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Called & Ordained

Reflections on the New Testament View of the Office of the Ministry

WILLIAM WEINRICH



INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY HAVE become urgent and “front stage” in the Lutheran Church. To a considerable degree the Lutheran community has throughout its history been relatively free from internal disagreement on the question of church and ministry. There have, of course, been occasions when the question was raised and became important. For the Missouri Synod the dispute surrounding Bishop Stephan and the disagreement between Walther and Grabau are examples. Today the situation is different. The issue of church and ministry is a vital question and arises through practical issues which confront the church: the ministry of women, the role of the laity, the question of “lay ministry,” the concern for the most “effective” evangelistic structuring of the church. Social and cultural contexts no doubt play a role as well. The church lives increasingly in a pluralism which is egalitarian and dominated by the notion of personal autonomy. In a context like that, pastors easily become redefined as helpers, facilitators, therapeutic specialists, and administrative overseers.

Nonetheless, serious questions attend the issue of church and ministry. A cavalier view that polity is mere adiaphora and therefore of no serious significance will likely not be alive to the evangelical, christological, and even trinitarian implications in discussions concerning ecclesial and liturgical structure. How does the church give itself voice? In what way is the church in continuity with its apostolic beginnings? Is the church essentially apostolic or prophetic? Such questions are not merely doctrinal questions. They are also questions of structure and of form. Despite the popularity in some quarters of separating form and substance, the fact remains that to be communicated—and that is the nub of continuity—substance

must take on a form. Is there a basic form or pattern which itself connotes the substance which it conveys? I think the answer to this question is “yes.” In the following I hope to give some New Testament resonance to that answer.

In New Testament and early church studies, the question concerning the formation of office in the church still very much occupies scholarship. Much depends on where one begins and what one allows. An instructive and influential example are the conclusions of Ernst Käsemann concerning the place of office in the theology of Paul. According to Käsemann, any link between Christology and ecclesiology is alien to Paul, and where that link occurs, one finds “early catholicism.” The Letter to the Ephesians is an example of the latter:

Here even the connection between ecclesiology and christology is given a sacramental basis . . . The church grows as it were out of Baptism, and in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper it is constantly reunited out of all the dispersion to which its members are subject in everyday life. . . . As the sole actor, Christ mediates himself to those for whom he died and over whom he chooses now to reign. The sacramental presence of Christ in the church for the world—that is the central motif of the early catholic doctrine of redemption. For this the “saving facts,” the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection, form the presupposition.¹

Such a view will have immediate consequences for what one is able to say about Paul’s view of office, and Käsemann draws the full implications:

There is for Paul no extension of the earthly Jesus in the church as the earthly deputy of the exalted one. It is just where he speaks of the Body of Christ that christology and ecclesiology are not interchangeable. . . . The contrast [between Paul and “early catholicism”] is especially clear when it comes to the concept of ecclesiastical office. Characteristically, the genuine letters of Paul mention neither ordination nor the presbytery, but leave the functions of the church to charismatics and address every Christian as a charismatic. . . . To put it pointedly, but without exaggeration, the Pauline church is composed of nothing but laymen, who nevertheless are all, within their possibilities, at the same time priests and officeholders, that is, instruments of the Spirit for the enactment of the Gospel in the everyday world.²

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM WEINRICH is Professor of Early Church History and Patristic Studies and Dean of Graduate Studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. This study was first presented at the First Annual St. Matthias Day Theological Forum held at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Dearborn, Michigan on St. Matthias Day, 1992. It was later revised and presented at the Lutheran Free Conference, held at Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Francis, Minnesota on Reformation Day, 1992.

Käsemann's depiction of the primitive church is distinctly egalitarian and rests considerably upon 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 according to which all Christians are Spirit-bearers having certain *χαρίσματα* which determine their function and task within the community. Furthermore, Käsemann's phrase "the genuine letters of Paul" makes clear that not only Ephesians, but certainly also the Pastoral Epistles and most likely Colossians are not considered legitimate source materials for rendering Paul's understanding of office. In Käsemann's case, however, there are further contexts which are excluded from any interpretation of Paul's view of church office. The denial that there is any continuation of the earthly Jesus into the history of the church³ implies that the traditions about the earthly Jesus contained in the Gospel narratives provided Paul with no materials for the development of his own views. And finally, Käsemann's opposition of Paul to Jewish Christianity ensures that the contexts of the Old Testament and specifically of second temple Judaism remain unconsidered as significant contributors to Paul's own view of office.⁴

