

## *Church and Ministry*

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The Collected Papers of  
The 150th Anniversary Theological Convocation  
of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Edited by Jerald C. Joerz and Paul T. McCain

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*Jesus Washing Peter's Feet* by Ford Madox Brown.  
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**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

IN COMMEMORATION OF  
THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

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## FOREWORD

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IN COMMEMORATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—Missouri Synod's 150th Anniversary, the faculties of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, together with the district presidents and vice-presidents of our Synod and the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, attended a theological convocation devoted to the topic of the doctrines of Church and Ministry, specifically the doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry and the doctrine of the royal Priesthood of all Believers.

What made this event unique was the fact that it was scheduled shortly after the International Lutheran Council (ILC) met here in the United States. Thus, we were privileged to have as participants in our convocation the leaders of all of our partner churches around the world, as well as leaders from a number of other Lutheran churches who had gathered for the ILC meeting. Our partner churches were invited to send one theologian from their church body. Hence, the convocation took on a most welcome international flavor, as we were able to listen to the reaction of many of our friends from around the world to issues of concern to our church. Their participation in this conference was extremely beneficial to us and very much appreciated.

One of the most important goals of this convocation was that it not simply be an end in itself, that is, a convocation for the sake of having a convocation. Instead, the publication of the papers as a book, along with a study guide, was considered an essential aspect of this effort. I would like to encourage the pastors of our church to study these essays carefully and then to lead their congregations in a study and discussion of these important issues.

— Dr. A.L. Barry

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*Presentation II*

**THE OFFICE OF THE PASTORAL MINISTRY:  
SCRIPTURAL AND CONFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Dr. John F. Johnson, President  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

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“SURELY THERE IS NO MORE COMPLICATED TASK in the repertoire of contemporary theological needs,” opines the Roman Catholic priest, Aidan Kavanagh, “than that of accounting for the traditions of ordained ministries and the effects these have had on the Ministry of the church over the past two thousand years.”<sup>1</sup> While Lutheranism has not experienced the arguable luxury of institutional existence for as long as the tradition of Father Kavanagh, his sentiment is easily extrapolated to our own historical context.

### **Introduction**

Lutheran disagreements over the nature of the Public Ministry have been persistent and notorious. Such disagreements were prominent among European Lutherans, especially those in German lands in the nineteenth century, and they attended the birth of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1847. Since the middle of the twentieth century—largely through the impetus of merger and alteration in ecclesiastical structure—American Lutherans have argued intensely over the theology and practice of ministry.

And now, even at the dawn of a new century, a whole range of issues concerning the doctrine of the Ministry continues to be the subject of discussion in my church body and, I suspect, in many of those represented through the International Lutheran Council. Is the Pastoral Office of divine institution or the product of social expediency? Are there certain functions of ministry that only pastors are to execute? What is the Lutheran understanding of ordination? Is the term “lay minister” truly oxymoronic?

Certainly, the purpose of this essay is not to definitively address all of those questions, and the many others posed in contemporary conversation about the Office of the Ministry. Rather, as ironical as it may seem, the underlying purpose of this essay is to underscore a certain inevitability of such debates. That is to say, difficulty with the doctrine of the Ministry is endemic to Lutheranism and a demonstration of its genius. Just as in other areas of Lutheran theology—Law and Gospel, justification and sanctification, formal principle and material principle—our view of the Office of the Ministry rests on understandings and expressions of irreducible tension. In other words, here, as elsewhere, Lutheran theological reflection is dialectical. One consequence of this fact is some degree of perennial debate and discussion as various aspects of the “both/and” dimensions of scriptural and confessional teaching on the Ministry are emphasized. Dissolution of the dialectic—unequivocally positing one aspect to the exclusion of the other—signals the demise of the creative tension that characterizes the historic Lutheran concept of ministry.

The approach to the assignment given to me by President Barry, then, is to elaborate certain fundamental themes that comprise the Lutheran doctrine of the Pastoral Ministry, highlighting the importance of maintaining them in proper dialectical tension. Accordingly, my remarks will take three directions. First, I will briefly rehearse the scriptural foundation for an understanding of

the Office of the Ministry. Second, I will summarize treatment of the Public Ministry of the Word in our sixteenth-century confessional documents. And third, on the basis of the preceding, I will identify three issues relating to the Public Ministry—critical to stating our Lutheran doctrine—which are best defined in a dialectical context. In all of these comments my intention is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. I hope that they will be of some service for our continued conversation during these days together.

### **Scriptural Foundation**

In the Old Testament, various roles and titles describe different aspects of the Ministry of the Word: patriarch, prophet, priest, and king. At times, the individual roles overlap, as in the case of Ezekiel. However, two characteristics stand in sharp relief: the call or institution by God and the responsibility under God to proclaim and teach His Word.

The priesthood was an institution specifically given by God and began when Moses consecrated Aaron of the tribe of Levi (Exodus 28). The priesthood was established by God for service at the tabernacle and for the meditation of His grace through the sacrificial system. Indeed, Old Testament priests conveyed God's forgiveness to those who confessed their sins and offered appropriate sacrifices. They also conferred God's grace, peace, and blessing through the Aaronic benediction (Num. 6:22–27). The sons of Aaron, chosen by God's grace, serve as representatives of the people to God and God to the people.

Yet, as informative as points of similarity and continuity between the Old Testament priesthood and the church's Office of the Ministry may be, the primary biblical background for the Office of the Ministry does not lie in Old Testament models of temple and priesthood. Rather, the point of departure is grounded and established in the person and work of Jesus Himself. Jesus ini-

tiated all Christian ministry when He invited the Twelve to follow Him. Jesus calls all disciples to serve—indeed, the entire work of a disciple in God’s cause must be to serve—but He also called a particular group to the special ministry of the apostolate. (In this sense, at the root of all ministries in the church is a double institution by Jesus.) The constitutive factor in the call to the apostolate is not merely the encounter with Christ, but being directly entrusted by Him to be His representatives. The apostles bear the authority of the One who sent them (Matt. 10:40; 16:19).

Jesus gives to the apostles the command not only to pray for the sending of laborers “into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:38), but also to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19–20). To be sure, Jesus does not here say *expressis verbis*: “Let there be pastors.” What He does say is: Make disciples by baptizing and teaching. Obviously, there must be those to do the baptizing and the teaching.

The apostles of the post-resurrection period are clearly signs of God’s calling persons to a special ministry. Peter, for instance, is called by the risen Christ to become one of the chief missionaries and spokesmen of the church. He does not derive his authority from “below,” as it were; it is given to him by Christ and, therefore, he is allowed to establish and nurture communities. Similarly, Paul, according to Gal. 1:12, receives a call from the resurrected Lord to be His apostle to the nations. Paul does not receive his authority from “below”—a charge he, in fact, strongly denies in Galatians 1 and 2—but directly from the risen Christ. It is the authority given to him in this apostolic ministry, in the apostle, which enables him to found and to direct congregations throughout the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, a variety of New Testament texts attests to the fact that Jesus, through the calling and sending

of the apostles, established a specific Office of the Ministry. “But how are men to call upon 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 a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10:14–15; RSV). The Ministry or Office of the Word is necessitated not merely by the concern for order in the church, albeit that is not an unimportant consideration. The Office of the preaching of the Word is required for the sake of the creation of saving faith.

However, the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ continues in but is not limited to the office of the apostle (Acts 1:8, 25). Luke reports that the apostle Paul appointed elders in each church during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). Together with the apostles, the elders exercised supervision in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15; 16:4). In Acts 20, you will recall, Paul calls the Ephesian elders together in Miletus, charging them to take heed to the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made them “overseers” (*episkopoi*, v 28). It is manifestly clear, then, that divine provision was made for the Ministry of the Word in the congregations of the church of God. The elders are bishops or overseers. They occupy their Office by divine appointment, even though such appointment is through human agency (Acts 13:1–3).

