

Pastor and People together in Christ's Church

CHRIST, THE FIRST MINISTER

The first minister of the Christian church is Jesus Christ. One can speak of neither church nor ministry before Him.

The Old Testament provides the backdrop for the story. It tells of God's shepherding His people Israel. We read also of their rebellion against this leadership, their desire for a more tangible king, their refusal to hear the prophets, their corruption of the Temple worship. Through it all God remained their King, despite the occupation of an earthly throne by the likes of Saul and David. This goes without saying. Yet God knew the wisdom of ruling them as a man. And so Scripture also contains the message that God would provide a more excellent Prophet, Priest, and King: Jesus, the Christ, in whom God and man reign as one.

These are familiar terms by which we speak of the Messiah's office. Yet we often overlook what is probably a more significant Old Testament image: "the LORD is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). Throughout the faithless leadership of human kings, priests, and Pharisees, God remained their shepherd. And so, even as He condemned Israel's failed leaders, He promised that He would raise up a more faithful shepherd, who paradoxically would be both God Himself and His servant David in one (Ezekiel 34). The puzzle was solved in the figure whom Isaiah had prophesied, "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms" (40:11). There can be no doubt who this is. Jesus, of course, claimed, "I am the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11). He looked upon the people Israel with great compassion, as sheep who needed Him (Mt. 9:6), and He spoke of Himself as the kingly shepherd who on the Last Day would separate His sheep and lead them to eternal pasture (Mt. 25:32-34).

The image of the Messiah as the shepherd of Israel includes the notion of "ruling", and thus is similar to kingship (Mt. 2:6); but there is more to it than that. Since at least the 17th century, as Lutherans sought a name for their ministers to replace the old confusing term "priest", they struck upon the name "pastor" (from the Latin word for "shepherd"). Today this has become our favourite term. Yet of all the terms for ordained ministers in the New Testament, "pastor" (in Greek, *poimēn*) is the least common (only Eph. 4:11; I Pet. 5:2). Its primary biblical reference is to Christ Himself, "the chief Shepherd" (I Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:20). This is an office that Christ continues to hold not only till Judgement Day, but into all eternity when "the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water" (Rev. 7:17). For all time the church's chief pastor continues to be Jesus Christ. As Luther puts it, "You should, rather, consider the fact that he [the pastor] possesses the office of the ministry which is not his but Christ's office."¹

The New Testament confirms this by applying to Jesus almost every term for "minister".² Though He is never specifically called a *diakonos* ("minister"), He claims to have come in order "to minister"—not "to be served" but "to serve" (*diakoneō* - Mt. 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk. 12:37; 22:27). He is "the apostle and high priest of our confession" (Heb. 3:1), and refers to Himself frequently as the apostle ("sent one") of God (e.g. Jn 14:9; 15:15; 20:21). He is also the church's chief *episkopos*, "bishop" or "overseer" (I Pet. 2:25). And perhaps the most frequent description of Jesus is "preacher" (Mt. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 11:1; Mk

¹ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:204. Later he affirms:

[L]isten how simply St. Paul speaks about ordination in II Timothy 2 [:2]: "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Here there is neither chrism nor butter; it is solely the command to teach God's word. Whoever has received the command, him St. Paul regards as a pastor, bishop, and pope, for everything depends on the word of God as the highest office, which Christ himself regarded as his own and as the highest office. (AE 38:212)

² Among all the New Testament vocabulary for the ministry, only *presbyteros* "elder" appears not to be applied to Christ.

1:14), one even greater than Jonah (Mt. 12:41). He was anointed as the Messiah in order to preach (Lk. 4:18; Is. 61:1), and He insists that preaching is the reason He came (Mk 1:38). As the apostles testify, His ministry did not end with His ascension, for they continue to call the risen and ascended Jesus the chief apostle, bishop, and pastor of the Church. Precisely how it continues will be considered below, but it is worth pondering already the significance of Jesus' words to the apostles, "He who hears you, hears Me" (Lk. 10:16)—words in the present tense by which Jesus insists that He still speaks through His servants.

This insight was not lost upon Luther, whose well-known definition of the church is embedded in our Book of Concord:

thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd. (Smalcald Articles III.xii:2)

There is a tendency to hear only the first half, as if the church can be defined merely as the sheep (the church as believers alone). But Luther cannot exclude Christ Himself from the church, and indeed a Christ who continues to speak to His flock. These simple words cut through so many controversies today that pit pastor against people, church against ministry, clergy against laity. In the midst of these debates it often seems that Christ's own headship has been forgotten. Luther returned Him to the focal point:

Our action only offers and bestows such baptism, ordained and constituted by Christ's command and institution. For this reason he alone is and remains the one true, eternal baptizer who administers his baptism daily through our action or service until the day of judgment. So our baptizing should properly be called a presenting or bestowing of the baptism of Christ, just as our sermon is a presenting of the word of God. ... So it is not our work or speaking but the command and ordinance of Christ which make the bread the body and the wine the blood, beginning with the first Lord's Supper and continuing to the end of the world, and it is administered daily through our ministry or office. We hear these words, "This is my body," not as spoken concerning the person of the pastor or the minister but as coming from Christ's own mouth who is present and says to us: "Take, eat, this is my body."³

Though the term "Real Presence" has a unique and particular meaning with regard to the Body and Blood of Christ in the bread and wine, Luther's words here remind us that Christ is not only present among us in this sacramental manner. He has not abandoned His church.

St Paul spoke similar words to the Corinthians, who were split by factionalism, each party seeking to follow their "founding father". Without denying the role of these missionary preachers, among whom Paul himself must be counted, he redirected them again to Christ:

²¹ So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ **and you are Christ's**, and Christ is God's. (I Cor. 3:21-23)

While each faction claimed to belong to its leader (Paul, Apollos, or Peter), Paul reminds them that these men are but servants, and that everyone in the church belongs to Christ alone. In fact, even Christ humbles Himself to be a servant of God.

Paul's words are profoundly relevant to a modern church which opposes church to ministry in a struggle for power. The means of grace, the authority to preach or administer the sacraments, is not like a baby that can only belong to one woman or the other. The struggle threatens to tear them apart, and no Solomon can determine to whom they belong. For the "possession" language into which our church so often falls threatens to exclude Christ from His own church. Luther memorably concluded his attack on the private mass and priestly consecration in the Roman Church with these words:

For we must believe and be sure of this, that Baptism does not belong to us but to Christ, that the Gospel does not belong to us but to Christ, that the Office of preaching does not belong to us but to Christ, that the Sacrament does not belong to us but to Christ, that the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins do not belong to us but to Christ. In summary, the Office and the sacraments do not belong to us but to Christ, for He has ordained all this and left it behind as a legacy in the church to be exercised and used to the end of the world; and He does not lie or deceive us. Therefore we cannot

³ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:199.

make anything else out of it but must act according to His command and hold it. However, if we alter or “improve” on it, then it becomes a nothing and Christ is no longer present, nor is His order.⁴

THE CHURCH AS PASTOR AND PEOPLE TOGETHER

Of course, the church does not consist of Christ only—though the New Testament comes very close to saying so. For whatever is the church, is only so as long as it remains a part of Christ. St Paul, for example, delights to call the church Christ’s Body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24).⁵ Though Paul elsewhere uses the image to emphasize the diversity of gifts and vocations within the church (I Cor. 12:12-31; Rom. 12:3-8), its primary meaning is to emphasize the unity of the church with Christ (Eph. 4:3-6). The Head cannot be separated from His body. By comparing the one-flesh union of husband and wife in marriage to the unity of Christ with His body, the church (Eph. 5:23-31), Paul shows just how intimate this union is. Indeed, the Church can be said—perhaps with some hyperbole—to make Christ complete (Eph. 1:23), just as a married man is no longer whole without his wife.

St Peter makes the same point with an architectural analogy (I Pet. 2:4-5). The church is God’s Temple. This is not merely a statement about the obsolescence of the Old Testament place of worship; it is a deeply meaningful description. Christ Himself, whom Paul once called the Church’s foundation (I Cor. 3:11), is more precisely identified as the cornerstone, which gives the church its shape and orientation (I Pet. 2:6-7; Eph. 2:20). The apostles, on whose ministry Christ promised to build His church (Mt. 16:18; Tr 25), are separated neither from Christ nor the church, but are its foundation stones (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14). The baptized members of Christ’s Church, the holy priesthood, are like living stones built upon this foundation (I Pet. 2:5). And it is called a Temple, because God dwells in it, in us (I Cor. 3:17; 6:19; II Cor. 6:16). Such a building can survive the loss of an occasional brick, but if either walls or foundation are pulled apart or destroyed, so also is the building. The church, thus, has no existence apart from Christ and His apostolic ministry, and without the church they serve no function.

Some Lutheran theologians have been reluctant to speak of the apostolic ministry in these bold terms.⁶ Matthew 16 has been interpreted as if the rock on which Christ’s church is built is merely the spoken word or even the faith of the speaker. Yet Melancthon understands it otherwise as he explains this text in the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*:

²³ In all these passages Peter is representative of the entire company of apostles, as is apparent from the text itself, for Christ did not question Peter alone²⁵ As to the statement, “ On this rock I will build my church ” (Matt. 16:18), it is certain that the church is not built on the authority of a man but on the ministry of the confession which Peter made when he declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Therefore Christ addresses Peter as a minister and says, “ On this rock, ” that is, on this ministry.

