching or administering the sacraments contrary to the Scriptures? CA XIV?"
- "Why have we created the vocation of lay minister? If the office of the ministry is to be done by a pastor, why give these duties to lay people?"
- "Are all Christians to witness and share their faith verbally or is verbal sharing only for clergy?"
- "Is evangelism and missions given to the priesthood of all believers or only to the clergy?"
- "Why has there never been an emergency Lord's Supper? Why should only ordained pastors consecrate and distribute the Lord's Supper?"
- "Is it wrong to have laymen serving as pastors—word and sacrament ministry—when there are pastors available, in other words, when there is no extraordinary circumstance?"
- "Since everyone is the same, priesthood of all believers, why can't women serve as district presidents?"
- "If a pastor is pastor to the entire church how can some DELTO vicars/pastors be limited to a specific congregation?"
- "What is an emergency?"
- "A godly man has little formal theological training but is interested in completing DELTO training at a later date. But a congregation is vacant and needs pastoral care. So the District President 'authorizes' him to do all the functions of the pastoral office in that place. Is this *rite vocatus*? Why or why not?"

These indicate the importance of working diligently and carefully so that the LCMS may clearly confess the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry.<sup>12</sup> This situation prompts us to ask: Why is CA XIV absolutely

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<sup>12</sup> The systematic departments of both LCMS seminary faculties have acknowledged a fundamental agreement concerning the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry during

vital? Does it really matter that a called and ordained man preaches, teaches, absolves, baptizes, and consecrates the Lord's Supper, and does CA XIV provide an answer?

Before we look at CA XIV, a discussion of some documents and individuals from the history of the LCMS is paramount. We will examine these sources afresh, especially Walther. There are also pragmatic concerns. We cannot address the doctrine the ministry today without considering the scope of expectations that parishioners may have for their pastors. As we reflect on the pastoral office through CA XIV, we will be sensitive to the context in which we live and are called to serve.

### **I. The Separation of Office and Functions: The Ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto***

The 1989 Lay Worker Study Committee Report offers this view of the ministry:

*In accordance with AC XIV every congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, by virtue of its synodical membership, has agreed to fill the divinely instituted office of public ministry in its midst with a pastor(s) (or vacancy/interim pastor) from the clergy roster of the Synod. Under his spiritual supervision, various functions normally carried out by the one who holds the office of public ministry may be delegated to and carried out by other ordained or commissioned ministers, consecrated lay workers, or lay leaders. Such delegation shall be done by the pastor under the authority granted by the congregation in his call and/or by action of the congregation itself in order to fulfill the mission and ministry of the congregation.*<sup>13</sup>

CA XIV is indeed acknowledged but this report endorses an entirely contrary position. Functions of the office of public ministry are delegated to those outside the office: "commissioned ministers, consecrated lay workers, [and] lay leaders." This rests in the authority of the congregation, which may appear on the surface to reflect Walther's Thesis VI on the *Predigtamt*.<sup>14</sup> If a pastor simply performs functions of the pastoral office as

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two joint meetings at Terre Haute, Indiana in the 2005–2006 academic year. See Joel P. Okamoto, "The Office of the Holy Ministry," 97–111 above.

<sup>13</sup> LCMS, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, 71; emphases added.

<sup>14</sup> Hence, the conclusion of the aforementioned question in *The Lutheran Witness* (February 2006): 28 "Ultimately, it is the congregation, the priesthood of believers, that is responsible." For Walther's references, see Theses 6 and 7 in Part Two of *Church and Ministry*. Walther's theses here describe the congregation "as the possessor of all churchly power or the keys." According to Walther, it is God who



a result of the congregation's delegation, when the pastor returns it to a parishioner, then, it has simply come full circle.

An examination of two works the report mentions as foundational would further clarify the statement.<sup>15</sup> First is the 1981 CTCR document, *The Ministry*, which interprets 1 Peter 2:9 as Christ's commission to all Christians to do ministry.<sup>16</sup> It interprets Ephesians 4:11-12 as referring to special offices that equip the served for the work of serving.<sup>17</sup> This is coupled with the notion of "ministry in the abstract" and "ministry in concrete"<sup>18</sup> allowing a separation of the office from its functions.<sup>19</sup> "Office

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confers/transfers/commits (*übertragen*) the *Predigamt*, and he does it through the congregation in the way "prescribed by God." Thus, the quoted portion from the Layworker Study Committee's report describes the congregation as a subject that grants authority to the pastor to delegate various functions that he would normally carry out himself to certain lay workers; Walther, on the contrary, in his theses portrays the congregation not as the main actor but rather as an instrument through which God grants *Predigtamt*. Walther says nothing about an option of delegating "various functions normally carried out by the one who holds the office of public ministry" to the non-ordained.

<sup>15</sup> LCMS, 1989 *Convention Workbook*, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning this prevalent misunderstanding of 1 Peter 2:9, see Thomas M. Winger, "The Priesthood of All the Baptized: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation," (STM thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1992). See also Winger, "The Office of the Holy Ministry according to the New Testament Mandate of Christ," *Logia* 7 (Eastertide 1998), 40; The Theological Commission of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK), 1997, "The Office of the Church: An Orientation," tr. Charles R. Schulz, *Logia* 10 (Holy Trinity, 2001): 17-30; Charles R. Schulz, tr., "Sermon by Dr. Martin Luther on Easter Tuesday, March 30, 1529, John 20:19-20," *Logia* 6 (Eastertide 1997): 39-46.

<sup>17</sup> This view is opposed by Henry H. Hamann, "The Translation of Ephesians 4:12—A Necessary Revision," *Concordia Journal* 14 (January 1988): 42-49.

<sup>18</sup> CTCR, *The Ministry*, 11. The language of "ministry in abstract" and "ministry in concrete" appears in a footnote here with a reference to E. W. Janetzk's essay, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia Today," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 13 (November 1979): 68-81. Janetzk's writing does not employ the language of *in abstracto* and *in concreto*, but instead it borrows a distinction between "the ministry of the church" and "the ministry in the church" that Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson suggested in their *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 118. The CTCR in *The Ministry* interprets that Janetzk used "the ministry of the church" and "the ministry in the church" as the ministry *in concreto* and the ministry *in abstracto* respectively. The way the expressions of *in abstracto* and *in concreto* are presented in *The Ministry* indicates that such a distinction is an accepted mode of speech in the LCMS. This is understandable because such a reference is located in *The Ministry* after a quotation from Franz Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, where he explains the term *ministry* in a general, or wider, and in a special, or narrower, sense; Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 3:439. Although Pieper himself does not employ the language

and functions usually go together, but may be separated. Functions of the office of the public ministry that are performed by others remain the responsibility of the office of public ministry and must be supervised by it."<sup>20</sup>

The second foundational document is C. F. W. Walther's theses on the office of the holy ministry: *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*. Commonly known as *Church and Ministry*, it was first published in 1852. Later editions appeared in 1865, 1875, 1894, and 1911. Translations by J. T. Mueller (CPH, 1987) and John M. Drickamer (CPH, 1981) used the third edition of 1875, not the 1852 edition. Only the 1852 edition stands "as our unanimous confession," which was officially received by the LCMS at

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of *in abstracto* and *in concreto* neither in his German original—*Christliche Dogmatik* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1920), 501-502—nor in the English edition, John Theodore Mueller does it in the corresponding section in his *Christian Dogmatics* where he, like Pieper, explains the term *ministry*. "Accordingly we speak of the Christian ministry in the abstract (*in abstracto*), that is, distinct from the persons who administer it, and in the concrete (*in concreto*), or as it is vested in called and ordained pastors, who perform its duties in the name of the local congregations." John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics: A Handbook of Doctrinal Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), 563. About that same time, Mueller's colleague, John H. C. Fritz, articulated this even clearer: "If rightly understood, we may distinguish between the ministerial office *in abstracto* (*Predigtamt*) and the ministerial office *in concreto* (*Pfarramt*). In the Fifth Article of the Augsburg Confession the ministry of the church *in abstracto* (*Predigtamt*) is spoken of. . . . The Fourteenth Article of the Augsburg Confession speaks of the ecclesiastical, or ministerial, office *in concreto* (*Pfarramt*)." John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology: A Handbook of Scriptural Principles* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 28-31. Interestingly, in his explanation of both the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto*, Fritz relies completely on *The Augsburg Confession* of Matthias Loy by providing lengthy quotations from this work (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1908). Loy's view on the ministry is summarized by Todd Nichol, "Ministry and Oversight in American Lutheranism," in *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry*, ed. Todd Nichol and Marc Kolden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990): 99-101. According to Nichol, Loy (1828-1915) was well aware of the questions on the ministry not only in his own context of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, but also in the Missouri Synod versus the Buffalo and Iowa Synods as well as in Germany. Nichol characterizes Loy's view on the ministry with an emphasis on "the priesthood of all believers," and "a repudiation of hierarchical status for the clergy of the church." The office exists "for the sake of order and the proper service of the community," acknowledging that all believers possess the powers of the keys. Nichol also observes that Loy was open to women serving as pastors of the church when no men were available. This practice employed by Loy, according to Nichol, was a consequence of the possession of all the rights that the Christian priesthood possesses.

<sup>19</sup> CTCR, *The Ministry*, 16, 35-36, 41-42.

<sup>20</sup> CTCR, *The Ministry*, 41.

its convention in 1851.<sup>21</sup> This is important. Beginning with the second edition (1865, 194), including all the later editions, Walther quotes from Ludwig Hartmann's *Pastorale Evangelicum* (1697), which contends that CA V refers to the ministry *in abstracto* while CA XIV refers to the ministry *in concreto*.<sup>22</sup>

The question is whether Walther includes this distinction to suggest that the functions of the office could be separated from the office itself. To pursue this question, we will briefly investigate three sources where the distinction *in abstracto* and *in concreto* appeared at the time of Walther: the correspondence between J. A. A. Grabau and Saxon pastors (1840–1845), Walther's second edition of *Die Stimme* (1865), and J. W. Baier's *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* that Walther enlarged (1879).

### *The Grabau-Missourian Correspondence (1840–1845)*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> "For this reason then at our synodical convention held in St. Louis in the fall of 1850 we entrusted the above-mentioned name [i.e., Walther] as the editor to put together this present book, and after it was presented to the synodical convention held the following year at Milwaukee partly verbatim and partly substantially, and after it had been examined and respectively revised, it was published in our name as our unanimous confession." C. F. W. Walther, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Fragen von Kirche und Amt* (Erlangen: Verlag von C. A. Ph. Th. Bläsing 1852), vi–vii. Here, "we" designates "the members of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States." Walther, *Kirche und Amt* (1852), iii.

<sup>22</sup> Mueller's translation reads: "This statement (AC 5 which Walther quotes immediately before these statements), of course, does not speak of the ministry of the Word *in concreto* or of the pastoral office but only of the ministry of the Word *in abstracto*, of which Ludwig Hartmann, among others, rightly reminds us in his pastoral theology: 'The ministry of the Word may be treated in two ways: first, in an abstract way when the state of the office itself is being considered, as Art. V of the Augsburg Confession treats it; second, in a concrete way, when the persons are considered who minister in this holy office, as Art. XIV of the Augsburg Confession treat it' (*Pastorale evangelicum* [Nuremberg, 1697], 4:25)." C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry: Witnesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Questions of the Church and the Ministry*, tr. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 178.

<sup>23</sup> Studies on this correspondence, which consists of five documents, are relatively few, at least in English. To review recent studies on this topic, see William M. Cwirla, "Grabau and the Saxon Pastors: The Doctrine of the Holy Ministry, 1840–1845," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 68 (Summer 1995): 84–99. William Schumacher translated the first two documents, i.e., *Hirtenbrief* and *Kritik*, with an introductory short essay in "Grabau's *Hirtenbrief* and the Saxon Reply," *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays on C. F. W. Walther in Memory of August R. Suelflow* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 133–176. Benjamin T. G. Mayes has translated the fourth document and included an introduction in "A Letter by Johannes Grabau on Christian Ordination," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 73 (Fall 2000): 171–189. Most recently, Mayes did a thorough treatment of the entire correspondence in "Reconsidering Grabau on Ministry and

Our primary source is Gotthold Heinrich Löber's collection of the correspondence.<sup>24</sup> As the longer title of this book indicates—" . . . a *Protestation* against a hierarchical view asserted within the Lutheran Church"—this monograph was edited by Missourians with a possible bias. Unfortunately, this is the only available source on the correspondence. It contains Grabau's *Hirtenbrief* itself (1 December 1840),<sup>25</sup> and the Saxon pastors' reply two and a half years later (3 July 1843).<sup>26</sup> Grabau, then, responded to the Saxons' reply (12 July 1844),<sup>27</sup> to which Löber attaches Grabau's letter to a Saxon pastor in New York, T. J. Brohm (26 June 1844).<sup>28</sup> The Saxon pastors have the last word in their reply to Grabau's 1844 rebuttal (15 January 1845).<sup>29</sup>

Löber's forward already indicates the concerns that prompted the Saxon pastors to publish the correspondence: the position of the *Predigtamt* in the church. It must not be placed too high or too low, but remain in the "salutary middle."<sup>30</sup> If the *Predigtamt* is regarded too highly, then the right and duty of the spiritual priesthood of the congregation may easily be diminished and Christian freedom obscured. If, on the other hand, it is regarded too low, the congregation may show contempt for preaching and

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Sacraments," *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (Summer 2006): 190–212. See note 1 of the above work by Mayes for a rather exhaustive list of works on Grabau. Readers are to consult these and other writings regarding historical questions of the debate.

<sup>24</sup> G. H. Löber, *Der Hirtenbrief des Herrn Pastors Grabau zu Buffalo vom Jahre 1840. Nebst den zwischen ihm und mehreren lutherischen Pastoren von Missouri gewechselten Schriften. Der Oeffentlichkeit übergeben als eine Protestation gegen Geltendmachung hierarchischer Grundsätze innerhalb der lutherischen Kirche* (New York: H. Ludwig & Co., 1849). The translation is: *The Pastoral Letter of Mr. Pastor Grabau at Buffalo of the year 1840, together with the writings exchanged between him and a few Lutheran Pastors of Missouri, to the general public presented as a Protestation against hierarchical view asserted within the Lutheran Church.*

<sup>25</sup> Löber, "The Pastoral Letter of Mr. Pastor Grabau," 11–20; hereafter "*Hirtenbrief*."

<sup>26</sup> Löber, "Judgment of the aforementioned Pastoral Letter to which the Author had Requested," 20–36; hereafter "*Kritik*." This document was written by G. H. Löber and co-signed by T. C. F. Gruber and C. F. W. Walther.

<sup>27</sup> Löber, "Mr. Pastor Grabau's Supposed Rebuttal to our aforementioned Judgment," 37–57; hereafter "*Antikritik*."

<sup>28</sup> Löber, "A Letter of Mr. Pastor Grabau to Mr. Pastor Brohm in New York Forming Part of the Preceding Rebuttal," 57–64; hereafter "Letter to Brohm."

<sup>29</sup> Löber, "Our Judgment of the aforementioned Pastoral Rebuttal of Mr. Pastor Grabau," 64–88; hereafter "Judgment of *Antikritik*." This document is signed by G. H. Löber, K. F. Gruber, E. G. W. Keyl, and C. F. W. Walther.

<sup>30</sup> "*diese heilsame Mitte*." Löber also uses the phrase: "*die rechte Mitte*." Löber, *The Pastoral Letter*, 6. Interestingly, it was the Saxon pastors who were concerned about a high or low view of the *Predigtamt*; whereas, Grabau used no such words or thoughts in his correspondence against the Saxon pastors.

could lead to separatism and an excess of Christian freedom, resulting in enthusiasm and sectarian disorder. "We Lutheran preachers and congregations from Saxony under our leader, former pastor Stephan, indeed just experienced manifold of the worst pain in both of these erroneous ways here mentioned," states Löber. To guard against this, "we have sought with diligence and great care to let our souls be navigated to the right middle [*die rechte Mitte*], according to which the holy *Predigtamt* is positioned in its right divine *Ordnung* neither too high nor too low."<sup>31</sup> For the Saxons, Grabau's understanding of the *Predigtamt* was too high, which frustrates the salutary middle (*heilsame Mitte*) of the Saxon conviction and did not regard the spiritual priesthood of all Christians enough.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Grabau's position was characterized as papistic, Old Testamentalish, too liturgical, and hierarchical.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, there are expressions in Grabau that may give this impression. He writes: "Even if the person in the office be evil, the words of institution are nevertheless powerful *because of the office, to which the Lord still binds Himself*. . . ." <sup>34</sup> The Saxons interpreted this to mean the sacraments depend on the person of the pastor, denying the efficacy of the word of God.<sup>35</sup> The Saxons' uneasiness must have increased when they read Grabau's reply: "It maintains thereby that the word and sacrament of the altar is [*sic.*] powerful only in this *Ordnung* of the office in which the Lord wants to have them used."<sup>36</sup>

Then, Grabau refers to the *Predigtamt* as "a particular *Stand* on earth ordained by God."<sup>37</sup> The Saxons appear to have understood this to mean the office of the holy ministry is a special rank or class of Christian. In response to this, the Saxons incorporated the distinction of the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto*:

Merely incidentally we remark with respect to linguistics that the office, when it is designated not *in concreto* but *in abstracto*, cannot be called a *Stand*, but rather an *Ordnung* which Christ has instituted in His church,

<sup>31</sup> Löber, *The Pastoral Letter*, 6; emphasis original.

<sup>32</sup> Löber, "Kritik," 22.

<sup>33</sup> Löber, "Kritik," 22; Löber, "Kritik," 35; see also Löber, "Judgment of *Antikritik*," 67. Again, the title of this collection by Löber includes a phrase: "a Protestation against hierarchical view."

<sup>34</sup> Löber, "Hirtenbrief," 15; emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup> Löber, "Kritik," 28. Such a characterization of Grabau is widely held.

<sup>36</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 45.

<sup>37</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 38.

an *ordo ecclesiasticus*, or ministry [*Dienst*], *ministerium*, and authority [*Macht*], ἐξουσία, a call [*Beruf*], etc.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, Grabau's understanding of ordination was not acceptable. While ordination for Grabau is essential and has a divine mandate; for the Saxons, it was non-essential, an *adiaphoron*, because only the call from a congregation is essential. Ordination was still retained, however, but "simply for the sake of unity and good order."<sup>39</sup>

Do Grabau's statements necessarily mean that he held a hierarchical, even papistic, view of the ministry? Other correspondence may clarify. Grabau does not actually say that the sacrament depends on the *Predigtamt*:

Not that Christ needs the office in order to bestow power to His words of institution, but rather that Christ, in order to make things more certain for us, wants to *use* the office instituted by Him in grace in order to deal with men on earth by the power of His Word.<sup>40</sup>

Grabau was concerned about distributing the Lord's body and blood, not just their presence. The Lord gave the means of grace (*Gnadenmittel*) not "to be enclosed in a vessel" but to be served and given out. For the sake of its distribution, he instituted the means of the ministry (*Dienstmittel*).<sup>41</sup> For Grabau, to isolate the *Gnadenmittel* from the *Dienstmittel* not only diminishes the Lord's mandate and arrangement but also robs Christians of the gospel's certainty. When Grabau writes: "God wants to deal with us *ordentlicher Weise* in His church only through the holy *Predigtamt*,"<sup>42</sup> he neither denied the efficacy of God's word, nor suggested that the efficacy of the word depends on the office of the holy ministry or the person in the office.<sup>43</sup> He simply sought to extol the Lord's arrangement for distributing

<sup>38</sup> Löber, "Judgment of *Antikritik*," 66.

