Church and Ministry

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

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Cover painting:
Jesus Washing Peter's Feet by Ford Maddox Brown.
Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY.

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St. Louis, Missouri 63122

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

Table of Contents

Foreword

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

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

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

— Dr. A.L. Barry

Keynote Address

Challenges in Church and Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Dr. A.L. Barry, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to each of you from Him who is, who was, and who is to come, even Jesus Christ our Righteousness.

This convocation is a key part of the 150th anniversary celebration of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod The members of our Commission on Theology and Church Relations, as well as our seminary faculties and district presidents, are here for theological thought and conversation. What a fitting thing for Lutheran churchmen to do—celebrate by talking theology! We are also most pleased that representatives from member bodies of the International Lutheran Council, our partner churches and guests, can join us for this event. We come together in the hope and prayer that God would richly bless these days, to the benefit of all the church bodies involved in this convocation.

Introduction

Recently, we in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have become more and more aware of tensions among some of our pastors and congregations concerning Church and Ministry, especially

when it comes to the relationship between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public, Pastoral Ministry. I have a suspicion that, to some degree, these tensions have been around for a long time. Yet, for whatever reason, they have come to the forefront more pointedly of late.

We find an ever-increasing number of conflict situations our district presidents are called upon to address. Every one of these, and probably more besides, makes for very difficult days in the lives of pastors and other professional church workers, as well as congregations and their members. These conflicts often leave lasting scars on God's people. Fallout from them can easily turn into an unhealthy disruption in Gospel proclamation. It can even raise questions in the minds of people concerning their basic understanding of the Gospel. When these things happen, our theologians become understandably concerned, as the whole Synod should be. There is no doubt in my mind that our convocation is devoted to a timely and important topic.

The Missouri Synod in Days Past

This is by no means the first time in its history that the Missouri Synod has had occasion to ponder the doctrines of Church and Ministry. You might recall the extreme, almost crippling, difficulties our forefathers experienced in this connection even before our church body began and also in its early years of existence. By way of the theological leadership of Dr. C.F.W. Walther, the Lord brought us through those times of crisis.

Already at its 1851 convention, our Synod approved a set of theses on Church and Ministry prepared by Walther, together with his elaboration of them, and it instructed that his presentation be published as the Synod's statement and unanimous confession. The theses say that Christ gave the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the church.[1] They also state that the Pastoral Office is distinct from

the Priesthood of all Believers and that it is an Office established by God Himself.[2] Church and Ministry are related to one another in these various theses as follows: "The Holy Ministry is the power, conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood and all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of those who possess them together [*vom Gemeinschaftswegen*]."[3]

Walther and the Missouri Synod said that the Office of the Ministry has its origin in its divine institution by Jesus Christ with the call of the apostles. The keys that pastors administer as bearers of the Office are the same keys Christ first gave to His church, and to all members of the church. Pastors employ these keys, by God's command, as a matter of public responsibility.[4] This remains the position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and I submit that all of us within our Synod would do well to take this position to heart even after almost 150 years of history.

Today's challenges in Church and Ministry are certainly not limited to any one synod. In visiting with several of our partner church and ILC presidents, I am told that similar tensions exist in their church bodies. The precise nature of the challenges may vary, but on the whole, these leaders tell me, tensions over Church and Ministry are as real elsewhere as they are in our Missouri Synod.

It is for this reason also that we look forward to the opportunity that this theological convocation presents. Let me say especially to our guests from other church bodies: we eagerly anticipate your involvement here, for I genuinely believe we can help each other.

Cultural Context

I would like to comment briefly on two basic trends that impact Church and Ministry, especially in the United States. These trends have helped shape the challenges presently faced by the Missouri Synod, and perhaps other church bodies too. The two trends

are radical equality—the desire to put everyone on the same level—and individualism.

After I had initially resolved to say a word to you about radical equality and individualism, someone advised me to pick up Robert Bork's book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*.[5] This whole volume is about these two forces. Bork calls them "the defining characteristics of modern liberalism."[6] They are very important when it comes to a consideration of the challenges that presently confront us in Church and Ministry.

Radical Equality

For our purposes, perhaps it would be best to characterize radical equality as a movement to eliminate all distinctions between people, even between ideas and teachings.[7]

Here are some examples of radical equality afoot in our U. S. society:

• a major chemical company goes out of its way to portray its scientists to the public as "a bunch of average Americans";[8]

• college students arrive at the university convinced that any claim to absolute truth threatens openness and equality;[9]

• commentators observe, with good reason, that about the only thing people will not tolerate is intolerance; and

• radical equality has made a deep impression on the United States; as Bork says in his book, "The idea that democracy and equality are not suited to the virtues of all institutions is a hard sell today."[10]

Yet, a passionate drive for a levelling kind of equality is not new in this country. Already in the generation or so after the Revolutionary War, many voices were crying for equality in terms every bit as radical as today's.[11] Among church bodies, the theology of the Baptists and Methodists positioned them to make great membership gains in a situation where "ordinary, often untrained peo-

ple found the freedom to act on their own impulses, unhampered by the doctrines of the past. . . ."[12] Consequently, the very idea of a well-educated and formally-called ministerium sworn to uphold established doctrinal norms came under attack in the United States already in the early 1800s. This trend has not decreased in intensity in our present day and age. If anything, it has only increased.

