

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY: DISTINCTIONS WITHIN AND WITHOUT

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1.00. WHY DISTINCTIONS?

Bene docet, it used to be said, qui bene distinguit. Not all distinctions make sense. There are serious, necessary distinctions (God and Caesar come to mind, in respect of tax-money, St. Mt. 22:21), and frivolous, sophistical ones (for instance, the Temple, and the gold in the Temple; the Altar, and the sacrifice on the Altar, to tell whether oaths are binding or not, St. Mt. 23:16-18). What makes for a good distinction? The Apology quotes Socrates, via Plato's Phaedrus, to the effect that "he is very fond of distinctions because without them nothing can be explained or understood in a discussion, and that if he found someone skilled in making them he would follow in his footsteps as those of a god" (XXIV,16, Tappert, p. 252). Then comes the point: "He 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."

It is not a question of academic pedantry. The preacher of the Gospel above all must not fudge and muddle things together, but be "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). The word here is orthotomounta, cutting straight. The most basic such "cutting," is of course that "distinction between law and Gospel," which is "an especially brilliant light" illuminating the entire Scriptures (FC SD V,1). And in Christology one must drive home the distinction between distinction and separation! "Every equivocation," says Luther, "is the mother of errors."¹

What then of the ministry? Right distinctions may not be a sufficient condition for untangling present confusions, but they are likely a necessary condition. Not so long ago North American Lutherans could have recognized themselves too in John Collins' impish observation: "Our daily language still shows signs of these ecclesiological contests, being littered with words like priest, pastor, minister, parson, presbytery, manse, vicarage, and so on, which people who have been brought up in the various denominational traditions use with impeccable propriety" (1992:110). But then came the "everyone-a-minister" tidal wave--the very elemental force Collins tackles head-on--and clarity and consistency, let alone

¹Omnis aequivocatio mater errorum (WA 39 II, 28,28).

"impeccable propriety," about ministry were at an end, even in the Missouri Synod.

Take a well-meaning statement like this, from the Social Ministry Affirmations (St. Louis, n.d.): "Thus the church has a single ministry to the whole man and all Christians participate in the single ministry of Jesus Christ to man in the totality of his being." Everything is here muddled up in a most un-Lutheran way, just as in the 1965 Mission Affirmations' slogans about the "whole world," the "whole society," and the "whole man." The economic and political needs of "the whole world" are clearly outside the scope of the Apostolic Commission (St. Mt. 28:19 ff.), hence beyond the competence of the church and her mission as such.

At the other end of the spectrum, consider the assertion of a difference between the "Public Ministry" and "The Office of the Public Ministry" (CTCR, The Ministry, 1981, p. 12), such that one may hold office in the "Public Ministry," but not be in the "Office of the Public Ministry"! The logic seems strained if not specious, suggesting, in Kuhnian terms, a "paradigm" swamped by anomalies, and about to breathe its last.

Our rich biblical, Reformation heritage does not need "reinventing." But its effective retrieval will require the modest virtue of clear and honest thinking. In what follows, therefore, I lay claim to no deep insights, novel ideas, or revolutionary discoveries. I simply suggest that our topic is governed by certain distinctions, the chief and constitutive among them being those between (1) priesthood and ministry, (2) Gospel ministry and auxiliary ministries (diaconate), and (3) spiritual and civil authority. Other, more subsidiary, distinctions, may reflect options offered at a given time, and are then situation-dependent. It is not final dogmatical or consensus language that we are after here, but only a workable way of getting at the topic, of surveying the lay of the land, as it were. Unless nebulous rhetoric gives way to clear contours--and that means distinctions--there simply isn't anything definite enough to be tested by Scripture and Confession. And if semantic fog has come to obfuscate the criteria themselves, the trouble is more dismal still. In any case, I gladly submit, as ex officio do we all, to any correction governed by our common biblical and confessional tests.

2.00. HIERARCHY, OFFICES, OR OFFICE?

Unlike the mostly dichotomous distinctions which follow, this introductory one is trichotomous. That is because there are three major confessional types in Western Christendom, the Roman Catholic, the Calvinist, and the Lutheran. Under "Amt" (office) Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart notes:

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, and in their own way the Anglicans, of the hierarchy . . . (I,338, my translation).

The reason is that "Lutheranism with its doctrine of the preaching office (CA V) as 'the' office powerfully underscores the position of the Gospel as the life-giving center of the congregation . . ." (p. 339). We may say, therefore, that the Roman Catholic model represents traditionalism, the Calvinist biblicism, and the Lutheran a distinctively evangelical hermeneutic:

Consequently one must register in the Symbolical Books a conspicuous lack of interest in the biblical nomenclature for the office-bearers. The talk of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11) is taken as proof that God has given ministers to His church (Tr. 27), which the Symbolical Books identify with their pastors and teachers (Tr. 67) . . .

From the meaning which the Symbolical Books attach to the word ministerium, the Greek diakonia, it follows, firstly that the office must have incumbents, and secondly, that the ranking by degrees of bishops and pastors is in principle abolished. The titles, however, contain an intimation of the tasks to be entrusted to the office-bearers. They are all to serve the Word and the Sacraments. The interest concentrates entirely on giving expression to the action of God (Fagerberg, 1965, pp. 248-249, 250, my translation. Cp. 1972, pp. 236, 237-238).

3.00. PRIESTHOOD AND MINISTRY

Priesthood is one thing, ministry quite another. All Christians are priests, not all are ministers.²

One is born a priest (in Baptism), but appointed a minister:

Office and Priesthood. Today's exegesis has confirmed Luther's claim that the whole New Testament grants the predicate "priest" (sacerdos) and "priestly" only to Christ and the whole people of God, but not to a special ministerial office (Stein, p. 216, my translation).

A priest offers sacrifices (I Peter 2:5), a minister serves or ministers in some designated way. Luther defines the former:

²"A Priest is not identical with Presbyter or Minister--for one is born to be priest, one becomes a minister" (LW 40:18).

as Christ himself was a priest and a sacrifice, so all of us too as Christians are truly a holy priesthood and the sacrifice itself, as Paul elucidates in Romans 12 [:1], where he teaches that we should sacrifice our bodies as a priestly sacrifice (LW 39:235).

As for ministry (diakonia), the most painstaking modern linguistic treatment known to me is John Collins' Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources (1990). The chief conclusions of that work are summarized and applied in Collins' Are All Christians Ministers? (1992).

Here, in outline, is how Collins traces the modern history of our problem: In 1931 Wilhelm Brandt, the chaplain of the Lutheran deaconess institute in Bethel, published his dissertation, Dienst und Dienen im Neuen Testament (Service and Serving in the New Testament). Brandt found the essence of diakonia to be humble, lowly service to others, based on St. Mark 10:45. This understanding was taken up by H. W. Beyer, in his diakonia article for Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, which appeared in German in 1935. Eduard Schweizer (1959; English 1961) pointed in the same direction. "The provenance of the idea within this world of German scholarship, Kittel's dictionary and Schweizer's view of early Church office, has legitimized diakonia as the expression of our contemporary broad and low view of ministry" (1991:240).

If the real point of ministry is humble, self-less service or helpfulness to others, should not all Christians be ministers? That became the thrust of immensely influential works like W.C.C. leader John A. Mackay's 1948 lectures (published in 1953 as God's Order) and A Theology of the Laity (1958) by Hendrik Kraemer, of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. The basic concept is now taken for granted also among "progressive" Roman Catholics, and in Faith and Order's 1982 "Lima Statement," Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry. (The Missouri Synod, incidentally received this enlightenment in O. Feucht's Everyone A Minister [1974], which defined: "The ministry is given by God and is exercised through spontaneous use of special gifts," p. 23).

The single, crucial proof-text for this "Copernican revolution" (the W.C.C.'s Hans-Ruedi Weber) or "large-scale paradigm shift" (H. Richard McCord, associate director, National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Laity and Family Life, U.S.A.) was and is a new rendering of Ephesians 4:12. The sea-change occurred between the Revised Standard Version (1946) and (1971). In the former, apostles,

prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." In 1971 this changes, by a "fractious comma," into "for the equipment of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Comments Collins: "Even without getting out the poster paper and colored pens for groups to draw up their models of Church based on these two translations, we can appreciate that a Church where teachers minister by teaching the rest is different from a Church where the teachers turn the rest into ministers" (1991:241). ". . . the work of ministry thus passes from the teachers to the saints" (1992:19).