The Pastoral Epistles are primarily concerned with demonstrating how the Pauline mission may continue without the physical presence of the apostle. Titus and Timothy are selected by the Spirit for collaboration in the work of Paul’s apostleship. The will of Paul for the continuation of the Pauline apostle in Crete, for instance, is carried out through Titus who arranges for the appointment of those who oversee the spiritual life and service of the people of God (Titus 1:5–9). It is apparent that something divinely willed is lacking in the congregation if such appointment is not made. While terminology varies, the office of oversight (*episkope*) is

established according to divine direction. Moreover, as Paul sets forth the qualifications necessary for those who would carry out this work, it is clear that not every believer is qualified to hold this office. Care must be taken so that the proclamation of the Word is entrusted to "faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2; RSV). Paul also exhorts Timothy not to be hasty "in the laying on of hands" as he carries out his oversight of the congregations established by the apostle and places individuals into the Ministerial Office (1 Tim. 5:22).

Finally, the Pastoral Epistles exhibit the theological priority of the Word. The Ministry in these epistles is subordinated to it. That is, the Word legitimates the Ministry and not the obverse. This Word is understood in terms of sound apostolic teaching. The elders-bishops are charged, first, to uphold and transmit the pure doctrine (1 Tim. 1:18f.; Titus 2:1); second, to draw the line against heresy (1 Tim. 1:3ff.; Titus 1:10ff.); third, to lead the worship with the reading of Scripture, preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 4:13); fourth, to exercise the "right of Absolution" (1 Tim. 5:22); and fifth, to lead an exemplary life (Titus 2:7), including the willingness to suffer for the Gospel "as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3).

The New Testament, of course, has been used by advocates of various views on the Office of the Ministry, including Lutheran interpreters who have labored to understand more fully the truths of the sacred Scriptures on these important issues. New Testament scholars participating in this convocation will note that I have prescinded from discussion or alignment with those Lutherans who, for example, emphasize the variety of ministries or those who espouse the formation of a hierarchial system of church offices in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> We must be open to the possibility that several different interpretations of ministry can rightfully claim an ancestry in the New Testament. Rather, those points I wish to iden-

tify from my modest survey are these:

a. The Ministry of the church is ultimately rooted in the way Jesus called disciples, and particularly the Twelve, to share his task. The preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God was established by Christ Himself.

b. From the service ministry of all, one particular form of ministry is distinguished in the synoptic tradition as well as Paul: the ministry of the apostles.

c. Just as the apostles were put into office by the Lord, even so the apostles placed others into office—those who had not seen the risen Lord—designating them to proclaim the Gospel to unbelievers as well as to teach and direct communities of believers. The means of appointment, the how of designation, apparently admitted of considerable variety.

d. Ministry is a gift of the Spirit, and exists, as do other charismata, for the upbuilding of the church.

### The Lutheran Confessions

“There is surprisingly little about the Office of the Ministry in the Confessions,” Edgar Carlson wrote in *The Lutheran Quarterly*, “and where they do treat of it, the discussion of the subject is almost always incidental to the main theme.”<sup>3</sup> Judged on the sheer number of lines in the documents explicitly dealing with the Pastoral Office, Carlson’s contention may have a claim to validity. What he fails to understand is that a doctrine of the Ministry, unless it is most narrowly conceived, is absolutely central to the abiding witness and message of our Confessions—that God accomplishes the restoration of the relationship of the believer’s faith in God through God’s Word of promise, that comes in preaching, in Baptism, in Absolution, in the Lord’s Supper.

The primary sources in the Confessions for a doctrine of the Ministry are Articles V, XIV, and XXVIII of the Augsburg Confes-

sion; Article XIII of the Apology; and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. However, as my colleague Norman Nagel reminds us, we might do well to begin with the fifth chief part of the Small Catechism rather than customarily starting with Augustana V. “When the Office of the Keys has been confessed,” Professor Nagel asks, “what remains to be still confessed of the Holy Ministry?”<sup>4</sup> But, as he concedes, 1531 did go into 1580.

When titles were applied to the first seven articles of the Augustana, the title “the Office of the Ministry” (German) or “the Ministry of the church” (Latin) was selected for its fifth article, which followed from the central teaching of the document, justification through faith treated in Article IV. Article V begins, “In order that we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted” (AC V, 1). Since justification—and with it salvation—comes from faith alone, the church’s Ministry has only one task. In other words, “the Public Ministry of the church is inextricably linked with God’s tools for creating faith, for recreating creatures as God’s children—the Means of Grace, Word, and Sacrament. The Pastoral Office is the Holy Spirit’s instrument by which the power of God’s Gospel is conveyed to people. . . .”<sup>5</sup> This Ministry is not simply some vague inference from justification; like the Gospel and the Sacraments, it is instituted by God. This is what “*institutum est*” means in the article.

Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession is the response of the confessors to John Eck’s charge that they denied the sacrament of holy orders. In terms of the Office of the Ministry, it teaches that no one may place himself in that public office. Or, to put it another way, the basic issue behind the article’s *rite vocatus* is the insistence that the Pastoral Office ought not be usurped by anyone. One enters the Ministry through God’s call as it is mediated through the church. The public proclamation of the Gospel and

administration of the Sacraments are to be exercised only by those who have been properly called.

Article XXVIII on the authority of bishops was probably the first of all the articles of the Augsburg Confession to be written. The article underscores once again that the servant ministry of pastors is oriented exclusively to the Gospel. Philip Melanchthon writes, "Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel, the power of the Keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the Sacraments" (AC XXVIII,5). He believed that God ordained the Public Ministry, "to forgive sins, to reject doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the fellowship of the church ungodly persons whose wickedness is known, doing all this without human power, simply by the Word" (AC XXVIII,21). Commenting on these lines, Professor David Truemper of Valparaiso University writes,

If God grants forgiveness only through the Gospel, then people's salvation depends upon that Gospel being proclaimed and sacramentally enacted. In that fact is grounded the necessity of the Ministry of the Gospel—a Ministry that in the view of the Augsburg Confession is never mere or abstracted function, but always as ordered, public, official Ministry.<sup>6</sup>

In Article XIII of the Apology, Melanchthon discusses the number and use of the Sacraments. He notes that the church "has the command to appoint ministers" (Ap XIII, 12) and expresses the willingness of Lutherans to speak of ordination as a Sacrament. "If ordination is interpreted in relation to the Ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a Sacrament" (Ap XIII, 11). However, Lutherans are willing to grant this only if "the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross" is recognized as totally "sufficient for the sins of the whole world," exclusive of a mediatorial

role on the part of the priests (Ap XIII, 8–9). But the sense in which ordination may be termed a Sacrament is severely delimited. The supposed sacramental nature of ordination is not inherent in the rite itself—it lacks an express dominical directive, although there is clear apostolic precedent. It does not have a visible element, nor does it confer grace. Luther did not speak of ordination in sacramental terms and as time went on, Lutherans viewed ordination as a rite of the church that affirmed the call into public ministry (but more about this later).

A final primary source in the Confessions for the doctrine of the Public Ministry is the *Treatise* of 1537. In this document we find the single occurrence of 1 Pet. 2:9 in the entire Book of Concord. Luther had, of course, quoted the passage (“You are a royal priesthood”) in speaking of Baptism as making all Christians priests. In the *Treatise*, the verse is employed to confirm the conclusion that the church has the right to call and ordain its pastors “since it alone possesses the priesthood” (*Treatise*, 69). Concomitantly, referring to the Priesthood of Believers, the *Treatise* affirms that in cases of necessity each Christian has the right to baptize and to publicly declare the forgiveness of sins.

The *Treatise* is also particularly valuable for yet one more enumeration of pastoral responsibilities. Melancthon here reiterates the basic functions of the minister of the Word, which he had previously included in Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession: “The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the Sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent” (*Treatise*, 60).