<sup>39</sup> Löber, "Kritik," 23; see also Löber, "Antikritik," 40-41. The Saxons also accuse Grabau that he speaks more of the inner call in connection with CA XIV. Löber, "Kritik," 26. The reference to the "alleged inner word and every kind of enthusiasm" that Walther opposes in Thesis 2 of *Die Stimme* in the second edition forward may have Grabau in mind; see e.g., Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 195.

<sup>40</sup> Löber, "Hirtenbrief," 15; emphasis original. See also Mayes, "Reconsidering Grabau," 194.

<sup>41</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 44.

<sup>42</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 44; cf., Löber, "Hirtenbrief," 15.

<sup>43</sup> Löber, "Kritik," 28; see also Löber, "Antikritik," 46. In order to support the Saxons' view that the sacrament depends on the words of institution and not on the person who administers it, which Grabau also shares, the Saxons gave a lengthy quotation from Luther's "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests, 1533." LW 38:200-204; WA 38:241, 6-243, 23. Here Luther indeed makes a distinction between the person and the

his gifts. Grabau sees no contradiction between his position and the Saxons' that God wants to deal with us through the word.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, the Saxons did not have a problem with Grabau either, as their response to his "*Antikritik*" indicates:

If the question is: 'How does God let us partake these means of grace and deal with us *ordentlicher Weise*? The answer is: through the *Predigtamt* ordained by Him.<sup>45</sup>

What about Grabau's claim that the *Predigtamt* is a special *Stand* in the church? As Mayes observes, Grabau does not entertain any thoughts that the pastor possesses an indelible character.<sup>46</sup> Grabau distinguishes between the *Predigtamt* and the spiritual priesthood.<sup>47</sup> While he calls the former a special *Stand*, he speaks of the latter as the occupants of "all other *Ständen*."<sup>48</sup> This is how Luther also used the word *Stand* and *Ständen* in the "Table of Duties" attached to the Small Catechism<sup>49</sup> and in the third part of the Large Confession.<sup>50</sup> With *ordo* and *Stand* used interchangeably in Luther, the use of the term *Stand* is not an issue. Despite the Saxons' questions to the contrary, Grabau does in fact highly extol the spiritual

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office in the *Predigtamt* and emphasizes that the Lord's Supper does not depend on the worthiness of the person who fills the office. But, again, this is what Grabau also believes; see Löber, "*Antikritik*," 46. Luther asserts that the doer and giver of the sacrament is not the person in the office but Christ. Christ administers the sacrament through the *Predigtamt*; see WA 38:240, 8-11; 24-34; LW 38:200. The *Predigtamt* does not belong to the person who fills it, but to Christ. In fact, it is Christ's office; see WA 38:243, 21-23; LW 38:204. The *Predigtamt* and the sacraments always remain in the church; persons, however, are daily subject to change; see WA 38:241, 19-20; LW 38:201. The sacrament, therefore, does not depend on the person, whether he is godly or evil, but "on Christ, on His Word, on His office, on His mandate and *Ordnung*;" see WA 38:241, 6-10; LW 38:200-201. In the portion of Luther quoted here, it is indeed the Lord's words that consecrate the bread and wine as the Saxons maintain, but Grabau's point is also supported as the *Predigtamt* is included in the *Ordnung* of Christ.

<sup>44</sup> Löber, "*Kritik*," 28; Löber, "Judgment of *Antikritik*," 82-83.

<sup>45</sup> Löber, "Judgment of *Antikritik*," 83.

<sup>46</sup> Mayes, "Reconsidering Grabau," 203.

<sup>47</sup> The Saxons respond to Grabau that they do not need his instruction on such a distinction because they already knew it "from the little book of Spener about the spiritual priesthood." Löber, "Judgment of *Antikritik*," 67.

<sup>48</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 38.

<sup>49</sup> "*Die Haustafel etlicher Sprüche für allerlei heilige Orden und Stände . . .*" *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 11th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 523. Luther here follows the three orders: *ordo ecclesiasticus*, *politicus*, and *oeconomicus*.

<sup>50</sup> WA 26:504, 30-505, 18; LW 37:364-365.



priesthood.<sup>51</sup> He even explains their right to choose and ordain pastors as emerging from the nature of the church's spiritual sacrifice in presenting a person to God to whom he gives the office.<sup>52</sup> The spiritual priesthood concerns the position of Christians before God. The *Predigtamt* is a *Stand*, which entails the congregation because it stands before her to serve the means of grace.<sup>53</sup> Grabau's first statement on the *Predigtamt* as a *Stand* in the correspondence should be read carefully again:

The Holy Scripture teaches *concerning the Holy Predigtamt* that it is a particular *Stand* on earth ordained by God in which He ordains certain apt persons from among men so that they may with divine authority as messenger/ambassador in His stead carry forward the Lord's words to others, administer the sacraments, as also lead (them) to Christ and build them up for the eternal life.<sup>54</sup>

There is no reference to an indelible character here. Instead, Grabau confesses that the man in the *Predigtamt* preaches and distributes the sacrament with divine authority as an ordained man. When the Saxons replied to Grabau's "*Antikritik*" by saying that the ministry *in abstracto* is to be called an *Ordnung* rather than a *Stand*, they explained the *Ordnung* as *Macht* (authority) and ἐξουσία.<sup>55</sup> When the Saxons' suspicion that Grabau resembles Stephan is removed, both positions appear to be similar.

Even though the Saxons objected to the use of the word *Stand* in Grabau's description of the *Predigtamt*, their primary objection was to Grabau's disapproval of the Saxon view that "the office is set up when the congregation transfers/confers (*überträgt*) it according to the right it receives from God to call a preacher."<sup>56</sup> For Grabau, ordination was not an *adiaphoron*; it has a divine mandate.<sup>57</sup> For the Saxons, ordination was an *adiaphoron*. A call from a congregation was essential, while ordination remains simply for the sake of good order. Grabau's view of ordination comes from the New Testament terms for *sending*: from the Father to the Son and to the apostles.<sup>58</sup> He notes, in the mandate to and practice of the

<sup>51</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 38.

<sup>52</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 38.

<sup>53</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 38.

<sup>54</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 38; emphasis original.

<sup>55</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 66.

<sup>56</sup> Löber, "*Kritik*," 31. Grabau replied: "The congregation does not give or transfer (*überträgt*) the holy *Predigtamt*, as you, my beloved friends, say, but the Son of God, with the Father and the Holy Spirit." Löber, "*Antikritik*," 39. "Your view that the congregation transfers/confers (*übertrage*) the office is false." Löber, "*Antikritik*," 47.

<sup>57</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 39–40, 41; see also Löber, "Letter to Brohm," 58.

<sup>58</sup> Löber, "*Antikritik*," 40; Löber, "Letter to Brohm," 58–59.

apostles, the person to be placed into the office was not only called and elected but also sent and placed.<sup>59</sup> Placement refers, in Grabau's view, to ordination. He does say, however, that the *how* of ordination is an *adiaphoron*, but the ordination itself—namely, a man's placement into the office for service—is not.<sup>60</sup> While the Saxons argued that CA XIV does not define ordination as divinely mandated, they maintained that the word *öffentlich* excludes "self-promoting crooked preachers" and, at the same time, reserves "oral witness of all Christians because outside the *öffentlichen* Divine Service every Christian may and should give testimony to the Gospel to others."<sup>61</sup> Grabau did not object to the Saxons' claim concerning a Christian's personal testimony in the world.<sup>62</sup>

What, then, is the difference between Grabau and the Saxons on ordination? Both refer to the consecration and distribution of the Lord's Supper by laymen. Each oppose a lay administration of the body and blood of Christ. As Mayes demonstrated, the Saxons were more rigorous about this practice than Grabau.<sup>63</sup> But the reasons for this were quite different. For the Saxons, lay administration of the Lord's Supper was not acceptable because the Lord's Supper is by nature *öffentlich*. God wants order (*Ordnung*) in his church and an office-less (*Amtlose*) person should not distribute the sacrament, since it would cause disorder.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Grabau's reason is that a lay person is not within the Lord's *Ordnung* of the *Predigtamt*. He is not put there to serve the body and blood of the Lord. Lay distribution, therefore, is contrary to the Lord's design and arrangement for distributing the Lord's Supper through the *Predigtamt*. Grabau goes even further, arguing that anyone who stands outside the office ends up distributing only bread and wine.<sup>65</sup> While the Saxons do not touch on this last statement, they came to a similar conclusion: "the office-less (*Amtlose*) person should not distribute the sacrament because they do not have a mandate for it."<sup>66</sup>

Contrary to their usual characterization, Grabau and the Saxons hold more in common regarding the *Predigtamt* than not. Both confessed that the words of institution consecrate the bread and wine. Both confessed that the Lord's Supper is administered by the *Predigtamt* in *ordentlicher Weise*.

<sup>59</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 40; Löber, "Letter to Brohm," 59–60.

<sup>60</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 41.

<sup>61</sup> Löber, "Judgment of Antikritik," 66.

<sup>62</sup> Löber, "Letter to Brohm," 59.

<sup>63</sup> Mayes, "Reconsidering Grabau," 205–206.

<sup>64</sup> Löber, "Judgment of Antikritik," 83.

<sup>65</sup> Löber, "Antikritik," 44–45.

<sup>66</sup> Löber, "Judgment of Antikritik," 83.

Both appreciated the spiritual priesthood. Both confessed the distinctiveness and the divine institution of the *Predigtamt*. Both confessed that a man is a pastor because he is called and placed in a congregation. The Saxons took Grabau's *Stand* as the ministry *in abstracto*. There was no such abstract ministry, however, among the Saxons or with Grabau. The use of the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* originated from the Saxons' impression that Grabau elevated the person of the pastor too high, as in Rome; yet there was no trace of this in his letters. The Saxons saw a shadow of Stephanism in Grabau, and indeed there are places where Grabau may cast such a shadow, but the core of Grabau's thinking centered around the dynamic flow of the gospel in the Lord's institution of the means of grace and the *Predigtamt*, and their coherent relationship for man's certainty as the Lord's arrangement to deliver his gifts.

Grabau and the Saxons came out of different circumstances, but each attempted to be faithful to the Lord of the church in these issues. The distinction between the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* did appear in the words of the Saxons. The purpose, however, was not to separate the office from its functions, but simply to oppose a hierarchical understanding that they saw in Grabau.

#### *Walther's Die Stimme, the Second Edition (1865)*

Walther's second edition of *Die Stimme* (1865) introduces the distinction between the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* in continuity with the Saxons' response to Grabau. The longer title of this book specifically mentions Grabau by name: "... in defense against the attack of Mister P. Grabau in Buffalo."<sup>67</sup> As the "*Hirtenbrief*" correspondence demonstrated, Walther too addressed what the Saxons thought Grabau's position was rather than what he actually confessed.

The phrases in question appear under Thesis II on the *Predigtamt* in Walther: "The *Predigtamt* or *Pfarramt* is not a human *Ordnung* but an *Amt* instituted by God Himself."<sup>68</sup> Grabau would agree with this statement, except he would prefer to use the word *Stand* rather than *Amt*. Since Luther used these words interchangeably, Grabau would not oppose this thesis. Under the second subsection of Thesis II "The testimonies of the church in its official confession," the second edition of *Die Stimme* adds the words *in abstracto* and *in concreto* immediately after the quotation from CA V: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching [*Predigtamt*]" (CA V, 1):

<sup>67</sup> "... zur Abwehr der Angriffe des Herrn P. Grabau in Buffalo."

<sup>68</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 193.

To be sure, the *Predigtamt* is spoken of not *in concreto* or of the *Pfarramt*, but of the office *in abstracto*, as Ludwig Hartmann quite rightly reminds us, among other things. He writes in his *Pastorale*: Concerning the *ministerium* it may be treated in two ways: 1. *in the abstract*, if the *Stand* itself and the *Amt* itself is under Christian consideration in which the *Amt* is treated in the fifth article of the Augsburg Confession; 2. *in the concrete* or with respect to the persons who are there in the holy office, as this topic is treated in the fourteenth article of Augsburg Confession.<sup>69</sup>

Walther identifies the source of the expressions *in abstracto* and *in concreto* as from Ludwig Hartmann's *Pastorale Evangelicum*.<sup>70</sup>

The definition of the Holy Ministry is given and particularly in abstract view: IV. But now, for the thing itself (the Holy Ministry), according to the account instituted for us, we put forward several things concerning the pastoral office. Concerning the ministry it may be treated in two ways: 1. *in the abstract*, if the position/standing itself, and the office itself is under Christian consideration, in whose respect is treated in the fifth article of the Augsburg Confession, concerning the ministry; 2. *in the concrete* or the consideration of the persons, who is engaged in this holy office, as considered in the fourteenth article of the Augsburg Confession, which reads, "*nemo debeat publice in Ecclesia docere aut sacramenta administrare, nisi legitime vocatus.*"<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 194. "Vom Ministerium kann auf zweierlei Weise gehandelt werden: 1. abstraktiv, sofern der Stand selbst und das Amt selbst der christlichen Betrachtung unterliegt, in welchem Betracht vom Amte im 5. Artikel der Augsburgischen Konfession gehandelt wird; 2. konkretiv oder in Ansehung der Personen, die sich in diesem heiligen Amte befinden; so wird von diesem Gegenstand im 14. Artikel der Augsburgischen Konfession gehandelt." The Latin original of Hartmann is quoted in a footnote in *Die Stimme* (1865): "*De ministerio tractari potest dupliciter: 1. abstractive, prout ipse status, ipsumque officium christianae considerationi subiacet, quo respectu agitur de ministerio articulo 5 August. Conf.; 2. concretive seu ratione personarum, quae in hoc sacro officio versantur; sic artic. 14 August. Conf. de hoc themate agitur.*"

<sup>70</sup> Hartmann was born in 1640 in Rothenburg and was active throughout his life as pastor and superintendent until his death in 1680, except for his time of theological study in Wittenberg. He was a friend and brother-in-law of Spener and corresponded with him since 1669. See Erhardt Peschke, "Das Collegium Pastorale August Hermann Frankes 1713," in *Reformation und Neuzeit 300 Jahre Theologie in Halle*, ed. Udo Schnelle (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 158–159; and Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, tr. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 352.

<sup>71</sup> Hartmann, *Pastorale Evangelicum* (1722), 27. Note that Hartmann uses the word *legitime* instead of *rite* when quoting from CA XIV. He writes: "*nisi legitime vocatus*" and not "*nisi rite vocatus.*"

Hartmann continues: "the *ministerium* or pastoral office is instituted by God to preach the Word in the public assembly of the church and administer the sacraments legitimately," and "the suitable person is legitimately called to impart all Christ's benefits to the faithful." Then, he expounds through New Testament passages on the distinctive "*ministerium* or definite order of the ministry in the church in the New Testament which lasts to the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20 comes first, explaining that this is the divine institution of the *ministerium*. "Just as Christ is sent by the Father, He sent Apostles immediately and the Apostles who are instituted by Christ instituted further pastors and bishops as witnessed in the Book of Acts . . . (and in) Tit 1:5." Mark 16:15 comes next, which Hartmann uses to explain that the office is instituted to baptize, teach, preach the word, and administer the sacraments. "Where the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments according to the institution of Christ are made, there is the church."<sup>72</sup>

While Spener's influence may be associated with Hartmann and his work, at least in this part of his book, Hartmann faithfully discusses the office of the ministry according to CA V as the divinely instituted office for the distribution of the gospel in preaching and the sacraments. He considers this the ministry *in abstracto*. While the distinction between the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* may be regrettable, for Hartmann the ministry *in abstracto* was neither about mere functions of the means of grace nor generic activities of sharing the gospel by the spiritual priesthood.

This leads one to ask: Did Walther correctly understand Hartmann?

It is important for this sake to understand this because of those who desire to make the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*) a means of grace and coordinate it with the Word and sacraments and assert that it is unconditionally necessary for anyone for salvation, so that no one without the service of an ordained pastor can either come to faith or obtain absolution of his sins, whereas our church teaches this only of the oral or bodily Word (*mündlichen oder leiblichen Wort*) in opposition to the alleged inner word and every manner of enthusiasm. Nevertheless, our foundational Confession in the fifth article no doubt intends to bear witness also to the divine institution of the pastoral office, even if only

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<sup>72</sup> Hartmann, *Pastorale Evangelicum* (1722), 27-28. Other Biblical passages here quoted are 1 Cor 12:27-29, Eph 4:11-12, Acts 20:28, etc.

indirectly, as all commentaries of our orthodox theologians on this article clearly show.<sup>73</sup>

Whether Walther intended to allude to Grabau's position or not is irrelevant. Regardless, Walther's intent in Thesis II, as the Hartmann reference indicates, was to confess that the *Predigtamt* or *Pfarramt* is divinely instituted.

Problematic is the location of Hartman's quotation in Walther's presentation of Thesis II. Hartman's words are located under "2. Witnesses of the Church in Its Official Confessions" rather than "3. Witnesses of the Church in the Private Writings of Its Teachers."<sup>74</sup> Here also in this thesis Walther refers to only the first half of the first sentence of CA V: "*Das Predigtamt oder Pfarramt ist keine menschliche Ordnung, sondern ein von Gott selbst gestiftetes Amt.*"<sup>75</sup> Missing is its reference to the means of grace and the *externum verbum*. CA V states that the gospel is located concretely in the *externum verbum* of word and sacraments. There is nothing abstract (no ministry *in abstracto*) about CA V. It confesses that God gives out his gifts through the *externum verbum*, by his use of the *Predigtamt*, which he instituted for the *ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta*.

Ultimately, Walther's use of Hartmann does not separate the office and its functions to the end that CA V refers to the office of the spiritual priesthood; however, his distinction between the ministry *in concreto* and *in abstracto* does not fully appreciate the whole of CA V.

### Baier's Compendium (1879)

The third source to examine the distinction between the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* is Baier's *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*<sup>76</sup> that

<sup>73</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 195.

<sup>74</sup> Norman E. Nagel, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions and in Walther's *Kirche und Amt*," *Concordia Journal* 15 (October 1989): 426.

<sup>75</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 193. "The Preaching Office or Pastoral Office is not a human order but an office instituted by God Himself."

<sup>76</sup> J. W. Baier (1647–1695) studied at Jena, where he came under the influence of John Musaeus. He was called as professor at the University of Jena and later to Halle. According to Robert Preus, Baier was, like many of the later orthodox Lutherans, somewhat affected by Pietism. His *Compendium Theologiae Positivae* was first published in 1685 and appeared in thirteen editions by 1750. Robert Preus evaluates: "While demonstrating that the Jena theology was not syncretistic but orthodox, this work, which on every page leans on Musaeus, is not wholly free from the latter's synergism. Baier's presentation and formulations are very scholastic and indicate a decline in the forcefulness of orthodox Lutheran dogmatics;" *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism: A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House,

Walther enlarged and published in 1879.<sup>77</sup> Baier's original work was published in 1685, eight years after the appearance of Hartmann's *Pastorale Evangelicum*. Whether Baier used this or drew from a common source cannot be verified, although Hartmann's influence on Baier seems unlikely.