Against this recent but now massive consensus, Collins urges that it rests on bad linguistics. It assumes that the New Testament's "diakonia" language was drawn from pedestrian, daily-life contexts, and from the domain of the lowest social strata, servants and slaves, at that. But, says Collins, a careful look at ancient Greek usage proves the opposite. Far from evoking scenes of lowly, slave-like service, diakonia is in fact redolent of divinity, mystery, and religious solemnity. Two examples must suffice here. One is the designation of Hermes as diakonos of the supreme god (Aeschylus' Prometheus 942, Collins, 1991:244), and thus as messenger between heaven and earth. The other is Athenaeus' avoidance, in his Deipnosophistae ("Philosophers of the Dinner Table," Collins renders it, 1992:104), of diakonia in menial contexts, but choosing a cognate to say that by solemn tradition at a symposion "the one who was to do the waiting [diakon-] was never a slave; rather young sons of free men would pour the wine." Again: "The diakonia of tables is a privileged, religious ritual with a dignity accruing to it from the age of Homer" (1991:243). -6

Having sorted through a fascinating wealth of detail regarding ancient Greek usage, Collins concludes that the connotations of diakonia are sublime and exalted rather than lowly and slave-like. Its primary reference is not to its beneficiaries, but to the authority of the master whose command and commission define it. Further, "in view of what ministry/ diakonia was for Greeks, whether Christian or not, the writer of [Ephesians] could not possibly have entertained the idea of all the saints being called into ministry" (1992:111). Or: "In [Col. 1:13-23], being the purveyor of the mystery is what constitutes Paul the minister" (p. 112). I cannot refrain from citing more fully Collins' conclusions about I Cor. 12, particularly

against Conzelmann (1975) and Kaesemann (1964):

To Paul's high world of godly diakonia, through which ancient Corinthians anticipated receiving heaven's mysteries written large on their hearts (to borrow Paul's later imagery of the process involved in diakonia, 2 Cor. 3:3), we now bring the banal inadequacies arising from Kittel's lexicography of the 1930s. By the weight of this 1930s learning Paul's high rhetoric has been brought down to the lowlands of short horizons where mysteries are beyond the range of vision, and the divinely commissioned diakonai, by which churches are constituted, became, in the phrase cited earlier, 'everyday acts of service.'

. . . Within its artificial atmosphere [i.e. that of 'the servant church'], as the predominant English translations of 1 Cor. 12:5 instructed us over the past forty years, there flourish all 'varieties of service,' a prosaic instruction delivered even more platitudinously in another well known translation officially promulgated for public reading, where we are told 'there are all sorts of service to be done.' Thus has a tendentious and reductionist semantics of the diakon- words rendered the fertile field of Corinthian diakonia a linguistic desert (1993:89).

For a different linguistic argument specifically against the equipping-the-saints-for-ministry view of Eph. 4:12, see Hamann (1982) and (1988). The Treatise comments on our text: "[Paul] numbers among the church's own gifts pastors and teachers, adding that such are given for the ministry for upbuilding the body of Christ" (68, cp. Tappert, p. 331).

The real problem with "priesthood" and "ministry" is that both languish under the terrible profanation of everything ^{sacred} ~~spiritual~~ in our time. The one cannot be built up at the expense of the other. The trouble is not too much Royal Priesthood, but rather that its secularized counterfeit is not nearly Royal and Priestly enough! The Gospel Office does not degrade the People of God, but with its sacred ministrations adorns them ever anew with the Epiphany gold and myrrh of heavenly Royalty and Priestliness.

3.10. Pre-Reformation Luther and Reformation Luther

In 1515 Luther did indeed say that if a layman were to go through the motions of performing sacramental acts, then, "because he has not been consecrated and ordained and sanctified, he performs nothing at all, but is only playing church and deceiving himself and his followers" (LW 25:235). Fusselman (1994) rightly criticizes the unchurchly "lay-ministry" arrangements of the 1989 Wichita Convention. But his appeal to that decidedly pre-Reformation view of 1515 is mistaken, since Luther vehemently disavowed and denounced it, for instance in his Concerning the Ministry of 1523: "If then that which is greatest, namely, Word and baptism, is conferred on all, then it can rightly be maintained that the lesser, the power

to consecrate, is also so conferred" (LW 40:25). Nor is it at all tenable to make baptisms or absolutions given by laymen in emergencies, in any way inferior to those done by pastors: "So also women, when they baptize, exercise the legitimate priesthood, and that not by a private act, but by a public and ecclesiastical ministration [German version: mit einem gemeinen und oeffentlichen Amt der Kirche], which belongs to a priest alone [quod ad solum sacerdotem pertinet]" (WA 12:181; cp. the less accurate version in LW 40:23). Ditto for absolution in the Book of Concord: "So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another" (Treatise 67, Tappert, p. 331).

3.20. Early Reformation Luther and Mature Reformation Luther

As there is a pre-Reformation Luther, so there is also a pre-encounter-with-the-enthusiasts Luther. The chief marker of that turning point is Luther's 1525 response to Carlstadt, Against the Heavenly Prophets (LW 40:79-223). The difference between Luther (1523) and Luther (1532) is dramatic. In the former Luther takes the "each" and "all" of I Cor. 14:26 and 31 to mean all Christians, so that all might speak by turns in the public service (LW 40:23). Luther (1532) will have none of that, but insists: "In this passage Paul is speaking of the prophets, who are to teach, not of the people, who are to listen . . . It should be clear that he is commanding the congregation to listen and build itself up, and is not commissioning it to teach or preach" (LW 40:388.391). Walther minimizes this as a mere change in exegesis (1915:I,115-116). It is a pity that the theological Floor Committee at the 1989 Wichita Convention was misled with copious, one-sided citations from Luther (1523).

Of course, both priesthood and ministry are present and distinguished in both (1523) and (1532). But Luther (1523) is a sort of first approximation, inveighing with "liberationist" zeal against the Roman outrage of degrading the real, holy priests of God, His dear believers, in order to exalt the "shorn" elite with their "indelible character." Despite affirmations of ministry and ordination (40:11, 36-37, 40), the sometimes unguarded language, combined with the loose view of I Cor. 14, easily suggests faulty conclusions--which were drawn later by men like Hoefling and Sohm. The approach of (1523) may also have cost Luther the support of the Bohemians, to whom the document had been addressed, and who now turned back to

Rome. Luther (1532) redresses the imbalance. He himself confessed that the importance of the divinity of the office only dawned on him gradually (LW 26:20-21). His (1533) embodies Luther's mature position. Among the most judicious treatments of Luther's teaching about the ministry known to me are Buchrucker (1972), Lieberg (1962), and Stein (1974).

3.30. Luther and the Book of Concord

It is the Confessions, not Luther's personal views, on which the church nicknamed for him takes her stand. Yet for our Book of Concord Luther is not just anybody either. He is "the most eminent teacher of the churches which adhere to the Augsburg Confession." Therefore "the true meaning and intention of the Augsburg Confession cannot be derived more correctly or better from any other source than from Dr. Luther's doctrinal and polemical writings" (FC, SD VII, 41, Tappert, p. 576). One may not, therefore, pit the Confessions against Luther, as Loehe did in his letter to G. M. Grossmann (Saginaw) of 1 July 1853, regarding Walther's Church and Ministry:

The excerpts . . . are more than sufficient to prove Walther's agreement, or rather the agreement of his book, with Luther . . . Even though there is at least one passage [in the Symbolical Books] which is written in Walther's (Luther's personal [*individuell-lutherischen*]) sense, yet the plain sense especially of some passages of the Augsburg Confession yields no necessity to explain them in harmony with one or two passages. The Symbolical doctrine appears unfinished to me . . . (1985:2,199, my translation).

To conclude with a bon mot by Leif Grane: Luther "has no 'doctrine of justification,' for which one could muster some understanding, or which one might perhaps even find 'correct,' while at the same time regarding him as less felicitous in the doctrine of church and ministry. If one wants the one, one must take the other into the bargain" (1975:190, my translation).