The foregoing review of the primary confessional statements relating to the doctrine of the Public Ministry, as in the case of the scriptural data, has been consciously cursorial. And, as with the

New Testament material, from this survey certain points are to be noted:

a. The Confessions do not deal with the Ministry by means of a biblicistic analysis in detail but with the theological center of the Reformation—justification—as a point of departure. The Gospel proclaimed and imparted is the main focus.

b. The Public Ministry is an office instituted by God.

c. The power of the Pastoral Office is not a temporal power but a power in spiritual matters of Word and Sacrament.

d. Pastors cannot enter the Public Ministry on their own authority; it must be conferred by the “mediate” call of the church.

e. God has chosen to work through the individuals of His church. When He uses ordained pastors as vehicles of the Word and Sacraments, both the pastors and those they serve may be confident that the Holy Spirit is intimately at work.

### **Three Issues in Dialectical Context**

At the outset of my time with you, I suggested that at the heart of the Lutheran scriptural and confessional formulation of the doctrine of the Public Ministry, significant tensions exist. These tensions need not be lamented; they are critical for an explication of the most central features of the Lutheran perspective. I am convinced that their dissolution into mutually exclusive propositions, or even dilution into overly emphasized contentions, will destroy a distinctively biblical and Lutheran confessional understanding. In this final section of my presentation, and by way of illustration, I wish to address three fundamental, but crucial, elements in our doctrine of the Ministry best maintained in tension.

### **The Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers**

First, scriptural and confessional theology distinguishes, but does not separate, the Office of the Public Ministry from the Priest-

hood of Believers. This is dialectic tension that we must continue to let stand and not attempt to force the two apart.

Scripture clearly teaches that the whole people of God, His spiritual priesthood, stand as individuals before God without distinction of merit or place (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 2:9). All of the people of God are called to make the spiritual sacrifices of the good, acceptable, and perfect life for which God has called them from the darkness of sin into His marvelous light. Similarly, all Christians bring the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins in ways consistent with the callings and stations where God has placed them in daily life. This concept of the so-called "Universal" Priesthood was prominent in the early writings of Martin Luther. He proposes, as it were, a type of Baptismal egalitarianism. All Christians, whether ordained or not, have the same Baptism, the same Gospel, and the same faith. There are no spiritual distinctions among the people of God. Consequently, they share a common priesthood and are called to exercise priestly responsibilities. Commenting on 1 Pet. 2:9, Luther writes:

Hence all of us who believe in Christ are priests and kings. . . . Not only are we the freest of kings, we are also priests forever which is far more excellent than being kings, for as priests we are worthy to appear before God to pray for others and to teach one another divine things. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, addressing the key passage Matt. 16:18, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," Luther concludes that the power of the Keys was not given by Christ to Peter personally, but "to the whole Christian community."<sup>8</sup>

Luther never rejected his doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers, but he also insisted on the absolute necessity of the ordained Ministry in the church. "Although we are equally priests," he says, "we cannot all publicly minister and teach."<sup>9</sup> Luther him-

self taught, as do the Confessions, that the formal exercise of any sharing of the Word be invested in those who are called to such a public ministry by the church. God has ordered His church in the manner of all human institutions that He has fashioned; He has given the church the gift of public leadership, specifically the Pastoral Office.

This, of course, is not a denial of the Priesthood of all Believers. Because the spiritual office has been entrusted to all believers, its administration is not left to the whim of every individual believer. Rather, in the congregation the pastor serves the priestly commission God has given to the entire congregation. Thus, writes Edmund Schlink:

Under no circumstances may the right of every believer to forgive the brother's sins be treated as nonexistent, or as provided only for a case of emergency, or only as done in trust for the Public Ministry. The call into the Public Ministry and the activity in this office at all times presupposes the royal Priesthood of all Believers and does not abolish it.<sup>10</sup>

A separation or dissolution of the relationship between the Pastoral Office and the Priesthood of Believers will lead to either a theory of transference—the derivation of the special, Public Ministry from the common Priesthood of all Believers represented by the congregation—or to the idea of a priestly “holy order” inherently superior to the members of the Priesthood of all Believers. Lutheranism keeps the universal and special priesthood in dialectical tension, avoiding the temptation of deriving one from the other. Neither the promise of salvation in Christ, nor its communication through the Ministry of the Word can be reduced to the question of the “political” relationship between congregation and pastor. It is not true, for example, that in a congregation where pastoral leadership is strong, the exercise of the Priesthood of all Believers will

be weak, or that strong exercise of the Priesthood of all Believers will inevitably weaken the Pastoral Office. The Priesthood of Believers and the Office of Public Ministry remain in creative tension with each other as parts of the one Body of Christ. Edmund Schlink addresses this dialectical relationship in his *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*:

The question could be raised whether the Ministry antedates the congregation or vice versa; whether the Ministry is above the congregation or vice versa. Such an either/or is out of order. . . . Neither the congregation nor the person of the pastor is the final authority, but the Lord of both in royal sovereignty governs both pastor and congregation through the Gospel and Sacraments.<sup>11</sup>

### Office and Function

Scriptural and confessional theology will also maintain a healthy and creative tension between the nature of the Office of the Ministry as divinely instituted and the existential functions of the Office.

The Office of the Public Ministry is a divine institution. It is grounded in the express will of God (1 Corinthians 12; Eph. 4:11–16; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19; John 20:22–23; 2 Cor. 5:18–20). It is not a human innovation. The Pastoral Office is not an option that churches or congregations may or may not choose to exercise. The Office of Ministry is God's idea, not ours!

At the same time, the Office of the Ministry is manifestly characterized by certain functions and activities that are indicated in the Holy Scriptures, in both our Lord's words and in the apostles' teachings on these issues. Even Article V of the Augsburg Confession seems to deal more with the functions of preaching and administering the Sacraments than it does with office. This supposed ambiguity has prompted at least three views of the Public Ministry in our Lutheran tradition—views which, I suspect, are

represented in some fashion and with some influence in all the church bodies represented in the convocation. A colleague from the Lutheran Church of Australia, E. W. Janetzki, has offered a helpful categorization.<sup>12</sup>

On the one extreme, he says, are those who take a purely functional view of the Office of the Ministry. What is commanded is not an office at all, but the functions or activities of preaching and administering the Sacraments. These functions belong *iure divino* (by divine right) to all Christians. There is no divine institution of the Pastoral Office. Indeed, this position virtually combines the Office of the Public Ministry with the Priesthood of all Believers. Embodiment of this perspective surfaces in the contemporary inflation of terminology, which defines anything and everything Christians do as ministry or in insistence on the oxymoron of “lay clergy” who would do everything that pastors do but are not called and ordained into the Office.

At the other pole are those who have emphasized the institution and character of the Office to the extent of viewing it as a special estate and not derived in any sense from the Priesthood of Believers. Pastors are both to instruct their members and direct all church affairs. They act in the stead of Christ in their own person.

Janetzki then identifies a *via media* (a middle way) that rejects both extremes. This view affirms the Pastoral Office to be of divine institution, not of purely human arrangement. But the pastor is not a member of a special order or estate who may demand unconditional obedience. The divine gift of the Office has been given to the church and demands filling. The church, the Priesthood of all Believers, has the authority to fill the Office and to regulate it. This the church does through its organized and public structures.

But, most important to the issue of office versus function, I would argue, is the scriptural and confessional insight that office does involve function. It is in this sense that the dialectic is main-

tained. The term “ministerium” goes back to the New Testament *diakonia*, and it points both to the Office itself and to the activities for which this special office was mandated. The Melanchthon scholar Peter Fraenkel calls *ministerium* a “verbal noun.” Its meaning or content must always be understood as having “verbal” qualities, a dynamic dimension. Its substance can never be viewed as merely a static thing but always in connection with the actions or functions for which God created the ministerium.<sup>13</sup> Lutheranism insists that God instituted an office for public service of the Word. That office has no existence apart from the proper exercise of its functions. There is no independent ontological “servantness” if the servants in the Office are not serving in a God-pleasing way.