One cannot, of course, argue that Paul merely assumed Old Testament and Jewish configurations of community office and applied them to the church. Old Testament and Jewish offices were transfigured in Christ even as was the Old Testament sacrificial cultus. However, to believe that Paul was in strict discontinuity with the Judaism of his day, to disregard the Old Testament as a formative and constitutive agent for the Judaism of his day, and to exclude the traditions of the earthly Jesus as a prolegomena to Paul's own views of the Christian community and its leadership is to introduce a Marcionite-like dichotomy which I do not believe does justice even to the view of Paul in his "genuine" letters, let alone to the New Testament in its canonical form.

The prophetic messenger is in the place of God. God binds himself to Moses, as it were. If one were to ask the question, "Where is God?" the answer would have to be, "With Moses!"

In this article I would like to review some biblical material which, I believe, lays a foundation for the distinct office of the ministry within the communion of saints but which also indicates that the clergy-laity distinction lies implicit in the Bible and arises out of the central, determinative thematic structure of the biblical narrative. That thematic structure is of the one God who through his Word speaks the Gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and through that Gospel calls a faithful and holy people into existence, judging and forgiving them and promising to them the inheritance of his eternal dwelling.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

A good place to begin is Paul's introduction to his Letter to the Romans which gives a programmatic statement of the

apostle's position within the whole biblical economy:

Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called to be apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God which he promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, the Gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you also who are called of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1-6).

Here with all clarity we have the pattern of God's Gospel being spoken by an appointed and set-aside messenger who is sent in order that there might be a people who have what Paul calls here the "obedience of faith." Appointed messenger-preaching-obedient people of faith: that is the sequence and the pattern. However, this pattern does not begin with Paul. Nor does it begin with Jesus. It begins especially with Moses, and then after him and in the light of him the pattern continues with the prophets and the priests.⁵

Indeed, in the Old Testament Moses is the prophet *par excellence* (Dt 34:10 ff.). The manner of his call in Exodus 3 and his prophetic service throughout the formation of Israel and its sojourn through the wilderness and into the holy land cannot be overlooked. Two details from the story of Moses' call to be the prophet of Israel are of importance. First of all, when Moses hears that God intends to send him to Pharaoh, Moses objects because he is a nothing: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex 3:11). But to this God retorts: "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you; when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain" (Ex 3:12). The prophetic messenger is in the place of God. God binds himself to Moses, as it were. If one were to ask the question, "Where is God?" the answer would have to be, "With Moses!" However, this response would not simply mean that God is with Moses as a comforting and encouraging companion. God is with Moses in the sense that he has given Moses his own task so that in and through Moses God himself is a present agent, accomplishing his purpose of redeeming his people (cf. Dt 20:2 ff.). We might note also that in this account of the call of Moses, the call to redeem the people from Egypt entails also the call to serve God upon the holy mountain (Ex 3:12).

The second detail concerns Moses' objection to his suitability on the basis that he is "not eloquent" but is "slow of speech and of tongue" (Ex 4:10). To this objection God responds: "Who has made man's mouth? . . . Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (Ex 4:11 ff.). Here explicitly we are informed that Moses' words are nothing other than God's words. God speaks to his enemies and to his people through his chosen spokesman. In fact, the primary Old Testament term for prophet, *נָבִיא*, denotes a "spokesman." And, as is well known, the common prophetic introduction was the announcement that "the Word of the Lord came upon me." To hear the speaking of the cho-

sen messenger of God is to hear the speaking of God himself.

Nowhere is Moses' prophetic activity more important than in the giving of the covenant at Sinai. Significantly, it is here that the famous words about the people being "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" appear (Ex 19:6). But let us again be sensitive to the structure of the narrative. Moses alone goes up the holy mountain to God and receives from God the command to speak to the house of Jacob, the people of Israel. God tells Moses what he shall speak to the people:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:4-6).

However, in this position as intermediary the messenger does not separate God from his people by being in between, but the messenger is intermediary in such a way that in his person and work he is the place of God's own presence. God makes himself accessible to the people through the prophet and the priest who speak the words of God and perform the acts of God.