4.00. GOSPEL MINISTRY AND HELPING MINISTRIES

It is common ground that God has instituted a ministry, and that there are in fact various offices in the church. How are we to think of "the one and the many" here? Are the many offices simply forms of the one ministry? Or is there one divinely-instituted office, and several humanly-established ones? Or are there some of each?

There is one divinely instituted Gospel ministry or office (AC V) simply because there is one indivisible God-given Gospel (which always includes the Sacraments). Not any and every kind of ministry is divinely instituted, but only the ministry of the Word (diakonia tou logou), as distinct from, say, a ministering at tables (diakonein trapezais) [Acts 6:2.4]. This ministry of the Word is the Predigtamt of AC V (German), but Tappert's English fails us here. His "office of the ministry" says "Amt" twice and the essential "Predigt" not at all. In English "Predigtamt"³ (preaching office) has generally been simply "ministry" (via the Latin ministerium), with the tacit understanding that it meant the full "ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments" (AC V, Latin), not a vague "ministry" in general. This follows NT Greek usage nicely, as we shall see.

There is then the God-given Gospel office or ministry, and there are also offices or ministries established by the church in Christian liberty, following apostolic precedent. But the one Gospel ministry or Predigtamt itself may take more than one concrete shape: "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). It would be arbitrary to single out any one of these as "the only divinely instituted office." Standard Lutheran theology therefore has always favored the inclusive "ministry of the church"--reflecting the New Testament's diakonia usage (see 4.10 below)--rather than fastening upon specific terms like "bishop" or "presbyter" or even "pastor."

"Old Missouri," moreover, did not identify Predigtamt (preaching office, ministry) with the local, congregational Pfarramt (parish office, pastorate) quite so exclusively as the conventional wisdom would have it. Walther's Church and Ministry (1987:297-299) cites Chemnitz, who treats the various offices of Eph. 4:11 as simply "grades or orders" within the one God-given ministry of the Word. Of "evangelists" Chemnitz/Walther say expressly that they "were not apostles, nor were they appointed for any definite congregation; they were sent to various churches to preach the Gospel but especially first to lay the foundation." Similarly Francis Pieper, citing from an earlier Lehre und Wehre (1863:179) that the "preaching

³English cannot match the capacity of German for stitching together several small words into one large and rather precise one, like Kleinviehsozialpsychologiewirkungsgeschichtsrelevanzwissenschaftsinformationsquellenerforschungssueberdruss (being sick and tired of researching the information sources of the science of the relevance of the history of the effects of the social psychology of small cattle).

office (Predigtamt) goes through the world in a two-fold form, in a missionary and a parish-pastoral [pfarramtlichen] one," argued that missionaries sent by Synod or its districts should also be called and ordained, for they "have received and accepted a divine call just as much as those called to parish-pastoral activity by already existing congregations" (Lehre und Wehre, 1925:425).

The one Gospel office must not, however, be thought of as a bundle of "functions," to be gathered or scattered according to whim. The important Lehre und Wehre theses of 1874 (see Appendix) capture and safeguard the organic unity of the office. Thesis 2: "To whom the office of the Word is given, to him are thereby granted all offices which are exercised in the church through the Word." Thesis 6: "When the congregation confers an essential part of the preaching office [or ministry], then it virtualiter [in effect] confers the whole of the same . . ."

"Old Missouri" and "Old Wisconsin," incidentally, were quite agreed in the standard Lutheran understanding that "we have a sure doctrine that the Predigtamt (ministry, preaching office) derives [herkommt, descends, originates] from the common call of the Apostles" (Treatise 10, German).⁴ "New Wisconsin," by contrast, apparently dissolves the one office into various "functions,"⁵ while "New Missouri" seems bent on improvising seven-league boots from biblicist minimalism and stock phrases in poorly⁶ translated Walther-selections, to keep up with runaway organizational activism. The uniqueness of the Gospel office, redefined as "pastoral ministry," then no longer makes sense, and the void is filled with bureaucratic fictions about "episkopee" and "equipping."

⁴For NT background see Rengstorf (1969).

⁵See Nass (1994). "When Christ picked the apostles, he showed his desire for a 'public ministry' (Tractate, 10, German text)" (pp. 243-244). What a far cry from the "sure doctrine" (above)! How about: "When Christ picked water, bread, and wine, He showed His desire for 'sacraments'?"

The great Wisconsin Synod dogmatician A. Hoenecke (1909) put it very well: "The ordinary ministry [Predigtamt] is the continuation, willed by God Himself, of the extraordinary apostolic office, and is in and with the apostolic office of divine institution" (IV,180; my translation).

⁶The 1987 Church and Ministry, in the text of the ten theses on the Predigtamt (ministry), renders that standard term in four different ways: ministry, ministry of the Word, public ministry, and pastoral ministry! Thesis III should have said that "the ministry is not an optional office." Instead, it says that it is not an "arbitrary" one--whatever that may mean.

In sum, conceptual clarity would be served by distinguishing specializations within the one Word-and-Sacraments office from various other offices beyond that, which do not involve the right and duty to preach, teach, and give the Sacraments.

4.10. DIAKONIA: Generic, Specific, and Most Specific Senses

Gerhard (1774) devotes the entire opening chapter on the ministry (XII,4-38) to a comprehensive "onomatology" or treatment of the various biblical terms for the ministry. He notes that the name diakonia (ministry) is "most often" given to "the ecclesiastical order," but that the word has a range of meanings. Simplifying his scheme a bit, we note first a generic meaning, as in St. Luke 10:40, where Martha is distracted about much diakonian. And when Peter's mother-in-law arose from her fever and dieekonei them (St. Lk. 4:39), it was not devotions she was conducting, surely!

Secondly, diakonia/diakonos describe specifically the Word-and-Sacraments office, or the stewardship of the Mysteries⁷ of God (I Cor. 3:5; cp. 4:1). Contexts like Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rom. 11:13; II Cor. 4:1; 6:3; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7,17; I Tim. 1:12; II Tim. 4:5,11, which use the diakon-words by themselves, virtually compel us to understand the terms as referring to the one Gospel-preaching office. Since the terms themselves can have either more generic or still more specific meanings, however, we need more than the sublime evocations or connotations of the diakon-group of words, as documented by Collins. After all, even formerly grand words can become déclassé. We do, however, have the precise denotation of the Gospel office in phrases like diakonia or diakonos tou logou (of the Word, Acts 6:4), kainees diatheekees (of the New Testament, II Cor. 3:6), tou pneumatos (of the Spirit, v. 8), tees dikaiousunees (of righteousness, v. 9), tees katallagees (of reconciliation, 5:18), and tou euaggeliou (of the Gospel, Col. 1:23, cp. Eph. 3:7). This overview by itself suffices to show why diakonia/ministerium/ ministry is the best overarching term. This is why Gerhard, Quenstedt, and Baier/Walther all entitle our topic simply De Ministerio Ecclesiastico--as does AC VI

⁷Since "musteerion" becomes "sacramentum" in the Latin Bible, Ap. XXIV,80 interprets I Cor. 4:1 as follows: "'This is how one should regard us, as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the Sacraments of God,' that is, of the Word and Sacraments" (Tappert, p. 264).

Thirdly, when diakonoj are distinguished from episkopoj (bishops), as in Phil. 1:1 and I Tim. 3:8, then the term should be rendered "deacons." Traditionally this is taken to refer to the auxiliary office established by the church in Acts 6:1-6, mainly to supply temporal needs. But see sub-distinction 4.11.

4.11. New Testament Deacons and Reformation Deacons

According to Luther (1520) "the diaconate is the ministry, not of reading the Gospel or the Epistle, as is the present practice, but of distributing the church's aid to the poor" (LW 36:116). Collins (1992:36-40), however, argues that the real need of the "Greek" widows in Acts 6:1 was not for bodily provisions, but for instruction in their language. The Apostles, accordingly, retained the large-scale (Aramaic) proclamation for themselves, but had the Seven attend to the "small groups," in which Greek speakers could be taught in that language. The argument is ingenious and makes for a paradigm of impressive explanatory power. However, it seems forced to interpret the Acts 6:2 contrast between "ton logon tou theou" (the Word of God) and "diakonein trapezais" (ministering [at] tables) as one between teaching large crowds and teaching small groups.