Section one of Baier's chapter on the ministry in the church (Part III, Chapter 14, "*De ministerio ecclesiastico*" [i.e., the Latin title of CA VI]) begins:

For the gathering and preserving the church it is necessary for certain men to perform the office of preaching the word and administering the sacraments, in order that through these means faith may be granted to men, those gathered be strengthened and enriched. And this is that office which is called *ministerium ecclesiasticum*.<sup>78</sup>

This statement echoes CA V. One subsection (a) discusses how God, although he could have done and can do such works described above *immediate*, ordained both *ordinem* and *media* to do so through them. Walther now adds to Baier's text a few quotations from Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and the teachers of the church. Walther quotes Hartmann's *Pastorale Evangelicum* followed by CA V.<sup>79</sup> In *Die Stimme*, Walther quoted only the first part of CA V. Here he presents the full text. He, then, cites Mentzer, SD II, SD XII, and Gerhard. So far, it appears that Walther, not Baier, has incorporated Hartmann's view.

When we come to section two, which discusses how the triune God and the God-man Christ is the *causa efficiens* of not only the constitution of the ministry in the church, but also its functions,<sup>80</sup> the view of the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto* appears in Baier's text itself, not in Walther's additions.<sup>81</sup>

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1970), I:64–65. For the scholastic use of *in abstracto* and *in concreto* in Christology, see Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, tr. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 31–33.

<sup>77</sup> At the time of Walther, the St. Louis seminary was using Baier's *Compendium* as a textbook for dogmatics. Interestingly, *Compendium Theologiae Historicae* (1699), one of Baier's many other works, places the chapters on church and the office of the holy ministry *before* the chapters on baptism and the Lord's Supper, not *after*, as in his *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, Baier-Walther (1879), and Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik* (1917–1924).

<sup>78</sup> J. W. Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, ed. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1879), III:683.

<sup>79</sup> Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, III:685.

<sup>80</sup> Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, III:687.

<sup>81</sup> Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, III:688.



The *principle efficient* cause of the ecclesiastical ministry which not only in itself but also the arrangement [place, doctrine, purpose, etc.] of the ministers is the Triune God and Christ, the God-man θεάνθρωπος.<sup>82</sup>

Baier explains that the power of the ministry comes from Christ through his institution of the ministry. The ministers' standing (*status*, *Stand*) belongs to the Lord's institution, which may be viewed *abstractly*. The ministry may be viewed *concretely* when the man who does the work of the office is concerned. God, the author of grace, instituted both the means of grace and the office of the ministry in order to teach doctrine (Gal 1:8, 9, 12; 2 Tim 3:14-15) and to administer the sacraments (1 Cor 11:23-26). God placed certain individuals into this office by sending them and going with them (Ps 68:12, Matt 9:38, Luke 10:2, Rom 1:1, Heb 5:4). The office with its functions belong together. God made Paul an apostle (Gal 1:1), while the Holy Spirit has made others overseers to care for the church (Acts 20:28; cf., 1 Cor 12:4-11). Both God and man are involved because God entrusts the office to certain men (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16, Eph 4:11-12).<sup>83</sup> Walther supports Baier here by adding quotations in German from Ap XIII, 11-13, Tr 10, and Luther.

We may observe four things here. First, Baier uses the word *status* (*Stand*) to describe the Lord's institution of the office of the holy ministry. *Status* was controversial for the Saxons during the Grabau controversy. Second, Baier bases the doctrine of the ministry on the Lord's institution. In fact, he teaches that both the means of grace and the office that serves them are instituted by the Lord. It is the Lord who puts certain men into the office. He sends them. Third, while Baier in section two uses the terms *abstract* and *concrete*, he does not apply the language of *abstract* to CA V nor the term *concrete* to CA XIV. Fourth, the office and the activities of the ministers run together for Baier.

Baier does not separate the ministry *in abstracto* (CA V) from the ministry *in concreto* (CA XIV). By inserting the Hartmann quotation into Baier's *Compendium*, Walther did. Yet, as Walther's placement of the Hartmann quotation indicates, his intention was to say the Lord instituted the *Predigtamt* with CA V and not to advocate the separation of the office from the functions of the *Predigtamt*. It appears that Walther cited Hartmann in section one in anticipation of Baier's own statement in the following

<sup>82</sup> Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, III:687. "*Causa efficiens principalis ministerii ecclesiastici cum in se, tum ratione ministrorum, qui illo funguntur, Deus trinus est, et Christus θεάνθρωπος*" (emphasis original).

<sup>83</sup> Baier, *Compendium Theologiae Positivae*, III:688-690.



section. When the Saxons spoke of the ministry *in abstracto* and *in concreto*, they were likely reflecting on Baier's *Compendium* or had in mind Hartmann's *Pastorale Evangelicum*. Neither Hartmann, Baier, Walther, nor even Grabau, separated the functions of the ministry from the office of the ministry.<sup>84</sup>

A few additional observations on Walther's *Die Stimme* may help us to understand his position.<sup>85</sup> First, Walther does not start with CA V but with CA XIV: "*Das heilige Predigtamt oder Pfarramt ist ein von dem Priesteramt, welches alle Gläubigen haben, verschiedenes Amt.*" In his situation, he wanted to refute the error that the *Predigtamt* and the *Priesteramt aller Gläubigen* are not distinct. Walther does not use the term *rite vocatus* but *verschiedenes Amt*. The terms are not identical, but *rite vocatus* gives a basis for *verschiedenes Amt*. Thesis II: "*Das Predigtamt oder Pfarramt ist keine menschliche Ordnung, sondern ein von Gott selbst gestiftetes Amt*" contains only half of CA V.<sup>86</sup> For Walther the office of the holy ministry was not derived from the priesthood of all believers or historically evolved but was instituted by God. What is missing in Walther is that the office of the holy ministry is instituted by God for the delivery of what has been confessed in CA IV. This comes in Thesis V.

Second, the essential core of placing a man into the *Predigtamt* for Walther is the call from the congregation: "*Das Predigtamt wird von Gott durch die Gemeinde, als Inhaberin aller Kirchengewalt oder der Schlüssel, und durch deren von Gott vorgeschriebenen Beruf übertragen*" (Thesis 6-A).<sup>87</sup> God is the subject of the verb. Neither bishops nor the church but the Lord's mandate and institution places a man into the *Predigtamt*. The church is God's instrument, but by emphasizing the congregation as the possessor of all church power, this thesis gives the impression that the congregation and not God places a man into the *Predigtamt*. Later generations may have gotten a different impression, especially from Thesis VII: "The holy *Predigtamt* is the authority, conferred by God through the

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<sup>84</sup> Kurt Marquart similarly observed: "Walther himself, however, may have over-interpreted L. Hartmann (*Church and Ministry*, 178), whose citation says not that there is an abstract office and then also a concrete office, but rather that *one and the same office* may be *considered* abstractly, in respect of the office and estate [*Stand, status*] itself (as in AC XIV). There is only one divinely instituted office, which is ordinarily—and this is part of the divine institution—exercised by the divinely called incumbents of that office, but which may in emergencies be exercised to the extent necessary by anyone." *The Church and her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, ed. Robert Preus, vol. 9 (Ft. Wayne, IN: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 126; emphases original. Our consideration here may support William Cwirla's assertion: "the pastoral office *in abstracto* has been misused in terminology of 'every Christian a minister' via the abstraction of AC V." Cwirla, "Grabau and the Saxon Pastors," 99.

<sup>85</sup> See the excellent study of Walther's theses on the office of the holy ministry in Nagel, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions and in Walther's *Kirche und Amt*," 423–446.

<sup>86</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 193.

<sup>87</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 245.

congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and all churchly authority, to carry out the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of the community.”<sup>88</sup>

Third, Walther speaks of ordination as an ecclesiastical rite not instituted by God: “*Die Ordination der Berufenen mit Handauflegung ist nicht göttlichen Einsetzung, sondern eine apostolische kirchliche Ordnung, und nur eine öffentliche feierliche Bestätigung jenes Berufs*” (Thesis VI-B).<sup>89</sup> Here, Walther does not refer to CA XIV. When quoting Chemnitz’s *Loci Theologici* that the rite of ordination is a public confirmation of the call, Walther leaves out this sentence: “By this public rite we testify that though this act is mediate, yet it is truly divine, for the person is presented to God and it is pointed out that the person has been sent through lawful means by God Himself. For it is not our work but God’s which we do: through us He calls and ordains this person.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, when Walther quotes Chemnitz’s *Examination of the Council of Trent*, he leaves the five reasons why the laying on of hands were particularly suited for the public confirmation.<sup>91</sup> He also did not use Luther’s words from *The Lectures on Genesis, 1535–1545*: “The laying on of hands is not a human tradition; it is God who makes and ordains ministers. Nor is it the pastor who absolves you, but the mouth and hand of the minister is the mouth and hand of God.”<sup>92</sup> Although not his intention, this seems to indicate that Walther opens the door to fraction or quantify the office.

Thesis VIII from Walther’s *Die Stimme* is often cited to suggest the delegation of certain functions of the office of the holy ministry to laymen: “The *Predigtamt* is the highest office in the church, from which all other offices in the church flow.”<sup>93</sup> On the basis of this thesis, we customarily speak of *ad hoc* auxiliary offices (*Hilfsamt*: “office that helps” or “helping office”). While it is widely held that the holders of auxiliary offices can perform one or more of the functions of the office of the holy ministry, Walther in Thesis VIII did not envision this. The *Hilfsamt*, according to Walther, supports the *Predigtamt* so that the holder of the *Predigtamt* may devote himself fully to the ministry of word and sacrament. Walther’s examples of *Hilfsamt* are “[lay] elders who do not work in the word and in the teaching [doctrine] (1 Tim 5:17),” “the rulers (Rom 12:8),” “deacons in

<sup>88</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 315.

<sup>89</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 289.

<sup>90</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 303; cf., Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, tr. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), II:705.

<sup>91</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 303–342; Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, tr. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), II:693–695.

<sup>92</sup> WA 43:600, 25–27; LW 5:249.

<sup>93</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 342.

the narrow sense," "the school teachers," "the almoners," "the sexton/sacristan," and "the leader of a choir in the public Divine Service." Quite to the contrary, for Walther the *Predigtamt* is the only office that Jesus instituted, and the bearers of the *Predigtamt* are to care for the congregation of God and watch over their souls as those who give account for them (1 Tim 3:1, 5, 7; 5:17; 1 Cor 4:1; Titus 1:7; Heb 13:17). Walther does not hold the bearers of the *Hilfsamt* accountable to God, neither partially nor fully.<sup>94</sup> As in Thesis II, so in Thesis VIII, Walther does not divide the *Predigtamt* into office and functions.

The move towards separating functions and office is not a uniquely Lutheran phenomenon. In the mainline Protestant seminaries, the interdependence of piety and intellect were challenged by the early twentieth century. They adopted the early-nineteenth-century European model of a fourfold curriculum. Following the fundamentalist-evangelical seminaries, which emphasized skills-oriented training in social service and marketing, many seminaries saw pastoral work as the application of certain techniques or theories.<sup>95</sup>

A study by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Preparation for the Professions Program warns against separating skills of the minister from his person. It opposes a mere application of pastoral skills and emphasizes the formation of a minister by advocating an integration of thinking, being, and doing. A good theological education develops not only ministerial functions, but forms pastors who embody the doctrine handed down by Jesus through the apostles.<sup>96</sup> This "is a process by which the student becomes a certain kind of thinking, feeling, and acting being."<sup>97</sup>

For Lutherans, an integration of skills and personal formation are crucial but still do not make a pastor. A man is a pastor not because of his knowledge of sound doctrine, his skilled performance of preaching and administration of the sacraments, his leadership quality, his personal faith and piety, or even a combination of all of the above. He is a pastor when Jesus places him into the office of the holy ministry. Yet, the Carnegie study leaves us something to think about. It challenges separating the

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<sup>94</sup> Walther, *Die Stimme* (1865), 342-343; Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 289-290. For a study of Acts 6, see Norman E. Nagel, "The Twelve and the Seven in Acts 6 and the Needy," *Concordia Journal* 31 (April 2005): 113-126. Cf., Samuel H. Nafzger, "The CTCR Report on 'The Ministry,'" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47 (April 1983): 97-129.

<sup>95</sup> Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy*, 190-271.

<sup>96</sup> Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy*, 22, 100-126, 178-182, 330-354.

<sup>97</sup> Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy*, 10.

functions of the ministry from the office and disputes shortening pastoral education.<sup>98</sup>

## II. What Do We Confess in CA XIV?

Does CA XIV suggest or even allow delegating preaching and the administration of the sacraments to lay people? Some take CA XIV merely as a rule for good order within the church because there are no biblical citations given either in CA XIV or Ap XIV. We need to keep in mind that CA XIV belongs to the doctrinal portion of the Augsburg Confession ("Our churches teach . . ."),<sup>99</sup> and thus is fully biblical. Here is the text of CA XIV.

<i>Vom Kirchenregiment wird gelehrt,</i>	<i>De ordine ecclesiastico docent</i>
<i>daß niemand</i>	<i>quod nemo debeat</i>
<i>in der Kirchen</i>	<i>in ecclesia</i>
<i>offentlich</i>	<i>publice</i>
<i>lehren</i>	<i>docere</i>
<i>oder predigen</i>	
<i>oder Sakrament reichen soll</i>	<i>aut sacramenta administrare</i>
<i>ohn ordentlichen Beruf.</i>	<i>nisi rite vocatus.</i>

"Concerning church order they teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called" (CA XIV).<sup>100</sup>

### *The Place of Article XIV in the Augsburg Confession*

CA V was the first article on the ministry and CA XIV the second, but CA XXVIII, the third article on the pastoral office, was drafted before the other two, and played the central role within the "disputed articles" of the second part of the Augsburg Confession. CA XXVIII distinguishes between spiritual and temporal authorities, and clearly confesses the office of the holy ministry as the office that delivers the means of grace. CA XXVIII draws this confession from John 20:21–23 and Mark 16:15 (5–21).

<sup>98</sup> In many ways, the new curriculum of Concordia Theological Seminary, which was formed before the appearance of this Carnegie study and which began to be implemented starting the academic year 2005–2006, represents the integral way of forming pastors; see John T. Pless, "A Curriculum from and for the Church," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 70 (January 2006): 85–93.

<sup>99</sup> David Scaer understands CA XIV as well as CA XXVIII as a commentary of CA V; see David P. Scaer, "Augustana V and the Doctrine of the Ministry," *Lutheran Quarterly* 6 (Winter 1992): 407.

<sup>100</sup> The Latin text from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 47.

CA V must be read within the context of preceding articles. The Augsburg Confession moves from God and his creation (CA I) to man's fall and original sin (CA II), then on to the incarnation of Christ and his accomplishment of salvation through his death and resurrection (CA III), and finally to the justification of sinners before God (CA IV). CA V confesses the preaching office as instituted by God (by Jesus in CA XXVIII, 5-7) along with the means of grace. CA V emphasizes not the person placed into the *Predigtamt* but the Holy Spirit as the one who bestows faith and who, according to CA III, is sent by Jesus (CA III, 5). Thus, the Augsburg Confession confesses the intimate connection between the Lord's ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit.<sup>101</sup> The ministry of Jesus continues after Easter. Jesus, by sending the Holy Spirit, bestows the fruits of the cross to sinners until the end of the age. The Holy Spirit in turn binds himself to the *externum verbum*, the means of grace (CA V), in order to deliver the forgiveness won on the cross. The *externum verbum* speaks against any notion of a ministry *in abstracto*. Rather, the ministry is concrete: the gospel is located *extra nos* as a gift. Preaching happens when there is a preacher preaching, a teacher teaching, and a minister administering the sacraments.

CA V reflects a rich biblical theology of the mandate and institution of the office of the holy ministry: John 20:21-23 (CA XXVIII, 6-7; Tr 9, 23, 31); Matthew 28:19-20 (Tr 31); Luke 10:16 (CA XXVIII, 22; Ap VII/VIII, 28, 47); Matthew 16:18-19 (Tr 22, 25); John 21:17 (Tr 30).<sup>102</sup> Through the apostle, Christ himself speaks (Lk 10:16), absolves (John 20:21-23; Matt 16:19-20), teaches and baptizes (Matt 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16).<sup>103</sup> The doer and giver

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<sup>101</sup> The Lord's ascension was the presupposition of the Pentecost. Or to put it another way, the ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit can never be separated. It is the ascended Lord Jesus (Acts 1:6-11) who continued his own ministry on earth (Acts 1:1) by sending the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13; cf. John 20:22). The Holy Spirit bound himself to the means of grace (preaching, baptism, the Lord's Supper) to do what he is given to do (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, 13-14). Preaching (Acts 2:14-36), baptism (Acts 2:37-41), and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42) were not floating about. Christ did not leave them up to a spontaneous or incidental service. He gave the apostles to deliver them; precisely that was the reason for his *sending* them (Acts 1:12-26, John 20:21-23, Matt 28:16-20 Mark 16:15, Luke 24:44-49, Eph 4:11-12, 2 Cor 5:17-21).

<sup>102</sup> In the ordination liturgy of the first LCMS Agenda of 1856, John 20:19-23 appears first and as dominical mandate of the Holy Ministry, and so also in 1866, 1876, 1880, 1890, 1896, and 1922. It disappears from the 1917 Agenda where Matthew 28 comes first as dominical mandate, and so through 1921, 1936, and 1943. In 1984 *Lutheran Worship Agenda*, John 20:19-23 returns as second mandate passage after Matthew 28:19-20. The most recent *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* of 2006 follows the way of 1984.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas M. Winger, "The Office of the Holy Ministry according to the New Testament Mandate of Christ," *Logia* 7 (Eastertide 1998): 40.

of the ministry is Jesus (Matt 20:28; Luke 22:27). The man put into the *Predigtamt* is an instrument sent by Jesus (2 Cor 5:17–21;<sup>104</sup> cf., Ap VII/VIII, 28: *Christi vice et loco*; Ap XXIV, 79–81).<sup>105</sup> Just as the Holy Spirit is most pleased when he brings Christ while hiding himself; likewise, the Spirit active in the *Predigtamt* (John 20:21–23; cf., John 14:25; 15:26; 16:13–14; Luke 3:16, 22; 4:18; 24:49) is all about Jesus and the means of grace, not about the pastor.<sup>106</sup> A pastor is only an instrument to deliver the forgiveness of sins. Attention is not directed on him but on what he is there for: an instrumental servant of the gospel and the sacraments through whom Jesus speaks and gives.<sup>107</sup>

CA V was thought as sufficient for the Wittenbergers to confess the doctrine of the ministry. In Augsburg, they had to answer John Eck's false allegations:

267. The church of Christ does not know the Sacrament of Ordination. Luther. But it is a figment invented by human beings. Zwingli. Rhegius. Amsterdo.

<sup>104</sup> The proclamation, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ" (v 19), is changed into the address, "Be reconciled to God; καταλλάγητε τῷ θεῷ" (v 20). Here the words of reconciliation are both the word of the apostles and the word of God (cf., 1 Thess 2:13). Since Christ gave the apostles (here, Paul and Timothy; 2 Cor 1:1) the ministry of reconciliation (τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς; 2 Cor 5:18), entrusting to them "the message [word] of reconciliation; τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς" (2 Cor 5:19), so the apostles speak "on behalf of [in the place of] Christ; ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ" (2 Cor 5:20) as the authorized sent-ones, as the "ambassadors for [in the place of] Christ; ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν" (2 Cor 5:20). We also note that the Greek word for "making appeal; παρακαλοῦντος" in 2 Cor 5:20 is the verb form of the *Paraclete* (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7), whose work is to bring Jesus to the hearers. The reconciliation of God in Christ takes place in the very proclamation of the messengers of God. See also Chemnitz, *Examination*, II:229.