²⁶ Besides, the ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons, as the Levitical priesthood is, but is spread abroad through the whole world and exists wherever God gives his gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers. (Tr 23-26)

⁴ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), WA 38:240.24; AE 38:200. Note also:

Even today Baptism and the proclamation of the Divine Word are not mine but God’s. When we hear this Word, we must bear in mind that it is God Himself who is addressing us. When kings hear the Word and see the administration of the Sacraments, they should place their crowns and scepters at His feet and say: “It is God who has His being here, who speaks here, and who is active here.” You will perhaps be tempted to interpose: “Why, it is just a plain priest standing there and administering the Lord’s Supper!” If that is your viewpoint, you are no Christian. If I were to hear none but you preach, I would not care a straw about it; but it is God who is speaking there. It is He who is baptizing; it is He who is active. He Himself is present here. Thus the preacher does not speak for himself; he is the spokesman of God, the heavenly Father. Therefore you ought to say: “I saw God Himself baptizing and administering the Sacrament of the Altar, and I heard God preaching the Word.” *Sermons on the Gospel of John* (1537), AE 22:505.

⁵ Luther draws this image into his definition of the church in LC 2:51.

⁶ Some theologians would say that the apostolic ministry is not of the church’s *esse* (essence) but only of its *bene esse* (well-structured existence). But such a distinction is not found in the Book of Concord, nor in most classic Lutheran theologians.

Both the term he uses (*Predigtamt*) and the explanation he gives make it clear that Melanchthon is speaking of the office of the ministry as the foundation of the church.

St Paul quite likely had Christ's words in mind when he spoke of his own apostolic preaching as laying a foundation (Rom. 15:20; I Cor. 3:10). If the church is composed of believers in Christ,⁷ then there should be nothing surprising in Paul's assertion—for it is through the preached Word that faith in Christ is created (Rom 10:14-17). The means of grace (Word and sacrament) are sometimes spoken of as marks of the church, for where they are faithfully administered, there the church is surely to be found (Ap VII:5). But they are not merely empty signposts pointing to a reality outside themselves (like signs along a highway). No, they are marks of the church because they create the church. Because the means of grace create faith, the church cannot be found apart from them. In this sense, the church cannot exist apart from the ministry, either, for it is God's appointed office to deliver His means of grace, by which He establishes and preserves His church (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts. 2:41-42; Eph. 5:25-27).

The intimate connection of the believers, the means of grace, and the office of the ministry within the church is neatly maintained in the Augsburg Confession:

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among who the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (Augsburg Confession VII:1)

This definition, too, is often improperly truncated, so as to define the church merely as believers. But the means by which believers are created cannot be excluded from the definition: where preachers preach the Gospel purely and administer the sacraments in accord with it, there believers are created and nourished. This gathering is the church. Melanchthon himself insists:

there are two noteworthy elements, not to be omitted, whenever a definition of the church is formulated. For we must not imagine the church without some knowledge of the promise concerning Christ and without the ministry; the church is not in an assembly where there is neither knowledge of the promise of Christ nor the voice nor the ministry of the Gospel.⁸

In the Large Catechism, Luther explains why this must be so: “For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, and outside it no one can come to the Lord Christ” (LC II:25).⁹

Thus, just as the church cannot be separated from Christ any more than a body can be separated from its head, so also the preachers of the Gospel and the believers in the Gospel must be held together. It is a natural and healthy union, epitomized in the language and theology of St Paul, who can write: “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers [*episkopoi*] and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). The church's well-being is contained in that little word “with”. In Philippi there is no hint of tension or competition between people and pastors. Certainly such tension has arisen in the history of the church. On the eve of the Reformation the ship was listing badly towards priestly power. The medieval Roman church had a dangerous tendency to identify the church exclusively with the pope and his hierarchy. The keys and all churchly authority were located in their hands, to the exclusion of the rest of the church. In response, Melanchthon emphatically asserted: “In I Cor. 3:4-8 Paul places ministers on an equality and teaches that the church is more than the ministers” (Tr 11).¹⁰ Indeed, she is ministers and laity together.

⁷ The New Testament repeatedly identifies faith as the mark of membership in the Christian Church: see Acts 5:14; 16:5; I Cor. 1:2; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:1; etc. See also AC VIII; Ap VII:28.

⁸ Quoted by Martin Chemnitz in *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), II:685-86.

⁹ Here Luther puts a Gospel spin on the ancient and oft-abused dictum, “outside the church there is no salvation.”

¹⁰ Tappert, 321, like most other English translations of the Treatise, reads, “the church is above the ministers”. This rendering of *supra* is possible, but in light of Melanchthon's ecclesiology elsewhere, it produces a nonsense. How can the church be “above” the ministers if the ministers themselves are an essential part of the church? Here the official German translation of the Treatise is helpful, which interprets *supra* as *mehr dann* “more than”. For this is Melanchthon's point: the Church cannot be defined as the ministerial hierarchy alone; it is much more than that.

Of course, the ship can easily list to the other side when the wind changes. This is a danger that threatens Lutheran Church–Canada, whose roots reach back to an assertion of the rights of the church against a corrupt bishop (often misinterpreted as the rights of laity against the clergy¹¹). When and where the same threat confronts her today, the same answers need to be spoken. The church is unhealthy whenever Christ’s gifts to the whole church are thought to be the exclusive possession of only one part, or when one part claims exercise of them contrary to Christ’s institution. Neither pastor nor people may claim exclusive or exhaustive authority, but only that authority which has been given them by the Lord. But where a pastor has abused his authority, this may not automatically be taken as evidence that his authority was illegitimate. According to the old proverb Luther quoted, “Misuse does not destroy the substance, but confirms its existence” (LC IV:59). If a pastor acts like a tyrant, the church does not act rightly by restricting the pastor’s God-given authority, by insisting that all authority must reside in the hands of the laity alone. This distortion of churchly authority is simply the reverse of what the Reformers faced. If one states the opposite of an error, one ends up making the opposite error. Clerical tyranny is then replaced by the tyranny of the voter’s assembly.

This is not the picture of a healthy organism. Rather, like the sound body of Paul’s illustration (I Cor. 12), the church best functions when pastor and people stand together, each speaking from their unique calling, as they once did in confessing the Gospel in the Formula of Concord.¹² Hermann Sasse once appealed for reconciliation between the camps opposing congregation and ministry, in wise words that still await an adequate hearing:

It is therefore impossible in the New Testament to separate ministry and congregation. What is said to the congregation is also said to the office of the ministry, and vice versa. The office does not stand above the congregation, but always in it. ... Office and congregation belong inseparably together. ... Only where there is a vital ministerial office, working with the full authority of having been sent, only there is a living congregation. And only where there is a living congregation is there a living ministerial office. ... If the office falters, so does the congregation. If the congregation falters, so does the office.¹³

THE OFFICE OF PASTOR

Yet the appeal for unity within a common calling is not all that may be said. There is a uniqueness to the office of the ministry and the vocation of all the baptized that remains to be identified and confessed.

The apostles in their inspired writings are insistent that not only their own office, but also the office of pastors who follow them, was instituted and given to the church by Christ Himself. Referring to Christ’s ascension, Paul writes:

¹¹ Note that when Bishop Stephan broke faith with the rest of the immigrant community, the issue was not whether the laity alone were church without the clergy, but whether the church (laity and pastors) could exist without a bishop consecrated in the European fashion. Thus, Walther correctly applied Reformation principles as he found them in Luther’s letter to the Bohemians (1523). Bishops have no unique authority by divine right, and the church can exist without them. The ship began to list, however, when Walther’s answer began to be seen as an assertion of lay rights against clergy, without either of which the church cannot exist.

¹² “We believe, teach, and confess that at a time of confession, as when enemies of the Word of God desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire community of God, yes, every individual Christian, and especially the ministers of the Word as the leaders [*Vorsteher*] of the community of God, are obligated to confess openly, not only by words but also through their deeds and actions, the true doctrine and all that pertains to it, according to the Word of God” (FC SD X:10).

¹³ Hermann Sasse, “Ministry and Congregation”, in *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 78-79. Sasse was calling for reconciliation between the various American Lutheran churches that followed the theology respectively of Walther, Grabau, and Löhe.

Therefore it says, “having ascended on high He took captivity captive, He gave gifts to men” [Ps. 68:18]. ... And He gave apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:8, 11)¹⁴

We can locate this act of giving quite precisely, for Luke’s Gospel associates the sending of the apostles on their mission with Christ’s final words before His ascension. They are to proclaim repentance and the forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations (Lk. 24:46-48). With this mandate, Christ institutes the office. The sending of the apostles by Christ Himself is so important that each Gospel in its own way ends with an account of this commission. Christ breathes the Holy Spirit upon them, and by such an act of ordination commits to the apostles the authority to forgive and retain sins in His name (Jn 20:21-23). He sends them into all the world to preach the Gospel (Mk 16:16; Acts 1:8), and authorizes them to baptize and teach all nations (Mt. 28:18-20). These texts may rightly be spoken of as the Words of Institution for the office of the holy ministry, and are frequently cited by the Book of Concord as the scriptural foundation of the office.¹⁵ They make it abundantly clear that the ministry is no invention of the church, but is divinely instituted.

Jesus’ promise that He will be with the church to the close of the age through such baptizing and teaching (Mt. 28:20) implies that the apostolic ministry would continue beyond the earthly lives of the apostles themselves. In fact, Jesus had already commissioned other ministers to proclaim the Gospel (Luke 10). Certainly it was Paul’s understanding that pastors outside the circle of the twelve apostles were also called by God into their office, as he remarks to the pastors of Ephesus, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers [*episkopous*], to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:28; cf. II Cor. 5:18; Col. 4:17). Though the church may be the human instrument by which God makes such appointments (see below), we must not lose sight of Paul’s insistence that it is always God Himself who makes ministers.