The Reformation's starting-point in respect of ministry in general, and therefore also of the diaconate in particular, is the axiom of the priority of preaching.⁸ With the highest office, that of preaching, all others are given as well (see Luther-citations in Walther, 291-296). The medieval custom of not allowing deacons to consecrate the Eucharist, but letting them preach--as though almost anybody could do that--ran counter to basic evangelical conviction. The first "Lutheran" ordination in Wittenberg was that of George Roerer in 1525. He was consecrated a deacon, and was thereby understood to have been "added, with equal rights, to the ranks of the other clergy of Wittenberg (who had already been consecrated under the papacy)" (Lieberg, 182n).

By a curious convergence the Reformation anticipates Collins' concern not "to shift our focus from

⁸"For the very greatest, holiest, most necessary, highest worship of God [Gottesdienst], which God has required as the greatest in the First and Second Commandments, is to preach God's Word; for the office of preaching [Predigtamt] is the highest office in the church" (Ap. XV, 42, German; my translation).

the real work of ministry to works of social service" (p. 38). The mere word "diakonia," however, doesn't do it. Why should not the meeting of needs from possessions (toon huparchontoon, Acts 4:32) held in common, and put at the Apostles' disposal, have become a specialized diakonia, as the numbers became unmanageable? St. Luke uses the diakon-word when he reports that certain women "dieekonoun [were ministering] to them out of their own possessions [toon huparchontoon]" (St. Lk. 8:3). It is not "ministry," but the ministry tou logou (of the Word, Acts 6:4), which is the ministry kat' exocheen, because the church lives from the Gospel alone.

Why then do we find Stephen preaching (Acts 6 and 7) and Philip serving as an evangelist (Acts 8), neither apparently restricted to "small groups"? Chemnitz conjectures that, having been found faithful in lesser tasks, Stephen and Philip were given the greater responsibility of the full preaching office (II,683). Gerhard thinks that they were preachers to begin with, but were assigned to major in charitable diakonia (1774:Loc XXIV,28), or as he calls it, "that part of the ecclesiastical ministry," which embraces the distribution of "biotics" (ta biotika) and other necessities.

An echo of the Reformation's "transvaluation" of the diaconate was heard among North American Lutherans after the tyrannical Pastor Grabau had arbitrarily dismissed his deacon, Christian Hochstetter (later historian of the Missouri Synod). Grabau argued in self-defense that the man was only a deacon, not a pastor, and could therefore be dealt with summarily. Walther wrote a scathing piece (1867), which accused Grabau of "sacrilege" and "church-robbery," and showed that

the Lutheran deacon's office is not an auxiliary office, like, for example, the almoner's office, . . . but the proper, one office especially instituted and established by Christ Himself . . .

However therefore Pastor Grabau may twist and wiggle, he will never manage to prove from God's Word that there is more than one divinely instituted office, and that there exists a type of preacher who by divine right would be something other or more or less than other [preachers], which of course is a doctrine which domineering preachers would only too fondly like to smuggle in from the Roman or the Episcopal church into the Lutheran.

Thus it is and remains a shameful deed, through which Pastor Grabau has proved himself a tyrant, a persecutor of the holy ministry, and an enemy of all human and divine order, that he has deposed, driven out, and chased away a Lutheran deacon, without all due process, by means of the brutal power of the trustees misled by him . . . (66-67).

A recent unpublished paper by John Stephenson argues forcefully for the restoration of the male

diaconate (we already have deaconesses), not in the Reformation/Walther sense, but as the traditional helping office, combined with catechetical duties. The human agonies of modern city-life offer an unlimited scope for this blessed office, in which, over the centuries, both men and women have held out help and hope in wonders of self-sacrificial, divine love.

4.20. Ministry (Predigtamt): WIDE and NARROW Senses

Pieper (1953:III,439) makes this distinction, asserting that "in the wider sense it embraces every form of preaching [German: Verkuendigung, proclamation] the Gospel or administering the means of grace," whether by Christians in general or by public ministers. Pieper offers no proof or illustration of his attribution of this usage to Scripture and "the Church," but moves on at once to the "special, or narrower"--really the proper--sense of the public ministry.

This distinction, so far as I know, is not found in Luther, the Confessions, Chemnitz,⁹ Gerhard, Quenstedt, or even Walther's much enlarged edition of Baier. The intent, no doubt, was to safeguard the dignity of the church's royal priesthood, but in present circumstances any equivocation between "priesthood" and "ministry" is less than helpful.

Given another interpretation, however, the same distinction makes very good sense. The 1874 theses (see Appendix) distinguish the Predigtamt (preaching office, ministry) proper from the wider public ministry, which includes also auxiliary offices: "7. There are however services which are indeed necessary in the church for her governance and therefore belong to the ministry in the wider sense, which however do not necessarily embrace the conduct of the office in the narrower sense; wherefore such auxiliary services may be done also by such as do not thereby receive the right to exercise also the office of the Word and the Sacraments."

In other words, auxiliary offices or services belong to the "penumbra" of the "ecclesiastical ministry" in the strict sense. That strict or proper sense is defined by the "essential parts" of the office, which are

⁹Chemnitz asks whether Christians have a "general call" (not a general ministry) to the ministry. His answer is that for the ministry one needs a "special or particular call," but that as spiritual priests "all Christians have a general call to proclaim the Gospel of God" (1981:29).

in principle indivisible: preaching, sacraments, absolution and retention, and all that these necessarily include. Those appointed to ecclesial offices beyond these essential parts, rightly belong to the "public" or "ecclesiastical" ministry, in the wider sense, since they serve in an official capacity (e.g. parochial school teachers, deacons, deaconesses), not simply as private individuals.

There are then "divisions of ministries" (I Cor. 12:5),¹⁰ yet the various sub-divisions or ministrations, whether within the one office, or among supporting offices, all subserve the one great ministry of the Gospel of God.

4.30. Ministry (Predigtamt) ABSTRACTLY and CONCRETELY Viewed

In Gerhard it is perfectly simple: "ministry" is an "abstractive," and "ministers" a "concretive" description (p. 4). The distinction, quite logically, is between the office and its incumbents.¹¹ We have here not two offices, or two kinds of office, but two ways of looking at one and the same office. In this sense AC V, "Of the Ecclesiastical Ministry," treats of the one office "abstract[ive]ly," while AC XIV speaks of the same office "concret[iv]ely."

Walther makes something else of this when he argues that AC V "does not speak of the ministry of the Word [Predigtamt] in concreto or of the pastoral office [Pfarramt] but only of the ministry of the Word [Predigtamt] in abstracto" (1987:178). There now is a tension between his Thesis Two, which identifies Predigtamt and Pfarramt, and his supporting argument, which divides Predigtamt and Pfarramt. The intent is of course perfectly sound: to make clear that salvation depends absolutely only on the Gospel, not on the public Gospel ministry. Yet that aim is achieved much better by the kind of commentary which Walther actually offers with reference to the even stronger language of AC XXVIII:

Here the office of the keys . . . is identified with the power of the bishops, and to it the obtaining of the eternal gifts is bound. But this is not because the eternal gifts of Christ's kingdom could in

¹⁰Collins takes the "ministries" and the "miracles" of vv. 5 and 6 to be the two species of the genus "gifts" (charismata) in v. 4 (1993). Gerhard was acquainted with this view as well (p. 6).

¹¹Hoenecke (IV:175) misunderstands this distinction, as though "abstractly" referred to the means of grace, in other words, to the activities of the office, rather than to the office itself, as in Gerhard. But on that see 4.40 below.

no wise be obtained without the administration of the means of grace by official [oeffentlichen] ministers [Amtspersonen], but because God desires ordinarily [ordentlicher Weise] to impart these gifts to men only in this way (p. 192).

Walther cites Hartmann in support of his distinction. Hartmann, however, uses not Walther's "in concreto/in abstracto" language, but Gerhard's terms, only adverbially rather than adjectivally. And he means the same thing as Gerhard, for as Walther cites him (p. 192):

The ministry of the Word may be treated in two ways: first, in an abstract way when the state or 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 treats it.