Individualism

We should also say just a few words here about the second trend, individualism. In some ways, individualism goes hand-in-hand with the idea of equality. By individualism, we mean the promotion of an individual to the point where a person becomes totally absorbed with his own thoughts, ideas, and wisdom.

Individualism, too, can boast of a lengthy pedigree in the United States. More than 150 years ago, a distinguished European visitor to this country made this observation: If all are on an equal footing, not only is "confidence in this or that man . . . destroyed, but [also] the disposition to trust the authority of any man whatsoever," that is, anyone outside oneself. Therefore, "every one shuts himself up tightly within himself and insists upon judging the world from there."[13] The visitor added that "in democratic societies, each citizen is habitually busy with the contemplation of a very petty object, which is himself."[14]

This mind-set has resulted in a kind of horrible fruition recently. Reflecting on the last 30 years, William Bennett says that our society places less value on sacrifice, restraint, or moral obligation, "and correlatively greater value on things like self-expression, individualism, self-realization, and personal choice."[15]

Under these circumstances, no doubt many church-going Americans regard their own local church to be only a free association of individuals who delight in the joy of belonging. But again, this is not particularly new. An 1844 book identified voluntarism—

that is, individuals freely choosing to do things—as the "central motif marking religion in America."[16] Whenever church life is seen largely to consist of persuading loosely-associated individuals to pull together in the same direction, the Office of the Ministry cannot help but be affected. As one writer put it already in 1850, "The minister is often expected to be, for the most part, a manager of social utilities, a wire-puller of beneficent agencies."[17]

The Continuing Challenges

In various combinations, these two trends of radical equality and individualism continue to present great challenges for us today when it comes to Church and Ministry. For instance, Christians who are unprepared, uncertified, and uncalled can all too easily begin to assume the public role and responsibilities of the pastor. If they are not satisfied with his "performance," or if he has frustrated them by telling them something they do not wish to hear, they may start thinking about "firing" him and "hiring" another. Or, interestingly, they may begin to conceive of the church according to the model of a business in which they own stock but in which they have little or no active involvement unless they want to.

If there is any consolation for us in all this, it is that none of the elements of the radical equality and individualism confronting us today are new. We have seen it all before. For that reason, we can appreciate all the more the efforts of our forefathers to assert their biblical and Lutheran theology of Church and Ministry even amidst, and in spite of, these forces.[18]

But there is bad news. The fight with these two cultural trends, grows more fierce as time passes. We should keep this in mind as we hear from our presenters the biblical and confessional teaching on Church and Ministry, and strive to apply it today.

Engaging the Challenges at this Convocation

Much of our planning for this convocation was guided by two overarching concerns. We asked, first, how can we best address the topic of Church and Ministry in a constructive manner that will be a blessing for all of our church bodies and a relationship-builder between our pastors and people at the congregational level? And, equally important, how can we carry what we have done here back to the pastors and people of our Synod?

At this convocation, we do not merely want to recall how this topic was treated in any one church body's past. Although none of us can divorce himself from what we have learned in days gone by, we need once again to ask the hallmark question that has made Lutheranism a light shining brightly down through the years: What do the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions have to say? There is no question more important than this. I am certain that this is the same basic question our partner church representatives and guests will find themselves pondering. Then, how can we, in our respective church bodies, best apply these truths in a meaningful and God-pleasing manner to the present day?

At this convocation there will be four major presentations. The first two presentations will focus on Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The other two presentations will be devoted to the subject of the Pastoral Office and the Royal Priesthood. Following each major presentation, we will hear responses by two or three reactors. We will have the opportunity to discuss these presentations as we break into discussion groups and then reconvene for two panel discussions. Finally, we have asked four individuals to offer comments at the end of the entire convocation by way of general summary and reaction.They will tell us what they heard, and give us their assessment of what they heard. Here I would like simply to offer a few thoughts by way of introduction to our major presentations.

Major Presentations I and II

First, and of primary importance, we need to go back and once again ask what the Scriptures say about the royal Priesthood of Believers and the Office of the Public, Pastoral Ministry. In taking us into the Scriptures, our first two main speakers will have the opportunity to underscore the Gospel blessings that our Lord has given us in the Priesthood of All Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry. For, both Priesthood and Ministry emerge from the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are both His gifts to His church.

Christ Himself created the Priesthood of all Believers. We see this truth taught in passages that use the language of priesthood. The Bible says that Christ has made His people priests (Rev. 1:6; 5:10). He, of course, was the Victim and the High Priest in the sacrifice that paid for the sins of the world. The activities of priests boil down to these three: offering sacrifices to the Lord, praying to Him, and proclaiming His message.[19] On account of Christ, we Christians offer our bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1–2). We pray for ourselves and our neighbors. And we declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

But truths about the Priesthood of All Believers are expressed also in biblical texts where the language of priesthood is not used. Christ gives the Keys to the church, that is, to those who believe in Him and confess Him, who are gathered together around His Word, who have the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:17–19; 18:18–20; John 20:19–23). Christ bought and paid for His bride, the church, with His own blood, and He Himself has placed the Keys into her hands at this staggering cost. What a privilege it is for Christians to be able to speak the Word of God, with all of its saving power (Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:12–17). As we do, the Master is with us until the end of the age (Matt. 28:18–20).