In fact, we can be more precise. For just as Christ remains the church’s first minister, and even as Christ Himself instituted the office, so all pastors are appointed by and represent the Second Person of the Trinity in particular. The biblical text most often cited by the Book of Concord as foundational for the office of the ministry is Christ’s promise to His seventy[-two] ministers: “Whoever hears you, hears Me” (Lk. 10:16).¹⁶ Here Christ rephrases a traditional dictum of the rabbis, who also sent forth representatives to speak for them: “A man is like his *shaliach* [‘sent one’].”¹⁷ But in the case of Christ, because He is “with us always” (Mt. 28:20), His representatives do not speak for Him as one who is absent, but are His mouthpieces. Though the church is the instrument through which ministers are called by Christ, it cannot therefore be asserted that the ministers represent the church. Their mandate is to represent Christ, as Melancthon insists in the Apology:

For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church’s call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16), “He who hears you hears me.” When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ’s place and stead. (Ap VII:28; cf. 47)¹⁸

These words are echoed in the traditional Lutheran formula of Absolution, by which the pastor announces, “in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins” (*TLH*, p. 16).¹⁹ In this act the pastor is a voice external to the congregation, speaking a word from heaven (Ap XII:40). If he forgave the congregation in their own name, such forgiveness would amount to little more than self-justification.

¹⁴ Translation by T. Winger.

¹⁵ See T. Winger, “The Office of the Holy Ministry According to the New Testament Mandate of Christ”, *Logia* 7.2:38-40.

¹⁶ The confessional references to this text are: AC XXVIII:22; Ap VII:28, 46; XII:40; XXVIII:18-19. It is the most frequently cited institution text for the office of the ministry in the Book of Concord.

¹⁷ Ber. 5:5; Mekh. Ex. 12:4 (5a); 12:6 (7a); Qid. 41; Chag. 10; Nazir. 12; BM 96; Men. 93. *Shaliach* is the Hebrew equivalent of “apostle”. See also Rengstorf’s article on *apostolos* in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*.

¹⁸ The relevant phrase in the original is *Christi vice et loco*.

¹⁹ This formula is rooted in John 20:21-23, and is echoed in Paul’s words, as Luther translates them, “das vergebe ich euretwillen an Christi Statt [I forgive it for your benefit in the place of Christ]” (II Cor. 2:10). The Vulgate reads, “in persona Christi”.

The first word our Lutheran confessional writings speak concerning the office of the ministry is therefore that it is instituted by Christ Himself and that such pastors represent not themselves but Christ. This is, in fact, the essential meaning of the term “minister” (*diakonos* in Greek).²⁰ Christians in lands with a British parliamentary system are well placed to understand the connotations of the term, as its secular use is quite similar to this theological meaning. In contrast to American government officials, who are understood to represent the people, a government minister in Canada represents the monarch in service to the people. So also the minister who serves the church represents the divine Monarch, as Chemnitz explains:

God Himself deals with us in the church through the ministry as through the ordinary means and instrument. For it is He Himself that speaks, exhorts, absolves, baptizes, etc. in the ministry and through the ministry. Lk 1:70; Heb 1:1; Jn 1:23 (God crying through the Baptist); 2 Co 2:10, 17; 5:20; 13:3. ... The chief thing of the ministry is that God wants to be present in it with His Spirit, grace, and gifts and to work effectively through it.²¹

There is, of course, another important aspect to the representational character of the pastoral office. For the office also continues in part the office of apostle. The apostles understood their missionary mandate to include the responsibility of appointing pastors to continue their work in each place, as they moved on to new fields.²² Such successors could not emulate the apostles in their foundational role, nor could they be eye-witnesses of Christ like the apostles, nor could they write authoritative words such as form the New Testament. But in terms of the authority to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, to cling to and to teach sound doctrine, all ministers are indeed successors of the apostles. In denying that pastors receive their authority from Peter alone (through the pope), the Treatise asserts, “we have a reliable teaching, that the office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles.”²³

This representative meaning of the “ministry” is perhaps not well understood today. The term “ministry” is now used in a rather different sense, as when it is applied to diverse forms of Christian service, such as “music ministry” or “youth ministry”. Language changes and adapts easily to new situations. Mediaeval Christians may have had no need to speak of what we today might call “youth ministry”. But there is a danger in reading back the modern use of a word into older documents. The biblical and confessional theology of pastoral ministry is best preserved, therefore, if we consistently speak of “the office of the ministry”.²⁴ Of course, “office” is also a term that is misunderstood; but it has the advantage that it has not acquired any competing modern meaning, and so can be easily explained.²⁵ “Office” is an abstract term referring to the authority and role conferred upon a specific person to be held on behalf of another in order to perform a public service. Thus, in the secular world one speaks of “the office of mayor” or “the office of president” or “police officer”. These are distinct and recognizable roles

²⁰ “A minister [*diakonos*] was an authorised assistant, an intermediary, an agent employed to perform a task for another person, a steward who administers the property of his employer (Collins; Donfried). A minister of Christ is therefore a person appointed by him to work with him and under his authority.... The word is therefore used to highlight the authority and responsibility of a person to act on behalf of the person who had appointed him. Thus, when we speak of pastors as ministers of Christ, we imply that he has appointed them as his agents, to speak his word and convey his sacraments to the people of God in the divine service” - John Kleinig, “Ministry and Ordination”, *Lutheran Theological Journal* 36.1 (May 2002): 26.

²¹ Chemnitz, 29.

²² Acts 14:23; I Tim. 1:6; II Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5. Here we might add Acts 20:17-38, in which Paul addresses the pastors in Ephesus as his spiritual successors.

²³ “[so] haben wir eine gewisse Lehre, daß das Predigtamt vom gemeinen Beruf der Apostel herkommt” (Tr 10, German text). Because all ministers hold office in succession to the apostles, Luther is willing to accept that bishops may govern the church in succession to the apostles (SA II.iv:9).

²⁴ *Amt* “office” or *Predigtamt* “preaching office” in the German writings of our Lutheran forefathers. The New Testament has no specific word for “office”, but speaks of *exousia* “authority” (Mt. 28:18; II Cor. 10:8; 13:10), and often uses abstract terms such as *diakonia kai apostolē* “office of apostle” (Acts 1:25) and *episkopē* “office of overseer/bishop” (I Tim. 3:1) to refer to a position that is vacant and needs to be filled.

²⁵ The meaning “a room where someone works” is certainly a new and different meaning, but does not cause any real confusion.

which cannot be reduced to a set of functions that may be performed by anyone. (One would not speak of the “office” of politeness or good citizenship, since these are functions common to all people.) In some social structures these office-holders represent the people at large; in others they represent the monarch. An office-holder may be accountable to those he or she represents, but the office is not therefore without authority, otherwise it would be impossible to do the job. So also the New Testament describes the office of the ministry as an office by which a man represents Christ, exercising Christ’s authority on His behalf for the sake of the church. Though the pastor is not to act tyrannically (see below), he clearly does have authority over the congregation under his care (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).

An emphasis on the **office** of the ministry draws attention not to the pastor, as if to glorify him (a common misunderstanding). In fact, the intension is precisely the opposite. By emphasizing that the pastor represents Christ, and speaks according to his office not his person, the attention is drawn away from the man. This was Paul’s understanding: “For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (II Cor. 4:5). With these words, Paul calls upon the pastor to hold his office with humility; he is nothing more than a servant. He gains honour not by seeking or demanding it but by serving faithfully. At the same time, Paul exhorts the church to give high honour to the men who labour in this difficult office (I Tim. 5:17), for this is often what they need to hear.²⁶ And if the church sometimes despises or neglects the authority of the office, the pastor, like Paul to the Galatians (1:1, 10-24), may be compelled to rebuke and instruct them on the basis of God’s Word.

Such a view of pastoral authority within the office was scarcely questioned before modern times. What is unique in the Lutheran confessional documents’ description of the office of the ministry, however, is the emphasis on the **functions** of the office. The Reformers were highly critical of irresponsible Roman priests who took the benefits of their office, who perhaps performed a few private masses, but who neglected the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments to God’s people that is essential to their office.²⁷ This fact explains the emphasis placed on the means of grace functions in the Augsburg Confession, as it describes the pastoral office:

¹ In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. ² For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel. (AC V, Latin text)

This criticism may be more contemporary than it seems. Accusations of clericalism in the church today may contain a legitimate concern that the pastor is giving glory to himself rather than to the Lord whom his office represents, or that he is content to represent Christ in the office without performing faithfully the duties the office has placed upon him. In such cases the Augsburg Confession calls the pastor back to the essential nature and functions of his office.

But the functional nature of this article is misunderstood if it is thought to say that only the functions of Word and sacrament were instituted by God, apart from an office to administer them (the error known as “functionalism”). This misunderstanding is contrary to the language of the article itself, which speaks in the German text of the *Predigtamt* “**office** of preaching”, and in the Latin text of the *ministerium* (which could not have referred to the functions alone in medieval church usage). Furthermore, the Augsburg Confession itself clarifies that the functions may not be separated from the office:

Our churches teach that nobody should preach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless he is regularly called. (AC XIV, Latin text)

²⁶ This parallels Paul’s words to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5. The husband is called upon to love his wife, not to force her into submission. The wife is called upon to submit to her husband, not to make him love her. In this way, each spouse is drawn into his or her unique role by the behaviour of the other. So also Luther (the ordained priest) tended to highlight the priesthood of all believers, while Melancthon (the lay theologian) often spoke more forcefully of the authority given by call and ordination.

²⁷ “Now what kind of consecration or priesthood is this, I ask, when the ordinary Christians receive from it neither baptism, sacrament, comfort, absolution, sermon, nor any kind of pastoral care or ministry? For whom are they consecrated and ordained? For the church?” - Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:177.