As in Gerhard, we have one and the same "holy office" or even "state" (Stand, a word Walther disliked), not two kinds of office, related like concentric circles. Walther's concern no doubt was to safeguard the right of Christians to make use of the office in emergencies. But it is just the one office of the church to which they then resort, not to something more general. More relevant to this problem would be a different distinction, that between position and activity, to which we turn next.

4.40. Ministry (Predigtamt) as POSITION and as ACTIVITY

This distinction is really a sub-set of the abstract wing (office as such) of the previous distinction, but because of its importance it will be treated here independently. The trouble is that both in English and in German "office/Amt" can mean either a position or an activity. Thus older siblings may discharge "parental offices" without being parents, or wanton women "conjugal offices" without being wives. Similarly "ministry" can mean the position and calling, or it can mean ministration, the activity.

What then is divinely instituted according to AC V, Word-and-Sacrament-dispensing activities only, or also an actual position for the faithful stewardship of these actions?

The "activities only" view is favored by Tappert's mistranslation of the German: "that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments" (p. 31). There is no "that is" in the German. Its introduction suggests that nothing more was involved in the institution of the ministry than the provision of the means of grace. Further, the German "Evangelium und Sakrament geben" must mean either "zu geben" (to give), or else "gegeben" (given). Both are linguistically possible, but only the former tallies with the Latin "ministry of

teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments." If "to give the Gospel" seems an odd usage to us, it was not so for Luther. He says expressly (1533): "Also bleibt nichts im Pfarramt oder Predigtamt, denn das einige Werk, naemlich geben oder darreichen das Evangelium, von Christo befohlen zu predigen" (St. L. XIX:1269. "So nothing remains in the pastoral office or preaching office except that single work, namely giving or dispensing the Gospel, which Christ has commanded to be preached;" cp. LW 38: 198).¹² See also Ap. XXIV, 80: "a minister who preaches offers [not Tappert's 'shows forth'] the Gospel to the people."

On the other hand, "Predigtamt" can mean the activity rather than the position. The prime example is in the German of Ap XV,42: "for the preaching office is the highest office in the church." (Here Walther might have had reservations about his "concrete," occupational sense, yet he takes it in just that way, to form his Thesis Eight, p. 289). Preaching as the highest worship echoes the remark in the Large Catechism (Third Commandment, 86) that "the proper office of this day [Sunday] is the preaching office [Predigtamt]." Here the "preaching office" is clearly the activity, not someone's calling in life. The same holds of the "external signs" or marks of the church in Ap. VII/VIII, 20: "das Predigtamt oder Evangelium und die Sakrament (the preaching office or Gospel and the Sacraments)."

Perhaps most interesting of all is the usage in AC XXVIII, 8-18. Tappert, despite the anti-clerical gloss at p. 31n, mistranslates clerically on p. 82: "These gifts cannot be obtained except through the office of preaching and of administering the sacraments." The German text says something else: ". . . except through the office of preaching [Amt der Predigt] and through the distribution of the holy Sacraments" (par. 9). Where the text has two activities ("office" being parallel to "distribution"), the translation puts one position with two duties!

However, the position is there too. It is that of bishops (=pastors, Tr. 63-65), or of the "spiritual power," which is exercised only in the activities of preaching, etc. (8, 10). The activities belong to the position by divine right (18-20).

¹²For "geben" in the sense of "zu geben," note this sentence of Luther's in a 1534 sermon: "Wer hat dich geheissen, wasser und wort zusammen geben?" (WA 37:636; "Who commanded you to put water and Word together?").

Turning back now to AC V, we note that Predigtamt and ministerium here do not run parallel to the distribution of the Sacraments, but include the latter. The only possible conclusion is that AC V confesses the divine institution not of offices as activities, but of the one office as position, devoted to the activities. Early commentators like Calov¹³ and Carpzov¹⁴ took this for granted.

4.50. Ministry (Predigtamt): "ONTOLOGICAL" or "FUNCTIONAL"?

These terms distinguish between being and doing. It is difficult to be precise here because the terms may be used in various ways. For instance, Sohm and Hoefling held that only certain functions were divinely instituted, and not also a special office to carry them out. If this is meant by "functionalism," it is clearly wrong. Fagerberg (1972), on the other hand, attributes a "functional" view of the ministry to our Confessions, and means by it something quite sound. He means simply that in the Book of Concord all stress is on God's saving activity, not on the human vessels. But against those who draw the wrong conclusions from this, he says categorically: "The idea that the office of the ministry is identical with the Gospel in action has no support in the Lutheran Confessions" (p. 235).¹⁵

When it comes to "ontology," it would be difficult to top what Queen Elizabeth II is said to have told her eldest son anent a fidgety activism: "Royalty doesn't have to do, it simply has to be." Ministry, on the contrary, must be up and doing Royalty's will!

¹³"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" ("The ministry is a sacred estate, instituted by God, in order that by the true teaching of the divine Word and the legitimate dispensing of the Sacraments human beings, sinners, might attain faith and through faith eternal life," 1665:451).

¹⁴He understands AC V as defining a divinely instituted "ordo ac status" ("order and estate," 1675:245), and holds (p. 248) that the working of faith is rightly attributed to the ministry as its ministerial cause, on the basis of terms like synergoi (co-workers) of God (I Cor. 3:9) and spiritual parents (I Cor. 4:16).

¹⁵In his German (1965) Fagerberg states: "The notion that the office is a general activity, which can be delegated from the general priesthood and carried out 'by whomever will,' lacks all foundation in the Symbolical Books . . . God has founded an office, through which He works . . . in reality, however, the Article [AC V] treats not at all of the general priesthood, but of the function of the Word-and-Sacrament-administration, which is regularly exercised by persons especially called to this . . ." (pp. 247, 249, 261).

The "ontological" perspective therefore evokes first of all the royal priesthood. They, after all, are the family of God, to whom God has in His Son given "all things" (Eph. 2:19; Rom. 8:32; I Cor. 3:21.22)--even participation in the "divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). To be God's son or daughter is ontologically weightier than to be His minister. The Treatise therefore stakes out non-negotiable evangelical ground when it confesses:

He therefore grants the Keys chiefly and immediately to the church, so that for that reason the church chiefly has the right of calling . . . Finally, Peter's statement confirms this: "You are a royal priesthood," which words apply to the true church, which, because she alone has the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers (24. 69; my translation; cp. Tappert, pp. 324, 331).

The glory of the ministry is faithfully to wear the Royal livery or uniform "O.H.M.S.," meaning not only "On His Majesty's Service" (see Pieper,), but also "On Her Majesty's Service." For if He is Kyrios, His holy Bride is Kyria.

The main "ontology," that is the capacity for performing the sacred activities of the office, ministers must bring along from their baptismal priesthood, the way a woman brings her womanhood into the marriage, becoming not a woman but mistress of the house at her wedding. (The example is from a 1539 sermon by Luther, cited in Walther, 1987:277-278).

What then is the "ontology" of the office? There are of course certain stringent personal prerequisites for holding the Gospel ministry (see the Pastorals). The most important of these is simply theology, in its proper, personal sense, as the God-given practical "habitus" (see the standard treatments), enabling the minister to expound and apply the saving truth properly--and "to confute objectors" (Tit. 1:9, NEB)! All this only hints at the real thing. The very fact that God has not only established means of grace, but has, in, with, and under the Apostolate, also instituted a special office to handle and distribute His saving treasures (St. John 20:28), this constituting fact defines the ministry's ontology: "Therefore, we constantly teach that the sacraments and all the external things ordained and instituted by God should be regarded not according to the gross, external mask (as we see the shell of a nut) but as that in which God's Word is enclosed" (Large Catechism, Baptism, 19, Tappert, pp. 438-439; my underlining).

Ministers of the Gospel shepherd (feed and defend!) the flock of God (I Pet. 5:2) for the Arch-

Pastor (v. 4). What does that mean? It does not mean that they do it on behalf of an absentee Shepherd living in celestial detachment! No, He Himself--ever present with all exousia (St. Mt. 28:18-20)--is doing it through them. Therefore: "He that heareth you heareth Me" (St. Lk. 10:16). As Adam's bride was taken out of his side, so the church is created by the witness-bearing spirit, water, and blood (I Jn. 5:6-8) which flow from the Body of the Second Adam (St. Jn. 19:30.34). It is the Lord Himself Who serves His Bride in His means of salvation, sanctifying and cleansing her "with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26), nourishing and sustaining His church (v. 29). The ministers of the New Testament, though in themselves "earthen vessels" (II Cor. 4:7), are not, like John the Baptist, merely friends of the Bridegroom (St. Jn. 3:29), but His very mouth and hands, by which He Himself preaches, absolves, baptizes, and celebrates the Supper.