In addition to the Priesthood of all Believers, we are told that the Office of the Public, Pastoral Ministry is also God's gift. That is what Scripture calls it. The ascended Lord "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

In a number of ways, Scripture attests that God Himself instituted this office. For instance, we note this fact already in Old Testament prophecies such as, "I will give you shepherds" (Jer. 3:15). Or we think of how the New Testament narrates the call of the apostles (Matthew 10; 28:18–20; Luke 9:1–10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21–23; 21:15–17). It says that pastors of the New Testament era subsequent to the apostles were called by God Himself: "Watch out for yourselves and the whole flock among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He acquired through His own blood" (Acts 20:28; translation mine). And it shows that the apostles also recognized these "next generation" pastors as their co-workers and fellow ministers (1 Pet. 5:1; Phil. 2:25; Col. 4:7; 1 Cor. 1:1; 4:1). Thus, the Pastoral Office is not simply a pragmatic human response to a need for leadership on the part of a group of Christians who gather themselves together and then, merely for the sake of good order, appoint one from among them to "do the Ministry." While it is true that the Office of the Ministry is necessary for practical reasons, it is also true that the Office has its origin not in the will of men, but in God's will for His church. It is His gift.

But let me go even one step further. I believe we can enhance our appreciation of these gifts—namely, the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Office—even more by asking: Are there other portions of Scripture that can be added appropriately to the basic groups of passages to which we have commonly referred ?

Permit me to illustrate. As I examine the book of Acts, I cannot help but think about certain incidents that further enhance

my understanding of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Ministry. For example, with regard to the Priesthood of all Believers: in the days and weeks immediately following Pentecost, Christians constituted a minority in Jerusalem. They were surrounded by many people who did not believe in Jesus as Savior. They would have had many opportunities to speak of their faith with unbelievers, one-on-one or even in groups. So it was with Stephen and Philip, who were among the seven deacons appointed to serve tables. But Acts says that Stephen did more than take care of food distribution. He also "wrought signs and wonders among the people, disputed with members of the synagogue and refuted the council of the Jews with the Word of the Spirit." By what right and authority did Stephen do such things? In his case and also Philip's, as members of the Priesthood of all Believers, "they did it on their own initiative . . . since the door was open to them, and they saw the need of a people who were ignorant and deprived of the Word." This is the conclusion Luther drew about the history of Stephen; but of much greater importance, it is a conclusion rooted in God's Word. By the way, Luther continued: "In the same way any Christian should feel obligated to act."[20]

But there is still another point that can be made from the early chapters of Acts, this one about the Office of the Ministry. While some think the church in its earliest days did not have a distinct Office of the Ministry, Scripture tells us otherwise. Even those taught by Jesus before and after the Resurrection did not attempt to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth until they received His authorization (Acts 1:8). When an apostle was needed to replace Judas, the pool of candidates for this position consisted only of males (Acts 1:20–22). The seven deacons were appointed because it was not right that the apostles neglect preaching and teaching. In all this we get glimpses of an Office of the Ministry that dated back to the earliest days of the church. It was originally exercised by the

apostles. This office had its own authorization and qualifications. It was limited as to who could and could not serve in it, and it had an overarching responsibility that shaped the day-to-day decisions of those who held it. Of course, there are no apostles, as such, today. Yet the same commission the apostles had received—to preach the Gospel and forgive sins—continues to this day. It is the commission to shepherd the sheep, if you will, and now it is carried out by pastors. The German translation of the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope correctly notes that the Office of the Ministry "proceeds from the common call of the apostles" (Treatise, 10).

Especially in contemplating our first two major presentations: What other applicable Scripture passages or themes might also help us in setting forth the biblical teaching about Church and Ministry? I see the possibility of doing this as both needed and challenging.

By being in the Word, and only by being in the Word, will we properly address the concerns that bring us here. Over the years, in working with pastors and people alike, I have found that if you want to change a situation that exists or if you want to address a need in the church, the best way of doing it is through the Word. That is why I have continued to say to our Missouri Synod, both to pastors and to laypeople alike: Be in the Word, in the Word, in the Word.

So we pray, "Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word." That is a most fitting prayer for each of us as we begin this theological convocation.

However, when I emphasize being in the Word, I am not suggesting that we ignore our Lutheran Confessions. Unfortunately, we live in a day and age where certain Lutheran entities no longer treat the Confessions as a clear and accurate exposition of Scripture, as writings suitable to serve as standards for proclamation in

the church of all times and ages including our own. Rather, they relegate the Symbols to the position of summarizing what the church believed to be true at some point in history. To me, this is no longer a *quia* subscription to the Confessions. Even as all of our speakers look to Scripture for what God Himself says, I am also certain that they will clearly direct our attention to the Confessions as *norma normata*.[21]

Major Presentations III and IV

But now let us turn to major presentations three and four, both of which are scheduled for tomorrow. In tomorrow's phase of our program, we will emphasize taking biblical truths from the first two presentations and putting them to use in the present.