There should be no hesitancy among us to acknowledge that there is a decidedly functional emphasis on the Office of the Ministry in our Confessions—after all, an office must always carry out a distinct activity. “The church has the command to appoint ministers,” says the Apology, since God wishes to preach and work through men and through those who have been chosen by men (Ap XIII,12). This means that God has established a special office, in that the crucial point is concrete activity. The Office is viewed, in a word, functionally in that the only legitimate ministry is one that functions in a manner consistent with divine intentions. The Holy Spirit works saving faith through the Means of Grace—the activity, the function of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, “for through the Word and the Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel” (AC V). For this purpose the divinely instituted Office of the Ministry exists. The church has the responsibility not merely of proclaiming and teaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and pronouncing Absolution in abstraction, but also that of choosing specific persons to publicly discharge these functions

on the behalf of the church. When those who are not in the Office of the Ministry are prevailed upon to perform some functions of the Office—in extraordinary or emergency situations, for instance—performing such functions does not make those who do them holders of the one divinely instituted Office of the Ministry.<sup>14</sup>

### Servanthood and Authority

In the third place, scriptural and confessional theology will understand that the authority in the Office of the Ministry is not personal, but that of the Gospel and, concomitantly, servanthood should characterize the Office.

If there is only one ministry the church must be ultimately concerned with, it is the ministry its Lord inaugurated and still carries on through His Spirit at work in the church. That is to say, the basis of all legitimate ministry in the church is the picture of Jesus' ministry, and as He Himself said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:28; RSV).

In our present culture, to be sure, "servanthood" is not highly respected. People strive to be possessors, not the possessed. We desire that others serve our needs; we are not as enthusiastic about setting aside our own concerns to serve them. The very term "servant" is taken as a term of denigration, a word that seems to demean and to imply a diminishing of personal worth and value. A character in one of Plato's dialogues says, "How could a man be happy, if he is to be a servant?" However, it is indisputable that *diakonia* is the most frequently employed term denoting what a person engaged in ministry does.

In Philippians 2 Paul puts into words *diakonia*, as embodied in Christ who, as servant, breaks free of the world's restrictions of class and order. Here the drama of the Incarnation moves from the "form of God" to the "form of a servant," a process of emptying. The importance of *diakonia* is that it is God's service; the obedient

Son “. . . who emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. . . .” (v 7; RSV). The servant does not stand apart as a servant class. Rather, *diakonos* becomes one with the served, as Christ became one with those whom He served.

This is true of the ordained servant as well. Nothing could be farther from the instinct of biblical and Lutheran confessional theology than the notion that the ordained Ministry is a private matter between the pastor and God; or that ordination virtually unleashes one upon innocent, unsuspecting congregations; or that ordination gives the ordained power to flail the congregation; or that ordination frees one from being in service to anyone.

The tension that must be preserved, however, is that the notion of servanthood must not lapse into a radical congregationalism in which the pastor becomes just the “hired hand” of the congregation. American Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde is right:

By calling and ordaining into this (the pastoral) office, the congregations and structures place themselves under the hearing of the Word, the proper exercise of this office, under the proclamation in Word and Sacrament of the Law and the Gospel. They recognize that what transcends them is the divine Word publicly proclaimed. The point of the Office is to see to it that what is preached in the church is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the final exercise of “authority.”<sup>15</sup>

In other words, any so-called pastoral “authority” establishes itself “through the Word preached and heard, the Sacraments given and received.”<sup>16</sup> Bishop Jobst Schöne writes,

The Christological character of the Office of the Holy Ministry is not found in the minister’s personality or any kind of ontological quality that is ascribed or conferred on him. Rather, it exists in what the minister is doing when he preaches the Word of God and administers the Sacraments.”<sup>17</sup>

There exists no inherent quality, virtue, or character that makes the pastor any better than anyone else in the church. He too stands before God as both saint and sinner.

Thus, the tension, the dialectic. Ordained Ministry is a part of the people of God, united with them in the task of mission and service, and standing with them under the judgment and grace of God. In another sense, the ordained Ministry stands on behalf of Christ over against the people of God, entrusted with the exposition of the Word of God, the administration of the Sacraments and the general spiritual oversight of the church.

Lutheran theology is no harbor or refuge for a repristinated form of medieval clericalism with pastoral chauvinists who play power games over the poor, unsophisticated laity. Nor does our tradition sanction a demeaning or slighting of the Office; for there is an authority of the Office based in the Word, which its incumbents are called to proclaim. In the words of Holsten Fagerberg,

The pastor in his ministry is to let God's work be expressed—and this can happen only if the pastor understands that he is an instrument in God's hands. Bishops and pastors. . . . are strictly subordinated to the Gospel or Scripture, and when they act contrary thereto, no one owes them any obedience."<sup>18</sup>

Pastoral authority can be lost. If it is to be effective it must be demonstrated through faithful proclamation and loving service, and not just asserted. As Richard Neuhaus astutely observes, when the pastor “has to explicitly assert authority it is usually a sign that the authority has already been lost.”<sup>19</sup>

Our Lutheran ascription of the Office of the Ministry as the “highest and greatest” in the church must always be balanced with the pastor as servant. These powerful words of St. Augustine in a homily he preached on the anniversary of his own episcopal ordination befit the tension:

When it dismays me that I am here for you, it consoles me that I am with you. For you I am a bishop, but with you I am a Christian. The first is an office accepted, the second a grace received; the one is a danger, the other a safety. We are tossed, it is true, as in a high sea, by the storms of our toil; but as we recall whose blood it was that bought us, we come, through the calm of that thought, safely into harbor. And as we labor at this task of ours, our response is in the benefit we all share. If, then, I am gladder by far to be redeemed with you than I am to be placed over you, I shall be more completely your servant as the Lord commanded, for fear of being ungrateful for the price that He paid to save me that I might be yours.<sup>20</sup>

### Conclusion

The aim of my remarks, in keeping with my assignment and the scope of this convocation, has been to identify certain central themes in the Lutheran doctrine of the Pastoral Office on the basis of the Scriptures and our confessional witness. I have been particularly concerned to identify the both/and, rather than the either/or, character of those themes because, as I stated at the outset, here too is the theological genius of Lutheranism revealed.

Colleagues from the seminaries of our Synod have no doubt noted—with some wonderment, perhaps—that I have not uttered the names of Walther, Löhe, or Grabau. Those names were not in my ordination vows; fidelity to the Scriptures and the Confessions was. And frankly, I still consider the eighteen theses on Ministry written by Charles Porterfield Krauth in 1874–75 to be the most illuminating of a 19th-century confessional view. Nevertheless, it must be said that the summary I have advanced does comport with the teaching of C.F.W. Walther. His theses were formally adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1851, and remain the *publica doctrina* (public doctrine) of Synod on the Office of the Ministry. Any repudiation or dismissal of Walther's position must continue to be of serious consequence in the Synod. For at the heart of that explica-

tion—as at the heart of the Scriptures and the Confessions—is the conviction that the Office of the Ministry is not a human institution, but God’s own creation for the proclamation of His life-giving and life-strengthening Word. If we have incidents of failure in the Ministry, let them be due to human frailty and judgment, rather than a failure to have understood what the nature of the Ministry really is.

We are called—you and I—to preserve the dialectic inherent in the nature of the Office, not to dissolve it. For in the dissolution will be nothing but tragedy and heartache for our churches as either pure functionalism or hierarchical authoritarianism triumphs theologically and ecclesiastically. But I must also say in conclusion, that there are matters at stake beyond the confines of our own internal debates that demand a united confessional voice on the Office of the Ministry. This summer’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in America proposals for full communion with the Reformed and the Anglicans involve significant compromise in the Lutheran view of the Ministry. Similarly, the question of the teaching office in the church today devolves on further elaborations on the Office of the Ministry, as does the need for ecumenical reflection beyond the current American Lutheran scene. It will, in my estimation, be impossible for those of us in the truly confessional Lutheran tradition to have an impact in such conversations if we sacrifice the hard theological work of maintaining a dialectical view of the Ministry for the relative ease of polarity.

### Notes

1. Aidan Kavanagh, “Christian Ministry and Ministries,” in *Church and Ministry*, ed. Daniel Brockopp, Brian Helge, and David G. Truemper (Valparaiso, Indiana: Institute of Liturgical Studies, 1982), 11.