“Regularly called” under-translates the concluding expression, *rite vocatus*. This phrase indicates that the man who is to carry out these functions must be placed into office through the call of the church carried out according to the normal, historic procedure. This procedure was laid out in the *Kirchenordnungen* (“church orders”) of the day, which specified the method by which a man was examined, called, and ordained into office. This is the rite to which *rite vocatus* refers, and this rite is incomplete without the final liturgical and public act commonly referred to as ordination.

Since Luther, the Lutheran Church has had certain objections to the way in which ordination was understood and performed in the Roman church. These objections focussed on the act of anointing with oil which was said to give the power to perform the miracle of transubstantiation and the duty to sacrifice Christ’s Body for the living and the dead. Once these elements of Roman consecration were removed, however, and the authority to preach and administer the sacraments re-emphasized, Luther quite firmly committed himself to the use of holy ordination:

when they [the church fathers] called someone to the true Christian office of the ministry or care of souls, they wanted to adorn and portray such a calling for the community with such pomp to distinguish them [i.e., the priests] from others who had not been called, in order that everyone might be sure and know who was supposed to exercise this office and who had the mandate to baptize, preach, etc. For basically consecration should not and cannot be anything other (if it is carried out rightly) than a call or a conferring of the office of the ministry or of the office of preaching.²⁸

The meaning of AC XIV is not that one particular rite of ordination must be universally observed. But by committing themselves to the churchly process of examination, call, and ordination, the Reformers insisted that the functions may not be separated from the office. No layman may preach or administer the sacraments without first being given the full office of the holy ministry.

The Augsburg Confession proceeds to give a rather detailed description of the functions which lie within the authority of the pastoral office:

Therefore, the episcopal office according to divine right is: [Latin: “according to the Gospel, or, as they say, by divine right, this jurisdiction belongs to the bishops as bishops, that is, to those to whom the Ministry of Word and Sacrament has been committed:”] to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and to reject doctrine which is contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the Christian congregation the godless, whose godless nature is manifest, without recourse to human authority, but alone through God’s Word. And for this reason parishioners and churches are bound to be obedient to the bishops, according to this Word of Christ, Luke 10[16]: “He who hears you, hears Me.” (AC XXVIII:21-22)²⁹

This list bears due scrutiny, as some theologians have been unwilling to maintain its fullness. At various times the authority to judge doctrine or to forgive sins and administer excommunication has been unjustly denied to pastors. Yet the purpose of this citation is not primarily to assert the rights of the pastoral office, but to recall pastors and bishops to their essential Gospel functions. After all, the office is not about power (Law) but authority (Gospel). Authority has to do with the marvellous ability to give out the gifts of God. It is, as Paul put it, “the ministry of reconciliation” (II Cor. 5:18). To judge and to exclude are, as in the ministry of Christ Himself, alien functions—what must sometimes be done, not what anyone wishes to do, and always for the sake of the Gospel.

²⁸ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:186. Luther is ambivalent about the term “consecration” (*Weihe*) used by the Roman church, as it emphasizes the anointing with oil by which a man is given the right to perform the private mass. He prefers the term “ordination”, as we see in his conclusion to this writing: “Our consecration shall be called ordination, or a call to the office” (AE 38:214). He prefers to retain the term “consecration” for Baptism, by which priests (not ministers) are anointed. Thus, when he returns to the topic he writes, “For ordaining should consist of, and be understood as, calling to and entrusting with the office of the ministry” (197).

²⁹ See similar statements in AC XXVIII:5-6; Tr 31, 61.

Martin Chemnitz, the faithful pupil of both Luther and Melanchthon, perhaps best summarizes the divine institution of the office with its functions in his handbook for Lutheran pastors:

What is the nature of the ministry of the church?

... it is a spiritual, or ecclesiastic **office**, instituted and ordained by God Himself for discharging and performing necessary **functions** of the church, so that pastors, or preachers, are and ought to be ministers of God and of the church in the kingdom of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 Co 4:1; Cl 1:25; 2 Cor 4:5

What, then, is the office of ministers of the church?

This office, or ministry, has been committed and entrusted to them by God Himself through a legitimate call

I. To feed the church of God with the true, pure, and salutary doctrine of the divine Word. Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:1; 1 Ptr 5:2

II. To administer and dispense the sacraments of Christ according to His institution. Mt 28:19; 1 Co 11:23.

III. To administer rightly the use of the keys of the church, or of the kingdom of heaven, by either remitting or retaining sins (Mt 16:19; Jn 20:23), and to fulfil all these things and the whole ministry (as Paul says, 2 Ti 4:5) on the basis of the prescribed command, which the chief Shepherd Himself has given His ministers in His Word for instruction. Mt 28:20.³⁰

The essentially Gospel nature of the office of the ministry suggests a few concluding comments about the way in which this office is administered. On the one hand, there is a primary obligation to cling faithfully to the apostolic doctrine the pastor has received, without which the Gospel is lost (see particularly I Tim. 4:1-16). In order to do so, he must be well-taught, well-equipped, and well-suited to the office (I Tim. 3:1-7). But Paul insists on a certain attitude with which this obligation is carried out: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness" (II Tim. 2:24-25). In doing so, he must show due respect to older men and women in the congregation (I Tim. 5:1-3). In fact, he could do no better than to model his own ministry on that of Christ, the great Shepherd:

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (I Pet. 5:1-4)

It is not an office of tyranny, for even the apostles were forbidden to adopt such secular modes of leadership (Lk. 22:25-26). Rather the pastor should be Christ-like even to the point of self-sacrifice, just as the apostles were called upon to suffer and to serve, like and with Christ (Mt. 20:23-28; Col. 1:24).

THE CALLING OF CHRIST'S PEOPLE

The vocation of the individual Christian, as a member of the church, cannot be described quite so simply. For to be a Christian, to be a member of the church, is not a vocation in the same sense as to be a pastor. Certainly all Christians are called by God (vocation means "calling"), but one must consider the nature of this call. It is a call to be justified (Rom 8:30), a call into His kingdom (I Thess. 2:12), a call to be God's people (Rom. 9:25), to be His children (I Jn 3:1), to be in fellowship with Christ (I Cor. 1:9) and God (Jam. 2:23), to be saved out of this world (I Thess. 2:13-14; I Pet. 2:9), a call to eternal life (I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 9:15; I Pet. 5:10), to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Mt. 22:1-14; Rev. 19:9), and to receive God's blessing (I Pet. 3:9); it is a call to repentance (Lk. 5:32) and to faith (Heb. 11:8; Rev. 13:10). Indeed, what all these aspects of God's call have in common is their emphasis on God's work and God's giving, rather than on man's work. It is difficult to find any passage in the New Testament in which the Christian is "called" to do anything. The Christian calling is primarily a gift not an obligation. This is the nature of the Gospel.

³⁰ Chemnitz, p. 26.

There are, of course, consequences of this calling for one's life and actions, such as suffering like Christ (I Pet. 2:21), striving to maintain unity with others (Eph. 4:1-4), and conforming one's life to God's holy Law (I Pet. 1:15). In other respects, the Gospel call leaves a person's vocation intact, and on the rare occasion when Paul refers to it, it is the vocation people already had before they became Christians (I Cor. 7:17-24). In other words, God's call to faith in Christ sanctifies a person's worldly calling, so long as it is not inherently contrary to His Law.³¹ The deeds that once were not pleasing to God become pleasing to God because of the forgiveness of sins in Christ. They are transformed by the Gospel (see Eph. 5-6). Thus a pagan husband's love for his wife is just love, but a Christian husband's love for his wife is a picture of the love of Christ for the church. A non-Christian baker may perform a valuable service for the world, but his work does not please God in any way, because it is done without faith (Heb. 11:6). In Christ, however, the Christian baker's baking is God-pleasing, and can be recognized as given by God.

To a certain extent, the office of the ministry does not differ from such worldly vocations. A man who is called to be God's child in Holy Baptism may later receive the office of the ministry as a distinct and additional calling. But Baptism makes him a Christian, not a minister. So also the Christian who is baptized and serves mankind as a butcher, baker, or candlestick maker has both a calling to faith and a calling to work. In fact, everyone has a multitude of callings (vocations) within the various spheres of home, work, government, and church. Within a home everyone is called to be either a father, mother, or child.³² In the workplace one is either a boss or a worker of various sorts. In the state one is either a public servant or a citizen.³³ In the church, one is either a pastor or a layperson. Thus, the pastor who holds authority over a parishioner in the church, may be under that parishioner's authority in the world if that person happens to be a police officer.

There are no distinct God-given vocations within the church except the divinely instituted office of the ministry and the calling to be a Christian. All Christians have a God-given obligation to respect, honour, and obey their pastors so long as their pastors act within the authority of their office. The letter to the Hebrews enjoins: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb. 13:17; cf. I Thess. 5:12-13). And St Paul admonishes those who would judge their pastor by his age, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12). Here we see the reciprocity of obligation, for the pastor's obligation towards his people (as sketched out above) must not be ignored. Christopher Wordsworth's ordination hymn paraphrases this balanced obligation marvellously:

Oh, may Thy pastors faithful be Not lab'ring for themselves, but Thee!
Give grace to feed with wholesome food The sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood,
To tend Thy flock, and thus to prove How dearly they the Shepherd love.

Oh, may Thy people faithful be And in Thy pastors honour Thee
And with them work and for them pray And gladly Thee in them obey,
Receive the prophet of the Lord And gain the prophet's own reward.

So may we when our work is done Together stand before Thy throne
And joyful hearts and voices raise In one united song of praise,
With all the bright celestial host, To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen (*TLH* 493)

Yet, though the pastoral office is unique in being a divinely-instituted vocation within the church, the church in her freedom certainly has the authority to create various other positions of service, which may be recognized as divine callings. There is, on the one hand, an undeniable similarity between these

³¹ "Apart from these Ten Commandments no deed, no conduct can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world" (LC I:311).