The third major presentation will begin where the second presentation ends: with the Pastoral Office. It will direct our attention to an application of biblical and confessional teaching about the calling and office of a pastor to our present day and age.

We should all recognize the tremendous urgency of giving encouragement to the many, often unsung, parish pastors who serve our congregations. We really need to uphold and strengthen them through the Word. I suppose I do not have to tell you that we have a bundle of disheartened, downtrodden pastors out there who genuinely desire and need this type of encouragement. I hope and pray that they are able to sense in us as churchmen a genuine sensitivity to them and their challenges and problems. They should see us as more than church administrators, professors, or members of a commission, but rather as co-workers in Christ committed to holding up the prophets' hands.

Of equal importance, this same kind of "shot in the arm" will be just as meaningful to these pastors when it likewise comes from the members of the congregations they serve. As noted earlier, radical equality and individualism tend to produce a kind of levelling

mentality in which everyone thinks he knows better than the pastor, or even that he could do a better job than the pastor—and that perhaps he should. Yet a pastor can rejoice in his own personal salvation in Christ and in the call the Lord has given him to serve in a particular place among a particular group of people. His is, indeed, a noble task. It is a marvelous thing when both pastor and congregation come to appreciate this.

Of course, a congregation or a church body at large will not necessarily say "yes" to everything pastors might propose or every idea they might have. Lately in the Missouri Synod, we have heard certain expressions that do not harmonize with the Word when it comes to the Office of the Public Pastoral Ministry. For example, we hear rumors of pastors who say that if a lay Christian should for some reason administer a Sacrament, it would not truly be a Sacrament, nor would it be a Means of Grace. Another assertion is that when Christian parents or Lutheran school teachers teach God's Word to children, they simply convey information, but not forgiveness and life, which can only come through the ministrations of a pastor. Or there is the idea that a pastor does not represent Christ to the congregation like an ambassador—that is, by proclaiming the Word of the One who sent him—but rather that the pastor is Christ to His people. One can massage what a brother pastor says in these and similar cases to make it sound somewhat palatable, but often the application of such erroneous statements to the congregation exceeds those directives and responsibilities given to a parish pastor by God's Word. Such application also creates great and understandable consternation within the church. We should speak to these brethren and to the congregations they serve, and do so fraternally and with absolute clarity.

But moving on, as we reflect on our last major presentation, we might try an exercise. Although most of us here are not laypeople, let us for a moment stand in laymen's shoes and consider the

very practical relationship between congregations and pastors. We might ask: What is God's will for these churches and their members? How should members of congregations think about themselves and their responsibilities in the Priesthood of All Believers? How should they view their called pastors?

I have sometimes heard Missouri Synod laypeople say, "I'm just a layman." What an opportunity we have to set forth the great role that God has given to the laity! We need to encourage these people to recognize their high and holy calling as priests of God, and to reflect this great truth in their daily lives and as congregational members. For example, Luther's Large Catechism speaks of "the secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother . . . [that] we may at any time and as often as we wish lay our complaint before a brother, seeking his advice, comfort, and strength." It continues, "Thus by divine ordinance Christ Himself has entrusted Absolution to His church and has commanded us to absolve one another from sins" (LC V, 13–14).

Another high privilege and responsibility of laypeople is to judge the doctrine taught in their churches, taught by their pastors. The Lord urges Christians to beware of the false prophets who come in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15ff.). Scripture says, "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1; see 2 John 10–11). This calls for both humble dedication and high biblical literacy on the part of our laypeople. It makes our pastors' teaching task still more urgent.

When we are thinking of the privileges and responsibilities of the Priesthood of all Believers, we also should not omit that laypeople both can and should speak about Jesus Christ with their families, friends, and neighbors. The open doors they have for doing so in their daily lives are countless, and we should lose no opportunity to hold this privilege high before the eyes of God's people, His Royal Priesthood. Indeed, theirs is a high calling from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has called them into His Kingdom.

Admittedly, congregations and individual laypeople sometimes abuse their roles. This we also need to identify as contrary to God's Word and harmful to His church. Earlier, I alluded to the "hire and fire" mind-set, which in our culture is fueled by radical equality and individualism. I am genuinely troubled by this growing attitude that I find among many congregations. Often this surfaces in connection with a pastor's desire to remain faithful to the Word. When these traits come to the fore, we, as called or elected leaders of our church bodies, have the responsibility to uphold and defend these brethren, and not just let them hang out there and get massacred.

While laypeople most certainly do judge doctrine, their pastors are called publicly to reject any doctrine or practice that runs contrary to the Gospel (See AC XXVIII, 21). So long as a pastor does this in accord with Scripture and the Confessions, members of the congregation he serves should support him and not try to pull the rug out from under him. When a pastor faithfully preaches and teaches God's Word to instruct and comfort as well as to warn and condemn, there should not only be respect in the congregation for him but also faithful reception of and obedience to what he says, not because he is saying it, but because the Lord said it. Christ is the supreme authority in the church. He redeemed her to be His own.