2. Representatives of the two positions are, respectively, Roy

Harrisville, *Ministry in Crisis* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987) and Karl P. Donfried, "A New Testament Scholar Looks at the Issue of Ministry," *Dialog* 27 (Winter 1988), 8–30.

3. Edgar M. Carlson, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in the Confessions," *The Lutheran Quarterly* (May 1963), 118.

4. Norman E. Nagel, "The Office of the Holy Ministry in the Confessions," *Concordia Journal* (July 1988), 283.

5. Robert Kolb, "The Doctrine of Ministry in Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions," in *Called and Ordained*, ed. Todd Nichol and Marc Kolden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 56.

6. David Truemper, "Church and Ministry in the Lutheran Symbols," *Church and Ministry*, 69.

7. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian" (1520), AE 31:354–55.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 356.

10. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 243.

11. *Ibid.*, 246–47.

12. E. W. Janetzki, "The Doctrine of the Office of the Holy Ministry in the Lutheran Church of Australia Today," *Lutheran Theological Quarterly* 13 (November 1979), 68–81. Karl Barth summarizes Janetzki in "The Doctrine of the Ministry: Some Practical Dimensions," *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988), 204–14.

13. Peter Fraenkel, "Revelation and Tradition: Notes on Some Aspects of Doctrinal Continuity in Theology of Philip Melancthon," *Studia Theologica* 13 (1959), 116–18.

14. See report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on *The Ministry: Offices Procedures, and Nomenclature* (1981), 4.

15. Gerhard O. Forde, "The Ordained Ministry," in *Called and Ordained*, 129–130.

16. Ibid., 130.

17. Jobst Schöne, *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood* (Plymouth: Logia Books, 1996), 8.

18. Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 243.

19. Richard Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 66.

20. Quoted by Kavanagh in *Church and Ministry*, 17.

## RESPONSE TO PRESENTATION II

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PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S STIMULATING PAPER does us all an enormous service. It reflects on a crucial point of Lutheran doctrine and practice, yet in a way that invites discussion and further specification. On a topic that has become a thorny thicket of contention, the essay sets out the great essentials of biblical teaching and confessional conviction, and it does so without invoking the more narrowly traditional party names and labels. It is just this way that can draw us together again into that single-mindedness on the subject, which, by all accounts, we Lutherans so desperately need throughout the world. To glorify God "with one mind and one mouth" (Rom. 15:5-6) is itself a great gift from God, one that is granted when His people pay heed reverently to His holy and life-giving truth (Acts 2:42-46).

My own modest comments will simply support and illustrate the main conclusion to be drawn from the Johnson essay. That conclusion, surprising though it may seem at first, is that the Lutheran understanding of the Ministry is fundamentally clear, simple, and straightforward. Johnson's summaries of biblical and confessional essentials allow little room for the pseudo-complexities and murky muddles to which we have become accustomed.

But what of the complications adduced, via Father Aidan Kavanagh, at the very outset of the essay? Two lines of comment suggest themselves. In the first place, it is true that the Lutheran debates over the Ministry in the last two centuries leave an impression of hopeless untidiness, such that Kavanagh's "sentiment is easily extrapolated to our own historical context," as Johnson says. Yet in our historical context it can, I believe, be shown that the trouble is not with the clarity of the Lutheran position, but with the conceptual confusions introduced precisely by deviations from the standard Lutheran paradigm. Particularly vexing is the temptation to make theology play the part of a hapless Jill tumbling after any recklessly pragmatic Jack of practice! When theological terms and categories must be stretched and gerrymandered to fit whatever practice has become convenient on other grounds, clear confession is, of course, at an end. It was no doubt a danger signal when the report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on *The Ministry* (1981) introduced a precarious distinction between the "Public Ministry" and the "Office of the Public Ministry," such that one may hold office in the Public Ministry, but not be in the Office of the Public Ministry! In terms of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, such convoluted terminology likely reflects an overburdened "paradigm" swamped by anomalies, and about to breathe its last.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, and at a deeper level, Father Kavanagh's tradition is burdened by the need to justify unbiblical, human doctrine developed over many years by various Roman teachers. Hermann Sasse makes the point well in his remark about Schmaus' attempt to prove the Roman claim of a double priesthood in his *Katholische Dogmatik* (1964): "In support of the priesthood of all Christians numerous Bible passages are given; in support of the particular priesthood not a single one. There could not be a more convincing

presentation of the unbiblical character of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the priesthood.”<sup>2</sup> Of course that complicates matters considerably.

The consistency and simplicity of the Lutheran paradigm of the Ministry becomes apparent when we compare it with the alternatives. As there are basically only three great confessions, or versions of the Gospel in the West—the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed or Calvinist—so there are three corresponding paradigms of the Ministry. Everything else is variations on these basic themes. As E. Schott put it in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*:

Strictly speaking only the Lutherans have a doctrine of the Office [*Amt*], while at the corresponding place the Calvinists treat of offices, and the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, as well as in their own way the Anglicans, of the hierarchy. . . . Lutheranism, with its doctrine of the Preaching Office [*Predigtamt*] as “the” office, forcefully underscores the position of the Gospel as the life-giving center of the congregation. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Johnson makes the same point when he says, for instance: “The Confessions do not deal with the Ministry by means of a biblicalistic analysis in detail but with the theological center of the Reformation—justification—as a point of departure. The Gospel proclaimed and imparted is the main focus.” Or again in the citation from David Truemper: “If God grants forgiveness only through the Gospel, then people’s salvation depends upon that Gospel being proclaimed and sacramentally enacted. In that fact is grounded the necessity of the Ministry of the Gospel. . . .”

The clear contours of the genuinely evangelical Lutheran understanding of the Gospel Ministry stand out against the double contrast of Rome on the one hand and Geneva on the other. The Roman concept may be labeled “traditionalism,” inasmuch as it

attributes divine institution and authority to mere human traditions about a sacrifice-oriented three-tiered ministry: deacons, presbyters, and bishops. Geneva, on the other hand, represents “biblicism,” that is, the legally-minded illusion that there is a divinely mandated outward church polity or structure, which then means restoring the various New Testament offices, of which Calvin identified four.<sup>4</sup> Leaving aside such manmade complications and requirements, the Church of the Augsburg Confession simply treasures the divine gift of the one apostolic Gospel-Preaching Office, that St. Paul defines as the stewardship of the Divine Mysteries (1 Cor. 4:1). Apology XXIV, 80–81 supplies an interesting and helpful commentary here. The term “liturgy,” the Apology states:

. . . squares with our position that a minister who consecrates offers the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches offers the Gospel to the people, as Paul says (1 Cor. 4:1), “. . . ministers of Christ and dispensers of the Sacraments of God,” that is, of the Word and Sacraments. . . . Thus the term “liturgy” squares well with the Ministry.

In the final section of his helpful paper, Dr. Johnson addresses three dichotomies of elements that must be kept in a certain tension. I find myself in basic agreement with the thrust of his argument on this score. I should like to suggest, however, a somewhat overlapping set of three distinctions, which—whatever the legitimate tensions might be—can serve to display the conceptual clarity of the Lutheran understanding of the Ministry in our time. Without proper, careful distinctions in our teaching, after all, “nothing can be explained or understood in a discussion,” to quote Socrates, via Plato, from the Apology. Further, Socrates “tells the person making the distinctions to cut the members at the joint, lest like an unskilled cook he sever the member at the wrong place” (XXIV, 16).

The three distinctions, on which the whole Lutheran locus of the Ministry hangs, are those between (1) the priesthood of all and the ministry of some; (2) the one God-given Gospel-Ministry or Preaching Office, and various auxiliary offices established by the church; and (3) the two realms or governments, the spiritual and the temporal. Properly drawn, these distinctions define the whole article of the Ministry. Permit the very briefest of comments to each of these.