Even personally wicked and unfit ministers "do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16)" (Ap. VII/VII,28; Tappert, p. 173; German: "they are there not for their own person, but as Christ [als Christus] . . ."). Note also the high "ontology" of office (not person) in Tr. 25,26.

Collins (1992), taking "in persona Christi" as "an essentially medieval characterization" (p. 6), deplores the "ontology"-based approach of the papacy because "neither married men nor married or unmarried women will be considered . . ." (p. 155). The warning against "ontology" overdone is certainly well taken, especially in light of the Apology's comment: "Daniel says that it is characteristic of Antichrist's kingdom to despise women (11:[3]7)" (XXIII, 25; Tappert, p. 243). The fact remains, however, that there are ineluctable ontological links between the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God as a Man, the mystery of Christ and His Bride the church, His choice of an all-male Apostolate, and His Apostle Paul's express exclusion of women from the ministry of His Gospel and Sacraments. The meaning of manhood and womanhood, however, cuts so far beneath the cognitive surface to the very depths of our creaturely existence, that no one, I trust, expects a detailed treatment of it here. I gladly defer to my betters by simply concluding with Sasse: "Nothing less will do than taking the stand that all such ordinations are contrary to God's Word and invalid, and that all official acts done by these ladies are done by lay persons"

(1986:60).

5.00. SPIRITUAL AND CIVIL POWERS OR GOVERNMENTS

"This power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised ONLY by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments . . . According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. All this is to be done NOT BY HUMAN POWER BUT BY GOD'S WORD ALONE" (AC XXVIII,8,21, German; Tappert, pp. 82, 84; my emphases).

The ministers of the Gospel govern¹⁶ the church, but only with the Word. Nor has the whole church any other power, for the Lord says: "But it shall not be so among you" (St. Mt. 20:26). "The sphere is that of powerless faith and knowledge. Within this sphere everything is enlightening and heartening but nothing can be effected by power, politics, or law" (Collins, 1992:116). "Christians can be ruled by nothing except God's word, for Christians must be ruled in faith, not with outward works. Faith, however, can come through no word of man, but only through the word of God, as Paul says in Romans 10:[17]" (LW 45:117). Pieper concludes therefore: "All government of the Church which does not bind the consciences of Christians to Christ's Word, but to the word of men, is pseudo-government" (II:394).

AC XIV treats of nothing except the orderly call into the ministry of the Gospel. Yet it is entitled "Of Church Government" (Vom Kirchenregiment). The essence of church government then is Gospel and Sacraments ministry itself--not "administration," or "episkopee":¹⁷

The Reformers and our Symbolical Books mean what they say. They mean and say that the proclamation of the Word (and the administration of the sacraments) constitutes the only form [einzigste Art] of church government, and therefore that the preaching office constitutes the only

¹⁶Note the Latin of FC SD X, 10: "ii quos Dominus ecclesiae suae regendae praefecit" (those whom the Lord placed before His church to rule her).

¹⁷"6. Is it correct to regard the administration of the means of grace as the distinctive characteristic of the pastoral office? The distinctive characteristic of the pastoral office is the episkope, or oversight, for the souls of God's people, not the specific functions ordinarily performed by the pastor . . ." (Bohlmann, 1992:2).

office of church government in the church of Christ, precisely also in the visible church of Christ (Sohm, I:484-485; my translation, italics in original).

Where then are "majority rule" and the whole parliamentary machinery? The church is neither an oligarchy of the clergy nor a democracy, but a Christocracy. If only He rules, then, in His Kingdom of Grace He does so by faith and love. Faith is settled in the Word of God, not by majority vote. And whatever is not a matter of faith, is settled by love, not force. "Love is the empress over ceremonies, and ceremonies must yield to love, but not love to ceremonies" (WA 39:I,22-23). Love means mutual accommodation. Voting is simply a way of expressing consensus--and is null and void if it contradicts Scripture and Confession, no matter how "unanimously."

What of adiaphora? Since we have no Levitical law governing New Testament worship, practices and ceremonies must reflect the biblical doctrine and confession, not whim or confusion. The teachers must lead here. Gerhard distinguishes within the power of the ministry (potestas ordinis) a "dogmatical" part and a "constitutive" one, the latter to do with external arrangements, adiaphora. He concludes: "But these powers belong to the whole church and not especially to the clergy. However, we readily admit that the first and chief parts of this power pertain to the ministry of the church" (cited in Walther, 1987:318). Mutual accommodation must prevail: "Therefore, the office of the ministry does not give to those who bear it, arbitrary power over Christians, nor does it deliver the ministers of the Word up to the arbitrary directions and commands of men" (1966 Theses of Agreement [Australia] VI,5).

One senses that state churchism has never been properly overcome in our Lutheran ethos. We seem to have trouble making things "stick," by the Word alone, without the accustomed help from state and/or society at large. State church despotism of course we reject out of hand, that being safely behind us. We are not nearly as conscious, however, of the same worldly power intruding itself into the church by means of corporate structure and bureaucratization (see Loetscher, 1954, and Wright, 1984). Grabau and the Pope we reject. What of Luther's "Lord ALL," the crowd, dancing to the culture's tune, and using and being used by corporate power? To change the office of preaching to that of "C.E.O." or of "equipping" is to abandon the Gospel for the Law.

While with the Reformation we must reject "juridicalism" ("Wir muessen das Consistorium

zerreißen, we must tear up the consistory," when it becomes coercive, St. L. XXII, 2210), the church must have the means to subject even ecclesiastical "City Halls" to the judgment of Scripture: The Pope "forbids a judicial examination. The latter does more harm than all the punishments, for when proper judicial process has been taken away, the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation after generation" (Tr. 51).

6.00. CALL and ORDINATION

Like "Law" and "Gospel" our terms may be used to include or exclude each other. Let us take them together first. That is natural, because like death, "Call/Ordination" is a process, not a point. The Latin topic of AC XIV is De Ordine Ecclesiastico (Of Ecclesiastical Order). That word, ordo, is the very word for ordination, as in Ap. XIII,11: "But if ordination [ordo; German: Sakrament des Ordens] is understood of the ministry of the Word, we should without difficulty call ordination [ordinem] a sacrament." In English usage therefore we have "taking orders." Ordination in this sense means being put into the church's order or office. Luther (1533): "For ordaining should consist of, and be understood as, calling to and entrusting with the office of the ministry . . . Our consecration shall be called ordination, or a call to the office" (LW 38:197, 214).

Without a "regular call" [ordentlichen Beruf], that is, "unless properly called" [nisi rite vocatus]-so our churches "teach" in AC XIV--"no one shall [soll, debeat; not 'should'] publicly teach or preach in the church or administer the sacraments."

Clearly, "Word-and-sacraments ministry" by "lay-ministers" is ruled out. "Lay-ministers" by definition have no regular call. If they did, they would not be "lay-ministers." In emergencies (that means danger of death or insuperable isolation, not mere inconvenience or whim), of course every Christian should do what he can. Even then, most Lutheran divines follow Luther in exempting the Holy Supper. So Gerhard: "But Bellarmine knows that we do not tolerate disorder in the church and that we accord to no one the authority to administer the Holy Supper, not even in an emergency situation, except to those who are legitimately called into the office" (cited in Walther, 1987:174). By definition, too, emergencies cannot be

made into a permanent order, with "lay-ministers" standing by.

The necessity for preachers to be properly sent (Rom. 10:15) has far-reaching missiological implications. Of course Christians as individuals can, may, and ought to make the saving Gospel known among unbelievers in every feasible way. The question is how the church as church is to pursue deliberate missionary outreach. May the called and ordained ministry of the Gospel be sidelined as a matter of policy, in favor of lay volunteers?