Following this statement the account continues with the giving of the Ten Commandments, which Moses communicates to the people. In addition, there is the divine command to worship God on altars of earth or stone, for, says God, "in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you" (Ex 20:1-17, 21-26). Upon this there follows the establishment of various laws and ordinances, including those concerning the sabbath, festivals, and the construction of the tabernacle. And there follows also the account of the establishment of the Aaronic priesthood which shall be chosen from the people of Israel to serve the Lord as priests.

The office of Moses as intermediary between God and the people is the means through which God calls his people to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." And what it means to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" is indicated as obedience to the Torah and the right service in the tabernacle. The giving of the Torah includes the priestly service to God through those chosen to be priests for the kingdom of priests. As Brevard Childs has put it, "a faithful priesthood was constitutive of an obedient worshipping people of God from the beginning and was grounded in the theophany at Sinai."⁶ Indeed, already at the call of Moses, Aaron is bound to Moses so that the words which God gave Moses to speak are the self-same words which Moses gives to Aaron to utter:

And you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God (Ex 4:15-16).

The priest, then, also was a "spokesman" for God, and one of his functions was to give instruction in the Torah (cf. Jer 18:18; Ez 7:26) as well as to present to God the offerings on behalf of the people. In the first instance, he represented God before men, and in the second instance he represented the people before God. In both he was an intermediary.

This may suffice to set the pattern as far as the Old Testament is concerned. God's intention to redeem his people entails the choosing and the calling of a man who is set aside for that purpose. This election by God of his messenger is not a preliminary activity which occurs before and apart from the redemptive activity itself. God's redemption embraces this election and sending of the messenger through whom God's people will be redeemed. For that reason, the messenger whom God calls and sends is bound to the redemptive activity of God in such a way that his words and his works are given their content and their configuration by the redeeming activity of God itself. The task of both prophet and priest is to recall the people to Torah so that they may be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The chosen vessels of God's own choosing stand as intermediaries between God and the people. However, in this position as intermediary the messenger does not separate God from his people by being in between, but the messenger is intermediary in such a way that in his person and work he is the place of God's own presence. God makes himself accessible to the people through the prophet and the priest who speak the words of God and perform the acts of God. This pattern recurs throughout the Old Testament, pre-eminently perhaps in the stories of the prophets whose fates at the hands of the kings and of the people are nothing other than narratives of Israel's obedience and of Israel's apostasy.

OFFICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The whole Old Testament history, rooted in the office and mission of the prophets and priests, is itself prophetic of that Prophet and Priest of whom it speaks and to whom it points, namely, Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the sacrifice of God. In fact, in the light of the New Testament witness we may say that precisely in view of Christ and of his work the stories of Moses and Aaron and of their successors were as they were. They foretold both by predicting and by depicting. In any case, the pattern we have briefly outlined in the Old Testament recurs in the evangelical accounts of Jesus: he is the elect Son of God who in preaching the coming of the kingdom gathers to himself the new people of the fulfilled covenant.

Rather than the idea of office arising later than the first church and the first apostles and therefore representing a sort of troublesome addendum to the egalitarianism of the primitive church, the distinctive office of the New Testament, that of apostle, lies within Christ's own mission which included the calling of a church of believers and saints. The office of apostle is constituted within Christ himself and his messianic work,

and the other offices, which do appear later but often very early, are foreshadowed in the community of the new Israel which Jesus gathered about him. Nothing is more central to the New Testament depiction of Jesus than that he was pre-eminently the “sent-one” from the Father—he is even termed an “apostle” in Heb 3:1—who with full authority speaks and acts for the Father. This perfect apostleship of Jesus is indicated often in the Gospels, for example in that Johannine-sounding statement of Jesus recorded in Mt 11:27: “All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Also those passages of John’s Gospel where Jesus says that he speaks nothing from himself but only that which the Father has given him to say, and that he does nothing but that which the Father has given him to do present Jesus as the perfect apostle, the one sent from the Father. Jesus, for example, said: “He who believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me, and he who sees me sees him who sent me. . . . For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has Himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak. . . . What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me” (Jn 12:44-50). Of course, it is clear in John’s Gospel that Christ is not only the speaker of God’s words but is himself the Word of God. Christ is himself the Torah of God, so that he is the prophet greater than Moses: “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn 1:17). Yet, in passages such as this, and perhaps most especially in the story of his baptism, it is clear that Christ is the “chosen one of God” who preaches the kingdom which he himself brings and who through that preaching gathers around himself a new congregation of the end time. As Harald Riesenfeld has noted, Jesus “was the first to bear office in the new people of God.”⁷