It would seem to me that the time has come when we as church leaders need to say these and similar kinds of things within our various church bodies, and that again with absolute clarity. We need to say to our pastors: this is good, right and proper when it comes to dealing with the people of God—and that is not. So also we need to say to congregations when it comes to dealing with their pastors: this is good, right, and proper—and that is not. In both cases, speaking from the Word will be a must. And speaking with absolute clarity will also be a must. For not to do so will only

tend to bring increased tensions, undesirable trends, as well as new demands on those church leaders who have been called upon to address these situations.

The Significance of Our Convocation Topic

Our goal here is much more lofty than helping each other, or the pastors and laypeople of our churches, to get better scores if someone were to give them a "true or false" test on Church and Ministry.

Instead, I submit that we are here for the sake of the Gospel. I am going to repeat that—yes, for the sake of the Gospel! Sound biblical and Lutheran teaching on Church and Ministry always strikes an evangelical note, for our doctrine of Church and Ministry is and must ever be very much Gospel-centered. This is a very important fact that I want to underscore in a variety of ways as our convocation opens.[22]

I might mention first—for it is of considerable importance as we are confronted by radical equality and individualism—that our teaching on Church and Ministry assures us that the Office of the Ministry was instituted by Christ Himself. He established this Office and mandated those who hold it to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. He gives them a particular responsibility to hold firm to the biblical Gospel and to hold it high before the eyes and ears of all. Even if everyone else in the church forgets, ignores, or resists what the Lord has said, the pastor is to keep on proclaiming. He is to give people what they need even if they may not want it right at that time. It is a powerfully steadying influence on any pastor to be reminded that his gift and task is to serve as an undershepherd of the Good Shepherd. It is a marvelously evangelical thing for laypeople to ponder that Christ has not only given His church salvation and the Gospel message, but also has called proclaimers to bring it to people.

Second, our teaching on Church and Ministry likewise gives clear encouragement to Christians who find themselves being called upon to administer the Means of Grace in emergencies, like emergency Baptisms. They can act, confident that it is not a mere turn of events in this world that enables them to do this, but the authorization of the Lord Himself. A similar thing might be said, moreover, about lay Christians who speak the Gospel with family or friends. The Lord has given them the privilege and responsibility to do so. They are in no way poaching on some personal preserve of their pastors when they speak to others of the Savior.

Third, this teaching also enables Christians to appreciate better the relationship between their own status as royal priests of God and their pastors' day-to-day activity. For instance, laypeople need not perform official church acts in order to become "involved," so to say. Luther wrote of how in the evangelical celebration of the mass, "We let our pastor say what Christ has ordained, not for himself as though it were for his person, but he is the mouth for all of us and we all speak the words with him from the heart and in faith."[23] Laypeople do not have to baptize, preach, or administer the Lord's Supper to develop an appropriate sense of participation in these public acts. For the pastor represents the congregation as well as Christ. What the pastor "does in the stead of the congregation, so does the church. What the church does, God does."[24]

Further, our teaching on Church and Ministry should increase regard both for the Priesthood of all Believers and for the Office of the Ministry. Time and again, Luther told Christians that for the public administration of the Means of Grace, they should look to their pastors. He did not argue against the fact that the Keys had been given to the church or against the priestly status of the Christian. On the contrary, he took Christ's gift of the Keys to the church very seriously.[25] In fact, "because they pertain to all Christians equally . . . those functions may be exercised in public worship

only by those who are called to the special office."[26] Consequently, our teaching on Church and Ministry proves to be very evangelical, in the fourth place, as it calls upon us to receive God's gifts as He gives them: both His gift of the Keys to the church and His gift of the pastors who administer the Keys in and for the church.

This might be a good place to mention a misunderstanding of the relationship between Church and Ministry. It comes into view when people characterize our doctrine as teaching that a pastor's execution of his office amounts merely to bringing order to a congregation. For in him the congregation has someone to preach and administer the Sacraments, so no contention need arise among the members concerning who will do these things. Order is established. But this is not the end of the story.

In the rest of the story, we have yet a fifth clue to the truly Gospel-centered nature of our teaching on Church and Ministry. Walther acknowledged the need for order, but he placed his emphasis on comfort for the poor sinner who needs the assurance of the Gospel. For if the Keys had been given first, not to the church but rather to the clergy or to the apostles as apostles, then every Christian faces a dilemma. One could only be sure he had been properly baptized, for example, by tracing the ministry of the pastor who baptized him back through a series of predecessors to the original apostles. Of course, this would be an impossible task. But the Keys were actually given first to the church, and so Christians do not have such a problem! Walther wanted people to know that the church has the authority to administer the Keys, and that it "cannot be lost by the church even if pastors apostatize or become tyrannical or die."[27] So, our teaching on Church and Ministry proves to be eminently evangelical as it maintains "that the power and validity of the divine Means of Grace may not be made uncertain and shaky for Christians.[28] Our Lord blesses with the sure and certain promises of His Holy Word.

Vitality of the Relationship Between Pastor and People

When I was yet a parish pastor, I often used the following illustration to explain to my catechism students the relationship that exists between the calling congregation and the Office of the Public Pastoral Ministry. It would go something like this. God has given to the congregation as a gift the Office of the Keys. This would be as if He had given a new car to the congregation as a gift. But God also has instructed the congregation to call or select a man who is capable of serving the congregation on their behalf as their called pastor or spiritual leader. In so doing, the congregation hands to the pastor it selects the responsibility of publicly operating the car.