The Chalcedonian distinction-without-separation is of the essence in considering Priesthood and Ministry. Respect for the one cannot be built on contempt for the other. Church and Ministry cannot be defined apart from each other. Luther understood this bi-polar, contrapuntal relationship best of all, and put it like this:

Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer. There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions [Word, Baptism, Supper, Keys] in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ. . . . True bishops are servants of this bride, and she is lady and mistress over them. . . . Now wherever you find these offices or officers, you may be assured that the holy Christian people are there; for the church cannot be without these bishops, pastors, preachers, priests; and conversely, they cannot be without the church. Both must be together.<sup>5</sup>

Also, C.F.W. Walther gives us an important clue when he comments, under his seventh thesis, that "the spiritual priesthood is not a public office [*Amt*] in the church."<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps most controversial today is the second distinction, that between the one Gospel-Preaching Office and various other offices that arise out of the church's use of her Christian liberty. One of

the greatest strengths of Dr. Johnson's paper no doubt is the fact that it does not weaken or dilute Augsburg Confession V, but takes it at face value. Ever since Höfling, it has become a widespread vice in the Lutheran Church to dissolve that article into a "general" or "generic" ministry allegedly belonging to everyone, and to find the special or specific Gospel-Preaching Office only in AC XIV. This unhistorical interpretation has, so far as I know, no precedent among the classical Lutheran divines. Calov and Carpzov both take it for granted that AC V refers specifically to the Pastoral Office, that is, to the Ministry as "a sacred estate [status] instituted by God."<sup>7</sup> The current confusion may well arise out of a misunderstanding of the contrast between "abstract" and "concrete" in this context. Gerhard seems to have introduced this way of speaking, when he classified "minister" as concrete and "ministry" as abstract.<sup>8</sup> This, however, is perfectly plain and straightforward. There are not two ministries, one broader and one narrower, but there is only one and the same Gospel Ministry (*Predigtamt*, Preaching Office) viewed either abstractly in terms of the Office itself as in AC V, or else concretely in terms of the persons of the incumbents as in AC XIV. By steering clear of the popular humbug on this score, Dr. Johnson's essay stays true to the mainstream of the Lutheran theological heritage.

Regarding what Dr. Johnson calls "the service ministry of all," it may not be amiss to draw attention to John Collins and his definitive study *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*, that encompasses all of Greek antiquity, both pagan and Christian.<sup>9</sup> It is Collins' contention that the ecumenical "ministry" discussion got derailed by H.W. Beyer's article in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1935, German), and by the "large-scale paradigm shift" between the 1946 and the 1971 Revised Standard Version translations of Eph. 4:12. The latter reads "for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry," thus paving the way

for the popular notion of “everyone a minister.”<sup>10</sup> In response, Collins argues that the provenance of *diakonia* is in fact not lowly or slave-related at all, but noble and exalted. He strongly refutes the notion that everyone is a minister, and concludes that objection to the traditional understanding really amounts to “underestimating the role attributed by the author [of Ephesians] to sound doctrine.”<sup>11</sup> The late Henry Hamann, a competent Lutheran New Testament scholar, also objected to the new translation on linguistic grounds.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, Collins’ argument about *diakonia* has only limited value, since the vocable by itself settles nothing. As Gerhard shows in his introductory *Onomatologia*, the New Testament uses the *diakonial/diakonos* group of words at several levels of generality. In the general sense it means simply “service,” such as in Rom. 13:4, but often in connection with food service. In the special sense, it stands for the Gospel-Ministry, usually in phrases like “Ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4) and “ministers of the New Testament” (2 Cor. 3:6). Finally, in its most technical sense, in contradistinction to bishops, it means specifically “deacon” or “deaconess,” and that is no doubt what Phoebe was, who is referred to in Rom. 16:1.

I digress for one moment to draw attention to an oddity that surfaced when a 1983 Lutheran World Federation study on the Ministry was translated into German from the original American theological text—something in itself already a bit contrary to nature! Where the original American document distinguished everybody’s general “ministry” from the more particular “ordained Ministry,” the German translation found it necessary to use two quite different expressions: “*Dienst*” (service) for the former, and “*ordiniertes Amt*” (ordained office) for the latter!<sup>13</sup>

In this connection, one could wish that Dr. Johnson had brought out expressly the biblical thrust against female occupants of the one apostolic Gospel-Preaching Office. The presuppositions

are all there, but the implications need to be made explicit, since this burning ecumenical issue threatens our own confessional unity in places. Dr. Johnson rightly asserts that “the point of departure is grounded and established in the person and work of Jesus Himself.” The sending of the Son by the Father issues into the sending of the one apostolic Ministry by that Son (John 17:18; 20:21). Father—Son—apostles—ministers: this is the unbreakable chain of the genuine “apostolic succession.” To purport to intrude women into this office, despite direct apostolic prohibitions (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11,12), violates the divine institution and certifies the perpetrators as sectarians in open rebellion against the Lord and His one holy catholic and apostolic church (Eph. 2:20).

The vital link between the divine institution and today’s Ministry is of course the apostolate of the twelve, or, with Paul, the thirteen. The German of Treatise 10 says that we have the “certain doctrine that the Preaching Office derives from the common call of the apostles.”

The third and final distinction is between the spiritual and the political realms or governments. The Lord’s mandate, “but among you it shall not be so” (Matt. 20:25–28), draws the boundary quite sharply. Servanthood and authority are defined here with reference to Christ, who rules His church not by the Law but by His Gospel and Sacraments. Faith and love, therefore, govern everything in the church. The Word of God governs faith, and whatever is left free by that Word, is governed by love. All attempts by majorities or minorities, pastors or people, officials or rank and file, to tyrannize one another, that is, to rule beyond and apart from faith and love, confuse the two realms and usurp Christ’s own government in His Kingdom of Grace.

Such are the givens that define what Lutherans have always meant when they confessed—as Dr. Johnson’s paper does emphatically—the divine institution of the Holy Ministry.

What then does it mean to have such a gift of God in the church? What real difference does it make? It is practice or implementation that makes the difference between perfunctory lip-service and genuine belief, conviction, and confession. The genuineness of our confession of the God-given Gospel Ministry is being tested today in at least two areas—one expressly mentioned by Dr. Johnson, and one not.

Our essayist repeatedly refers to the need for a proper, orderly appointment—what AC XIV calls “*ordentlich Beruf, rite vocatus.*” This is not something additional, an optional extra, but is part and parcel of the divine institution itself. Just as infant Baptism is not an additional, autonomous topic above and beyond the nature and benefits of Baptism but necessarily follows from them, so also in the case of the divine call into the Office. The nature of that call depends not on linguistic studies of the *kaleo*-group of words, but on the nature of the Office. That is how our fathers in the faith always looked at it.<sup>14</sup>

Just because the Lutheran Church accepts no divinely established episcopate above the ordinary ministers, that might move the latter about at will, our church has always gone to great lengths to ensure that God’s gift of His Gospel-Ministry should be subject only to His own revealed will, and not to the whims and whimsies of men. Part of this safeguarding has been the insistence that the calling and removing of ministers belongs to the church; that means, to hearers and preachers together, not to hearers alone or to preachers alone. Both must be allowed their proper participation, since God gave the gift to the church, not to individuals in the church.

If God, and not human whim, is to rule in His church, then His properly called servants may be removed from office—not arbitrarily, but only for cause—that is, for ungodly doctrine, ungodly life, or incompetence in office. In this context, the fathers of the

Missouri Synod, following Luther and the standard Lutheran tradition, resolutely set their faces against the so-called “temporary call.” Such a temporary non-call or contract, opposition to which our fathers wrote into the synodical constitution,<sup>15</sup> amounted in their judgment to a notice and claim of the right of future dismissal without cause. We need to come to terms with this heritage, if we expect our doctrine of the divine institution of the Gospel-Ministry to be taken seriously.

Last, but by no means least, perhaps the greatest challenge to a serious confession of the gift of the Gospel office today lies in the field of missiology. We are overwhelmed with a pragmatic clamor for successful methods, and with various sectarian schemes and even neo-Pentecostal fantasies about so-called “spiritual gifts” and the centrality of “meta-church” small groups. The question is not whether all Christians can and ought to confess their faith. Of course they do and must.