In fact, titles and representations of Jesus such as “Messiah” and “Son of Man” are indissolubly linked with the idea of the “kingdom of God” and the “people of God.” And with the ideas of the kingdom of God and the people of God the Gospels open up a perspective on Jesus’ ministry which stretches through the long history of Israel. As Israel through Moses had become God’s “kingdom of priests” and his “holy nation” because God had chosen them, had given them a promise of inheritance, had given them the Law by which to remain faithful, and had led them through his chosen representatives, so now in Christ, God was calling a renewed people of the kingdom, granting to them the promise of the inheritance of sons, giving to them a new way of life which is the way of Christ’s cross, and leading them through his Holy Spirit. Jesus is himself the new center of the renewed people of God, and in the gathering of the twelve disciples about Jesus there is represented not only the reconstitution of the people of God who were first founded upon the twelve patriarchs but there is also represented the perfect fullness of the redeemed people of God who are no longer dispersed but gathered.⁸

Harald Riesenfeld has called attention to the organic metaphors and images which Jesus used to indicate and to denote the kingdom he brings.⁹ These metaphors imply that Jesus does not exist as one person among the people of God,

but that he is in the midst of the disciples he gathers about himself as the source and defining focus of their life together as disciples. The image of the vine and the branches is illustrative (Jn 15:1 ff.): “The tree or the stem and the branches are for one another, and otherwise would have no reason to exist. Nevertheless, it is plain that the tree is at the same time the source of life, ‘for without me ye can do nothing’ (Jn 15:5).”¹⁰ The vine does not exist alone, nor do the branches exist alone. Yet, they do not relate to one another as mutually coordinate entities. The branches are not independent and do not give fruit from themselves and on their own. They are given their life and their task through the vine so that what they have received from the vine they can pass on as the fruits of their receiving. In this sense the branches are dependent on the vine and are ordered to the vine, and in this sense the vine may be said to be prior to the branches. Only in their being bound to the vine are the branches a part of the plant. I think Riesenfeld is correct when he concludes that in their New Testament context the use of such metaphors as the vine and the branches “involved, to some extent, an argument from its structure and function.”¹¹ The function of giving and of receiving denotes a structure and configuration which fundamentally orders the reality and life of God’s people as his church. That configuration is one of Christ and his disciples, of the vine and the branches, of the pastor and the people. The church entails and embraces both. As Ignatius of Antioch put it, for a true unity “you cannot have a head without members” (*Trall.* 11:2). We might add, for a true unity neither can you have members without a head.

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Other metaphors used by Jesus also function to indicate both the intimate unity between Jesus and his followers as well as the role he plays in their midst. In a strong eschatological context Jesus speaks of the householder who “leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work” (Mk 13:34). In the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, Jesus speaks of the master who sets his “wise and faithful” servant over his household “to give them their food at the proper time” (Mt 24:45; Lk 12:42). It is legitimate to perceive in texts such as these, statements of Jesus in which he is alluding, not to the totality of his followers, but to those who are given the service of oversight within the community of believers. The reference in Mark to

the householder leaving home and putting his servants in charge most probably has in mind the death and resurrection of Jesus and the commissioning of his disciples to carry on his ministry. These servants become householders in the stead of the householder; they become stewards of the position of householder in the house of God. They are expected to perform the duties of the householder and to perform according to his will (cf. Lk 12:47), and they are accountable to the householder when he returns. The person and the work of the servant is determined by the character of the true householder and by his will and purpose. The "wise and faithful" steward does not execute a different economy within the house; he effects the selfsame economy of the householder who is "gone away."