Two popular sectarian notions confuse matters here. One is the idea that the point of "ministry" is not preaching and sacraments, but facilitating the use of "spiritual gifts" for "ministry," which everyone has. The resultant enthusiasm for "small groups"¹⁸ à la "metachurch" (Carl George, 1992), is a "pneumatic fever," which militates against the Gospel ministry. The other idea is that when Timothy was told to commit what he had received to faithful men who in turn would be able to teach others (II Tim. 2:2), this meant a kind of spiritual pyramid-scheme, for multiplying lay-volunteers. Vitally important as good lay leaders and officials are (see Walther, 1963, # 27), this text is not about that. The "committing" here is actually call/ordination, as all Lutheran teachers have held. Pieper stresses the aspect of preparation: "Timothy performed the work of a theological professor when he committed, etc." (I:43).

It is odd how relatively peripheral the called/ordained Gospel ministry appears for instance in A Theological Statement of Mission (CTCR, 1991), and in the African Strategy Statement (Roegner, 1994).¹⁹ Compare the missiology of Acts, alluded to by Luther (cited in Walther, 1987:193 and 276):

God, though speaking from heaven to Paul, did not purpose to abrogate the ministry and do something out of the ordinary, but He bade him go into the city to a minister or pastor. There he was to hear and learn what He wanted him to learn. God wants us to go and hear the Gospel from those who preach it; there we shall find Him and nowhere else . . .

¹⁸Walther (1963, # 25) expressly holds that the congregation must not tolerate division by means of conventicles, that is assemblies for teaching or prayer led by uncalled persons outside the public preaching office ordained by God.

¹⁹Of the four types of missionaries that form the "Evangelization Force," three may be either laymen or ordained ministers, and the fourth is a lay-person. Of the six "Elements of the Missionary Support Evangelization Force," one is "usually an ordained minister," one (the Theological Education by Extension Coordinator!) "does not need to be ordained," three are laymen, and one is "usually" such (pp. 18 and 19).

The keys to bind and loose are the power to teach, not merely to absolve; for the keys pertain to everything by which I may help my neighbor; to the comfort that one can give to another; to public and private confession, absolution, and whatever else there may be. But above all they pertain to preaching.²⁰

Since God is the Author of the office, only He governs entry into and exit from it. Death excepted, He does both mediately through the church, which "alone has the priesthood." But what is the church? It is "holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (SA III/XII, alluding to St. John 10). True, "two or three" can be a church, but they can "document" themselves and be known as such only by reference to the church's marks, that is, the purely preached Gospel and the rightly administered sacraments (AC VII and Ap. VII/VIII). Is a "voters' assembly" then a church? That depends. If it acts with the church's marks, yes, if contrary, no. A mere "multitude," in contempt of the orthodox ministry, is not and cannot act as the church. It has then become simply a democratic papacy. So Walther holds that if a congregation seeks to call an additional minister but by-passes their existing minister in this matter, then "the call of the 'multitude' has no validity in such a case," being the action not of the church but of individuals. This is mistranslated in 1987:220, "there is no longer any call of the 'multitude.'" Walther says not that the "multitude" has not acted, but that its action is null and void. The reason: "the congregation, when properly ordered [mistranslated as 'organized'], consists of both preachers and hearers." Walther is talking about divine, not human order.

From this composition of the church (hearers and preachers) there follows the fundamental meaning of "ordination" as the laying on of hands. The church acts officially and publicly through her "public service," the Gospel ministry: "Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation [comprobatio]" (Tr. 70; Tappert, p. 332). Note also the important provision in Tr. 72,

²⁰This last citation is an important commentary on the oft-cited description of the Gospel in SA III/IV: First, Gospel preaching; second, Baptism; third, Sacrament of the Altar; "fourth, by the power of the keys and also by the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren . . ." In other words, the mutual conversation, etc., is not a fifth or last part, as in Tappert, p. 310, but an aspect of the fourth!

"adhibitis suis pastoribus, with the cooperation of their pastors,"²¹ which both the "Triglot" and Tappert skip.

Fagerberg (1972) is right therefore in saying that (1) the ordination-as-sacrament language in Ap. XIII is concessive and "lacks fundamental significance" (p. 249), but that (2) "According to Ap XIV the call also includes a form of ordination" (p. 248).

In Reformation thought weddings have been taken to illustrate what happens in ordination (Lieberg, p. 373n). Ministry and marriage are both divine institutions, into which the liturgical action signals, but does not in and of itself in isolation effect, entry. Whatever may have gone on before the public liturgical act, in terms of private agreements or even documents, one can usually still extricate oneself, even if with difficulty. Afterwards it takes at least an "annulment." Walther, incidentally, speaks of ordination as "accompanied with the outpouring of heavenly gifts on the person ordained," not of course because of someone's hands as such, but because of the church's "ardent prayer, based on the glorious promises given in particular to the office of the ministry" (1987:248).

One of the prime characteristics that make a call "regular" is that it not be arbitrarily limited as to time. The reasoning is very basic: if the minister is God's servant, he cannot be contracted or hired to serve "at the pleasure of the appointing authorities," to cite the delicate phrasing of a modern Synodical bylaw (3.950). The requirement of "regular (not temporary) call" of Gospel ministers used to be entrenched in the Synodical constitution.²² Temporary "calls" are wrong because they treat a divine gift as a human plaything, with the built-in provision of termination without biblical grounds. To dismiss a servant of God

²¹"Wherefore, when the bishops are heretics or refuse to administer ordination, the churches are by divine right compelled [omitted: with the cooperation of their pastors] to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves," Tappert, p. 332.

²²"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 which are customary in this country are not granted by Synod because they are contrary to Scripture and 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" (Koehneke, 1946:1,380). See also Robert Preus (1991).

without cause and due process (I Tim. 5:19) has always been regarded as sacrilege (Ps. 105:15) in the church. Walther (1987): "A congregation can depose an incumbent of the holy ministry only if it is clear from the divine Word that God Himself has deposed him as a wolf or hireling" (p. 304). Ungodly life, ungodly doctrine, or incompetence--not unpopularity--are the only proper grounds. God's call and commission do not depend, like parliamentary governments, on periodic "votes of confidence."

The temporary election of "full-time" officials, the imitation of secular universities in offering temporary teaching appointments, and Social-Security-driven retirement pose as yet unresolved theological problems for modern Lutheran church-life. Even more disastrous is the rampant "hiring and firing" mindset, in which people imagine that they can create and abolish calls and "ministries" according to their own fancies--rather than simply transmitting the one divinely instituted call and office (Walther, 1915:I,117). It is a tragic--and wicked!--thing when "multitudes," perhaps under the spell of some bureaucratic enthusiasm of the day (like the Church Membership Initiative),²³ press, oppose, torment, and perhaps even presume to remove their pastors for not measuring up to popular expectations.

7.00. CONCLUSION

The ministry is a conceptual cupboard that hasn't been tidied in a good while. I have tried to sort some things out, or at least indicate how it might be done. Yet I do not believe that the ministry is a particularly complicated affair. It is made to seem so by organizational, church-political pressures--for instance the "ecumenical" scheme to inoculate everybody with "apostolic succession" in the form of the "historic episcopate." So unequally are "Faith and Order" yoked together, that in the 1982 "Lima Document," Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, "Faith" is a very small tail, wagged by the massive dog of "Order"!

Our Synod, too, as Wohlrabe's dissertation (1987) shows, has drifted into theological change

²³In response to various attacks, including mine (Reporter, Oct. 1994, p. 9), on the pitiful "Church Membership Initiative" and its aim "To set in motion forces that will result in annual increases in the numbers of members of Lutheran congregations"--regardless of theology--Lyle Muller, of the Synodical Board of Evangelism Services, simply disclaims responsibility, shifting that to the AAL, but happily offers continued distribution (Reporter, Nov. 1994, p. 11).

regarding the ministry in the wake of pragmatic practice. Our biblical and confessional language is being vandalized, culminating in the replacement in our Synodical Constitution (Art. V) of the venerable terms "ministers of the Gospel" and "teachers," with the unchurchly cant of the Internal Revenue Service ("ministers of religion," 1992 Handbook, p. 10).