Now, in this entire process, the ownership of the Office of the Keys ("the car") remains with the congregation. But the exercising of the Keys in a public capacity, the operating of the car, if you will, has now been entrusted by the congregation to the pastor they have called. In so doing, he must operate the car in a genuinely responsible manner. This is a must. But the congregation also must not go grabbing the steering wheel while he serves in this capacity, yanking it first one way and then the other, acting as though they are all at once the ones who are to drive the car. In this arrangement, both have a clear responsibility from God to the other.

Now to me, two things are very clear in this illustration. One is that called pastors are not to act as though the Keys or their office—or, for that matter, the congregation—is theirs to treat however they please. Nor should they suggest that their laypeople cannot tell their neighbors about Jesus, or announce forgiveness to someone who has done wrong. But the other side of the coin is also very clear. Congregations should not try to reach back on a whim and pull the Keys out of their called pastor's hands after they have given them to him. So also, congregations should not impede the work of their pastors or make their lives miserable as they carry

out their Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Congregations also need to act in a responsible manner over against their called pastor. In several ways, I think that this illustration captures many important points about the relationship between the Priesthood of All Believers and the Public Pastoral Office.

Now, I recognize that no illustration is perfect. Every illustration breaks down somewhere. For example, the Office of the Keys is not a commodity like a car. Yet, in spite of the weaknesses in this illustration, I hope that one point comes through loud and clear. It is the importance of that vital relationship that must exist between the universal Priesthood of all Believers and the Public, Pastoral Ministry. We need to make it absolutely clear that it is always a blessed "both/and" when it comes to the Office of the Ministry.

This relationship is filled with evangelical significance, as mentioned earlier. From a very practical standpoint, when these two are not getting along with one another, the progress of the Gospel in the world is obstructed. Laypeople do not invite their friends to church because they do not want guests to experience all the bickering there. Pastors do not invest themselves as much as they could in their sermons because they get sidetracked by the battles. Countless hours and who-knows-how-much energy are poured down the drain. How tragic, especially among people like us who know something about working while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work.

Consequently, what we are doing here, at this convocation, is for the sake of the Gospel. We have the opportunity to grow in appreciating and applying to ourselves the evangelical emphasis that characterizes the doctrine of Church and Ministry. We also have the opportunity to recommit ourselves to living out the proper relationship between Church and Ministry, which cannot help but be a healthy step in taking the Gospel to a world that needs it so much.

Conclusion

I would like to repeat one point that is very important to the success of this convocation and its impact on our respective church bodies. This theological convocation will benefit our churches only if we carry back to the grass roots, to local congregations and parish pastors, what we have done here. If we assembled here, as it were, on a high and windy hill for two-and-a-half days to pull back and forth great theological truths, but then failed to take them back to our pastors and congregations, we would be seriously under-fulfilling the potential of our time together. In the Missouri Synod, we are already giving thought as to how this communication can best be accomplished. Our ILC partner churches and guests will have to do this in the way that would best serve the various church bodies. But carry the word back, I feel we must.

For the Missouri Synod, 1997 has already provided a wonderful occasion on which to praise God for all of the blessings that He has graciously bestowed upon us. This anniversary is a time for us to look back, but it is also a time for us to look forward. So we have determined to address what has been and continues to be a key theological and relational truth for our church body: the Priesthood of All Believers and the Office of the Public Pastoral Ministry. As we do this, I am confident that God will bless.

Notes

1. See Thesis IV on the church. The theses, and Walther's discussion of them, may be found in English in C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (*Kirche und Amt*), trans. J.T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia, 1987).

2. Theses I and II on the Ministry.

3. Thesis VII on the Ministry. Walther, Mueller translation, p. 22, altered.

4. An article on "The Missouri Transferral Theory," published

a quarter-century after Walther's book first appeared, spoke of "The transfer of the power to the office-bearer, to exercise the rights of the Priesthood of all Believers in the public preaching office" *Lehre und Wehre* 23 (October 1877): 295.

5. Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: Regan Books/Harper Collins, 1996).

6. Ibid., 5.

7. Bork defines what he terms "radical egalitarianism" as "equality of outcomes rather than of opportunities." Ibid.

8. William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1957), 235.

9. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 25 ff.

10. Bork, 10.

11. See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), and "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, ed. Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59–78; Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1963); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

12. David F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 65.

13. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Henry Reeve, Francis Bowen, and Phillips Bradley (New York: Knopf, 1953), 2:4. Robert Bellah and his associates contend that it is individualism, not equality (as de Tocqueville said), that "has marched inexorably through our history." Robert Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), viii. For present purposes

it will suffice to note that both radical equality and individualism are important forces.

14. Quoted in Bloom, 86.

15. William J. Bennett, "The Children," *What to Do About . . .*, ed. Neal Kozodoy (New York: Regan Books/Harper Collins, 1995), 5, quoted in Bork, 65.

16. Robert Baird, *Religion in America*, quoted in Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 157.

17. Andrew P. Peabody, *The Work of the Ministry*, quoted in Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 86. Hofstadter also quoted de Tocqueville: "If you converse with these missionaries of Christian civilization [Protestant clergy in America], you will be surprised to hear them speak so often of the goods of this world, and to meet a politician where you expected to find a priest." Hofstadter, 86, note 1.