We may mention one more image Jesus uses of his position and ministry in the midst of his disciples, that of "shepherd." The Old Testament use of this image was profound and determinative for Jesus and the New Testament writers. God will himself be the true shepherd of the sheep. He is the one who will feed his sheep like a shepherd, gather the lambs in his arms, and gently lead those who are with young (Is 40:11; cf. Ps 23).¹² However, also the human leaders of Israel could be called "shepherds." Jeremiah reproaches the faithless kings of Judah who have "scattered the sheep" (Jer 23:2). This leads to the prophecy that God will "set shepherds over them who will care for them, nor shall they fear or be dismayed, neither shall any

his life for the sheep (Jn 10:7-15). Echoing the prophecy of Jeremiah, the "Good Shepherd" gives eternal life to the sheep so that "no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (Jn 10:28).¹³

Images such as the "vine and branches," the "householder," and the "shepherd" present Jesus as an office-holder within the community he has founded and which he sustains through his teaching and through his giving himself up unto death "for the many." They imply a structure of relationship which distinguishes Jesus from his disciples even as it unites them into an organic whole. A shepherd is distinguished from the sheep, but there can be no shepherd apart from sheep.

However, there is one other image which equally depicts Jesus as placed in the midst of his disciples but which captures more vividly the nature and form of his ministry. I refer to the role of Jesus as *διάκονος*, "servant." In response to the request by their mother that the sons of Zebedee share in the rule of the kingdom, Jesus tells the disciples that they are not to regard themselves as rulers like the Gentiles who lord it over them. Rather, "whoever would be great (*μέγας*) among you must be your servant (*διάκονος*), and whosoever would be first (*πρῶτος*) among you must be your slave" (*δοῦλος*; Mt 20:26 ff.; cf. Mk 10:42-45). Luke places his account of Jesus' words in a more suggestive context, that of the Last Supper, and uses a different terminology: "Let the greatest (*ὁ μείζων*) among you become as the youngest (*ὁ νεώτερος*) and the leader (*ὁ ἡγούμενος*) as one who serves" (*ὁ διακονῶν*; 22:24-27). Jesus now goes on to define his own ministry: "For who is the greater, the one who sits at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves." Now these passages are often cited as descriptive of the servant posture of all Christians. But it is clear from all three contexts that Christ fully expected that there would be one "among you" who would be "great," "first," and "the leader." He foresees the ministry of his disciples and here wishes to define it and to give it its own proper contour and content. In exercising their "rule" in the midst of Christ's people, the disciples are to be "servants," that is, they are to minister as Jesus ministered. The ministry which the disciples will receive is to be patterned on the ministry of Jesus who came to serve and not to be served.¹⁴ Jesus' messianic ministry, therefore, is prototypical of all ministry by those who shall be chosen, sent and placed in the midst of the disciples of Jesus. These servant passages, no less than those of the householder and shepherd, depict a structure of giving and leading and of receiving and following.

However, Jesus' ministry is not prototypical by way of outward and external example. His ministry is prototypical by way of extension and continuation. Jesus does not send his disciples out with instructions that they should do what he did. He gives them the Holy Spirit and in that way continues in them what was begun in himself when he received the Holy Spirit and went forth preaching the forgiveness of sins and using up his life in loving service for those given to him. The narrative of the story of the Christ from his Baptism to his death is, to be sure, the narrative of every Christian who is the disciple of Jesus from Baptism to faithful death. But the narrative of Jesus is also the narrative of the office of Christ, by no means separated from the reality of Baptism common to all,

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be missing" (Jer 23:4; cf. Ez 34). It is virtually certain that Jesus understood his own person and mission in the light of such Old Testament antecedents. Jesus regarded the crowds who came to hear him with compassion, because they were "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36). He is the shepherd who seeks the one sheep which is lost (Mt 18:12 ff.). Jesus is himself the "Good Shepherd" who, unlike the hireling, does not abandon the sheep but lays down

but yet given to some who are called and chosen to be in the midst of the disciples as the representative of him who is "gone away" but who is present in them for all.

What we are wont to term the "institution" of the pastoral office is entailed in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. When Jesus commissions his disciples to go into all the world to preach and to baptize (Mt 28:19), it is under the aegis of his victorious ascension that this will happen: "All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me" (Mt 28:18). And now comes the promise: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). The continuing presence of the ascended Lord is in the persons sent and the mission they undertake in the name of Jesus. Jesus does not here institute an office that did not previously exist. As the resurrected and ascended Lord, he continues his own ministry in and through those he commissions. The office of the Christ as the "sent-one" from the Father continues in the life of the church in the service of those who are sent. This is explicitly affirmed in John's account. Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). The ministry of Jesus, begun at his Baptism with the Holy Spirit and completed in his death as the Lamb of God, is now to continue in the church in the ministry of the disciples: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22 ff.). The preaching and the doing of Christ's commissioned apostles is nothing other than the speaking of Jesus and the doing of Jesus. John's Gospel is especially lucid concerning this point. As the apostle from the Father, Jesus says and does only what the Father gives him to say and to do. For that reason Jesus is the Word of the Father, and whoever hears Jesus hears the Father and whoever sees Jesus sees "him who sent me" (Jn 5:19,30; 8:28 ff.).