But if the Jill of theology simply comes tumbling after Jack's pragmatism, then we are at the mercy of the mass-marketeers of religious wares, seductively offering to ensure the success of the "church," even if the Gospel of God should fail! The marketeers, meanwhile, penetrate into the Scriptures as deeply as the water-spider into the water, and are as adept in theology as a sow at the harp or a cow in the walnut tree--to borrow from Luther's ecclesial bestiary. Yet in the church God has set first, Apostles, second, Prophets, third, teachers or other Gospel ministers--in that invariable order--and then everything else (I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20; 4:11). This structure is ontological, for it is the way the Head of the church has chosen to make His Body "grow with the growth of God" (Col. 2:19).

If we seek not an arbitrary, but a genuine clarity and consistency in the understanding and practice of the ministry, then the "lex agendi" (rule of action) among us must learn again to take its cue from the "lex credendi" (rule of belief), not vice versa. That means that the unity and purity of the evangelical doctrine and Sacraments must receive not honorable mention in a whole laundry-list of Synodical "objectives," but over-riding, top priority. "For the pulpit [Predigtstuhl] can and must alone preserve Baptism, Sacrament, doctrine, articles of faith, and all estates in their purity" (LW 28:62).

Kurt Marquart, Ft. Wayne

Monday after Reminiscere

(13 March 1995)

At your direction I submit the following two questions for theological study:

QUESTION ONE: Does Lutheran missiology rely chiefly on the God-given Gospel-office or on lay-volunteers--or is this an adlaphoron?

QUESTION TWO: Are ordained women really pastors, though wrongfully, or are they not pastors at all?

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APPENDIX

HAS THE CONGREGATION THE RIGHT IN A REGULAR WAY TO CONFER AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE HOLY MINISTRY TEMPORARILY UPON SOME LAYMAN?

*

HAT DIE GEMEINDE DAS RECHT, ORDENTLICHER WEISE EINEN WESENTLICHEN THEIL DES HEILIGEN PREDIGTAMTES IRGEND EINEM LAIEN TEMPORAER ZU UEBERTRAGEN?

(Theses adopted by the "Joint Columbus Conference" [presumably of the Synodical Conference], submitted at the request of the Columbus Conference by Pastor E. W. Kaehler, and printed in Lehre und Wehre, vol. 20, nos. 9, 11, 12 [Sept., Nov., Dec. 1874], pp. 257-268; 331-339; 363-369. The theses are translated by the undersigned, with the original text provided for comparison).

1.

The public ministry [lit.:preaching office] is an Office of the Word.

*

Das oeffentliche Predigtamt ist ein Amt des Wortes.

2.

To whom the Office of the Word is given, to him are thereby granted all offices which are exercised in the church through the Word.

*

Wem das Amt des Wortes gegeben ist, dem sind damit alle Aemter verliehen, die durch das Wort in der Kirche ausgerichtet werden.

3.

The rights granted with the Office of the Word (in the narrower sense) are: the authority to preach the Gospel, to dispense the sacraments, and the authority of spiritual jurisdiction.

*

Die mit dem Amte des Wortes (im engeren Sinne) verliehenen Rechte sind: die Gewalt, das Evangelium zu predigen, die Sacramente auszutheilen und die Gewalt eines geistlichen Gerichtes.

4.

By way of order the congregation, which has the right to call, is not only bound to the ministry till the end of days, but it also may not mutilate the latter, that is, it must co-establish all essential parts of the same.

*

Ordentlicher Weise ist die Gemeinde, welche das Berufungsrecht hat, nicht nur bis ans Ende der Tage an das Predigtamt gebunden, sondern sie darf dasselbe auch nicht verstuemeln, d.h. sie muss alle wesentlichen Theile desselben miteinrichten.

5.

The congregation can establish grades (taxeis, tagmata) of the One Office of the Word, that is, it may make the arrangement that this one is to attend to this part and that one to that part of the ministry; but this is done only de iure humano.

*

Die Gemeinde kann Stufen (taxeis, tagmata) des Einen Amtes am Wort einrichten, d.h. sie kann die Ordnung treffen, dass dieser diesen, jener jenen Theil des Predigtamtes zu besorgen hat; es geschieht dies aber nur de iure humano.

6.

When the congregation confers an essential part of the ministry, then it virtualiter confers the whole of the same, only with the provision to attend to the designated part alone. (He who is called to a part of the office does not, however, have the right, without a further call, to take over the part of another).

*

Wenn die Gemeinde einen wesentlichen Theil des Predigtamtes uebertraegt, so uebertraegt sie virtualiter das Ganze desselben, nur mit der Bestimmung, den bezeichneten Theil allein zu besorgen. (Der zu einem Theil des Amtes Berufene hat aber nicht das Recht, ohne anderweitigen Beruf den Theil eines Andern zu uebernehmen.)

7.

There are however services which are indeed necessary in the church for her governance and therefore belong to the ministry in the wider sense, which however do not necessarily involve the holding of the Office in the narrower sense; wherefore such auxiliary services can be done also by such as do not thereby become entitled to exercise also the Office of the Word and the sacraments.

*

Es giebt aber Dienste, welche zwar in der Kirche noethig sind zu deren Regierung und daher zum Predigtamt im weiteren Sinne gehoeren, die aber das Fuehren des Amtes im engeren Sinne nicht nothwendig in sich schliessen; daher solche Hilfsdienste auch von solchen gethan werden koennen, welche damit die Berechtigung nicht bekommen, auch das Amt des Wortes und die Sacramente auszuueben.

8.

He who is to administer an essential part of the Office of the Word, should be ordained or at any rate be set apart for the ministry. (The Conference accepted the thesis in the following form: "He. . . must be regularly called, and so set apart, but also be ordained according to ecclesiastical order").

*

Wer einen wesentlichen Theil des Amtes am Wort verwalten soll, sollte ordinirt oder doch zum Predigtamt ausgesondert sein. (Die Conferenz acceptirte die Thesis in folgender Fassung: "Wer. . . muss ordentlich berufen, also ausgesondert, aber auch nach kirchlicher Ordnung ordinirt werden").

9.

Such a man also cannot be called temporarily and therefore cannot, even if he is ordained, legitime perform official acts in other congregations without having a regular call, except if necessity were to compel it.

*

Ein solcher kann auch nicht temporaer berufen werden und daher auch nicht, wenn er gleich ordinirt ist, ohne einen ordentlichen Beruf zu haben, in fremden Gemeinden legitime Amtshandlungen verrichten, es sei denn, dass die Noth dazu zwaenge.

The congregation may therefore confer an essential part of the holy ministry in a regular way only on him, whom it has regularly called and set apart for the Office of the Word, namely for as long as it will please God, the Founder of the Office.

*

Die Gemeinde darf daher einen wesentlichen Theil des heiligen Predigtamtes ordentlicher Weise nur demjenigen uebertragen, den sie zum Amte des Wortes ordentlich berufen und ausgesondert hat, naemlich of so lange, als es Gott, dem Stifter des Amtes, gefallen wird.

K. Marquart
Monday after Oculi, 1990

To Thesis 7:

"For we know now that someone who must attend to an essential part of the Office of the Word, can do so only because the whole Office of the Word has been conferred on him; thus he is really an incumbent of the ministry [Predigtamt]" (p. 334).

To Thesis 8:

"He who without necessity omits ordination, is a schismatic, he separates himself from the orthodox church of all ages. . . . Even though we do not dream of denying that e.g. the administration of the Holy Supper by a layman temporarily called, though not ordained, by a whole congregation in an emergency, is valid and legitimate--Walther, Pastoraltheol., p. 180--yet we must emphasize decidedly that only the most pressing emergency permits this. If a congregation calls an unordained person in the ordinary case, it disregards churchly order. The vocation to the Office of the Word must, for the sake of those who run and are not sent, Jer. 23:21, have some public testimony, and it is just this testimony that ordination gives. But if this is so--and no Lutheran will deny it--then it is also correct when we maintain: He who must administer an essential part of the holy Office, should be ordained to this" (p. 364).

Re. the dispensing of sacraments, etc., by ordained theological students (Consil. theol. Wittenberg. II, p. 108): "Without ordination or its equivalent [ein Analogon] they were not allowed to do this; they had to have the whole Office, in order to be able to exercise a part of it" (p. 366).