18. "The democratization of Christianity . . . has less to do with the specifics of piety and governance, and more with the incarnation of the church into popular culture." Hatch, *Democratization*, 9. If anything, an understanding of the religious setting in which the early Missourians found themselves invites us to admire their adherence to Scripture as well as to the Lutheran Confessions and Luther. If they really had been importing "American" elements into their doctrine and practice of Church and Ministry, imagine what the Missouri Synod would have looked like!

19. See *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955–1986) [hereafter AE], 13:315.

20. Martin Luther, *Concerning the Ministry* (1523), AE 40:38.

21. It is interesting that, in the preface to the first edition of his book on Church and Ministry (1852), Walther described the Missouri Synod's persuasion that "present differences among the

Lutherans concerning the doctrines of the Church and the Ministry and whatever is immediately connected with them stems from the fact that the doctrine set forth in the public confessions of our church and in the private writings of its orthodox teachers has been disregarded and abandoned."

22. Ken Schurb, "The Meeting of Church and Ministry in the Lutheran Confessions and Some of Their Interpreters," The Pieper Lectures: Volume 1. *The Office of the Ministry*, ed. Chris Christophersen Boshoven (N. p.: Concordia Historical Institute and the Luther Academy, 1997), 60–112.

23. Martin Luther, *The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests* (1533), AE 38:208–209.

24. *Dr. Martin Luther's Kirchen-Postille: Evangelien-Theil*, Vol. 11 of *Dr. Martin Luther's Sammtliche Schriften*, ed. J.G. Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1882) [Hereafter St. L.], col. 2304. See AE 51:343.

25. See St. L. 11:745–746; 11:2304–2305. See also *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), AE 41:154.

26. Regin Prenter on Luther, quoted in Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (Ft. Wayne: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 117.

27. C.F.W. Walther, *The Form of A Christian Congregation*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 16, note 1.

28. C.F.W. Walther, *The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*, trans. Fred Kramer (n.p.: The Office of Development, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1987), 105.

Presentation I

God's Character and the Calling of God's People: Contextual Relations

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I want to express my thanks to President Barry for his keynote address. It sets the stage for a discussion that is in some respects perennial, but becomes particularly crucial when the prevailing culture so winsomely and compellingly catechizes the people of God, including the clergy, in categories that deconstruct central commitments of the Christian vision.

The people of God today face a very different set of challenges than the previous Christian generation. There is a growing consensus that the Christian community must more rigorously analyze and address its cultural setting.

T. S. Eliot was prophetic when he warned of a culture driven

> by a compulsion to live in such a way that Christian behavior is only possible in a restricted number of situations. This is a very powerful force against Christianity; for behavior is as potent to affect belief, as belief to affect behavior.[1]

There is a need for clarity of vision and conviction that will witness to Christ and His Kingdom in our time. To place this in very practical terms, most in this assembly can recall a time when a

broad spectrum of people in North America had an idea—however rudimentary—of what a Christian pastor and Christian people were called to do. Nor is it ancient history to recall a time when abortion was illegal in civic society and divorce infrequent in the church. Though we can remember, it also now seems like a very distant world that there is little prospect of revisiting soon.

The task that is before us, I would propose, is much greater than providing a catena of quotations from Luther, Walther, or other teachers of the church—as important and necessary as such texts remain. Surely we are faced with the foundational question of how to live out the Christian vision as God's people.

If a previous era witnessed debates about the meaning of an authoritative Bible, the pressing question now is how it can exercise any meaningful authority over the community. In almost every Christian tradition the tension between its historic position and the surrounding culture grows ever more intense.

The contrast between the formal positions and the practice of churches becomes very sharp, while there seems to be no hermeneutical bridge by which Scripture can cross over to the present moment and form the actual lives of God's people in clear and evident patterns. In a fascinating collection of essays titled *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, the following point is made:

> The image of "reclaiming the Bible" suggests that it has been forsaken or lost. Of course, that is not literally true. There are more Bibles than ever before, and in more languages, dialects, translations, and versions. What needs to be reclaimed for the church is the Bible as authoritative Scripture. There is a loss of confidence in the ability of the church to read the Bible through the eyes of its own faith and in light of its own exegetical and liturgical traditions.[2]

What faces us is a comprehensive task of catechesis in Christian thinking. A part of that calling is the need to provide the peo-

ple of God with critical, analytic tools to view and engage their surroundings in Christian categories.

In the United States, for example, native patriotism and legitimate gratitude for many blessings can obscure those forces within our society that directly challenge Christian life.