³² "he has given and entrusted children to us with the command that we train and govern them according to his will" (LC I:173).

³³ "God has delegated his authority of punishing evil-doers to civil magistrates in place of parents" (LC I:181).

churchly vocations and God-pleasing vocations in the world. Though the tasks and responsibilities may differ greatly, the fact remains that both churchly and worldly vocations operate under God's call. Both public school teachers and Lutheran school teachers serve God in their vocations, and so in this respect they are both "called" by God (one through the public authorities, the other through the church). This is not to demean church work, but rather to recognize the valuable, faithful service performed by Christians in the world. Thus, it might also be said that a secretary in a business has a calling which does not differ essentially from that of a church secretary, and so on. God is equally pleased by both, for it is not the work itself but the faith of the Christian that makes works pleasing to God.³⁴

On the other hand, as we may praise the pastoral office as the highest calling because it is instituted to give out the most valuable gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in Christ, so we may honour other church vocations for their distinctive service to God's Word. Lutheran school teachers, Directors of Parish Services, deaconesses, etc., as well as volunteer workers like elders, trustees, and Sunday School teachers, not only conduct a God-pleasing vocation, but have a greater opportunity to confess Christ and teach His Word than their secular counterparts. It is because of this opportunity that church workers sacrifice many of the benefits of secular work, and we ought to praise them for their service to God's kingdom. They labour much for little reward. The church recognizes the high dignity of these callings, furthermore, because they in some ways also assist the pastor to carry out his vocation. Thus, such callings can be seen as in service to the Gospel.

But in the context of this discussion of Christian vocation, it is inappropriate to praise church work more highly than any other godly calling in the world.³⁵ Often the church is guilty of suggesting that church workers serve God, while other Christians serve only themselves or their neighbour. Such a distinction is false and misleading. In fact, good works should always be directed towards the neighbour (not towards God, for only faith truly pleases Him). Luther writes:

[Paul] briefly summarizes what an entire Christian life should be, namely, faith and love: faith in God, which apprehends Christ and receives forgiveness of sins apart from all works, and after that love toward the neighbor, which as the fruit of faith proves that faith is true and not lazy or false, but active and living. ... St. Paul ascribes everything to faith which not only receives grace from God but also is active toward the neighbor and out of itself gives birth to and produces love or works.³⁶

The creation of other offices, vocations, and roles within the church, though they are not instituted by Christ, is certainly in accord with Paul's recognition of diverse gifts within the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-31; Rom. 12:3-8). By the most common reading of Acts 6:1-6, the church would also be following the model of the apostles themselves who appointed assistants (deacons?) so that they could devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.³⁷ Every individual has something to offer to the well-being, unity, harmony, and functioning of God's church. But it would be contrary to the very point of Paul's bodily illustration (I Cor. 12) to flatten these individual contributions so as to imply that they are all the same. The novel idea which appeared in the 1940s, that everyone is a minister, is a prime example of this confusion. Although it arose from anti-clerical principles, the result of this idea is the utmost clericalism, for it implies that one's service in the church can only be considered valuable if it is equivalent to what a pastor does. The pastoral office then becomes the measure of a good work (which is too grand an obligation for any pastor to fulfil). To play the organ is not the ministry, nor is it valuable because it is like the ministry; it is a gift and vocation that is unique and valuable to God and His church in

³⁴ "In the sight of God it is really faith that makes a person holy; faith alone serves him, while our works serve the people" (LC I:147).

³⁵ Luther condemns the monks of his day for exalting their divine work above ordinary labours: "Let us see, now, how our great saints can boast of their spiritual orders and the great, difficult works which they have fashioned while they neglect these commandments as if they were too insignificant or had been fulfilled long ago" (LC I:312). "Just think, is it not a devilish presumption on the part of those desperate saints to dare to find a higher and better way of life than the Ten Commandments teach?" (LC I:315).

³⁶ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:184.

³⁷ For an alternative interpretation of Acts 6, that the seven men appointed were ordained ministers, not deacons in the later sense, see Norman E. Nagel, "The Twelve and the Seven in Acts 6 and the Needy", *Concordia Journal* 31.2 (April 2005): 113-26; also Albert Collver, "Deacons: Office of Service or Office of the Word", *Logia* 16.2 (Eastertide 2007): 31-36.

its own right. So also Sunday School teaching, youth leadership, serving as an elder, or singing in the choir—these are the diverse gifts which together serve the neighbour and promote the proclamation of the Gospel. By such diverse gifts the church of God is built up (Eph. 4:15-16) in peace and mutual edification (Rom. 14:19), through which even the weakest of brothers is sustained (Rom. 15:1-2).

There is, however, one biblical description of the baptized children of God that bears further scrutiny: the “royal priesthood”, sometimes called the priesthood of all believers. The great controversy that this phrase has so often caused in the Lutheran church is partly due to a simple linguistic confusion: that in many Western languages (including German and English) the term “priest” has also been used as a title for the office of the ministry. This invites the confusion that all baptized Christians are, in fact, the same thing as ministers (i.e. priesthood of the baptized = ordained priesthood). Luther himself, the early champion of the priesthood of all the baptized, rejected this misinterpretation. He noted with some aggravation that the term “priest” (in the sense of one who offers sacrifices) should never have been applied to ministers in the first place.³⁸ For ministers are called not to offer sacrifices but to serve God’s people with His gifts on His behalf. Such is the definition given by Melancthon in the Apology:

But let us talk about the term “liturgy.” It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says (1 Cor. 4:1), “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 (Ap XXIV:79-80; Tappert translation)

That is to say, the office of the ministry is primarily “sacramental” in its orientation. It is all about giving gifts from God to men.

The “priesthood”, by contrast, is not really about deeds at all (as we noted above in the discussion of the Christian’s calling). When St Peter first uses the phrase “royal priesthood” it is in parallel to “a chosen race, ... a holy nation, a people for His special possession” (1 Pet. 2:9). A priesthood in the ancient world was a special group of people who dwelt with and belonged to the gods, just as the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament had no territory of their own to live in, but (in theory) dwelt in the Temple and belonged to God. So “royal priesthood” is really a metaphor for the Gospel.³⁹ It is a term of endearment by which all Christians (Jew and Gentile together) are declared to be God’s chosen people, His special possession. This is the simple language of holiness, which means the ability to live in God’s presence. The royal priesthood are sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 3:1), and have that access to God that is available through Christ alone (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 4:16; 7:19; 10:1, 22; 10:22).

But St Peter does go on to describe certain works that this priesthood does. Yet far from paralleling the “sacramental” tasks of the office of the ministry, the works of the royal priesthood are described in purely “sacrificial” terms—as the name “priest” suggests. In the Old Testament “priest” was a perfectly appropriate term to apply to the men who did the sacrificial work in God’s Temple. But in the New, because of the nature of the ministry, it is quite improper to refer to God’s ministers as priests. In the New Testament the term is reserved for all the baptized, and for their work it is a perfectly appropriate name. As long as the sacramental/sacrificial distinction is clear, there is no need for confusion between the two vocations. The distinction between pastor and baptized priest is not primarily the field of work (public

³⁸ See particularly his response to the Roman theologian who accused him of this, *Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser—Including Some Thoughts Regarding His Companion, the Fool Murner* (March 1521), AE 39:143-228. For example, “I did not say that all Christians are churchly priests” (153).

³⁹ See T. Winger, “‘We are all Priests’: a Contextual Study of the Priesthood in Luther”, *Lutheran Theological Review* 4.1 (Spring/Summer 1992): 129-56.

versus private), but the direction of the work.⁴⁰ Whereas the work of the pastoral office is primarily “sacramental” (from God to man), the vocation of the spiritual priesthood, the baptized people of God, is essentially “sacrificial”.⁴¹ This is, after all, what Peter first wrote:

⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (I Pet. 2:5, 9)

This proclamation of excellencies (so often misunderstood as preaching) is biblical language for praise, the proper work of the priesthood (cf. Heb. 13:15).

Thus Luther, connecting priesthood to Baptism, and appealing to Peter and Paul, describes the role of priests as sacrificial:

We have been born of this bridegroom and bride through holy baptism and thus have become true clerics in Christendom in a hereditary manner, sanctified by his blood and consecrated by his Holy Spirit, as St. Peter calls us in I Peter 2 [:9]: “But you are ... a royal priesthood” for offering spiritual sacrifices. St. Paul also extols us as priests in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter 12 [:1], for he calls upon us “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God....” Now to make sacrifices to God is solely the office of the priests, as the pope himself and all the world must admit.⁴²

The appeal to Romans 12 reminds us that the sacrifices of the spiritual priesthood are even broader than just praise. For St Paul speaks of sacrificing one’s very self (Rom. 12:1). The priesthood thus presents itself as the sacrifice.⁴³ What this self-sacrifice looks like is unfolded in the rest of the chapter. It involves discerning the will of God (listening to His Word), rather than following one’s own selfish desires (12:2), humility (12:3), love, honour, fervour, joy, prayer, generosity, hospitality, peacefulness (12:9-21), and the use and acknowledgement of the diverse gifts and roles which God has provided within His church, the Body of Christ (12:4ff.). This sacrifice of self is therefore not only towards God but towards brother and sister in the church and towards one’s neighbour in the world (Heb. 13:16). In fact, the world can be served no better than by praying for its conversion, which is a unique task of the whole Christian church (I Tim. 2:1-4).