This notion of tradition occurs also in the Paraclete sayings which speak of "another Paraclete" who will "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:16,26). In the coming of the Holy Spirit Jesus continues to be present, even as in the coming of Jesus the Father was present. Therefore, as Jesus did not speak on his own authority but spoke the word of the Father (Jn 8:28), so also the Paraclete "will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak" (Jn 16:13). It is clear that the speaking of the Paraclete is nothing other than the mission of those sent by Jesus (Jn 15:26 ff.; 20:22 ff.). The office of the Christ continues in the church in the office of preaching.

The same point is explicit at the very beginning of The Acts of the Apostles. Luke refers to his Gospel as the first book which deals "with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). The aorist form "began" (ἤρξατο) implies that the narrative which is to follow contained what Jesus is continuing to do. In fact the received title of this work, "The Acts of the Apostles," is something of a misnomer. A better title would be "The Acts of Jesus the Lord." For Jesus continues to do and to say in the acts and words of the apostles what he did and said in his "earthly" ministry. It is thematically necessary, therefore, that the accounts of Jesus' ascension and of the coming of the Holy Spirit begin the Acts, for the mission of the disciples and the life of the church they engender is nothing other than the

locus of the active rule of Jesus the Lord through the Holy Spirit. In the Acts, therefore, Christian churches arise where the preaching of the apostles is received: "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt 10:40). Not surprisingly, where the preaching of the apostles is received, there worship in the name of Jesus is begun.

The characteristics of a bishop or deacon listed in the Pastoral Epistles reflect the characteristics of the servant as they were exemplified in the life of Jesus. He was humble, gentle, above reproach, an apt teacher, and the Bridegroom of one bride. The call and charge to be a servant in the midst of God's people binds the one called to the call and charge which is Christ's own so that he becomes one with Christ in the exercise of Christ's ministry.

→ Those who are chosen and sent by the Lord continue the presence of Jesus in the midst of his people. Elsewhere in the New Testament this is implied in the images and titles which designate those who exercise the ministry of Christ in the churches. The apostles and bishops are called shepherds (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt 5:2 ff.; cf. 1 Cor 9:7), stewards of the household of God (1 Tm 3:2 ff.; Ti 1:5,7; 1 Pt 4:10 ff.), and a husbandman (2 Tm 2:6; 1 Cor 9:7)—all titles which Jesus used of himself.¹⁵ The shepherd continues his work in the shepherds; the householder continues his work in his stewards; the husbandman continues his work in the husbandmen.

We have argued that the office of apostle and the apostolic office of preaching which continues in the church subsists in the person of Christ so that the one sent by Christ is bound to that servanthood which was Jesus' person and work. This is true both of the words preached by the emissaries of Christ and of the works effected by his emissaries. The characteristics of a bishop or deacon listed in the Pastoral Epistles reflect the characteristics of the servant as they were exemplified in the life of Jesus. He was humble, gentle, above reproach, an apt teacher, and the Bridegroom of one bride. The call and charge to be a servant in the midst of God's people binds the one called to the call and charge which is Christ's own so that he becomes one with Christ in the exercise of Christ's ministry.

Nowhere in the New Testament is this theme more energetically argued than in Paul's discussions about his own apostolic life and work. In the face of certain opponents, whom Paul calls "super apostles" (2 Cor 11:5), Paul develops his understanding of the apostolic office to which he had been called. The exact identity of these opponents is a matter of

debate, but their opposition to Paul centers on his lowliness. They, so the argument apparently went, were the true apostles of the risen and exalted Christ, for their ministry was in demonstrations of power: visions and ecstatic speech. Paul, on the other hand, was constantly put out to imprisonments, beatings, shipwrecks, and rejection. Clearly Paul was not an apostle of the risen and exalted Lord; otherwise Paul also would demonstrate the Lord by lordly works and wonderful speech. How Paul defends his apostolicity is a clear evidence of the christological content of the apostolic office.