<sup>105</sup> Cf., John 5:30, 8:28–29, 12:44–50, 15:26–27, Matt 11:27, Luke 10:16, Rom 10:14–15, 17, Heb 3:1, Exod 3:10–15, Is 6:8, Jer 1:7, Ezek 2:3–4.

<sup>106</sup> Luther says: "Offices and sacraments always remain in the church; persons are daily subject to change. As long as we call and put into the offices persons who can administer them, then the offices will surely continue to be exercised." WA 38:241, 19–21; LW 38:201.

<sup>107</sup> Luther writes about this in: WA 38:239, 27–32; LW 38:199. Cf., WA 38:240, 8–17; LW 38:199; WA 26:295, 34–35; LW 37:193; WA 26:156, 34–36; LW 40:242; LC IV, 10; WATR 4:695, 1–9; LW 54:394; WA 19:506, 30–507, 15; LW 36:350; WA 23: 271, 8–11; LW 37:142.

268. All Christians, as many as are baptized, are equally priests. And any layperson can consecrate churches, confirm children, and so forth. Luther.<sup>108</sup>

Eck had twisted Luther's biblical teaching of the royal priesthood (βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα, 1 Pet 2:9).<sup>109</sup> He accused Lutherans of setting aside the office of the ministry by including every Christian. He charged that laymen were acting as if they were ordained. Melancthon added CA XIV to refute these charges and to exclude the suspicion that CA V talks about the priesthood of all believers.

### *The Priesthood of the Baptized*

The phrase "the priesthood of all believers" originated not with Luther, but about 150 years later with Philipp Jakob Spener.<sup>110</sup> In his early polemics against Roman theology, Luther used the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all the baptized for two purposes. First, the Roman church claimed that the sacrament of ordination indelibly gave a spiritual character to the ordinand. The priesthood was a spiritual *Stand*, a special rank or class of people in contrast to the laity, who were presumably lower. This taught that the ordained priest worked together with God to work the miracles of transubstantiation and baptismal renewal because of his indelible character. For Luther this was a denial of the gospel. The baptized are all equally spiritual and there is only one *Stand* before God. Within the body of Christ one serves the other according to his or her vocation.<sup>111</sup> Holding an office is not a claim to power but to service.

<sup>108</sup> BSLK 69, n. 1. Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 65. Cf., Henry E. Jacobs, ed., *The Book of Concord: Historical Introduction, Appendixes and Indexes* (Philadelphia: General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1908), II:89.

<sup>109</sup> Eck quotes Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520. The whole section of *De Ordine* is a polemical against Roman bishops and priests who did not do the ministry of the word, that is, preaching and giving out the sacraments. WA 6:560, 20–30; 564, 6–566, 9; LW 36:106–107, 112–117.

<sup>110</sup> For the study of Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized, see Norman E. Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61 (October 1997): 277–298; Thomas Winger, "The Priesthood of All the Baptized." I am particularly indebted to Timothy J. Wengert, "The Priesthood of All Believers and Other Pious Myths," unpublished manuscript, 2005.

<sup>111</sup> See John T. Pless, "Reflections on the Life of the Royal Priesthood: Vocation and Evangelism," in *Shepherd the Church: Essays in Honor of the Rev. Dr. Roger D. Pittelko*, eds. Frederic W. Baue, et al. (Ft. Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2002), 271–285. On pages 283–284, Pless cites and comments on "The Office of the Church: An Orientation" by the Theological Commission of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran



Luther's doctrine on the priesthood of the baptized does not suggest the uniformity of actions or the slogan that everyone was a minister so that all Christians preach and administer the sacraments. He emphasized neither the authority of the laity nor indelible character of the ordained, but the unity of the body of Christ and service to one another according to each one's calling.<sup>112</sup>

Second, the doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized is the church's defense against unfaithful and legalistic pastors. It taught pastors to be

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Church (SELK) in 1997, to argue the same point as Luther's here. The full text of the SELK statement in English translation is found in *Logia 10* (Holy Trinity, 2001): 17-30.

<sup>112</sup> A prolonged exchange of blows between Emser and Luther took place during 1521. Emser, a humanist who became an adviser to Duke George of Saxony, a Roman Catholic ruler, criticized Luther's exposition of 1 Peter 2:9, claiming that it destroyed the distinction between the clergy and the laity. Luther responded: "I have never said that St. Peter's words refer to his (Emser's) invented priesthood, which he calls *ecclesiasticum* and which I shall call 'churchly' from now on. Furthermore, I did not say that all Christians are churchly priests." *Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig*, 1521. WA 7:629, 14-17; LW 39:153. Luther then pointed out that "the churchly priesthood" has been called "ministry (*ministerium*)," "preaching office (*Predigtamt*)," and "shepherd (*Hyrten*)," etc., but never "priesthood (*sacerdocium*)" or "spiritual (*spiritualis*)." WA 7:630, 10-16; LW 39:154. Luther's *To the Christian Nobility of 1520* was a target of Emser's accusation. Luther's interest was not to talk about the relation between the Office of the Holy Ministry and the priesthood of the baptized, but to deny the pope's claim that there are two classes of people (*Stände*), one spiritual and the other secular. WA 6:407, 13-19; LW 44:127. His primary emphasis was oneness among Christians. Another important point is that among the Christians, each *serves* the other. Within the body of Christ, holding an office can never be a claim to power but a claim to service. All the baptized are members of the one body of Christ and individually servants to each other in their respective offices. Disunity of individualistic spirituality is not upheld. WA 6:408, 31-409, 10; LW 44:130.

The oneness of Christ's body does not mean uniformity of action. Each is called to serve with his and her distinctive vocation. One does not invade, so to speak, another's office and its duties and responsibilities. Congregational leaders do not belong in the pulpit; the pastor is not above the law. All in all, the doctrine of the priesthood of the baptized confesses Jesus as the Lord and head of the church, for cut off from the only Priest, Christ, the priests (the baptized) will lose their being as royal priesthood. Thus, Luther confessed the priesthood of the baptized as a defense against the pope and his displacement of Christ. Melancthon in 1530, then, seems to have reflected on Luther's earlier words in his *Retraction 1521*: "In all my writings I never wished to say more, indeed only so much, that all Christians are priests, although not all of them are ordained (*geweyhet*) by bishops, and so not all preach, celebrate Mass or exercise the priestly Office unless they were ordained to it (*vorordenet*) and called (*beruffen*). That is all I intended to say, and so let that be that." WA 8:250, 31-35; LW 39:233.

faithful to their call and ordination,<sup>113</sup> even as it also taught all the baptized to be faithful to their callings. More specifically, it supported the argument that Christians may not be deprived of pastors because of the pope's unwillingness to allow anyone except those ordained by the bishops loyal to him to offer the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>114</sup>

Jobst Schöne observed that the understanding of the doctrine of the royal priesthood changed after Luther's death.<sup>115</sup> During the age of pietism, the royal priesthood was internalized and individualized into true believers, who confess their faith and give proof of their faith by living a holy life. Then in the nineteenth century, the pietistic view of the royal priesthood morphed into a democratic expression where the priesthood of all believers was viewed as a check and balance to the power of the office of the ministry. He writes: "What a strange development!"<sup>116</sup> It reappeared in the ecumenical movement of the World Council of Churches with the "the apostolate of the laity."

### *Ecclesial Order*

What does the *ordo* in the church denote in CA XIV (*De ordine ecclesiastico*)? Does CA XIV simply espouse a good order to prevent chaos and disunity?

In the Large Confession (1528), a key source of the Augsburg Confession, Luther delineates three estates: *ordo ecclesiasticus*, *politicus*, and *oeconomicus* (church, government, and household) as is also found in the Table of Duties in the Small Catechism. All three orders are holy in God's sight, above which is the common order of Christian love.<sup>117</sup> Luther explains the

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<sup>113</sup> Ernst Kinder reports that at the time of the writing of the Augsburg Confession the terms "call" and "ordination" were used interchangeably. *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1958), 158.

<sup>114</sup> WA 6:564, 6-14; LW 36:112-113. Melancthon picks this up in the Treatise. Citing 1 Peter 2:9 in Tr 69 (the only appearance of this passage in the entire Book of Concord), Melancthon argued that the baptized should never be deprived of the service of a faithful pastor of the gospel, not that all the baptized should publicly preach, teach, and administer the sacraments.

<sup>115</sup> Jobst Schöne, *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood* (Plymouth, MN: Logia Books, 1996), 15.

<sup>116</sup> Schöne, *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood*, 15.

<sup>117</sup> WA 26:504, 30-505, 28; LW 37:364-365.

*ordo* in the church as “*pfarampt odder dienst des worts* (pastoral office or the ministry of the word)” that preaches, administers the sacraments, etc.<sup>118</sup>

The *Variata* of 1540, although a private writing of Melanchthon, is nevertheless informative because it adds the following words to CA XIV: “. . . *sicut et Paulus praecipit Tito* [1, 5], *ut in civitatibus presbyteros constituat* [. . . just as Paul instructs Titus [Tit 1:5], to ordain elders [appoint men to the office of elder] in every city].”<sup>119</sup> Thus, Melanchthon indicates that the *ordo* in the church refers to the ordination of pastors. Putting (καταστήσῃς; καθιστημι) a man into the office of elder, that is, the ministry, was Paul’s *ordo* (διαταξάμην; διατάσσω; τάξις). The *ordo* encapsulates τάξις, ἐτάξατο, and ἐξουσία (*potestas*; Mt 28:16, 18), and ἀποστέλλειν (*missio*; πῶς; John 20:21).<sup>120</sup>

For Rome the *Predigtamt* is not the *Gnadenmittelamt*, the office that preaches and serves the sacraments, but it is the *ordo* that has acquired the power (*Gnadenkraft*) to consecrate the body of the Lord and sacrifice the Mass for the living and the dead. For Rome the *ordo* is complete in itself, which imparts a magical power *ex opere operato*. For the Reformed, the sermon became a sacrifice of the gospel and the Lord’s Supper a eucharist: things the church does. The *Predigtamt* became an organ of the congregation for its functions. In this way, Luther’s and Chemnitz’s distinction between preachers/teachers and hearers/learners was annulled. Both Rome and the Reformed have changed the office of

<sup>118</sup> WA 26:504, 30–35; LW 37:364. In a similar way, the Lutheran Confessions use the term *ordo* regarding the office of the holy ministry (Ap XIII, 11–12; XXII, 13; XXVIII, 13, SA III, 11, 1; SC, Table of Duties, 1). For example, Ap XXVIII, an article closely related to CA XIV as to CA V as we saw above, confesses: “Therefore, bishops have the power of the order, namely, the ministry of Word and sacraments” (Ap XXVIII, 13).

<sup>119</sup> Th. Kolde, *Die Augsburgische Konfession lateinisch und deutsch* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1896), 177. Cf., Jacobs, *The Book of Concord*, II:140. The complete *Variata* XIV reads: “*De ordine ecclesiastico docent, quod nemo debeat in ecclesia publice docere aut sacramenta administrare, nisi rite vocatus, sicut et Paulus praecipit Tito* [1, 5], *ut in civitatibus presbyteros constituat*.” Melanchthon uses *constituat* from the Vulgate’s *constituit* for καταστήσῃς in Titus 1:5. Titus 1:5–6 is cited again in Tr 62.

<sup>120</sup> While Melanchthon in his *Variata* gives Titus 1:5 for CA XIV, later Lutheran dogmaticians connected other biblical passages to it. For example, according to Robert Preus, Gerhard cites Jer 23:2, John 17:9, John 3:27, Rom 10:15, and Heb 5:4 with CA XIV; for Balthasar Mentzer (1565–1627) CA XIV is based on Rom 10:15 as well as on 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6, Acts 20:28, and Eph 4:21. Robert Preus, “The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy,” in *Church and Ministry Today: Three Confessional Lutheran Essays*, ed. John A. Maxfield (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2001), 6–7, 10.

distributing the means of grace into the office of sacrificing.<sup>121</sup> When the congregation is understood as the actual bearer of the *Gnadenmittelamt* and the pastor as mandated by the congregation, the direction from him to us will be muddled. This view entered the Lutheran Church through Spener's pietism.

The *ordo* in CA XIV does not refer to a rank, but the office of preaching, teaching, and distributing the sacraments (*Gnadenmittelamt*). The *ordo* in the church is not a spontaneous or incidental service but a regular and orderly service that incorporates the office bearer. This all comes together with the Lord's institution of baptism, preaching, absolution, and the Lord's Supper. That the salvation accomplished on the cross may be distributed to people not only privately and incidentally but regularly and orderly, the Lord also instituted the office of the holy ministry for distributing the forgiveness of sins. Those put into the *Predigtamt* do the regular and orderly service of this office. The *Predigtamt* engages the minister's entire person, his vocation.<sup>122</sup> One is never half in.<sup>123</sup>

### *In the Church*

This *ordo* is found "in the church" (CA XIV), but how does the Augsburg Confession understand the church? Many people today feel that organized religion does not empower them to be fully-committed Christians. Church rituals and organizations seem to them empty shells. If one congregation does not deliver what they want, then they may seek another option or switch denominational affiliations. Many people float around, attempting to find a place they can call home.

<sup>121</sup> Theodor Kliefoth, *Liturgische Abhandlungen* (Schwerin/Rostock: Stiller, 1854), I:348–351. See my, "The Confessional Liturgical Revival of Theodor Kliefoth and the Works of Liturgical Revision of the Preface in Nineteenth-century Sweden: The Vitality of the Lord's Supper as Confessed in 'He Alone Is Worthy!'" (Ph.D dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 2005). Kliefoth writes: "If the *Gnadenmittelamt* were comprehended as a product and as an organization of the common priesthood of all Christians, then the Lord would have instituted only a function of the means of grace administration but not a certain ministry entrusted to a certain person for this." *Liturgische Abhandlungen*, I:341. The term *Gnadenmittelamt*, as far as I can tell, is unique to Kliefoth; see Theodor Kliefoth, *Acht Bücher von der Kirsche* (Schwerin and Rostock Stiller, 1854), 18–19, 187–212. The only other theologian who employs this term that I have found is Ernst Kinder; see *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 146–151. Kliefoth also employs another unique term for the office of the holy ministry: *Heilsmittelamt* in *Acht Bücher von der Kirche* (Schwerin and Rostock: Stiller, 1854), 217 *passim*.

<sup>122</sup> Werner Elert, *Der Christliche Glaube: Grundlinien der Lutherischen Dogmatik*, 3rd ed. (Hamburg: Fricke, 1956), 419–420.

<sup>123</sup> Nagel, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions and in Walther's *Kirche und Amt*," 443.

When CA XIV speaks of the church, it confesses the church as defined not by whatever we would seek or bring, be it the most brilliant of human organization, the most splendid liturgy, the wisest men, the most beautiful church building, the well-put set of doctrinal formulations, or the warmest love found among members. The church is the assembly of all believers "among whom the Gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel" (CA VII, 1). For the Augsburg Confession, the church is the place where our crucified and risen Lord lives and gives his abundant gifts set forth in its first five articles.

In church, the living Jesus (CA III) is actively bestowing his gifts to us personally and collectively. Jesus is not just an object of our faith or worship, but the giver of all good gifts. The life of the church and of Christians does not depend on our works, feelings, reasoning, tastes, spirituality, or even faith, but on the gifts that Jesus brings to us continuously and abundantly (CA IV; CA V). When we are cut off from the source—Jesus and his gifts—we will be left wondering how best we may seek a relationship with him, either by shopping for another church or by attempting to find God within us.

Thus, Luther spoke of the church in his *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545):

Wherever the Word is heard, where Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, and absolution are administered, there you must determine and conclude with certainty: 'This is surely God's house; here heaven has been opened.' . . . This is nothing else than calling it the kingdom of heaven and heaven itself, for the place where God dwells is the house of God. But where does God dwell? Does He not dwell in heaven? Therefore He joins the earth with heaven and heaven with the earth.<sup>124</sup>

To define the church by the means of grace is to confess the church as the place where Jesus continues his service to us: *ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia*.

### *No One May*

The words *debeat* and *soll* allow no options (*nemo debeat/Niemand . . . soll*). These same verbs describe the indispensable relation of good works to faith in CA VI, 1. They have the force of *must* rather than *should* in English.<sup>125</sup> What the Lord has joined may not be separated.

<sup>124</sup> WA 43:597, 4–6, 16–19; LW 5:244.

<sup>125</sup> Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," in *Eucharist & Ministry: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue IV*, ed. Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979), 113.

The office bearer does not have a primacy given by some special endowed quality. Rather, it means that only those who are called and ordained into the *Predigtamt* are to gather and feed a congregation.<sup>126</sup> CA XIV holds that the means of grace and the office (*Gnadenmittelamt*) are instituted together. The office and its functions (i.e., the means of grace) are not detached from each other.

Kinder maintains that the preservation of the church's apostolicity (apostolic doctrine, Scripture, and ministry) is the *conditio sine qua non* of its existence as Christ's church. For this reason, it cannot be relegated to spiritual abstraction. He also emphasizes the ministry's face-to-face character before the congregation in preaching and the administration of the sacraments. The Lord did not leave his people to cling simply to abstract principles but addresses them through men in the office.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the pastoral ministry does not exist for itself, but as a secondary means through which the Lord speaks and gives of his gifts concretely.

### *Public Service*

The words *offentliche* and *publice* refer to preaching and the distribution of the sacraments by those in the office (CA XIV; *offentliche lehren oder predigen oder Sakrament reichen; publice docere aut sacramenta administrare*). Within the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, the word *publice* is defined not as a sacrifice (*sacrificium*) but public service (*publicum ministerium*; Ap XXIV, 78). The ministry is a public service: liturgical, sacramental, and pastoral.<sup>128</sup> Through the ministry the Lord speaks and feeds us. The congregation lives from what is given. Since the bearer of the office is Christ's instrument, he is answerable for faithfully handing on of the doctrine of Jesus.<sup>129</sup>

"Teaching," "preaching," and "administering the sacraments" link CA XIV with CA V and XXVIII, and also with CA IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII. Our Lord's mandates to teach (Matt 28; cf., Eph 4), preach (Mark 16; Luke 24), absolve (John 20; Luke 24), baptize (Matt 28; Mark 16), and distribute his body and blood (Matt 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Cor 11) are the foundation. What becomes apparent from the Augsburg Confession and other confessions is that Christ's institution of the ministry is adjacent to his

<sup>126</sup> Cf., Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 157.

<sup>127</sup> Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 154–156.

<sup>128</sup> Kinder explains *publice/offentlich* in CA XIV as not only God's proclamation to the congregation but the church's preaching to the world. *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 156–157.

<sup>129</sup> Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 155–156.

institution of the means of grace.<sup>130</sup> Office and functions do not exist independently. The apostles do not exist apart from what the Lord gives them to do. Baptism, teaching, the Lord's Supper, and absolution do not exist as abstract functions seeking someone to carry them out.<sup>131</sup>

### *Ritely Called*

The practice of early Lutherans clearly shows that they did not understand the word *call* in an arbitrary or temporary sense. They did not, for example, envision that a congregation could appoint one layman to preach and administer the sacrament one week, and a different one the next. That was precisely Eck's accusation, and it was against such a notion that CA XIV was added. Nagel points out that Mueller's translation of Walther's Thesis III in *Kirche und Amt* is misleading.<sup>132</sup> By rendering "ordinarily" for "*ordentlicher Weise*," the intended connection of Thesis III with CA XIV by the word "*ordentlichen*" is lost. Walther states that the preaching office is not an arbitrary office (*Das Predigtamt ist kein willkürliches Amt*). The opposite of arbitrary for Walther is "*ordentlicher Weise*." The word *ordinarily* allows other options, which Walther did not intend as the citation of Matthew 28:19-20 demonstrates. The *Predigtamt* has Christ's mandate and institution; therefore, the church is "*ordentlicher Weise*" bound till the end of days (*bis an das Ende der Tage*). CA VII confesses that the one holy church remains forever (*una sancta ecclesia perpetuo mansura sit*) because Jesus, the Lord of the church, will not die. Thus his way of distributing the gifts will be bound to the *Predigtamt* "until the end of days."<sup>133</sup> Within this *ordo*, the church maintains the means of grace.