Within each unique vocation, finally, it is even possible to speak of every Christian teaching the Word of God. For parents are admonished by Scripture to raise their children in the fear and love of the Lord (Deut. 4:10; 6:7; 11:19; Ps. 78:5; Eph. 6:4). And all Christians are to correct, encourage, and comfort one another (II Cor. 13:11) with the Gospel by which we have all been comforted (II Cor. 1:4). Martin Chemnitz draws together and highlights such Scriptural admonitions, while at the same time distinguishing this work from the pastoral ministry:

It is true that all Christians have a general call to proclaim the Gospel of God (Ro 10:9), to speak the Word of God among themselves (Eph 5:19); to admonish each other from the Word of God (Col 3:16); to reprove (Eph 5:11; Mt 19:15); and to comfort (1 Th 4:18). And family heads are enjoined to do this with the special command that they give their households the instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). But the public ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments in the church is not entrusted to all Christians in general, as we have already shown (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:12). For a special or particular call is required for this (Ro 10:15).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ “So, while pastors are responsible for the ‘sacramental’ aspects of the divine service, by which the Triune God comes to the faithful and graciously enacts the gospel for them, the priesthood is responsible for the ‘sacrificial’ aspects of the divine service. Sacrificially, pastors stand together with the congregation before God, even when they lead it in confession, prayer, praise, and offering. Sacramentally they offer and convey the gifts of God from God to the congregation. More correctly, God does this through them as his mouthpiece and his hands.” – Kleinig, p. 33.

⁴¹ “All Christians are priests—not that all should function without difference in the ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments, without a special call, but that they should offer spiritual sacrifices. Ro 12:1; Heb 13:15-16”, Chemnitz, *Enchiridion*, p. 29.

⁴² Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:187.

⁴³ In Rom. 15:16 Paul describes his ministry as offering up the Gentiles to God.

⁴⁴ Chemnitz, 29. In this quotation the punctuation and brackets have been slightly revised for clarity of reading.

Such teaching of the Word of God by all Christians is an extension of the sacrifice of self, by which they submit to the Word of God rather than promoting their own selfish thoughts and needs.

AN EXCURSUS ON THE KEYS AND THE CALL

The reader of the preceding discussion is now well-prepared to consider a topic of considerable controversy in the Lutheran Church: the office of the keys. Where and when the divide between church and ministry, people and pastor, has become hostile, the root of the problem often has lain in questions of authority. For Lutherans, the keys are its primary expression.

In the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Melanchthon appears to side with the church against the ministry in this opposition:

Therefore, he [Christ] bestows the keys especially and immediately on the church, and for the same reason the church especially possesses the right of vocation. (Tr 24)

The phrase “especially and immediately” seems to imply that someone else has the keys “indirectly”, and has led to the theory of *Übertragung* “transferral”. In this view, the pastors receive the keys from the church (the laity), as the primary and immediate possessor of all authority. However, a number of factors weigh against accepting this theory too quickly.

Firstly, one must examine the point at issue in the Treatise to determine whether the opposition “church versus ministry” is justified. The answer is found already in the title of the treatise. It is a question of the papacy’s authority, not that of the pastoral ministry. The controversy the Treatise addresses is not pastor versus church but pope versus church. This is established more clearly in Melanchthon’s opening words:

The Roman bishop arrogates to himself the claim that he is by divine right above all bishops and pastors. Then he adds that by divine right he possesses both swords, that is, the authority to bestow and transfer kingdoms. Finally, he declares that it is necessary for salvation to believe these things, and for such reasons the bishop of Rome calls himself the vicar of Christ on earth. (Tr 1-3)

The problem is that the pope has usurped the place of Christ by claiming that all authority in the church is his own. In the pope’s church, the pope retains the exclusive right to consecrate bishops, who then alone ordain pastors. By this hierarchy, so the theory goes, the pope lends his authority to the ministry of bishops and pastors. They exercise the keys, as it were, in his name. For the Lutherans this meant that separation from the Roman church and its hierarchy meant separation from the keys of the kingdom, for their authority could only be obtained from the pope.

It is against this background that Melanchthon’s words must be understood. It is, therefore, a fatal misstep to identify “church” with “laity” in his assertion. For his point is that the keys belong to the whole church on earth, not to the pope alone. Shortly before the above quotation, Melanchthon had written, “it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys do not belong to the person of one particular individual but to the whole church” (Tr 24). For, as he had written previously, “the church is more than the ministers” (Tr 11). With this in mind, Melanchthon’s apparently contradictory assertion falls neatly into place:

In all these passages Peter is representative of the entire company of apostles And what is here spoken in the singular number [Mt. 16:19] ... is elsewhere given in the plural [Mt. 18:18; Jn 20:23] These words show that the keys were given equally to all the apostles and that all the apostles were sent out as equals. (Tr 23)

How can the keys be given to the church and at the same time to the apostles?⁴⁵ The answer depends on one's definition of the church. If the church is defined as the laity alone, then clearly there is a conflict. If, however, as we have defined it above, the church is the people of God and His ministers together, there is no conflict. This is surely Melanchthon's definition. For him, the ministers are that portion of the church which exercises the keys that were given by Christ to the whole church everywhere.

In order to understand this apparent paradox, it is helpful to distinguish between the keys themselves and the office of the keys.⁴⁶ For "office" refers to a specific position or role by which an authority is exercised for the sake of a body of people. Though the keys are given in general to the whole church, the ministers are that portion of the church who hold the office of administering them. It is inherently contradictory to speak of the office of the keys belonging to the laity, or to speak of the laity as the "original possessors" of it. For this office is not received by way of delegation but conferral. The distinction is vital. For a "delegation" of the keys implies that Christ Himself is absent and needs someone else to carry on His work. But "conferral" merely recognizes that Christ works through the whole church as His instrument, His hands. As John Kleinig explains:

no matter how we regard the public ministry, we run into difficulty if we forget about the real presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the church. The keys to the Father's presence belong to Jesus and Jesus only. He has not handed them over to pope or pastors or the church to be used apart from him and to represent him in his absence. Rather he himself wields the keys publicly in the divine service through the ministers of word and sacrament, just as he works together with all the faithful in their priestly service of his heavenly Father.⁴⁷

Because the keys always remain Christ's,⁴⁸ because He has both given them to His Bride, the church, and also instituted an office within that church to wield them, there is no conflict between Melanchthon's statements in the Treatise and such statements about the office of the ministry that the same author makes in the Augsburg Confession. Here Melanchthon simply identifies the office of the keys with the office of bishop (pastor):

Now our [teachers] teach that the authority of the keys or of bishops is, according to the Gospel, an authority and mandate of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and to retain sin, and to dispense and administer the Sacraments. For Christ sent out the apostles with this mandate: "Just as My Father has sent Me, so I send you also. Receive the Holy Spirit; to whom you remit their sins, to the same they are remitted, and to whom you retain them, to them they are retained." (AC XXVIII:5-6)

Therefore a bishop has the power of the order, namely, the ministry of Word and sacraments. He also has the power of jurisdiction, namely, the authority to excommunicate those who are guilty of public offences or to absolve them if they are converted and ask for absolution. A bishop does not have the power of a tyrant to act without a definite law, nor that of a king to act above the law. (Ap XXVIII:13-14).

If, then, the ordinary way in which the keys are used in the church is by pastors exercising them within their office, what does Melanchthon mean by asserting that the keys are a gift to the whole church? Firstly, he means that the keys may not be used arbitrarily or selfishly by the pope and his henchmen (who were inclined to withhold absolution for political purposes). Secondly, as the quotation from Tractate 24 suggested (above), the primary means by which the laity within the church exercise the keys is through vocation, the calling of ministers. For this is to a great extent the practical result of Melanchthon's

⁴⁵ The apparently contradictory givings of the keys in the New Testament may not be played off against one another. "That the great freedom of the Reformation is truly the freedom of the Gospel is shown by the fact that the Office of the Keys is given three times in the New Testament: in Matthew 16 to Peter, in John 20 to all the apostles, in Matthew 18 to the whole church. These three bestowals of the office may not be separated. One may not be selected as the chief one, and then played off against the others" – Hermann Sasse, "Ministry and Congregation", in *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 78.

⁴⁶ "even though the keys are given corporately to the whole church and each congregation, Christ exercises the keys publicly through those who are ordained ministers of his word. Luther and the reformers therefore always distinguished the *office* of the keys from the keys themselves" - Kleinig, 32.

⁴⁷ Kleinig, 35.

⁴⁸ As Luther wrote, "the keys, or forgiveness and retention of sins do not belong to us but to Christ" (AE 38:200).

argument in the Treatise. He proves that the Lutheran church, as Christ's church, has all the divine authority necessary to call and ordain pastors without any need to appeal to the pope. For by calling and ordaining ministers, the church puts into practice the keys that were given by Christ. By doing so, they are instruments of Christ in ensuring that the church is served, fed, and perpetuated. Luther argues that the church cannot be church without calling ministers:

This is and must be our foundation and sure rock: Where the gospel is rightly and purely preached, there a holy, Christian church must be. ... But where there is a holy Christian church, there all the sacraments, Christ himself, and the Holy Spirit must be. Now if we are to be a holy Christian church and to possess the most important and necessary parts such as God's word, Christ, the Spirit, faith, prayer, baptism, the sacrament, the keys, the office of the ministry, etc., and should not also possess the humblest part, namely, the power and right to call some persons to the office of the ministry who administer to us the word, baptism, the sacrament, forgiveness, which in any case are available, and serve us through these, what kind of a church, I ask, would this be?⁴⁹

Once again, though, it is important not to isolate or divide pastor and people within the church. The right to call belongs (by divine institution) to the whole church, not just to the laity. In the only New Testament examples of calling apostles and ministers, the men who are already apostles and ministers play a leading role. Paul instructs Timothy and Titus to appoint pastors (I Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5). The prophets and teachers in Antioch called Paul and Barnabas to their mission (Acts 13:1-3). Paul and Barnabas appointed pastors in their new missions (Acts 14:23). The involvement of the laity in testifying to the competence of candidates for the ministry is implied by Paul's words to Timothy on the matter (I Tim. 3:2-7). The mechanism of these calls is neither described nor prescribed by the New Testament, and the Lutheran Church should resist the urge to institutionalize one particular method of doing it.⁵⁰ In the only detailed description of a call in the New Testament, the multitude of Christians nominate and testify to the candidates, while the apostles choose which man would become an apostle by casting lots (Acts 1:15-26). What more beautiful example could there be of pastors and people working together under God's direction to call someone into the ministry!