Paul's defense occurs primarily in his Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, although intimations of his apostolic understanding also occur elsewhere.¹⁶ In 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:2 Paul argues that his apostolic ministry was constituted in the reconciling act of God in Christ. The new creation is "from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18). In Paul's thought, the reconciling act of God in Christ and his own receiving of the apostolic office are not two distinct and autonomous events.¹⁷ The reconciling act of God in Christ is not a dead event of the past which we can only recall and remember. Christ died and was raised, and for that reason his reconciling death remains the means, the place, and the content of apostolic preaching and apostolic living. Indeed, the reconciling act of God in Christ is present and effective in and through the exercise of Paul's apostolic service. For that reason, Paul can write that he is an ambassador "in the place of Christ" (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ), and he can cast his proclamation not in the indicative, as though he were speaking about Christ, but in the imperative addressing his hearers *in persona Christi*: "Be reconciled to God!" (2 Cor 5:20). Indeed, the time of the reconciliation of God in Christ is the moment of Paul's address: "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). If we then ask the question: where and when is the reconciliation of God in Christ which faith receives and to which faith adheres, the answer is: in the proclamation of the messenger of Christ. To hear and to believe him is to be reconciled with God.

However, since the apostolic office is constituted in the reconciling act of Christ's cross, the content of apostolic preaching must have and can only have the cross as its content. As Paul writes, "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23). But it is also the conduct of Paul's ministry which bears the imprint of the cross of Christ. The apostolic office is essentially cruciform in its contour and configuration. Already at the call of Paul it was declared that he must suffer for the sake of Christ's name (Acts 9:16). The listing of Paul's sufferings made it clear that these words became reality (2 Cor 11:23-33). However, in some of the most remarkable self-descriptions Paul can speak of himself as "always carrying the dying of Jesus in the body" or as "always being handed over into death" (2 Cor 4:10, 11). This cruciform character of

Paul's apostolic ministry is itself the manifestation of "the life of Jesus in the death-ridden flesh" (2 Cor 4:11). As the cross of Jesus was in fact not his defeat but his victory and was the instrument of the forgiveness of sins, so also Paul's sufferings in his flesh are the very revelation of the resurrected and exalted one who in his apostle continues to be present as the one who reconciles.¹⁸

The minister of Christ is steward of an office which is Christ's own office. To exercise that office is a task to be sure, but it is also a life. The office of the called and ordained ministry arises not from faith nor from the common priesthood of the people of God. The office is that of the Word of God, who is Christ Jesus himself. The office therefore expresses itself in the proclamation which has the crucified Christ as its content and in the life of servanthood which has the crucified Christ as its shape. This office is not apart from the people; it is in the midst of the people and exists unto them and on their behalf. For their consolation it speaks the content of their own faith, and it lives for their benefit the life which was given up for "the many." This is the christological nature and content of the office of the ministry and the defining feature of those who are called into it.

We are often tempted to identify the office only with the functions it performs. This is to forget the person of Christ who may be known only in his works but who is also the distinct agent of his works. The office of the ministry likewise manifests itself in the functions of preaching, the administration of the Sacraments, and—in light of the above discussion—in the servanthood of the minister. Yet, the office is not merely functional. It endures and it perdures because Christ is the eternal Lord. The church remains forever because through the ministers he gives to the church the Word never ceases to create and to sustain faith. The ministry is, therefore, christological and incarnational. Indeed, it is incarnational because it is christological. As such, the continuation of called and ordained ministers in the church is evidence that Christ is keeping his promise: "I am with you always, to the close of the age."

It is a remarkable fact that even after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples continued to speak of the earthly Jesus. The reason for this is both clear and fundamental to Christian faith: the resurrected and ascended Jesus is the Lord of the church in and through the continuation of those words and those deeds which he spoke and did as Jesus of Nazareth. If we believe that those words and those deeds are integral and necessary for our salvation, then we will understand the necessity for the office of preaching and the Sacraments. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation!" It was so in Paul's proclamation. It is still so in the proclamation of those who are pastors in the church of Christ.¹⁹

NOTES

1. Ernst Käsemann, "Paul and Early Catholicism," *New Testament Questions of Today*, translated by W.J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), p. 243.