<sup>130</sup> Cf., Elert, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 419; Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, tr. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 241; Winger, "The Office of the Holy Ministry according to the New Testament Mandate of Christ," 40.

<sup>131</sup> Kinder notes that in CA XIV the ministry is spoken of with "administering the sacraments." He explains that the sacrament should not be given out by each member of the congregation but only by the called office bearers. Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 157-158.

<sup>132</sup> Nagel, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions and in Walther's *Kirche und Amt*," 428-429.

<sup>133</sup> Walther's Thesis III reads as follows: "*Das Predigtamt ist kein willkürliches Amt, sondern ein solches Amt, dessen Aufrichtung der Kirche geboten und an das die Kirche bis an das Ende der Tage ordentlicher Weise gebunden ist.*" Mueller translates it as: "The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is *ordinarily* bound till the end of time;" *Church and Ministry*, 191, emphasis added. Drickamer is similar to Mueller: "The ministry of the Word is not an optional office, but one whose establishment has been commanded to



An *ordentlichen Beruf* does not simply mean *orderly*, as opposed to chaotically, or *ordinarily* to indicate a normal principle open to other options. It refers to the Latin title of CA XIV (*De ordine ecclesiastico*) denoting the *Kirchenordnung*, which specified the legitimate and liturgical procedures of the church including how a man is examined, called, and placed into office through a liturgy of ordination. Ordination brings this whole process to completion (Tr 67).<sup>134</sup>

Discussion of the specific liturgy for ordination is not included in CA XIV. It was likely avoided due to its negative connotation in connection with the Roman theology of the sacrifice of the mass and the office to do so.<sup>135</sup> However, *rite vocatus* means not just *rightly* called, but *ritely* called, that is, called in accordance with the rite of the church.<sup>136</sup> The rite or liturgy is included in the adverb *rite*, not a ritual of empty formalism, but the public liturgy of the church whereby the candidate is publicly ordained, namely, in the presence of the congregation. *Ordentlich* goes with the *ordo publice*, which denotes the ordinand's placement into an office for the sake of doing something specified for the community.<sup>137</sup>

The Roman opponents understood the words *rite vocatus* as "canonical ordination," a sense foreign to the Lutherans.<sup>138</sup> The Confutation essentially accepts CA XIV but insists on the Roman rite, which stipulates that only a bishop is authorized to ordain. The issue was not about ordination but whose hands did it—Rome's understanding of *potestas ordinis*. Apology XIV does not accept this restriction. It emphasizes, on the one hand, the teaching of the word and administration of the sacraments;

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the church and to which the church is *ordinarily* bound till the end of time;" Walther on the Church, 78, emphasis added. *Ordinarily* does not adequately convey the meaning of *ordentlichen* and *rite*.

<sup>134</sup> Norman E. Nagel, "Ordination Is Not Other Than . . .," *Concordia Journal* 28 (October 2002): 431–446. Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 158–159; Jobst Schöne, "Church & Ministry Part 2: Systematic Formulation," *Logia* 2 (April 1993): 38–39.

<sup>135</sup> Cf., Kliefoth, "Meßopferamt," in *Liturgische Abhandlungen*, I:349.

<sup>136</sup> Maurer takes a view that *rite vocatus* simply means "regularly called." Any ritualistic sense of ordination is excluded. Maurer, *Historical Commentary on the Augsburg Confession*, 191–197. The same position is held by Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, 1989), 153. John Kleinig, on the other hand, expounds on the ritual significance of the rite of ordination in CA XIV. "Ministry and Ordination," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 36 (May 2002): 33–35.

<sup>137</sup> Cf., the Large Catechism tells of the hangman who does his duty *by virtue of his office* (LC I, 274).

<sup>138</sup> Cf., Hellmut Lieberg, *Amt und Ordination bei Luther und Melanchthon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 335.

and on the other, it criticizes the Roman bishops, who compel the evangelical pastors to stop confessing the gospel. The Treatise addresses this: "when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel or are unwilling to ordain, the churches retain their right to do so" (Tr 66). This is the true divine right as opposed to Rome's three divine rights (Tr 1-5).<sup>139</sup> The royal priesthood may not be robbed of its right to elect and ordain ministers (1 Pet 2:9; Tr 66-72). Again, it does not follow that an unordained believer may publicly preach, teach, and administer the sacraments.

The word *vocatio* includes not only a call from a congregation but also the rite of ordination. At the time of the Augsburg Confession the terms *call* and *ordination* were used interchangeably.<sup>140</sup> CA XIV talks about the whole process of putting a man into the *ordo*, the *Predigtamt*, the *Gnadenmittelamt*.

To the ordination rite, Ernst Kinder adds the blessing, or consecration into the office (*die Einseugung*), and a sending (*missio*, *die Weisung*, and *die Gemeinde*), as does Jobst Schöne (*benedictio* and *missio*).<sup>141</sup> The blessing is given to the candidate through the Lord's mandating words and other words regarding the office of the holy ministry, through prayer, and through the laying on of hands. Through this blessing, the man is ordained and firmly put into "the ministry of the office." The *missio* puts the ordinand under the mandate of the ministry of Jesus.<sup>142</sup>

*Educating Clergy's* view that the formation of a pastor calls for a long process was advocated by Reformation era Lutherans. For Lutherans, such formation is the work of God. Ordination (examination, blessing, and sending) does not depend on the candidate's self-service and self-glorification. He is presented and ordained for the *proprium* of the *Predigtamt*, the service of the means of grace, and bound to and by this office.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>139</sup> These three are: that the bishop of Rome is superior to all bishops and pastors; he possesses the power of both swords; and it is, therefore, necessary for salvation to believe these things.

<sup>140</sup> Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 158.

<sup>141</sup> Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 158-159; Schöne, "Church & Ministry, Part II: Systematic Formulation," 38. Kinder takes neither Rome's position that ordination bestows an indelible character nor the Reformed emphasis on an election by the congregation.

<sup>142</sup> Kinder, *Der evangelische Glaube und die Kirche*, 158-159.

<sup>143</sup> Kinder explains that the word *Amt* should have come from a Celtic word *ambactus*, which means *umgriffen-sein*, indicating that a man is attached, fixed, to a service-oriented function. Ordination has this attaching and fixing element, which comes with

### III. Why Should There Be Called and Ordained Clergy?

Questions about the ministry emerged from the context of what is actually happening in LCMS congregations: unordained men are acting as if they were ordained.<sup>144</sup>

The problem of the medieval Roman church concerning the ministry was that the preaching office had become the office that sacrificed the mass on the basis of the priest's indelible character. Later the enthusiasts blurred the distinction between preachers and hearers. For Rome the ministry was the office that enforced the law. The enthusiasts had no office at all. A key problem for us is the separation of the preaching office from its functions, indicating that the person is inconsequential and anyone can do it. This was common in Protestantism. Doctrine was treated as theory. Pastoral ministry was viewed as the application of skilled techniques. In the background may lie an unconscious expectation of the laity who have adopted a professional and pragmatic mindset that the duties of the pastoral office do not require complex techniques or a skilled performance. The role of women, homosexuals, increasing globalization, and development of information technology have also affected the ministry of the church in various degrees.<sup>145</sup>

Changing definitions of emergency situations, questions about supervision, licensure, and authority in the church are related to how we view the ministry. To respond properly, we begin with our Lord's words in the New Testament. Though we pledge ourselves to the Book of Concord as a correct exposition of the Scriptures, we may not be satisfied when we have arrived at an answer simply by citing the Confessions. Every generation must investigate doctrine in light of new questions and changing situations. Regarding CA XIV, we must articulate not only its importance for the Reformers, but also why we still confess it today.

I have discussed CA XIV. At the center of CA XIV is the Lord's mandate and institution. The doctrine of the ministry belongs to the gospel because the office of Jesus and the dynamic flow of the gospel through the means

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duty, responsibility, and obligation. With ordination, then, the candidate is now bound to the particular mandate of the ministry, that is, the ministry of the means of grace.

<sup>144</sup> See the bullet-pointed questions on pages 125-126.

<sup>145</sup> The Report of the Church Growth Study Committee of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod gives us a concise and critical study on the gospel and American culture in its *For the Sake of Christ's Commission* (St. Louis, 2001).

of grace define it. The Lord gives; the church receives. Both occur through the office that delivers the means of grace (*Gnadenmittelamt*).<sup>146</sup>

In our day, the office of the holy ministry is often referred to with language denoting power, ability, right and privilege, function, necessity, good order, piety, leadership, and election. Such language tends to separate the office from its functions. When, however, we begin with the Lord's words, that is, his mandate and institution of the office of the holy ministry for the sake of the dynamic flow of the Lord's giving and our receiving, we not only confess this doctrine most concretely and most cohesively, but we also find profound comfort. Let the pastoral office remain pastoral. It is Jesus who addresses us when we hear the words: "I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins," "I baptize you," and "Take, eat; this is the true body of Christ, given for you."<sup>147</sup>

What is the difference between a pastor addressing the Lord's people like this, and a lay minister speaking these words? Lee S. Schulman, who wrote the foreword to *Educating Clergy*, observes that the technique of saying so is not that complex.<sup>148</sup> Anyone can say these words. Does who says it not matter because the efficacy of the word remains? Does a pastor speak these words simply for the sake of a good order? No, what is at stake is the office of Christ, and his words with which he established it.<sup>149</sup> Those who hear these words receive them as spoken by the Lord through the instrument he has put there to speak them, and thus with certainty and comfort. Doubt is taken away. They know that they have heard the voice of their Shepherd (SA III, 12, 2). They know that their pastor is the one Jesus called, blessed, and sent to and for them for the delivery of the gospel.

<sup>146</sup> Kliefoth, *Acht Bücher von der Kirche*, 18–19, 179.

<sup>147</sup> The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 185, 270, 165.

<sup>148</sup> Foster, et al., *Educating Clergy*, x.

<sup>149</sup> Chemnitz confesses: "But it is worthwhile to ponder for what reasons it is so important that a minister of the church have a lawful call. Now, we must not think that this takes place out of some human arrangement or only for the sake of order, but the reasons are very weighty (and) consideration of them brings many things to mind. (1) Because the ministry of the Word is that of God Himself, which He Himself wants to carry out through ordained means and instruments in His church, Lk 1:70; Heb 1:1; 2 Cor 5:20. . . . (3) The real heart of the ministry is that God by His Spirit and His grace wants to be there with the ministry and through it work efficaciously." *Loci Theologici*, II:699.

Who consecrates the bread and wine matters. Who preaches matters. Who baptizes matters. CA XIV confesses the coherence of the office and the functions. It confesses the formation of a pastor. It confesses the office of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>150</sup> Laypersons who have not been put into the office of the holy ministry have not been blessed and sent by Jesus to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.<sup>151</sup>

As always, the final question is what kind of Christ do we end up confessing if we fail to confess CA XIV clearly? Impoverishment of the doctrine of the office of the holy ministry impoverishes the church because through this office Christ shepherds his church. Luther reminds us that Satan's chief target is the Divine Service, where Christ visits his church through the preached word and the administration of his sacraments.<sup>152</sup> When he takes aim, he seeks to sever the church's bond to the Lord's word,

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<sup>150</sup> Luther writes: "For we must believe and be sure of this, that baptism is not ours but Christ's, that the Gospel is not ours but Christ's, that the office of preaching (*Predigamt*) is not ours but Christ's, that the sacrament [of the Lord's Supper] is not ours but Christ's, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins, are not ours but Christ's. WA 38:240, 24-34; LW 38:200. See also WA 38:241, 6-10; LW 38:200-201.

<sup>151</sup> *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39 (December 1968): 772-775 printed a brief study of the Systematic Department of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, under the names of Herbert J. A. Bouman, Erwin I. Lueker, and Arthur Carl Piepkorn, entitled "Lay Workers in the Church." The question that this study engages in is: "To what extent can functions of the sacred ministry properly be given to a layman, such as a lay worker or seminarian? Can he, for example, be given the right to celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar?" By citing AC V, AC XXVIII, Ap XIII, Treatise, AC XIV, AC XXIV, and SD VII, the study concludes: "These facts appear to lay down the principle that lay workers should *not* be given charge of congregations by District officials, if this implies that they are to exercise the pastoral ministry" (emphasis original).

<sup>152</sup> WA 42:110, 15-111, 17; LW 1:146-147.

his mandate and institution, regarding worship and a faithful confession of the *Predigtamt*. This plants seeds of confusion and doubt that take root in the very means by which Christ serves the church. Ultimately, it is only the church that suffers for Christ and his gospel gifts are thereby obscured and oftentimes lost. Why, then, should there be called and ordained clergy? Because the Lord mandated and instituted it. We confess that our Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry here on earth through the ministry of the means of grace according to his arrangement; and clinging to this, we cling to what is most certainly true.

## Fellowship Issues and Missions

Klaus Detlev Schulz

### *The Ecclesio-political and Ecumenical Setting*

Nowhere is the question of fellowship and unity more urgently raised than where it was thought that doctrinal squabbling and disunity among Christians would become a hindrance to a uniform message of the church to the world. Hermann Sasse illustrates the problem:

Four churches [*Andachtstätten*] stand a hundred yards distant from each other, in a large city in India. Each of these churches is, on any given Sunday, only half filled. Each has a pastor with insufficient members. Each finds itself all too often in endless controversy, not against the sin and the pain that rules around them, but rather against the supposed distortion of the faith and practice of the others. Seven mission societies work frantically among a population of a million people. Five of them maintain that they alone possess the truth of the gospel, and therefore claim the right to work and found churches everywhere. Where the gospel has found entrance, there the fragmentation of the church has placed an impediment in front of the non-Christian. Thoughtful men ask why we demand devotion to the one Christ and yet at the same time we worship separately and narrow-mindedly seclude ourselves from one another in these most holy dealings. These divisions perplex the thoughtful seeker. Which church should I join? This is the question the converted ask.<sup>1</sup>

Divisiveness is not exclusively Christianity's problem, it is the problem of other religions as well. Christianity is concerned about its segregated existence because it stands in stark contrast to the unity Christ himself prays for: "that all of them may be one" (John 17:21). On what exactly should Christianity unite? Inter-denominational discussions of fellowship reveal the disturbing truth that there exists among Christians different ideas on what the church (ecclesiology) is and what constitutes its

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Sasse quotes these significant and marked words of an Anglican bishop of Dornakal, India uttered at Lausanne, World Conference, 1927. Hermann Sasse, "The Question of the Church's Unity on the Mission Field," *Logia* 7 (Holy Trinity 1998): 54.

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fellowship. In other words, the principles of orientation are not shared by all denominations. To be sure, all believe in something—non-confessionality does not exist—but this confession varies, which makes some principles of orientation more inclusive than others. Within Lutheranism, there is a general consensus that the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*), the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, constitute the church and its fellowship. In terms of specifics, however, they disagree. The Wisconsin Synod, for example, would add to the marks prayer and “practices that demonstrate a common faith.”<sup>2</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) has made advances toward the Moravians and Episcopalians, making it seem to us in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) that they do not take the marks seriously. The Reformed would agree with us on the marks but would add a third component: church discipline. The Roman Catholics adopt the classical marks of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed—one holy, catholic, and apostolic—but would have them gravitate exclusively around the primacy of the pope and thus, remain, to be frank, only guardedly ecumenical. And finally, the Orthodox churches of the East argue for the visible principle for unity, namely, the apostolic succession of the sacramental centered office and faithfulness to tradition.

The most striking and perspicuous quests for unity and fellowship are those of a visionary nature. Movements whose principle of orientation painfully remind us of the provisional end of denominational separation in light of the *eschaton* (the end to come), which to varying degrees, seek to preempt the heavenly oneness in terms of a corporeal vision now. The World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910 was the first grand scale initiative that incorporated as many church bodies as possible to materialize a vision of “world evangelization in this generation.” It never happened. Christianity is perhaps further removed from accomplishing world evangelization than it was in 1910. But such a vision spurned on ecumenical movements such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) which, together with its subsidiary bodies, the International Missionary Conference (IMC) and “Faith and Order,” pursues the grandest ideal of unity of all: a *koinonia* that culminates “in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through

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<sup>2</sup> The Wisconsin Synod’s understanding of church fellowship is based on a “unit concept, covering every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of a common faith.” *Four Statements on Fellowship presented by the constituent synods of the Synodical Conference for study and discussion* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 9.44–47.

witness and service to the world.”<sup>3</sup> The Lausanne Movement, founded in 1974, uniting all conservative evangelicals runs a close second, but with the intent of preserving a few more traditional doctrines for a united message to the world.<sup>4</sup> The International Lutheran Council (ILC), has become the voice of all confessional Lutherans in this world of which the LCMS is an active member.<sup>5</sup> It offsets the hegemony of the Lutheran World Federation’s (LWF) unifying agenda and is, unlike the LWF, more content with just being a union of partnership churches rather than staking claims for an ecclesiology.

### *Mission and Fellowship Converge in Ecclesiology*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church places the question of fellowship in ecclesiology. The doctrine of the church is defined in the Augsburg Confession (CA), article VII: “Likewise they teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments” (CA VII, 1-2).<sup>6</sup> Here the issue of fellowship also converges with the mission of the church, which according to CA VII is a “kerygmatic-sacramental act.” As the church reaches out to humanity, it, too, is bound to the purity of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. As it practices this, moreover, the question of unity and fellowship around these very marks

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<sup>3</sup> The WCC corporeal interests are evident: “It will be necessary to realize that the spiritual dimensions of catholic unity cannot be opposed to the visible manifestation of the Church as *koinonia*, but must be rethought to include all of its corporeal dimensions, including the intimate connection between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the sacramentality of the Church.” Patrick W. Fuerth, *The Concept of Catholicity in The Documents of the World Council of Churches* (Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1973), 247. One may also see, Peter Steinacker, *Die Kennzeichen der Kirche* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 50.

<sup>4</sup> John Stott, ed., *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement 1974–1989* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), xiii–xiv.