In bygone days the Lutheran church honoured more faithfully the spirit of co-operation between pastors and people in issuing such calls. Martin Chemnitz, who held the office of Superintendent in Braunschweig and wrote a handbook for the examination of pastors in his diocese, wrote:

It is clearly and surely evident from both the commands and the examples of Scripture, that when the ministry is to be entrusted to someone through a mediate call, those who are already in the ministry and profess sound doctrine are to be used. Tts 1:5; 1 Ti 4:14; 2 Ti 2:2; Acts 14:23. But since ministers are not the whole church, but only part of it (Eph 4:11-12), and they are not lords of the church, but ministers and overseers (2 Co 1:24; 4:5; Eze 33:7), therefore they neither can nor should seize to themselves alone the mediate call, with the other members of the church excluded; for not even the apostles did this, but drew the rest of the church in with themselves. Acts 1:15-16; 6:2-3; 14:23.⁵¹

Following in this theological tradition, C. F. W. Walther himself, the first president of the Missouri Synod, likewise argued that any call issued without the involvement of pastors was illegitimate:

If ministers who already administer the office belong to the calling congregation, they also of course belong to those calling; indeed, according to the office that they administer in the church, they above all [belong]. Hence, when their cooperation, which behooves them on account of their office, is denied, then there is no longer any call of the "multitude," for then the call is extended not by the [whole] congregation but by individuals in the congregation, which, when properly ordered, consists of both preachers and hearers.⁵²

⁴⁹ Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:211-12.

⁵⁰ "It is God who calls into His ministry, usually through men. The how is not the decisive thing." – Sasse, 81.

⁵¹ Chemnitz, 33.

⁵² Walther, C. F. W. *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), pp. 219-20. Where Mueller translated *gehörig geordnet* as "properly organized", we have corrected the translation. The point of the verb *ordnen* is not "organization" (by human right) but divine institution. Martin Chemnitz had written similarly, "*But do Anabaptists*

The English-speaking reader must be made aware that “congregation” is a misleading translation of Walther’s word *Gemeinde*. Referring to a larger collection of local congregations (*Ortsgemeinden*) under the supervision of a head pastor and a group of assistant pastors,⁵³ the word refers to something more akin to a “circuit” in our context. While the involvement of the District President or circuit counsellor is thus commended, Walther’s strong words suggest that Lutheran Church–Canada consider ways in which other pastors might be more involved in the call process. There would be great wisdom in inviting the pastors who already hold office in the circuit to advise and support a vacant congregation in calling, for no local congregation is truly independent of others in its fellowship.⁵⁴

While considering such questions about the practical application of our theology, we must not lose sight of the one whose call it ever remains. For ultimately the church does not call into her own ministry, nor do pastors or bishops call men into their own succession. For it is Christ’s ministry, and the right to call remains His alone:

Who, then, properly has the right or power to send and call ministers of the Word and of the Sacraments?

At all times there have been great, often also bloody, controversies regarding the right to call; but, speaking properly and on the basis of Scripture, the right to call and to send laborers into the harvest belongs to Him who is the Lord of the harvest, and it is good to note in Scripture that the right and administration of this call are ascribed expressly to the individual persons of the Trinity.⁵⁵

EXCURSUS ON INTRUSION

A pastor of one parish should not minister to the members of another parish without the consent and permission of the pastor concerned. Ministry by one pastor to the flock of another pastor against his will or without his consent constitutes intrusion. That means that a pastor should not undertake to carry out the official acts and duties which are the responsibility of the Office of the Ministry for members of a parish he has not been called to serve.

The Office of the Ministry is a divine institution established by our Lord Himself to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and teach His Word. Our Lutheran Confessions cite Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 10:16, and John 20:19-23 when referring to this fact.⁵⁶ Our Lord puts men into the office He has instituted and gives them to the church to act in His stead and by His command.⁵⁷ In the Letter to the Ephesians we are told that Christ has given pastors “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (4:13). When St. Paul addressed the Ephesian elders (pastors) in Acts 20:28 he said, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He obtained with His own blood”, thereby indicating that the Holy Spirit had placed the pastors in the flock over which He had given them oversight. God joins pastor and people in one flock or congregation, and what God joins together man may not put asunder.

do right, who entrust the whole right of calling to the common multitude (which they take the word ekklesia to mean), with the ministry and pious magistrate excluded? By no means. For the church in each place is called, and is, the whole body embracing under Christ, the Head, all members of that place. Eph 4:15-16; 1 Co 12:12-14, 27. Therefore as the call belongs not only to the ministry nor only to the magistrate, so also is it not to be made subject to the mere will [and] whim of the common multitude, for no part, with either one or both [of the others] excluded, is the church. But the call should be and remain in the power of the whole church, but with due order observed” (Enchiridion, p. 34).

⁵³ As Walther himself was head pastor of a *Gesamtgemeinde* in St. Louis that consisted of four *Ortsgemeinden*, each of which had another pastor under his supervision.

⁵⁴ The reader may imagine situations in which this practice would be open to abuse by pastors who wish to impose their own will on another congregation. But as “abuse does not negate the use”, the possible benefits must not be casually dismissed. Congregations frequently cry out for help in the call process from pastors, whom they view as having a particular expertise to offer.

⁵⁵ Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacrament: An Enchiridion*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), 30.

⁵⁶ Tr 31. Tappert 325.

⁵⁷ Ap VIII:28. Tappert, 173. Compare *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941), 16.

The church, as Chemnitz says, is composed of preachers and hearers, and where one is missing something is lacking. Thus, God commits a particular flock to a particular shepherd. In Titus 1:5 St Paul says to Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders [pastors] in every town as I directed you.” Each congregation has its pastor which God places in its midst. The fact that a pastor has been given oversight and jurisdiction over a particular congregation at a particular time and place has always been understood. Thus, one pastor should not intrude or interfere in the ministry of another pastor and attempt to carry out the official acts of a pastor for people who already have a regularly called minister.

The understanding that a particular pastor has been given oversight and jurisdiction over a particular congregation at a particular time and place is echoed in the writings of Martin Chemnitz, the second Martin in the Lutheran Church. He writes,

What we have said ... about the apostolic calling, that it should stretch into the whole world, we cannot say also now about those called mediately. For teachers, pastors, bishops, [and] presbyters are called to certain churches and do not have authority to teach everywhere or in all churches. Thus in Acts 14:23 elders are ordained for individual churches, and in Titus 1:5 Titus is left in Crete to establish churches in every city. And thus God, through a special call, ordinarily shows where he wants someone’s labor to be used. Therefore, by virtue of this call they do not have authority to teach in other churches to which they do not have a special call.⁵⁸

Luther himself said, “St. Paul would not tolerate the arrogance and wickedness of someone interfering with the office of another. Each one should pay attention to his own commission and call, allowing another to discharge his office unmolested and in peace.”⁵⁹ More recently this article of doctrine was expressed by Dr Norman Nagel of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. “A pastor may not intrude or suffer himself to be intruded into what is the responsibility committed to another pastor.”⁶⁰ Traditionally, our Lutheran theologians have also referred to I Peter 5:3 to indicate that each bishop or pastor has his definite church territory or parish, which St Peter calls his *kleros* in the aforementioned verse. The *kleros* is the part or portion that the Lord God has entrusted to that pastor.⁶¹ Luther also cited I Peter 4:15 in connection with the sin of intrusion arguing that one who lusts after the office of another, one who intrudes and interferes in the office of another, is to be considered no different than a thief or murderer. This is more readily apparent in the Greek or Luther’s German translation than in our modern English versions.

The NIV translates I Peter 4:15, “If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even a meddler.” The KJV is not as vague: “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.” The Greek word, which is rendered as “busybody in other men’s matters” is an *allotriepiskopos*, literally “a bishop over what belongs to another.” Luther rendered this “der in ein fremdes Amt greift”,⁶² and on the basis of this passage maintained that one who “reached into the office of another” was no different than a murderer or a thief. If one suffers for the name of Christ that is cause for rejoicing.⁶³ But if one suffers because one has intruded into another pastor’s office or parish one has committed a grievous sin. He has acted contrary to the will

⁵⁸ Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1989), 2:703.

⁵⁹ Martin Luther, *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers* (1532), AE 40:391.

⁶⁰ Norman Nagel, “Who Is To Baptize?”, *Concordia Journal* 15.3 (July 1989): 220.

⁶¹ “[In] 1 P[e]t[er] 5:3 the *kleroi* seem to denote the ‘flock’ as a whole, i.e., the various parts of the congregation which have been assigned as ‘portions’ to the individual presbyters or shepherds.” Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd ed. Wilbur Gingrich and Fredrick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 435, s.v. 2.

⁶² “One who reaches into the office of another.” After a lifetime of theological reflection, and more than two decades spent translating and revising his translations of the Bible, it is significant that Luther was not satisfied with the 1522 translation of this passage which read “frembds guttis suchtig”, “one who lusts after another’s treasures”. He changed the former to “der in ein fremdes Amt greift” in 1546, the year of his death.