The real question is whether in the church’s official and intentional mission work, in the planting of churches, God’s gift and institution for this very purpose is to be central—Rom. 10:15: “how shall they preach unless they are sent?”—or whether the God-given Gospel Ministry is to be made peripheral, sidelined in favor of schemes regarded as more efficient or more likely to succeed. In short, shall we walk by faith or by sight? That is the question. Since few will suspect C.F.W. Walther of clericalism, we should note his comment to the so-called “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18–20), which he treated as words of institution for the Ministry.

From this it is clear that the preaching-office [*Predigtamt*] of the apostles is by Christ’s mandate to endure till the end of days; but if this is to happen, then the church must ever and again, till the end of days, set up the regular [*ordentliche*] public preaching-office, and administer the Means of Grace in this ordinance [*Ordnung*] in her midst.<sup>16</sup>

God in His mercy grant us again that sturdy unity of mind and spirit that enabled our Lutheran forefathers to endure great hardship and privation, and to sacrifice personal interest and preference to the common good, and to the service of our One great Shepherd and His one flock!

Notes

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962).
2. Herman Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 75.
3. E. Schott, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, s.v. Amt, 1:338–39.
4. Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:335–38.
5. Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), AE 41:154, 160, 164.
6. Compare J. T. Mueller's mistranslation, in *Church and Ministry*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 268.
7. "*Ministerium est status sacer, a Deo institutus, ut vera divini verbi doctrina et legitima Sacramentorum dispensatione homines peccatores fidem consequantur, et per fidem aeternam salutem*" (Abraham Calov, *Exegema Augustanae Confessionis* [Wittenberg, 1665], 451). Carpzov speaks of a divinely instituted "*ordo ac status*" (*Isagoge in Libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranorum Symbolicos* [Leipzig, 1675], 245).
8. John Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* [Tübingen, 1774], 12:4.
9. John Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
10. Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974).
11. Collins, 234.

12. Henry P. Hamann, "Church and Ministry: An Exegesis of Ephesians 4:1-16," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 16 (December 1982), 121-128; "The Translation of Ephesians 4:1-16," *Concordia Journal* 14 (January 1988), 42-49.

13. *The Lutheran Understanding of Ministry* (Geneva: Department of Studies, LWF, 1983), 5, and *Das Lutherische Verständnis vom Amt* (Geneva: LWF, 1983), 5. The translators add an apologetic note: "With the common concept 'ministry' the inner connection of service (*Dienst*) and office (*Amt*) is given expression more directly than is possible with the German concepts" (my translation).

14. ". . . the church cannot create a call according to its own discretion but can issue only that call that God has instituted and that He alone recognizes (through which alone a servant of God comes into existence, not, however, through a human contract for a few hours and days" (C. S. Meyer, ed., *Walther Speaks to the Church* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1973], 58). See also the monograph by that acknowledged expert on Lutheran Orthodoxy, the late Dr. Robert Preus: *The Doctrine of the Call in the Confessions and Lutheran Orthodoxy*, Luther Academy Monograph #1, published by Our Savior Lutheran Church and School, Houston, Texas, 1991.

15. "From the very beginning, our Synod had to take a definite stand on this question. Among the conditions of membership in Synod the following is listed [in the Constitution]: 'Regular (not temporary) call of the pastor.' Chapter V, paragraph 11, we find this statement: 'Licenses to preach that are customary in this country are not granted by Synod because they are contrary to Scripture and to the practice of the Church.' . . . This has been the consistent practice of our Synod since that time and has been stated again and again in official papers presented at conventions and in our periodicals" (P. Koehneke, "The Call into the Holy Ministry," in *The Abiding Word*, T. Laetsch, ed. [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946], 1:380).

16. C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller, 191; my re-translation.

## RESPONSE TO PRESENTATION II

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Oklahoma District  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE CHURCH and her ministers has been going on since the time of the apostles and has continued through every age. What makes it so interesting perhaps—even urgent in our time—is that we are the ones responsible. We are the seminary professors, church body presidents, theologians and district presidents. Today, we are the ones to whom the church looks for the preparation of her pastors as we provide for their ongoing education, formation, skill development, supervision, and guidance—for them and their parishes as they work together in ministry. Dr. Johnson's paper, "The Office of the Pastoral Ministry: Fundamental Scriptural and Confessional Considerations," provides an excellent background for discussion under the threefold direction of scriptural foundation for understanding the Office of the Ministry, our confessional documents, and then, flowing out of these two, three issues concerning public ministry: the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers, the Office and function of the Public Ministry, and servanthood and authority.

Through Scripture and the Confessions, Dr. Johnson points to what I feel is at the core of public ministry: servanthood. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to

be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. . . ." (Phil. 2:5-7). For me, personally, as the servant of Christ first to the people of Faith Lutheran Church in Owasso, Oklahoma, and then to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as president of its Oklahoma District, the background of Scripture and Confessions puts the Public Ministry into a clearer perspective. It was not possible to read and study this paper without making personal application of the servant theme woven throughout, a theme to which I respond.

Within his discussion of the possible interpretations of ministry in the New Testament, Dr. Johnson states: "The Ministry of the church is ultimately rooted in the way in which Jesus called disciples, and particularly the twelve apostles, to share His task." When Jesus said, "follow me" He wasn't talking about getting in line behind him to take a stroll through life. It was a call to servanthood. It was a call to leave father and mother behind, and not to look back. Following Jesus required a commitment to be servants—not for power or for authority over others, nor finally to achieve a respectable position in life. It is a call to servanthood, and not for salary or title. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head," (Matt. 8:20). Servanthood. And, more important than serving is the attitude of the servant. St. Paul says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. . . ." (Phil. 2:5).

The church is not immune from the notion of upward mobility. When a pastor considers a call from one ministry to another, laypeople often remark: "He'll probably take this call because it will be a promotion for him" or "I doubt if he'll go; it seems like a lateral move." Pastors have accepted and declined calls because the salary package was more or less. Six years ago when I was first elected president of the Oklahoma District, people around the Synod commented to me that I had now been elevated to a position of

honor and authority. It did not take long to discover that “up” was not the direction of this elevation. Personal upward movement is not a characteristic of Gospel Ministry. The church does not have a hierarchial system, although it is difficult not to take a worldly view of our structure. We live in a society where money and position is a reward for success and success is the antonym to “down.” “Down” is a dreaded word, a taunting word. “You’re going down.” “Down” is the word of a servant. Jesus said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matt. 20:26). A servant is the least person, the one who puts everyone else ahead of him, the one who eats last, washes last, sees to his own needs last. In our world there is no place for “down.” It implies failure, weakness, poverty, less than normal, lack of initiative, low self-esteem, depression, and a direction to be avoided.

“Up,” on the other hand, is power, competition, success, energy, money, and ease. Look at the people that our world holds up as heroes. Name them: businessmen, athletes, entertainers. Most of them make lots of money, stand in a spotlight, and seem to have much influence over a variety of issues. It was the same in Jesus’ day. Luke writes in the first verses of chapter 21 of His Gospel: “He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury; and He saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. And He said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had’” (vv 1-4; RSV). St. Paul writes, “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential. . . . God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. . . . God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world . . . to nullify the things that are. . . .” (1 Cor. 1:26-28). Jesus said, “. . . whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:35 RSV).

That is what He did when He emptied Himself and became a servant. He filled in all the blanks of what it means to be down: demotion, anonymity, servant, loser. When Jesus said "follow me," the path He walked was one of downward mobility. The One who possessed everything became nothing to demonstrate to us God's greatness. He called the Twelve and us to follow Him in this, declaring us to be His chosen people and a royal priesthood.