<sup>5</sup> The ILC has a membership of twenty-nine confessional Lutheran churches that embraces approximately three million Christians. Though confessional Lutheran missions has taken a foothold all over the world for more than 150 years, many areas, as in former communist states, are encountering it for the first time. At the last convention in 2001, the LCMS declared fellowship with three churches: the Lanka Lutheran Church of Sri Lanka, the Lutheran Church of Latvia, and The Lutheran Church of Lithuania.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, tr. Charles Arand, et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 43.

become pertinent. This means that in pioneer situations where no other churches exist, Lutheran missions will speak on behalf of the church of Christ but it does so by purely preaching and rightly administering the sacraments. In this task, therefore, her goal is implied: Through preaching the Lutheran faith will emerge, and eventually develop fellowship around the truths of the gospel and the sacraments.<sup>7</sup> Where other churches exist, Lutheran mission will seek ways to underscore the ecumenical witness of the gospel. Simultaneously, it will limit its fellowship to those who also emphasize the truth of the gospel and the sacraments as the means God chooses to bring salutary faith. The mission of the church thus becomes a litmus test of the church's sense for a clear message and true oneness in Jesus Christ.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church accepts an understanding of fellowship that plays itself out on a broader level, which embraces all Christians who truly believe and confess the triune God. Since violation of this fellowship would be syncretism, fellowship must be withheld from those who use the name of the triune God in blasphemy, and as I will demonstrate, must avoid syncretistic notions by constantly being reminded of her faith in the triune God.<sup>8</sup> Second, there is also a concentrated ideal of fellowship that embraces believers' concerns for purity and clarity of message and, hence, seeks a visible fellowship with one another around a consensus of doctrines (*consensus de doctrina*). The practical expression of this fellowship materializes in a *communio sacris*, a fellowship around the holy or sacred things; a violation of this would be defined as unionism.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Confessional-Lutheran Mission Society called Lutheran Church Mission (formerly known as the Bleckmar Mission) adopted three important theses to indicate the confessional nature of her missionary task: "The Lutheran church can pursue only Lutheran mission work," "Lutheran mission work can only be pursued by the Lutheran church," and "Lutheran mission work must lead to a Lutheran church." Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, ed., *Lutherische Kirche treibt Lutherische Mission: Festschrift zum 75 jährigen Jubiläum der Bleckmarer Mission, 1892, 14 Juni 1967, Hrsg von Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf* (Bleckmar üB Soltau: Mission Evangelisch-Lutherischer Freikirchen, 1967), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), *Theology of Fellowship* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1965), 11.

<sup>9</sup> The main, official sources pertaining to the issue are: CTCR, *Theology of Fellowship*; CTCR, *A Lutheran Stance toward Ecumenism* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1974); CTCR, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1981); CTCR, *Inter-Christian Relationships: An Instrument for Study* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1991); CTCR, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship: Study Materials and Summary* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2000); CTCR, *The Lutheran Understanding of*

## I. The Broad View of Fellowship: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Ecclesiology

### *The One Holy and Catholic Church: Faith in the Triune God*

According to the watershed statements on the church made in Articles VII and VIII in the Augsburg Confession—which, according to Sasse, were never as well articulated until that time in church history—the Evangelical Lutheran Church reflects a theological charity that acknowledges the existence of a body of true believers within the segregated denominations of Christianity.<sup>10</sup> They share a common faith in the triune God. This church is defined as the *una sancta*, the *congregatio sanctorum*. The existence of the true faith that unites all believers is an article of faith and thus a *mysterion* known only to God.<sup>11</sup> And yet, while this true unity is seen only by God, the faith of this *una sancta* is believed to exist where there is a visible expression of faith, even if its lowest common denominator is the ecumenical creeds or similar statements made to that effect. It is no Platonic entity; rather it exists wherever there is the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Theological concession to an ecclesial breadth stemming from the concept of the *una sancta* has always been part of the theological heritage of the Lutheran Church. It may be considered a provision of charity because it was, admittedly, defined against the backdrop of the declaration of Luther as a heretic. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Reformation emerged from a church body that cloaked Christology with mariology and justification with meritorious practices. Still, the Augsburg Confession confesses a fellowship of faith that crosses all boundaries. One of the first attempts to provide a concrete assessment of this broad fellowship, while at the same time also casting a missionary perspective on it, came from an influential authority in the seventeenth century: the orthodox theologian

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*Fellowship: Report on Synodical Discussions* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2001). Further documents relating to fellowship issues are: CTCR, *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1983); CTCR, *Admission to the Lord's Supper: Basics of Biblical and Confessional Teaching* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Sasse, "Kirche und Kirchen," in *Credo Ecclesiam* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1930), 307.

<sup>11</sup> The CTCR, *Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (2000), 4, for example acknowledges that the "the Holy Trinity is the source and pattern for the fellowship Christians have with one another in the 'one holy Christian and apostolic Church.'" Although much of that faith is assumed as a given and not explained any further.

and famous hymnologist at Hamburg, Philip Nicolai (1556-1608).<sup>12</sup> In his book entitled *Commentarii de regno Christi* (Commentaries on the kingdom of Christ, 1597), Nicolai offers a panoramic survey of all regions of the world and chronicles how the remotest regions have already heard the preaching of the apostles. With somewhat incredulous descriptions Nicolai perpetuates the common tradition that the apostles had reached all parts of the world.<sup>13</sup> Newly discovered regions such as Brazil, Peru, and the West Indies were also in possession of the Christian gospel, even if it meant only a breeze of it.<sup>14</sup>

More important, however, is Nicolai's astounding ecumenical openness by recognizing the work of his opponents, the Roman Catholic Jesuits, who did work out of reach to Lutheran influence.<sup>15</sup> He and others within orthodoxy had access to reports on mission work in the East such as those made in 1564 by a Jesuit missionary to Japan, Johannes Baptista Montius. What Nicolai established from these reports was that the Jesuit missionaries were actually making proper Christians. They ascertained from these reports that they were instructing heathens in the fundamental Christian doctrines such as the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Baptism; they also abstained from the erroneous doctrines on the primacy of the pope, purgatory, indulgences, and merits. The faculty of Wittenberg in 1651, almost one hundred years later, similarly concluded that the Jesuits were not making papists "much less a Jesuit, but a

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<sup>12</sup> Willy Heß, *Das Missionsdenken bei Philip Nicolai* (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 1962). Wolfgang Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche im 17. Jahrhundert* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1997), 9.

<sup>13</sup> This tradition rests on Ps 19:4-5; Rom 10:18, Col 1:6, and in historic reports attributed to the historian Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339). See Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche*, 8; and Heß, *Das Missionsdenken bei Philip Nicolai*, 92.

<sup>14</sup> He certainly displays innovative thought to prove his point: The Brazilians, though being under God's wrath for having rejected the preaching, still perpetuate a ritual that is reminiscent of the form of Baptism as can be seen from their pagan priests' conduct in their temples who still used the signing of the cross. See Walter Holsten, "Die Bedeutung der altprotestantischen Dogmatik für die Mission," in *Das Evangelium und die Völker. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie der Mission* (Berlin-Friedenau: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Gosnerischen Mission, 1939), 148-166.

<sup>15</sup> In the seventeenth-century, colonies and foreign lands remained in Spanish and Portuguese hands and, in accordance with the *cuius regio, eius religio* agreed upon in the peace of Augsburg of 1555, Lutherans had no claim on them. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church pursued missions actively and expansively. To avoid disarray and confusion within the ranks of its monastic orders as to who is to go where, Pope Gregory XV in 1622 passed the "*Congregatio de propaganda fide*," to streamline its mission; Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche*, 10.

Christian just as we are.”<sup>16</sup> Such ecumenism was not out of the ordinary for Lutherans, nor was it a wholesale dismissal of its own particular doctrines. Lutheran orthodoxy stood firmly rooted in the tradition of the Augsburg Confession (CA VII), and thus considered that the preaching and the sacrament were still going on, and people still had faith in the triune God.<sup>17</sup>

This professed unity is incredibly important for relations to remain conciliatory on the mission field. It would be a mistake to consider the existence of this Christian fellowship as totally invisible without to some degree requesting proof of the veracity of the faith in the triune God and its practices. For against a confessed faith to the triune God and on the basis of its practice, Lutheran mission measures all ecclesial acts such as Baptism, Holy Communion, ordination, and joint prayer. Generally, if they pass the test, we accept their validity and refrain from actively proselytizing such Christians. As is well known, Baptism performed by other denominations is accepted less grudgingly by Lutherans than Holy Communion. In the former, the validity rests on the words of institution in the name of the triune God, which we recognize is still confessed, whereas in the latter there are other weighing factors. Holy Communion as celebrated by Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches is generally accepted as efficacious, but whether the same applies to the Reformed is more difficult to say.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the churches of the

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<sup>16</sup> Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche*, 84–89. Johann Gerhard’s evaluations are not much different “*Ex his apparet, Jesuitas in primis Christianae religionis rudimentis tradendis a Pontificiis traditionibus et superstitionibus sibi temperare ac fundamentalibus fidei Christianae articulis imbutos, decalogo, symbolo apostolico, oratione Dominica mediocriter informatos baptizare, ut dubium nullum sit, quam plurimos hac ratione Christo lucriferi, qui papalia dogmata vel non intelligunt, vel in tentationum igne abjiciunt*,” *Loci Theologici*, ed. Preuss (Berlin: sumtibus Gust. Schlawitz, 1864), II:432. See also Gröbel, *Die Mission und die evangelische Kirche*, 18, 89.

<sup>17</sup> Heß, *Das Missionsdenken bei Philip Nicolai*, 160–161. Though Nicolai’s missiological influence was lost during the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) and thereafter, his missionary ecclesiology received renewed attention some two hundred and fifty years later by Wilhelm Löhe who cited major portions of “*De Regno Christi*” in his *Three books about the Church*, tr. ed. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). Christian Weber, *Missionstheologie bei Wilhelm Löhe: Aufbruch zur Kirche der Zukunft* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996), 295. Heß, *Das Missionsdenken bei Philip Nicolai*, 17–18. Werner Elert picks up this moment of both Nicolai and Löhe by calling it the “Gospel impact” (*evangelischer Ansatz*) of Protestant Lutheranism, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, tr. Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), I:385.

<sup>18</sup> Hermann Sasse, “Abendmahlsgemeinschaft, Kirchengemeinschaft und kirchliche Föderation,” *In Statu Confessionis*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf (Berlin and Schleswig-Holstein: Verlag die Spur GMBH & Co. Christliche Buchhandels, 1976), II:240. The

Radical Reformation, any notions of a possible presence of Christ are completely removed by their disuse of the words of institution.<sup>19</sup>

What makes matters more confusing is that syncretistic churches have emerged all over the world, particularly in Africa and South America, where the confession of the triune God, the centrality of Christ, and the sacraments merge with active ancestor worship and animal sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> The missionary sacrament of Baptism and the faith in the triune God is often concealed by such questionable practices. Upon close examination *in concreto*, one discovers both confession and practices that are far removed from the faith confessed at the ecumenical councils and Chalcedon. One wonders, whether under such instances the salutary faith of the *una sancta*, could even exist. We would do well as Lutheran Christians to respond to our mission obligation and alert others where such dangers lurk. The church of today, is challenged more than ever in the area of Christian faith and fellowship in the triune God. Modern discussions on this subject draw our attention to this fact as well.

### *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Discussions*

Karl Rahner in his seminal tract, *The Trinity*, observes that Christians are basically impotent to confess their faith in the triune God lucidly on the basis that: "Christians are in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."<sup>21</sup> Rahner has a point, especially in view of popular Unitarian expressions of God found even among Lutherans.

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incongruity between the two sacraments would be less evident, if one were to accept the validity of both Sacraments on the basis of Luther's (and Augustine's) principle that "when the word is added to the element, a sacrament results" (SA III, vi, 1).

<sup>19</sup> In South Africa the Reformed Anabaptists (known as the Doppers) celebrate communion without the use of the words of institution.

<sup>20</sup> See J. N. Amanze, *Botswana Handbook of Churches* (Gaborone: Pula Press, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, tr. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 10-11; Carl E. Braaten, *No Other Gospel: Christianity among the World's Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 105. Carl Braaten quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, after his visit to the United States, observed this about American theology, which is by and large in want of a definitive Christology: "The rejection of Christology is characteristic of the whole of present-day American theology. Christianity basically amounts to religion and ethics in American theology. Consequently, the person and work of Christ fall into the background and remain basically not understood in this theology." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Protestantismus ohne Reformation," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1958), 353-354, quoted in Braaten, *No Other Gospel*, 15.



Naturally, classical Christianity is categorized as a monotheistic form of belief, but if it is not careful, warns Rahner, Christianity's monotheistic form of belief could become its Achilles' heel. The root of this problem lies in Christianity's dogmatic system wherein, Rahner claims, the doctrine of the Trinity

occupies a rather isolated position. . . . To put it crassly . . . when the treatise [on the Trinity] is concluded, its subject is never brought up again. . . . It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake, and that even after it has been made known to us, it remains, as a reality, locked up within itself. We make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to do with us at all.<sup>22</sup>

For other contemporary scholars such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, and Carl Braaten, Rahner's invective has struck a cord, and in debating the subject further they have encountered a basic deficiency in the doctrine of the Trinity that applies to both the theologies of the East and West.<sup>23</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity in Western Christendom rests on a platform of struggles against false concepts of the Trinity as three separate and independent gods, which resulted in the defense of the unity of God: a monotheism that argues for an essential union of all three persons in the one true God. The Trinity thus becomes only of interest insofar as they *ad se* agree with the one divine essence of the triune God: Christ is *homousios* with the Holy Spirit and to preserve the third person's essential union he is confessed as "proceeding from both Son and Father."<sup>24</sup> From this divine unity, which is either viewed as Spirit (John 4:24) or as love (1 John 4:8), the West derived the plurality of the trinitarian persons. The East in turn sees the unity in the monarchy of the Father. In the end, the Father is the personal God who is the source of both Son and Spirit. The Father alone has the freedom and privilege to be irreducible and becomes the only *fons* (source) in the divinity.

<sup>22</sup> Rahner, *The Trinity*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), I:256-336; Robert W. Jenson, "Die trinitarische Grundlegung der Theologie. Östliche und westliche Trinitätslehre als ökumenisches Problem," *Luther und die trinitarische Tradition. Ökumenische und Philosophische Perspektiven*, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, Vol. 23 (Erlangen: Martin Luther Verlag, 1994), 9-23. See also Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), I:135-161.

<sup>24</sup> See the decisions made by the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381).

Both of the above presentations have their shortcomings: that of trying to derive the Trinity from the person of the Father, or the unity of the divine substance. The East looked at the West dumbfounded, unable to accept their scheme as anything other than modalism; the West equally perplexed looked at the East as supporting subordinationism.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, Pannenberg raises his concerns over the systematic procedure the West has so readily assumed, namely, that of deriving the Trinity from the divine substance. Any talk about God that puts the doctrine of unity first that then advances by way of derivation to the Trinity could lead to the false assumption "that the trinitarian statements must seem to be more or less superfluous and an external addition to the doctrine of the one God."<sup>26</sup> If one actually follows this method, one should guard against the possible misconception of stating explicitly beforehand "that what is said about the unity is in itself insufficient" and "that trinitarian statements [must] supplement what is said about the one God."<sup>27</sup> Even the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church fathers of Lutheran Orthodoxy, though speaking of God within the framework of special revelation, began with Old Testament monotheism and derived the attributes of God from the concept of God as supreme being or spirit. Only then would they advance to the doctrine of the Trinity. Thereby they, too, could not protect themselves from a misconception "that the one God can be better understood without rather than within the doctrine of the Trinity." This in turn conveyed the false impression that "the latter seems to be a superfluous addition to the concept of the one God even though it is reverently treated as a mystery of revelation."<sup>28</sup>

Within a mission context, moreover, one is reminded of the words of Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), who, as far as his

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<sup>25</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:298: "Any derivation of the plurality of trinitarian persons from the essence of the one God, whether it be viewed as spirit or love, leads into the problems of either modalism on the one hand or subordinationism on the other". Similarly, Braaten, *No Other Gospel*, 112: "The . . . method of starting with the assumption of unity in the interest of a strict monotheism—whether of Jewish, Greek, or Roman provenance—led to the Arian and Sabellian heresies. Because the Western Latin tradition began with the assumption of unity and then proceeded to inquire into the Trinity it has produced an unstable record on the Trinity that has threatened to unravel into unitarianism with its lower accompanying Arian Christology, in which Christ is something lower than God."

<sup>26</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:283.

<sup>27</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:281–283.

<sup>28</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:291.

Christology is concerned, may still be considered a Lutheran.<sup>29</sup> He addressed his missionaries overseas, who were in the process of compiling a general catechism for the heathen (1740) with the following instructions and cautionary words. He alerts them to two false methods of proclaiming the gospel among the heathen: 1) that one tells them too much about God and nothing about the Lamb and his reconciliation; 2) that in proclaiming the gospel one tells them first about the Father and then about his Son. "Therefore" he advises,

we want henceforth to preach to the heathen first that the Creator of all things, God, in whom they believe from nature, became man and poured out His blood for us. Afterwards, when they believe in His death and wounds, one says to them that God has a Father, etc. . . . If one tells the heathen first about the Father and then about the Son, then one makes them into Arians who want to go directly to the Father and pass by the Son, but certainly no one comes to the Father except through Him. At the same time, they get an idea of subordination (i.e. that the Son is less than the Father). Although to some extent it has a basis, it is fitting only before brothers and sisters who look into the depth of the mystery.<sup>30</sup>

I do not plan to equivocate the doctrine of the Trinity. To be sure, Christianity's talk of God is always reflective of who God is as it engages the unbelief on the mission field. The nature of that talk depends on the context and is certainly different from a pure systematic reflection on the triune God in the classroom. Nevertheless, Zinzendorf and contemporary discussions do at least bring to our attention that the widely accepted procedure of talking about God ontologically in seeking common views on the identity of God has its shortcomings. The dialogue of seeking to build bridges is riddled with problems if the discussion precludes the economy of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and, especially, the status of Christ. If Christ is inserted at a later point, how could he be understood other than subordinate or peripheral to the common notion of a god?<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 179.

<sup>30</sup> ed. Werner Raupp (Hrsg.), *Mission in Quellentexten. Von der Reformation bis zur Weltmissionskonferenz 1910* (Erlangen: Verlag der Evang.-Luth. Mission and Bad Liebenzell: Verlag der Liebenzeller Mission, 1990), 167.

<sup>31</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:299. Studies in the comparison of religions do in fact demonstrate that most religions have incorporated Christ in some form or another into their belief system. This would potentially open up the economic Trinity for inter-religious dialogue. God could simply be spoken of as the New Testament Gospel narratives portray him, rather than being caught up in the usual philosophic debates about the being of God. Certainly, Christian talk of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit may

Any talk of God, therefore, should speak of him as he revealed himself in the economy of salvation (*Heilsökonomie*). Speaking about the divine unity before the revealed economy of the triune God is provisional talk. Only after it has been presented in detail should one proceed to the unity and attributes of the divine essence. Pannenberg suggests this procedure and actually follows it for his own *Systematic Theology*:

To find a basis for the doctrine of the Trinity we must begin with the way in which the Father, Son, and Spirit come on the scene and relate to one another in the event of revelation...Christian statements about the one God and his essence and attributes relate to the triune God whom we see in the relation of Jesus to the Father. They can thus be discussed only in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>32</sup>

In the economy of salvation, moreover, the persons do not function as mere modes of being but actually as centers of action. They present a concrete and intrinsically differentiated life within the unity but never beyond its essence. The Cappadocian rule guards against possible tri-theistic notions: "the external operations of the Trinity are indivisible," that is, they do not divide the essence of God. In this sense, "the doctrine of the Trinity is in fact concrete monotheism."<sup>33</sup>

### *Learning from Luther and the Confessions*

The preceding presentation was not inserted merely for the sake of adding length. While it simply broaches the topic of modern discussions and forgoes the important task of discussing its scriptural and doctrinal propriety, its sentiments resonate with much of what Luther says about God in the Large Catechism, though with one important distinction: the nature of fellowship with God. We are given insight into the vestiges of the Trinity (*vestigia Trinitatis*): how he enacts fellowship and how he maintains it with the believer. Though often scorned for flirting with tri-theism and for breaking the traditional twelve-fold division for a threefold, Luther did so, I believe, not only for pedagogical reasons but to offer insight into God, which was until then argued more or less in an almost philosophical way (as monotheistic). The external trinitarian works, as he describes them, are not just incidental or salient variables. On the contrary, Luther makes

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presuppose a prior understanding of god. It is obviously the God of Israel who revealed himself as the one and only God for whom they struggled against the prevalent gods in their religious surrounding, and then, more specifically and especially, the same Christian God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ.