⁶³ I Peter 4:13, 16.

and command of the Lord. St Peter included such interfering bishops in the same category as murderers and thieves. He considers it a sin which puts one outside the Church of Christ. This is a most serious matter since mortal sin cannot coexist with faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In his Exposition of Psalm 82 Luther said, “Those are thieves and murderers, of whom Christ says in John 10:8 that they fall into another’s parish and reach into another office, which is not commanded but rather forbidden them.”⁶⁴ If it is forbidden by God, then no good can come of it. Thus, Luther⁶⁵ and Chemnitz⁶⁶ agree that one cannot profitably receive the ministrations of one who intrudes, interferes, or meddles with those whom God has entrusted to another shepherd.

The pastor of a congregation has a call to minister to that congregation. That is certain. He need only check his call document if he is in doubt. God has put him there for that. God puts a particular man in a particular place to distribute the gifts, and faith rejoices to receive what God has given in the way He has given it.

Examples

Although it is impossible to list every example that might be raised, some examples might prove helpful to further one’s understanding of the issue of intrusion.

Any person, whether Christian or not, may visit a congregation to hear the Word of God preached. Thus, it is not intrusion when the pastor preaches in his own congregation in the presence of visitors from another parish. Nor is it intrusion when another pastor is invited by the called pastor to preach or conduct a service in the congregation served by the called pastor. Likewise, it is not intrusion if one pastor asks another to visit or commune a member who is hospitalized or shut in at some distance from his home church, or to call upon a member who has moved away from home.

The pastor of the parish should baptize the parishioners’ children, as well as unbaptized adults he has catechized. “The responsibility to baptize, and with that the responsibility to go on caring for the baptized, cannot be undertaken by a pastor who is here today and gone tomorrow.”⁶⁷

A Christian should seek out his own pastor for private confession and absolution, and other pastors should direct the Christian to his own pastor. Private confession and absolution will make up part of the ongoing pastoral care which is the responsibility of the pastor who has been called to serve a particular congregation.

In Lutheran Church–Canada pastors of one congregation ordinarily commune people who are members of another congregation of Lutheran Church–Canada, or who are members of a congregation which holds membership in a synod or church body with which Lutheran Church–Canada is in fellowship. Since the minister is responsible for the pastoral care of those who commune at the altar entrusted to him, he may feel free or may feel compelled to refuse to commune those who ask to be communed. He may not commune an individual when that individual’s pastor has asked him not to do so.

Weddings and funerals should be conducted by the pastor of the congregation in which the individuals hold membership. “A pastor may not intrude or suffer himself to be intruded into what is the responsibility

⁶⁴ “Das sind die Diebe und Moerder, davon Christus Joh. 10,8 sagt, die in fremde Kirchspiele fallen und in ein fremd Amt greifen, das ihnen nicht befohlen, sondern verboten ist.” Note the phrase “in ein fremd Amt greifen”, which is the expression used in Luther’s translation of I Peter 4:15. Quoted in C. F. W. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1906), 312. The English translation can be found in C. F. W. Walther, *Pastoral Theology* (New Haven: Lutheran News, 1995), 232. It should be noted that Grimm’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch* defines Kirchspiel as “Die Gesamtheit der Pfarrkinder” that is, the totality of the parish children. *Das Deutsche Wörterbuch* is available online at <http://germazope.uni-trier.de/Projects/DWB>.

⁶⁵ “In it no one else, no stranger, should undertake to instruct his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and permission. And, body and soul, no one should listen to him [the interloper] but rather report and inform his pastor.” Quoted in *Pastoral Theology*, 231.

⁶⁶ “The churches must not and cannot with profit hear those who do not have the testimonies of a lawful call.” *Loci Theologici*, 2:698. Compare this statement with the one referred to in note 58.

⁶⁷ Nagel, 221.

committed to another pastor (most particularly not a pastor who was formerly pastor at that place).”⁶⁸ The pastor whom the Lord has given to the congregation is responsible for those God has entrusted to his care. Another pastor may not usurp that responsibility nor should he allow the pastor of a given congregation to be put in a position where he feels pressured to allow himself to be intruded upon. Obviously, when the bride is a member of one congregation and the groom a member of another, some choice will have to be made.

⁶⁸ Nagel, 220-21.

STUDY GUIDE

I. The Ministry and the Church are God's

- (a) Read Ezekiel 34:1-10. Who are the shepherds of Israel that God condemns? Why?
- 1.
- (b) Read Ezekiel 34:11-16, 22-24. How will God provide for His people Israel?
- (c) How are these prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament? See John 10:11; Matt. 9:6; Matt. 25:32-34.
- (a) Note that the word "pastor" comes from the word "shepherd". How is it helpful to remember that
2. God is the first "pastor" or "Good Shepherd"?
- (b) What is Jesus' office and ongoing service to His church? See Mark 1:38; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27; I Pet. 2:25. Is the Lord's Supper the only place where Christ is really present?
- How does each of the following passages describe the church's intimate and ongoing relationship with
3. Christ? Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 5:23-31; I Pet. 2:4-5. Can the body live without its Head?
- In what way does the apostolic and pastoral ministry carry out the work of Christ for His Body, the
4. Church? See Luke 10:16; Matt. 16:16-18; I Cor. 3:10-11.
- "The church is more than the ministers", writes Melancthon in the Treatise on the Power and
5. Primacy of the Pope (par. 11). In what way might pastors act as if they are the whole church by themselves? In what way might the laity do the same?

II. The Office of Pastor

- What responsibilities are given to pastors by Christ in the following passages? Matt. 28:18-20; Luke
6. 24:46-48; John 20:21-23.
- Who is it that makes men pastors over their flock? See Acts 20:28; II Cor. 5:18; Col. 4:17.
- 7.
- Whom does the pastor represent? See Luke 10:16; Matt. 28:20; II Cor. 5:20.
- 8.
- The word "office" is used to emphasize that the pastor has a position of authority given to him by
9. God. How is he to exercise this office? See Matt. 21: 25-28; II Cor. 4:5; II Tim. 2:24-25; I Pet. 5:1-4.
- What do Christians owe to their pastor? See I Cor. 9:13-14; I Tim. 5:17; I Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7,
10. 17.
- Why do you think it is important that the distinctive duties of the pastoral ministry are carried out only
11. by men who are properly taught, examined, called, and ordained into that office?

III. The Calling of Christ's People

- To what has God called all Christians? See Rom. 8:30; I Thess. 2:11-12; I John 3:1; I Pet. 2:9; I Tim.
12. 6:12. What do all these passages have in common?

- (a) Does the call to faith require Christians to abandon their worldly life? See I Cor. 7:17-24.
- 13.
- (b) When might it be necessary to do so? See I Pet. 1:14-16; Eph. 2:1-3.
What makes our ordinary life and work pleasing to God? See Heb. 11:6.
- 14.
- Consider the mutual responsibilities expressed in this classic hymn. How does Christopher
- 15.
- Wordsworth express the harmony that can exist between pastor and people?
- Oh, may Thy pastors faithful be Not lab'ring for themselves, but Thee!
Give grace to feed with wholesome food The sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood,
To tend Thy flock, and thus to prove How dearly they the Shepherd love.
- Oh, may Thy people faithful be And in Thy pastors honour Thee
And with them work and for them pray And gladly Thee in them obey,
Receive the prophet of the Lord And gain the prophet's own reward.
- So may we when our work is done Together stand before Thy throne
And joyful hearts and voices raise In one united song of praise,
With all the bright celestial host, To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen (*TLH* 493)
- How might it be both God-pleasing and useful for the church to create other roles like teachers,
- 16.
- Directors of Parish Services, elders, and Sunday School teachers in our congregations? See I Cor. 12:12-31.
- Israel was God's "kingdom of priests" and "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). St Peter in I Pet. 2:9-10 applies
- 17.
- this rich blessing to all Christians from all nations.
- (a) What else does he call this "royal priesthood" in these verses?
- (b) What does it mean to be "holy"? See I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:25-26 (note that "sanctify" means "make holy"). How does this happen?
- (c) As priests were the only people allowed to enter the most holy part of the Temple, what does it mean that all are Christians priests? See Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18-19; Heb. 4:16.
- (d) What does the royal priesthood do? (Hint: priests offer sacrifices.) See I Pet. 2:5, 9b; Rom. 12:1-2; Heb. 13:15-16.
- How and by whom are pastors called in the New Testament? See Acts 1:15-26; Acts 13:1-3; Acts
- 18.
- 14:23; Tit. 1:5. Don't forget what Paul says in Eph. 4:8, 11.
- How might a sinful "lust for power" lie behind instances of strife in our congregations? Consider the
- 19.
- wise words of Hermann Sasse:
- This faith in what God is doing does not exclude our responsibility, but rather includes it. This means renouncing everything that is destructive of the genuine holy ministry instituted by Christ and the genuine congregation instituted by Him, everything that makes of what Christ has instituted a place for exercising our lust for power, whether clerical or congregational. The office of the holy ministry is not lord over the congregation (2 Cor. 1:24); the congregation is not lord over the office of the holy ministry (Gal. 1). Both are under Him who alone is Lord; in Him they are one.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Hermann Sasse, "Ministry and Congregation", in *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia, 1986), 83.

RESOURCES

The chief confessional texts relating to the Office of the Ministry and the vocation of Christians should be read in conjunction with this study:

- Augsburg Confession, articles V “The Office of the Ministry”, XIV “Ecclesiastical Order”, and XXVIII “The Authority of Bishops”
- Apology to the Augsburg Confession, articles XIV “Ecclesiastical Order”, XXVII “Monastic Vows”, and XXVIII “Ecclesiastical Power”.
- The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.
- The Large Catechism, section I “The Ten Commandments”.

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