It is out of this Priesthood of Believers that the Public Ministry comes. St. Paul writes, "It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:11-12). Dr. John Fritz, in his book on pastoral theology, says that God did not leave the calling of pastors to the discretion of His people. He ordained that proper persons should be chosen for this important work. Congregations must be reminded that when they call a pastor to perform the public functions necessary in their corporate capacity they do not abdicate or forfeit the gifts and privileges they possess as kings and priests, to whom the Lord has entrusted the Means of Grace and thus the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. They retain all rights and powers, in virtue of which they call a minister for the public discharge of the duties these involve. They have signed away nothing when they elect a pastor. The congregation with its pastor, who is at once the minister of Christ and of His church, is responsible to God for its performance according to His revealed will.<sup>1</sup>

Since the pastor and congregation are inextricably linked through the divine call, it is important that this Priesthood of Believers operate in concert, and that the pastor and congregation share the same values and beliefs as they work in harmony to present the Gospel. While it is important to understand the relationship of the priests in the Priesthood of Believers, it is equally important to see this as a faith community whose behavior and values

reflect those of Jesus Christ and interact with the surrounding culture in such a way that the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is effectively presented. At times, a gap exists between the church and those we want to serve, that is, between pulpit and pew. As professional church workers, we often have failed to develop a critical awareness of the fast-moving and complex society around us, which the Lord has called us to serve.

Dr. Donald Deffner, in an article in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly* titled “Spiritual Wellsprings,” says:

The professional church worker should be concerned for increased intellectual and cultural sensitivity as well. Take the ‘test’ that follows. Try to characterize the individual’s position or mark in society with a word or a phrase that goes well beyond ‘I’ve heard the name.’ For good or ill these people often contribute powerfully to the value systems of our people. Do you know them?”

Allow me to read a few of the names listed by Dr. Deffner: Danielle Steel, Steven Spielberg, Orrin Hatch, Albert Camus, Amy Grant, Michael J. Fox, Jimmy Hendrix, Crystal Gale, Sidney Sheldon, James Reston, William Safire, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Deffner’s point is for us to recognize how little we may be aware of the world around us where our people live and from which they derive many of their values. We need to know this world and keenly understand it, so that we might better confront it. There is a phrase in 1 John 4—just a line—that should not be overlooked: “Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world” (v 17; KJV). As we are “in this world” and not “of this world,” we have the responsibility to be the church in this world. We must become experts at exegeting the culture of our communities. We cannot separate ourselves from those we are trying to serve. The Priesthood of Believers has responsibility for the Public Ministry.

Let me comment now on the Office of Pastor and its functions. Some months ago, I read an article in a travel magazine where the author was sent to evaluate the ten best European hotels. Upon his arrival back in New York, he had several days to spend and decided to check out the best hotel in New York City, that he found to be the equivalent to the best Europe had to offer, with one exception. The New York hotel employee who arrived at his suite identified himself as the one who would be acting as his servant during his stay. He said that in the European hotels there was no acting; they were servants.

A servant must have the attitude to serve. The Public Ministry is hands-on. It is not a nine-to-five office job or punching a 40-hour clock. It is making hospital calls, leading devotions for the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, training lay leaders, praying with people as they experience the joys and sorrows of life. And, it is study and personal devotion and sermon preparation. There is an expectation people have of their minister. In 1989, the Standing Committee for Pastoral Ministry published *Scriptural Standards and Ecclesiastical Expectations for Servants in the Office of the Public Ministry*. It identified general expectations for those who fill the Office of the Public Ministry, including such things as these personal qualities: devotion to God, loyalty, faithfulness, compassion, warmth, patience, and integrity. And, the pastor should show himself competent in theology and leadership dynamics. The committee then identified typical tasks that a congregation can expect from their pastor, teacher, parish leader and administrator.<sup>3</sup> Not included in the committee's document, but important, is that the expectation at times includes playing volleyball with teenagers even when one is a lousy volleyball player and feels out of touch with the teen culture, or attending yet another potluck with the golden agers, and so on. In all these ways the pastor is able to be with his people, and to know and understand them better.

The Public Ministry is not an office job; it is a people job. People in the parish notice when their pastor is sitting in the bleachers on Friday night in the fall cheering the hometown football team. While this may seem to have little to do with servanthood ministry, people come to recognize their pastor as one with them rather than as one who has a life and a world different from theirs. In Oklahoma, I consider it a bonus when a pastor shows up at harvest time to drive a truck or throw bales. This is hardly the kind of servanthood I was taught to expect; yet, I can see people respond to the leading of their pastor when they recognize their pastor as one with them in the Priesthood of all Believers. Dr. Eldor Meyer, in his observations of ministry in rural communities, says that pastors who take time regularly to go to the local coffee shop and visit with their members and friends in the community develop relationships in a way that might not otherwise be possible.<sup>4</sup> While we are the public performers of the Office of the Keys, we must remember that the Office is invested in real people. To say we are a servant is not enough. We must have the attitude of a servant and we must serve.

Dr. J.A.O. Preus III in a recent article in the *Concordia Journal* writes:

To prepare pastors for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the future will require of us creativity and boldness. The place to begin is to expand the partnership between seminary and church, with each contributing what it is best able to offer in the context that is most appropriate to its task. Preparing pastors for the church is a complex task. It involves forming, educating, and equipping. That is a task for all of us.<sup>5</sup>

While the initial burden for the preparation of pastors falls to the seminaries, the congregation where a pastor is first assigned, neighboring clergy, and the district office also play an important

role in helping the pastor immerse himself in the servant activities of the Pastoral Office. We each know stories of the servants who do not serve or who meet only the basic expectations a congregation can have for its pastor—those who feel, as Dr. Johnson describes it, as independent, ontological servants. Dr. Jonathan Grothe has written an excellent book titled *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry: Jesus and Paul*. He indicates that the counsel of close peers and supervisors in the Ministry can play a positive role in correcting an erring brother and/or in confirming him in the rightness of his position in the eyes of those he has been sent to serve.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus taught functional servanthood through personal example. On the night He was betrayed, while they were breaking bread, He took a basin of water and a towel, knelt down and washed the feet of the disciples. Ordinarily, the one hosting a dinner party would have a regulation servant attending the door who would wash the road dust off the feet of the dinner guests as they arrived, but not at Jesus' Supper. With unwashed feet the disciples reclined at the table where the conversation over dinner turned to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. To this Jesus responded,

The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as One who serves (Luke 20:25–27; RSV).

Jesus removes His robe and puts on a servant's towel. He has spent His entire ministry with them trying to demonstrate by His own example, gently, day by day, teaching them compassion, humility and servanthood, until now, in this last time together with them before His death, they cannot even do these things among

themselves. Their dispute over greatness merely demonstrates that they have no idea of the true greatness of which Jesus spoke. So, He goes from one to another until all have been washed. Then, resuming His place at the supper table Jesus said, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14; RSV). This is a simple act of servanthood before the ultimate act of laying down His life. Servants serve. They have that authority.

As Dr. Johnson says, the authority of the Office of the Ministry is not personal, but is of the Gospel. That servanthood should characterize the Office. Jesus sent His disciples, and breathing on them, commissioned them by saying: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone His sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:22-23). In Luke 9 we read, "When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (vv 1-2). He gave them the authority to serve. The servant becomes one with the served, as Christ became one of those He served. The authority of the servant does not come with a diploma or a clerical collar or with certification by the seminary faculty. The authority comes from the Gospel and either you are doing it or you are not doing it. Either you have it or you do not. The aged southern preacher said, "If you ain't seen nothin', you ain't heard nothin', and you ain't felt nothin', you ain't got nothin'." Your attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ who humbled Himself and became obedient to God and was therefore exalted by God to the highest place. The only way for the church of Jesus Christ to be great is for her to be servant of all. And, it must begin with us.

Notes

1. John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology: A Handbook of Scriptural Principles* (Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 31.

2. Donald Deffner, "Spiritual Wellsprings for the Professional Church Worker" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 53 (January–April 1989), 65.

3. *Scriptural Standards and Ecclesiastical Expectations for Servants in the Office of the Public Ministry*, A Document published by the Standing Committee for Pastoral Ministry, February 1989, 11–19.

4. Eldor W. Meyer, "Preserving and Growing Rural Congregations" A Report on Rural Ministry to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, July 1995, 15.

5. Jacob A. O. Preus III, "The Good Theological School: Forming, Teaching, or Training Pastors for the Church?" *Concordia Journal* 23 (July 1997), 200.

6. Jonathan F. Grothe, *Reclaiming Patterns of Pastoral Ministry: Jesus and Paul*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 94.