<sup>32</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:299.

<sup>33</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I:335.

concrete statements of God, statements which CA I makes only in abstract ways. Luther opens up a scheme that brings the believer concretely and existentially into a fellowship with the triune God and not only in a purely conceptual way. As Rahner notes: "The Trinity is not for us a reality which can only be expressed as a doctrine. The Trinity itself is with us; it is not merely given to us because revelation offers us statements about it. Rather these statements are made to us because the reality of which they speak is bestowed upon us."<sup>34</sup> In Luther's threefold presentation, the mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of salvation. The conversation here is about how God is not removed from us in heaven but is here on earth in fellowship with us. To use modern terminology: God is discovered in discourse.<sup>35</sup> This begins christocentric, or better crucicentric, centering on the redeeming work of Christ in whom we see a loving God and not the angry and terrible judge.<sup>36</sup> But Luther does not remain a christomonist, engaging in a "unitarianism of the second article;"<sup>37</sup> he is quick to add the economy of the Spirit "neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit."<sup>38</sup> For without the Spirit even Christ's work would have "remained hidden and no one knew of it, it would have been all in vain, all lost" (LC II, 38).<sup>39</sup> The believer is thus told that he is taken up into the fellowship with the triune God as he relates to ecclesiology. The church functions as mother, it incorporates and nurtures the faith of every Christian "through the Word of God" "which takes place through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire gospel" (LC II, 42, 54).<sup>40</sup> For this reason the triune God and the community of believers cannot be separated; their connection has missiological and soteriological implications.<sup>41</sup> The believer is brought into

<sup>34</sup> Rahner, *The Trinity*, 39, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Jenson suggests this term in place of the term *conversation*; Braaten and Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:470.

<sup>36</sup> "... we could never come to recognize the Father's favor and grace were it not for the LORD Christ, who is the mirror of the Father's heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge" (LC II, 65); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 440.

<sup>37</sup> A phrase coined by H. Richard Niebuhr, see Braaten and Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:469.

<sup>38</sup> Braaten and Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:469.

<sup>39</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 436. "For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, apart from which no one can come to the Lord Christ" (LC II, 45); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 436.

<sup>40</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 436, 438.

<sup>41</sup> "Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the beginning point for entering it" (LC II, 52); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 438.

this fellowship and any separation from it would be an exclusion also from salvation (LC II, 66).<sup>42</sup> Where the church remains true to its proclamation, salvation is found. One is amazed today how this premise is abandoned across denominations, even among Evangelicals, for a greater inclusiveness.<sup>43</sup> Against the backdrop of an economic Trinity and an ecclesiology along with it, Christianity confesses an exclusive trinitarian faith of an ecclesiocentric nature, which is explicitly defended already in the Athanasian Creed against monotheistic proposals of other kinds.<sup>44</sup>

## II. The Concentrated View of Fellowship: A Doctrinal and Sacramental Reality

### *Establishing Criteria for Fellowship*

Luther backs his ecclesiocentric perspective with a trinitarian theology. The church serves as the custodian over the word through which the

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<sup>42</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 440. To be sure, Luther's doctrine of vocation reminds us that Christians are in every facet of their life in worship and fellowship with the triune God as his explanation to the First Commandment holds: "*Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God*" (LC I, 3); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 386.

<sup>43</sup> Though a Roman Catholic, Paul F. Knitter, in *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996) represents Protestant views. A notable evangelical is John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992). A survey of the position of Evangelicals is given in Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). For the more traditional, exclusive arguments, one may see Peter Beyerhaus, "Theologisches Verstehen nichtchristlicher Religionen," *Kerygma und Dogma* 35 (April/Juni 1989): 106-127. See especially his appraisal for past traditional christocentric supporters such as Karl Heim, Karl Hartenstein, Hendrik Kraemer, and Gerhard Rosenkranz.

<sup>44</sup> Unlike Luther, CA I confesses God abstractly: "... there is one divine essence . . . . Yet, there are three persons, coeternal and of the same essence and power" (CA I, 2-3); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 37. In doing so, however, it does not dismiss the ecclesiological implications. For an exclusion from fellowship with the triune God is, at the same time, also an exclusion from the catholic faith (from which the Mohammedans are also dismissed). After all, the article frames its statement with "the churches among us teach . . ." (*Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent . . .*; CA I, 1); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 37. The Athanasian Creed repeatedly makes statements to the effect that "whoever wants to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic faith" (Athanasian Creed, 1-2, 26, 27, 40); Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 24-25. People might object and insist that individuals could also live as Christians without being in immediate contact with the church. Such lone individuals with a faith in Christ probably exist. It would, nevertheless, be difficult to fathom that they became Christians without any contact with the church. See Otto Zänker, "Die evangelische Kirchenfrage der Gegenwart," in *Credo Ecclesiam*, ed. Hans Ehrenberg (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1930), 87.

triune God bestows his fellowship (CA XIII).<sup>45</sup> It should be obvious then why the Evangelical Lutheran Church has singled out the marks (*notae ecclesiae*) to define her doctrine of fellowship. Unlike all other activities, the preaching of God's word and the administration of the sacraments are the source and definitive means for other activities. Fellowship is theocentric not anthropocentric, dynamic not static, a gift rather than a work. The marks are the dividing line in the church between that which is holy and that which is profane. They establish an eternal *communio in sacris*. To be sure, there is often a broadening of the marks with what one may call other attributes.<sup>46</sup> A classic case of contention is prayer, as Hermann Sasse reminds us:

The question when and under what circumstances joint prayer is possible cannot be answered for certain. But it should be stated that the celebrated prayer in the church's liturgy as prayer of the body of Christ was seen since early times part of the *communicatio in sacris*, as the practice of the early church shows in which the prayer together with the eucharist was held behind closed doors and argued from Mt. 6:6.<sup>47</sup>

The clarity with which fellowship around the marks is argued is noticeably absent in the question of prayer.<sup>48</sup> This is partly because the history of the LCMS reveals that its leaders at official meetings would at times abstain

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<sup>45</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 47.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Steinacker, *Die Kennzeichen der Kirche: eine Studie zu ihrer Einheit, Heiligkeit, Katholizität und Apostolizität*, Theologische Bibliothek Töppelmann 38 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 28–29. In this sense, the rejection of the LCMS's Constitution of all forms of unionism and syncretism relates directly to the marks of the church. These prohibitions are "a) serving congregations of mixed confession by ministers of the church; b) Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession; c.) Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities are all related to the preaching of the Gospel and the means of grace. (Art. VI, 2)" *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998 Handbook* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998), 11; CTCR, *Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship*, 2000, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis*, II:240. In fact the CTCR corroborates this observation with references to the Council of Laodicea, latter half of fourth century, which forbade prayer with heretics in its Canon XXXIII: "No one shall join in prayer with heretics or schismatics." CTCR, *Theology of Fellowship*, 22.

<sup>48</sup> From discussions with the Wisconsin Synod, especially Lutheran churches define it as an activity that results from fellowship already in place with God and with one another. Prayer is a fruit of faith, and thus a level lower than that of the preaching of God's word and the administration of the sacraments. This point continues to be made by Lutheran churches in view of the Wisconsin Synod's understanding of church fellowship as a "unit concept, covering every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of a common faith." See *Four Statements on Fellowship*, 9.44–47.



from joint prayer with leaders of other denominations, even as close as those from the Iowa and Ohio Synods. Abstinence from prayer in such instances was used as a tool to express one's dissatisfaction with the doctrinal positions of the other party.<sup>49</sup> Prayer is God talk, addressing the triune God and thus demands a context where such God talk is possible. By implication, joint prayers taking place beyond such a context would have to be dismissed.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, this view is easily abandoned for the sake of making prayer an evangelistic tool to witness one's faith to others. That would broaden the context considerably. But to have it assume a role as a means of grace, the preaching of the gospel, is indeed problematic.<sup>51</sup> At best, one should regard it as a *preparatio evangelica*, a petition to the triune God in the context of worship that he may open the hearts and minds of the callous for the truth found only in Jesus Christ.

Fellowship is seen particularly under the aspect of worship and the means of grace, but it is understood confessionally and doctrinally.<sup>52</sup> Though the *doctrina evangelii* in CA VII is a singular term and primarily associated with the doctrine of justification, it permeates and influences all other articles.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the *doctrina evangelii* is the apostolic teaching,

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<sup>49</sup> This was argued with the use of Scripture and from articles on that subject, see examples in Erwin L. Lueker, ed., *Lutheran Cyclopedia* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), 296.

<sup>50</sup> The Independent Lutheran Church in Germany (known as the SELK) has in its recent official statement on Christian relations with Muslims in Germany explicitly dismissed any joint services and prayer with adherents of the Islam religion; see Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche (SELK), *Wegweisung für Evangelisch-Lutherische Christen für das Zusammenleben mit Muslimen in Deutschland* (Hannover: Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche, 2002), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, the CTCR opens the door to such a thought by stating in regards to joint prayers at civic events: "These occasions may provide opportunity to witness to the Gospel." CTCR, *Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (2001), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Such indications were always part of the church, as Elert rightly points out with regard to the early church. See CTCR, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (2000), 12.

<sup>53</sup> CTCR, *Theology of Fellowship*, 25. Hermann Sasse sees unity possible only in an agreement on all the articles of the Lutheran Confessions as they relate to the churchly acts of preaching, teaching, and the sacraments. His negative opinion on the Brief Statement of the LCMS is renowned; see Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis*, II:257. Leif Grane holds a minimalist approach and dismisses any confessional reading of the *doctrina evangelii* because it stands in violation to Melancthon's original intent, which considers the *consentire de doctrina evangelii* (to agree concerning the teachings of the gospel) as referring to proclamation alone and not to correct doctrine or something similar. Rather, according to Grane, the CA could be characterized as pre-confessionalistic and pre-schism, and thus in no way envisions nor encompasses the idea of a confession as a line of demarcation of one denomination from another. Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession*:

the *ta didaskalia*, that is truthfully explained in all articles of the Lutheran Confessions. CA X is, therefore, not an illegitimate aggrandizement of the *doctrina evangelii* but its corroboration: "For this reason the churches are not to condemn one another because of differences in ceremonies when in Christian freedom one has fewer or more than the other, as long as these churches are otherwise united in teaching *and in all the articles of the faith*" (SD X, 31).<sup>54</sup>

Fellowship demands a confessional agreement in all articles of the faith as the church preaches (teaches) the gospel and administers the sacraments, which is pulpit and altar fellowship. From this emerged the *noli tangere* (do not touch) policy that also took effect on the mission field. Ties with Lutheran mission societies of Leipzig, Hermannsburg, and Neuendettelsau were severed. The LCMS mission work began with missionaries who defected to it from the Leipzig mission society. Franz Mohn and Theodor Näther among others disagreed with former mission colleagues on the mission field in India over doctrines such as verbal inspiration, *Übertragungslehre* (conferring the office), the status of the congregation in relation to church, and whether the pope is the antichrist. Both missionaries were enthusiastically embraced and supported by the LCMS.<sup>55</sup> Since then the mission field became the testing grounds for confessionalism in practices such as Baptism, exchange of pulpits, Holy Communion, and mixed marriages.<sup>56</sup>

In the discussion of fellowship the Evangelical Lutheran Church pays close attention to the body of doctrines (*corpus doctrinae*). The LCMS also has adopted the traditional orthodox division of the articles of faith (*articuli fidei*). They were divided into a hierarchy of doctrines: secondary

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*A Commentary*, tr. John H. Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 97.

<sup>54</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 640; emphasis added.

<sup>55</sup> William J. Danker, "Into All the World," in *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 299–303; Wilhelm Oehler, *Geschichte der Deutschen Evangelischen Mission* (Baden-Baden: Wilhelm Fehrholz, 1949), I: 221–222.

<sup>56</sup> Fred W. Meuser's analysis also includes the LCMS's and its partnership churches' opinion of practice on the mission field, see "Das Problem der Kanzel- und Abendmahlsgemeinschaft unter Lutheranern in Amerika," *Kirche und Abendmahl. Studien und Dokumentation zur Frage der Abendmahlsgemeinschaft im Luthertum*, ed. Vilmos Vajta (Berlin and Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1963), 211. Notwithstanding frequent criticisms from within such as Edward L. Arndt (1864–1929), in *Moving Frontiers*, 306; and Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1963), which is the embodiment of a constant implicit critique of the Missouri Synod's confessional mission enterprise.

fundamental articles such as Baptism and Holy Communion were sorted around the primary fundamental articles like the doctrine of justification and the doctrine of the Trinity (*articuli fundamentales et non fundamentales*). Around the fundamentals were clustered the non-fundamental doctrines, such as usury, which, though not a matter of indifference, do not if held in error necessarily terminate fellowship. These distinctions within the articles of faith underscore the felicity extended to those who, despite being subjected to abhorrent errors, were still believed to be in possession of the salutary faith.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, however, this hierarchy in the fundamental articles of faith does not establish the rules for fellowship,<sup>58</sup> that is, as if the primary fundamental ones were all that is needed. Certainly, Lutheran orthodoxy and the Lutheran Confessions always put Jesus first, but fellowship was not addressed with a minimalistic approach. Fellowship practices on the mission field also reflected that concern. Baptism, even if it was defined as secondary fundamental, or only an ordained necessity, became the missionary sacrament for enacting fellowship: the wages of original sin and the Lord's command to baptize never removed its urgency. It remains the first visible enactment of fellowship with the triune God and the switch in dominion (*Herrschaftswechsel*).<sup>59</sup>

Thus the following rule for fellowship holds: Where the truth of the gospel and the sacraments are distorted through heresy, fellowship should not be practiced. At the same time, moreover, where the gospel has not been completely obliterated and the sacraments are still administered, there the *una sancta* also exists.<sup>60</sup> Such a distinction is important for the practice of an inter-Christian relationship. Since missions takes its place in CA VII as a kerygmatic-sacramental act it belongs to the *communio in sacris*, and thus can only be done by a Lutheran Church. In distinction to this,

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<sup>57</sup> Lueker, *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, 320. See also Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I:80–93; and W. Rohnert, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Braunschweig and Leipzig: Hellmuth Wollermann, 1902), 20

<sup>58</sup> CTCR, *Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (2001), 4.

<sup>59</sup> The Lutheran Confessions also have not yet appropriated such a distinction of the articles of faith. Baptism still remains an absolute necessity. The CA II and the SD XII, 11 dismiss all thoughts of diminishing Baptism, even for children. But the Evangelical Lutheran Church never followed that stringent line. Siding with Luther, it always took exception to the death of unbaptized children of Christian parents who are to be commended to the God of infinite mercy. See Martin Luther, "Sermon on John 19: 25–37," in *Luthers Werke*, Erlangen Second Edition (Frankfurt am Main and Erlangen: Verlag von Heyder & Zimmer), 2, 152.

<sup>60</sup> Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis*, II:227.

however, there are the matters of externals making a *cooperatio in externis* with other church bodies possible, where the true Evangelical Lutheran Church does not see its doctrine and confession compromised or necessary for such inter-Christian action. This cooperation becomes a matter of discretion and casuistry and thus demands careful evaluation case by case.<sup>61</sup>

### *Testing Fellowship with Holy Communion*

The celebration of Holy Communion always becomes a test for the practice of church fellowship because of its central place in ecclesiology and is generally associated as the seal of agreement.<sup>62</sup>

Against the backdrop of those who belong to heterodox church bodies or among those who know the name of the triune God except in ignorance, a common missiological question is always this: "Should we admit someone who is not of our confession but who desires Christ in Holy Communion to participate in the altar" (1 Cor 10:18), or should we dismiss him and send him back to where the individual comes from, to the false gods or to a church with heterodox doctrines? Such a question really poses two false alternatives, assuming a *tertium non datur*. Practices of fellowship governed by missionary visions often propose Gordian-knot solutions to a complicated issue. It should be obvious, nevertheless, that lax practices in fellowship result ultimately in a counter-productive missionary witness of

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<sup>61</sup> After careful evaluation of certain practices, Lutheran mission would not engage in absolute separatism or isolation such as in matters of Bible translations and humanitarian aid efforts. Naturally, concessions to such joint practices must be applied with discretion because it, too, could become subject to confusion and misconception. See CTCR, *A Lutheran Stance toward Ecumenism*, 11; and CTCR, *Inter-Christian Relationships*, 29, 33. Martin Franzmann's distinction between the *res externae* and the *res internae* in this regard are not helpful. For the *notae ecclesiae* were externals, too, but they do not fit that category because of their indispensability; see "What Kind of Cooperation Is Possible of Discussions to Date?" in *Toward Cooperation Among American Lutherans* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 18–22.

<sup>62</sup> Across denominations the Eucharist is given central place in the discussion of fellowship. This is evident for the WCC in its CWME statement *Mission in Christ's Way*: "Mission in unity requires Christians to work for the authenticity of the apostolic faith. Doctrinal divisions, especially those that prevent the sharing of the eucharist . . . keep Christians from making a common witness. The eucharist, which is the most central sacrament of our faith, also is the place where our divisions become most painfully apparent. . . . At the same time, in light of the fact that many people around us do not even know the name of the Triune God except in blasphemy, we call in question the endless debates and time-consuming preoccupations demanding an 'open' eucharist." Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1987), 77.

the church: It conveys the idea that variants to the gospel are allowed to coexist. Holy Communion and its practice presuppose ordinarily a preexisting ecclesial fellowship, and an *a priori* full agreement in doctrine. Ordinarily because in view of confessional groups emerging within the state churches of Scandinavia, this principle might some day be challenged. Even though the prospect that the LCMS and a Scandinavian church may enter fellowship, is highly improbable.<sup>63</sup>

Gunther Wenz, in his *Theology of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, twists the ecclesiology of the Augsburg Confession to such a degree that it supposedly condones a heterodox communion fellowship. Standing in the tradition of the Leuenberg Concord of 1973, he concludes that participants have no obligation to cede any of their doctrines or traditions while attending the Eucharist.<sup>64</sup> Holy Communion is thus a declaration of fellowship that unites all those in Christ (i.e. faith in the triune God), but simultaneously stands above all differences in doctrine, confessions, and teaching. In this sense, communion fellowship is considered as a remedial means to assist in overcoming ecclesial differences, if not also a means to ignore them.

Equally disturbing are concepts of communion fellowship that are eclectic in their choice of doctrines and dismissive of others. Robert Jenson, for example, in his much discussed *Systematic Theology* approaches Roman Catholicism in proposing a Eucharist ecclesiology (what he calls also an ecumenical *communio*-ecclesiology) that gives the Eucharist central place. Protestants will have little remaining reason to sacrifice unity for truth if a few doctrinal differences were to be erased. In order to achieve the goal, he advances innovative corrections to a selected array of doctrines of his choice, which he considers as obstacles—the saints, Mary, and the papal office—while other doctrines are made more or less dispensable.<sup>65</sup> Conversely and just as problematic is the proposal from an evangelical front where the centrality belongs to preaching, but the Eucharist is placed on the hatchet block with the practice of open fellowship. Often the *manducatio impiorum* (partaking of unbelievers) is invoked in this discussion, namely, that faith does not make the sacrament or the holiness

<sup>63</sup> Would the only interim solution then be a form of selective fellowship? That, too, must also be dismissed as the false alternative; CTCR, *The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship*, 27–32.