2. Käsemann, pp. 245 ff.

3. Käsemann, p. 245: "There is for Paul no extension of the earthly Jesus in the church."

4. Käsemann, p. 248: "In borrowing from Jewish Christianity, the church was compelled to bind the Spirit to the office."

5. One could argue that the pattern begins already at the creation. God, the Holy One, speaks and through that speaking makes for Himself a people, Adam and Eve, who are according to his image and likeness. However, the typology of redemption and promised blessing which dominates the biblical narrative is that of the Exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

6. Brevard Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 153.

7. Harald Riesenfeld, "The Ministry in the New Testament," in *The Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1953), p. 100.

8. It was prophetic promise that in the end times God would gather in his dispersed people and dwell with them in a renewed Jerusalem (see Is 5:26; 11:10, 12; 49:22; 62:10; Ez 36:24). The Gospel of John especially understands this eschatological act of God as beginning in the ministry of Jesus. Note John's use of the Feast of Booths (Jn 7-8) and his interest in unity (Jn 12:32; 17:20 ff.). Very likely John's report of the Feeding of the Five Thousand belongs to this theme: the fragments are gathered into twelve baskets (Jn 6:13). The choosing of the Twelve certainly indicates that Jesus is reconstituting the New Israel with God in its midst.

9. Riesenfeld, pp. 104-109.

10. Riesenfeld, p. 104.

11. Riesenfeld, p. 104.

12. The context of Is 40:11 is important. The chapter begins with the famous voice crying in the wilderness, which the New Testament identifies with John the Baptist. The one whose coming the voice in the wilderness proclaims is the one who will lead the people like a shepherd. As the one whose way was prepared by John the Baptist, Jesus may well have had Isaiah 40:3-11 in mind when he spoke of himself as a shepherd.

13. Here one should note the thematic unity between the discourse on the "Good Shepherd" who loses no sheep and the Feeding of the Five Thousand in which all the fragments are gathered up "that nothing be lost" (Jn 6:12).

14. Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, "Das kirchliche Amt nach den

lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften und nach dem Neuen Testament," in *Zur Auferbauung des Leibes Christi: Festgabe für Professor D. Peter Brunner zum 65. Geburtstag*, edited by Edmund Schlink and Albrecht Peters (Kassel: Johannes Stauda-Verlag, 1965), p. 104. To serve means: "nicht nur, sich selbstlos einer Aufgabe hingeben, sondern aus Glauben, der auf Recht und Macht verzichtet und Gottes Hilfe bei Jesus sucht, in der Weise Jesu den Menschen Liebe erweisen, um Glauben an Gott und Liebe zu den Menschen zu wirken."

15. For a summary, see Riesenfeld, pp. 121 ff.

16. For example, Paul writes that he bears "in his body the marks (στίγματα) of Jesus" (Gal 6:17). There are a number of good studies on Paul's understanding of his apostolic office. Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1978), pp. 14-123; John Schuetz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); David M. Stanley, "Authority in the Church: A New Testament Reality," *CBQ* 29 (1967), pp. 555-573; David M. Stanley, "Become Imitators of Me: The Pauline Conception of Apostolic Tradition," *Biblica* 40 (1959), pp. 859-877; Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Der leidende Apostel und sein Herr: Studien zur paulinischen Christologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

17. The Greek construction is important here: τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καταλλάξαντος ἡμᾶς ἐαυτῷ διὰ Χριστοῦ καὶ δόντος ἡμῖν τὴν διακονίαν τῆς καταλλαγῆς (2 Cor 5:18). The definite article τοῦ after θεοῦ governs both participles, indicating that the reconciling and the giving are not separate actions but interrelated and fused.

18. Paul continues his defense in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Not his visions but his apostolic sufferings are the essential marks of his apostolicity. My opinion is that the "thorn in the flesh" is the apostolic sufferings of Paul. Here also Paul has followed the prototype of the suffering of Christ. As Christ asked the Father to take his sufferings from him, Paul also has three times requested to be relieved of his sufferings (2 Cor 12:8). The "grace" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:9 I take to refer to the apostolic office itself, the receiving of which was the saving moment for Paul.

19. Cf. Riesenfeld, p. 122 ff.: "Just as his Ministry took human form because he was incarnate, it will henceforth be committed to and discharged by men who are invested with his authority and act as his representatives. The visible nature of the Ministry is thus congruous with the Incarnation. Christ's own Ministry determined the beginnings of the Christian church, as they took shape during his lifetime. In the same way, the Ministry is an integral part of the church in the period between the Resurrection and the Second Coming."