<sup>64</sup> Günther Wenz, *Theologie der Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-luthersichen Kirche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), I:14.

<sup>65</sup> Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Works of God* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), II:189–249. See also Braaten and Jenson, *Christian Dogmatics*, II:349–354.

of the communicant. One is then referred to the great meals of Christ, his fellowship with sinners, and the large banquet to which people from all corners and streets were asked to come in. Yes, thereby the ultimate criteria for admission becomes Christ's unlimited grace or unlimited gospel. Consequently, that would eliminate all attempts towards a practice of admission and discipline.<sup>66</sup>

Naturally, one should not make fellowship an issue of theological sophistry or academic research. The LCMS's *consensus doctrinae* could invite the thought of inquisition, including that of its own members. To use a helpful Roman Catholic distinction, the *fides implicita* (blind obedience to the doctrinal position of the church) and the *fides explicita* (the faith that knows exactly all the doctrines of the church) often coexist.<sup>67</sup> In regard to the reality of a discerning faith, may a *non liquet* (not all is clear) policy even be considered, that is to say: When should a confession be considered good enough?<sup>68</sup> With regard to the fellowship of the altar, Luther's quest to explain Christ's real presence as passionately as he did shows that a clear discerning faith between the Antiochenian or Alexandrian theology matters in the practice of fellowship,<sup>69</sup> which would also include a proper distinction of Christ's bodily presence (διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα, 1 Cor 11:29). Pannenberg erroneously takes 1 Corinthians 11:27–31 far more leniently, proposing a Melancthonian solution, so to speak, to the mode of presence: "Prerequisite for admission can only be that one seeks fellowship with Christ, that is the faith in the presence of Christ in the meal, but not this or that theological interpretation of the mode of presence." On that basis it would also be far easier, as has become the fad in many circles, to support infant communion: "It is permissible as soon as a child can grasp the thought that Jesus is present in the celebration of the meal as

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<sup>66</sup> CTCR, *Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper*, 8.

<sup>67</sup> The CTCR raises the important reality of "ambiguous denominationalism" within the LCMS: "Contemporary denominations tend to cling to their traditional official formulations of doctrine and confession, but without taking them literally or expecting their constituents to believe, teach, and confess them with any degree of consistency." *Inter-Christian Relationships*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> CTCR, *Admission to the Lord's Supper*, 47.

<sup>69</sup> I find it rather odd that a church historian such as Alister MacGrath fails to see the connection between sacramentology and Christology in the discussion between Lutherans and the Reformed. Differences in the sacrament inevitably also lead to Christology. That connection was made soon enough in the Formula of Concord, Articles VII and VIII. See "Christology: On Learning from History," in *Who do you say that I am? Christology and the Church*, ed. Donald Armstrong (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 84.

mysterious as it may still seem."<sup>70</sup> Others in this connection seek to establish a self-examination of sorts that preempts confirmation and to validate their case draw attention to Luther's statement in the Large Catechism to the effect that Baptism and not confirmation is admission (*baptismus est admissio*) to Holy Communion (LC V, 87).<sup>71</sup>

Communion fellowship is thus tossed between two crucial questions, should the Lord's Supper be considered a means of grace *or* a means of church discipline? Certainly the former is preferred over the latter, but then again it is for those who repent of their sins and seek a life in forgiveness. It is not a means to cheap grace that makes concession to a murky fideism. Communion fellowship also has ethical ramifications. On the mission field, there is the tendency to over-moralize the issue of fellowship: non-smoking and abstinence from alcohol often become criteria as well (e.g. Botswana, Haiti, and in large areas of Asia). How one walks this path between church discipline (doctrinal or moralism) and grace is a difficult one. Perhaps, one could solve this issue from the doctrine of justification itself: Repentance is important and not the works or virtues of an individual.

The early church practice of communion fellowship has taught us to draw distinctions between the *missa catechumenorum* and the *missa fidelium*. This was done precisely with the purpose in mind that while the church pursued its missionary obligation to the world outside, it was also responsible to its own people.<sup>72</sup> As the preaching of the word and Baptism establishes a fellowship in the triune God, the fellowship wrought in the Lord's Supper is confessed as special to the unbelieving world.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematische Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), III:364, 359, 362; my translation of the original German text.

<sup>71</sup> Kolb and Wengert, *Book of Concord*, 476. Suggestions to this effect are made by Gottfried Martens, "Die Teilnahme von Kindern an der Heiligen Kommunion nach dem Urteil der Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften," *Lutherische Beiträge* 7 (February 2002): 97-108.

<sup>72</sup> "The proclamation of the Gospel extends to all people, over the unbaptized and baptized. In the proclamation of the word the worship service is open for all people. Holy Communion is only for the baptized. When the church celebrates Holy Communion, the doors to the world are closed . . . Holy Communion is the specific means of grace for the already constituted community of disciples. The most essential (*Eigentümlichste*) of the worship service is recognizable only in Holy Communion," Peter Brunner, "Das Wesen des kirchlichen Gottesdienstes," *PRO ECCLESIA* (Berlin and Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1962), I:133.

<sup>73</sup> Walter Freytag, *Reden und Aufsätze: Herausgegeben von Jan Harmelink und Hans Jochen Margull*, TB 13/1-2 (München: C. Kaiser, 1961), 228; and "Verleiblichung des Lebens aus



Nonetheless, the church has recognized certain openings and exceptions to the practice of closed communion.<sup>74</sup> The clearer the church preaches and teaches, the more it is willing to address individual cases. But what kind of concessions should apply and to whom? Apart from campus and wartime situations, the LCMS allows also for rare and difficult situations of personal need and of being in a state of confession. Discretion to such exceptional cases resides with the church's pastors.<sup>75</sup> Hermann Sasse will have none of these apply not even in the case of *periculo mortis* (in the peril of death). He considers participation a confession. If exceptions apply, these would declare the important distinctions between the Lutheran and Reformed sacramentology as irrelevant.<sup>76</sup>

### III. Conclusion

Amid a diverse mix of denominational and religious pluralism, indifference, apostasy, and political theism, we are to acknowledge a broader fellowship, based on the existence of salvific faith in the triune God. This faith is in constant jeopardy and should not be presumed a given, as most fellowship documents do. It must be a constant topic of discussion in all facets of the church's life in order to be explained succinctly and lucidly in the ecclesial and mission environment. More importantly, such discussions are ecclesiologically (and missiologically) grounded for the believer. In the economy of the Holy Spirit, the church becomes, through its marks of word and sacrament, the instrument of salvation and fellowship. Such fellowship takes place in its concentrated form, where, particularly in worship, it becomes a matter of confession to this triune God. This confession, moreover, embraces the doctrine of justification with all other articles of the gospel. Fellowship is a matter of a confessional custodianship over the marks through which this triune God works. As was demonstrated from the practice of the fellowship of the altar, the church is, nevertheless, never free from its challenges and complications.

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Christus. Die Bedeutung des Abendmahls für die Gemeinde, vom Missionsfeld her gesehen," *Reden und Aufsätze* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961), I:236-244. Though, as previously stated the sacraments might find a formal parallelism in other religions, they are unique to Christianity in terms of content and the combination of word and action. One may see Hans-Martin Barth, *Dogmatik: Evangelischer Glaube im Kontext der Weltreligionen* (Gütersloh: Christian Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlag, 2001), 587-588.

<sup>74</sup> See the cases of discretion in CTCR, *Inter-Christian Relationships*, 30-31; and CTCR, *The Lutheran Understanding of Church Fellowship* (2001), 11.

<sup>75</sup> CTCR, *Inter-Christian Relationships*, 31-32, 43; CTCR, *Admission to the Lord's Supper*, 47.

<sup>76</sup> Sasse, *In Statu Confessionis*, I:118.

I have chosen to speak of the mission of the church by task rather than locality. There is some truth in the fact that "[m]issions is no longer understood as a thing which plays itself out chiefly on the outer edges of Christendom, but instead as a way of life or, rather, as a lifestyle for every Christian congregation within its particular surrounding."<sup>77</sup> Placing missions into the definition of the church obliges both pastors and missionaries as overseers of the word and the sacraments to address issues of both missions and fellowship irrespective to their locality.<sup>78</sup> In 1965 the LCMS convention expressly passed a resolution that "the local Church and pastor are ultimately responsible for preaching of the Gospel, maintaining pure doctrine, and practicing fellowship."<sup>79</sup> Preaching and the gospel are not mere incidentals in the life of the church, jumbled together at good will; the three are all inextricably linked in the life of the church. Later, the 1971 LCMS convention passed a resolution to this effect stating: "[d]ifficult problems on the mission field are to be answered within the framework on the Synod's confessional stance."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations: Luther Texts on Mission*, tr. Klaus Detlev Schulz and Daniel Thies (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 3; See also David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian mission in theological perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 46. "After all, the Great Commission (Matt 28:19) explicitly says: 'Go ye therefore . . . .' The locality, not the task, decided whether someone was missionary or not; he is a missionary if he is commissioned by the Church in one locality to go and work elsewhere. The greater the distance between these two places, the clearer it is that he is a missionary."

<sup>78</sup> The CTCR observes: "one finds, all too often, that professing Lutherans hold positions and policies at variance with the official confessional positions of traditional Lutheranism". It then concludes that "[i]n contrast to the mid-19th century situation when the Missouri Synod was founded and its church-relations principles were first articulated, we can no longer assume that denominational membership clearly and directly identifies one's doctrinal positions and convictions." *Inter-Christian Relationships*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> CTCR, *Theology of Fellowship*, 46-105a.

<sup>80</sup> CTCR, *A Lutheran Stance toward Ecumenism*, 49-108b.

## Book Review

*The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15.* By Bruce K. Waltke. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004. xxxv+692 pages. \$50.00.

More than any other book of Scripture, Proverbs is popularly understood to be a book of practical advice. Yet, many of its sayings are often misunderstood or misapplied by laypersons reading the much-smooth English of the widely-available translations. The Hebrew of Proverbs is not easy, making good commentaries on it valuable to the parish pastor who is not a specialist in either the Hebrew language or Wisdom literature. Moreover, the growing number of articles and studies on Proverbs or on Wisdom literature in general presents a number of useful secondary sources for the study of the book, but most of these remain unknown and largely inaccessible for those who do not have privileges at an academic library. This commentary by Waltke, a respected evangelical scholar probably best known for his contributions to *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, 1990) and *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Moody, 1981), is the latest in the NICOT series that published its first volumes in 1976. This volume, originally planned to be a single volume on the entire book, represents only the introduction and commentary on the first fourteen chapters of Proverbs. A second volume on the balance of the book (Proverbs 16–31) is due to be published in 2005.

Waltke's commentary demonstrates throughout that he is conversant with most contemporary scholarship on Proverbs. The introduction takes pains to explore late twentieth-century commentaries, articles, and essays pertaining to Proverbs and its place among Wisdom literature in the Ancient Near East. At the same time, Waltke demonstrates that he stands within the stream of conservative evangelical thought as he defends a traditional view of the authorship of Proverbs. He defends Proverbs 10–24 as essentially composed by Solomon (with the 22:17–24:34 being other wisdom sayings adapted by Solomon), 25–29 as Solomon's proverbs edited by Hezekiah's scribes, Proverbs 30 in its entirety as coming from Agur's pen and all of Proverbs 31 as coming from King Lemuel, essentially in agreement with the various notices given in Proverbs itself. Moreover, he makes a good argument (based on his previous publications) that Proverbs 1–9 is also Solomon's work, contrary to the widespread opinion of critical scholars (and some evangelicals) who tend to date these chapters late. The only place where Waltke is open to challenge is his insistence that the acrostic poem about a Good Wife (31:10–31) is from Lemuel and not from the book's final (anonymous) editor. His argument here is not well-developed and his reasoning is suspect. But this is a minor point, since Lemuel *could* be the author of this poem. Waltke's introduction also competently explains other issues in Proverbs, including the ancient text and versions, the book's structure, poetry, poetics, and wisdom genres in Proverbs.

The commentary itself is competent, and while some of Waltke's philological assertions are open to challenge and will no doubt prove to be controversial,

the work clearly is well-researched and demonstrates Waltke's years of work on Wisdom literature. There are many exegetical insights to be found in the pages of this commentary. Moreover, Waltke skillfully demonstrates the organization of Proverbs. This is relatively easy to do for chapters 1-9, but much more difficult for 10-15, which is often seen as simply a random collection of sayings. Yet Waltke builds on the research of others ably demonstrating that these sayings are organized by various schemes, including a times theme, wordplay and catchword. While some of his assertions are less than convincing (e.g., the supposed chiasmic outline of Proverb 1-9, p. 12), most of his work on this score is welcome, since it will aid readers in understanding contextual clues that can be used to help interpret otherwise baffling sayings.

As helpful as all of this is, the Lutheran pastor will probably ask something more of a commentary on Proverbs: Where is Christ? Where is the gospel? Indeed, the editor's preface could be read as suggesting that this will be a prime focus, since this series arises out of American evangelicalism with "the conviction that the Bible is God's inspired Word, written by gifted human writers, through which God called humanity to enjoy a loving personal relationship with its Creator and Savior" (p. xx). Certainly, Waltke has much to comment on as it relates to God as Creator, a theme that is prominent in Proverbs (3:1-20; 8:1-31, and scattered sayings from Prov 10 onward). This is relatively easy. The harder part is finding and explicating Christ and his gospel in Proverbs. Unfortunately, Waltke almost denies that there is any reference to Christ at all in the book. He claims that Lady Wisdom who is featured prominently in Proverbs 3 and 8 is a reference to Solomon's wisdom and only a type of Christ (though he never explains his understanding of the word *type*). How Solomon's wisdom, not Christ, was present at creation and was that through which God created the world (3:19-20) and who rejoiced in God's creation (8:30-31) is not explained, although one might presume that Waltke believes that Solomon's wisdom derived from God himself. Instead, Waltke seems to be attempting to argue to the generally accepted view of critical scholars but to rescue it for evangelicals by giving it a patina of Christian application to Christ. Thus, he has a concluding section in the introduction that discusses Christ. Here he claims that Lady Wisdom cannot be Christ, yet somehow this all relates to Christ because Jesus is superior to Solomon's wisdom (a position that reads as if it is forced upon him by the New Testament). Strangely, he presents several propositions that are supposed to prove that Lady Wisdom cannot be Christ (p. 131). The most puzzling is the last one: "Wisdom was begotten by God, but Christ is God." Surely, Christ as God's Son strongly implies not only that he is God, but that he was begotten of the Father, a topic explored in the New Testament itself (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5; all relating to Psalm 2:7).

Moreover, Waltke is somewhat defensive about his denial that Lady Wisdom is not a hypostasis of Christ, since Proverbs 8 was the origin of the Arian controversy, and both sides admitted that this chapter depicts Christ. Instead, Waltke argues that the premise of the controversy (Lady Wisdom is Christ) was wrong from the start. Thus, neither the Arians nor the Orthodox were correct in seeing Wisdom as Christ. They were, in essence, arguing the right question on the basis of the wrong text. While this denial of any real intent of the author of Proverbs 8 to depict Christ as Wisdom is common among critical scholars and has been followed by some evangelicals, it is simply wrong. A comparison of Paul's discussion of Wisdom in Ephesians 3:8–10 with Proverbs 8 is enough to demonstrate that Paul knew Christ as "the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24), especially in Proverbs 8 (cf. Prov 8:10–11; 17–18; Eph 3:8; Prov 8:22–31; Eph 3:9–10; Prov 8:15–16; Eph 3:10). Our Lord himself claimed to be God's wisdom, as a quick comparison of Luke 11:49 and Matthew 23:34 demonstrates. Waltke seems embarrassed by the traditional Christian identification of Lady Wisdom as Christ, which leads him to claim that the Church Fathers were wrong about Proverbs 8 without truly exploring New Testament texts that may have given them good reasons for this identification. Instead, the Fathers are simply characterized as being ideologically motivated without having any sound exegetical basis for their assertion. While the Fathers often do not discuss in detail how they reached their exegetical conclusions, it is gratuitous and naive to believe that they were simply ideologues who asserted claims about a text without any sound exegetical principles. I believe that a sensitive reading of discussions of wisdom in the New Testament demonstrate that from the very beginning of our Lord's own teaching, he claimed to be Wisdom—a claim that was at least in part based on his understanding of Proverbs 3 and 8.

Thus, Waltke argues that the "high Christology" of Paul in the New Testament sprang from the apostle's fertile mind without any influence of Old Testament Wisdom texts (pp. 127–130). Since one cannot trace a "straight trajectory in Hellenistic Jewish wisdom literature moving from Wisdom in Proverbs 8 to Wisdom as the agent of creation to Jesus as Creator" (p. 128), there is no such trajectory in the Gospels or Paul, despite the fact that both can speak about Wisdom in terms that are at times quite parallel to Proverbs (e.g., Matt 23:34; Luke 11:49 1 Cor 1:19–30; Eph 1:17–18; 3:8–10).

Waltke at times seems to accept other claims of critical scholars and then attempt to make them palatable to evangelicals. For instance, like most critical scholars he argues that the verb קנה at Proverbs 8:22 must mean "created" instead of the more common "acquired" (e.g., Prov 1:5; 4:5, 7; 16:16; 17:16; 18:15; 23:23). The arguments for this are not convincing, especially that this meaning is more natural in other passages (e.g., Gen 4:1; Exod 15:16). Moreover, in his translation he fails to distinguish between קנה and חלל (8:24,

25), compounding the problem and obscuring the beautiful Christology of this passage. Wisdom says "God acquired me (חָכְמָה) at the beginning of his ways . . . I was brought forth (8:24, 25)," referring to the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. This, of course, was the crucial passage in the Arian controversy. No wonder Waltke denies that Proverbs 8 is about Christ, because if it is, his philology and exegesis would lead to the conclusion that the Arians were correct!

Waltke's failure to find significant passages about Christ in Proverbs leads him also to minimize the gospel in Proverbs. While he can speak of Proverbs as promising life and blessing, he often fails to unfold the riches of the gospel in Proverbs. Thus, he can speak about "life" in Proverbs being more than temporal existence and ultimately connecting it to the resurrection (p. 107), but he fails to use this as the gospel motivation to wise living that it actually is throughout the book. Passages that are filled with the blessings of the gospel (notably Prov 1:20-33; 8:1-36; 9:1-18; 11:28; 12:28) are either lightly treated when it comes to the promises of the gospel or turned into law. For instance the clear gospel promises of 11:28 (" . . . but righteous people will sprout like foliage") and 12:28 ("In the path of righteousness there is life, and the way of that pathway is not death.") are seen more as admonitions to readers to be faithful to God (i.e., as law; cf. Waltke pp. 511-512, 543-545) rather than as the promised work of God in the life of a believer (gospel).

Thus, Waltke's Proverbs has many fine points, but in the end falls short of being a truly gospel-motivated, Christ-centered commentary. While there is much to be learned here about the technical aspects of understanding the organization of the book and much philological insight in its discussion, it is disappointing to see this wonderful book of Scripture read as only about Christ in a peripheral sense, thereby emptying it of the power of the gospel. Proverbs' guidance is thereby reduced to a moralizing admonition from Solomon grounded in what is seen as humanly-generated confidence in God. This is a far cry from the book's real power: the gospel of Christ, which saves humans from their sinful foolishness and empowers them to live as wise children of God, relying on his transforming power to create faith in them and guide them in the path of faithful living.

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