Stephen L. Carter's perceptive analysis—*The Culture of Disbelief*—has the subtitle "How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion."[3] The second chapter of that book is titled "God as a Hobby." It begins with this paragraph:

> One good way to end a conversation—or start an argument—is to tell a group of well-educated professionals that you hold a political position (preferably a controversial one, such as being against abortion or pornography) because it is required by your understanding of God's will. In the unlikely event that anyone hangs around to talk with you about it, the chances are that you will be challenged on the ground that you are intent on imposing your religious beliefs on other people. And, in contemporary political and legal culture, nothing is worse.[4]

The view that religion is a very private affair and best kept that way is in the air we breath. The frequently noted rise of radical individualism and a loss of community is a challenge to secular as well as sacred traditions.[5]

From a philosophical perspective, Alasdair MacIntyre has perceptively argued that ethical discourse is vacated of its substance and persuasive power when an individualistic epistemology is in place:

> This thought is likely to appear alien and even surprising from the standpoint of modern individualism. From the standpoint of individualism, I am what I myself choose to be. . . . The contrast with the narrative view of the self is clear. For the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive

> my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships.[6]

The implications for the people of God are clear. The Priesthood of All Believers is not simply an assembly of autonomous individuals who have come to the same place by virtue of their sovereign and private decisions. Rather, by God's grace and election, they have been grafted into a common history and participate in a unified reality that goes back to creation itself and forward to eternity. Their identity derives from and is embedded in the great narrative of God's actions in Israel and in Christ. Wfe have our identity rooted in God's actions in the history of God's people.

Theologians from a spectrum of Christian confessions are increasingly critical of those forces that dissolve the basis of the church's community. Stanley Hauerwas challenges the standard way in which the biblical witness is "translated" by the modern academy at the conceptual rather than the linguistic level:

> Such "translation" is often deemed necessary because of the texts' obscurity, cultural limits, and variety, but also because there seems to be no community in which the Scripture functions authoritatively. As a result we forget that the narratives of Scripture were not meant to describe our world—and thus in need of translation to adequately describe the "modern world"—but to change the world, including the one in which we now live. In the classic words of Eric Auerbach, Scripture is not meant "merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history. . . . Everything else that happens in the world can only be conceived as an element in this sequence; into it everything that is known about the world . . . must be fitted as an ingredient of the divine plan." I would add that Scripture creates more than a world; it shapes a community which is the bearer of that world.[7]

To be the "bearer of the biblical world" is the calling of God's people. In our context, that calling immediately places each of God's people in tension with sometimes subtle, but always powerful cultural forces.

My initial suggestion is that these cultural forces—more frequently than the embrace of a particular theological position on Church and Ministry—are at the root of the tensions frequently experienced between the Priesthood of All Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry.

Unless the people of God have a foundational sense of Scripture's narrative—the history of Israel and the life of Jesus—that can be understood and appropriated in a manner that actually defines the church's common life, discussion of office, vocation, and moral issues will not occur with satisfactory results.

An analogy might be helpful. My pitching wedge is my friend and faithful companion. To show it to someone who has never seen a golf course, however, immediately requires an explanation. Without knowledge of the "delightful" narrative of the game of golf, the pitching wedge cannot be understood. It might be mistaken for a hoe or a garden tool.

Similarly, as the knowledge of the whole witness of Scripture becomes remote or lost, the case for the pastor's calling in relationship to God's people with its mutual and complementary dimensions is very difficult to make. Texts lose their power to persuade when removed from the structures in which they are embedded.

Before one builds the conceptual rooms and walkways for Christian living as the people of God, the scriptural view of reality from Genesis to Revelation must be in place. It is this foundation that has been removed so that Christian discourse now seems to be little more than a matter of personal preference. Even in the church, the texts seem to lack the power to address and to persuade in a manner that is recognizable.

Diogenes Allen, a Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, relates this episode:

> "Why should I go to church," someone once said to me, "when I have no religious needs?" I had the audacity to reply, "Because Christianity's true." That may seem foolhardy when we live in a pluralistic world with any number of different views of reality and apparently no rational means of telling which view is most likely to be true, and when it is said that all views are historically relative and mere reflections of social structures.[8]

Pastors and people are equally subject to these pressures.[9] Eugene Petersen, a Presbyterian clergyman, for example, has lamented the loss of pastoral identity among his peers:

> What they do with their time under the guise of the Pastoral Ministry hasn't the remotest connection with what the church's pastors have done for most of twenty centuries. . . They talk of images and statistics. They drop names. They discuss influence and status. Matters of God and the soul and the Scriptures are not grist for their mills.[10]

Peterson's claims are compelling when one compares much of the literature on being a pastor with classic portrayals such as those gathered in a book like Culbertson and Shippee's *The Pastor*.[11]

This confusion is also reflected in recent studies of theological education. If there is a lack of clarity on how the scriptural portraits assume concrete meaning for the life of the pastor, a variety of models are generated from the literature of leadership, therapy, and management.

It is encouraging that a man like David H. Kelsey, professor of Theology at Yale and no traditionalist, suggests that theological training should not give up its native tongue, namely, the priority of Scripture and the study of God in theological education.[12]

Sacred Scripture as Foundational Definition of God's People

My second suggestion is that our classic Lutheran view of the Priesthood of all Believers in relationship to the Pastoral Office provides the scriptural substance and rich pastoral resources to address our current setting.[13] Chief among our assets is the confession and confidence that the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures speak to every epoch. That it is here and in no other narrative that God's people behold the face of Christ is a claim at the core of our Lutheran confession. If it is tempting to re-interpret the scriptural texts in one of the many and various ways that modernity and post-modernism have advanced, we recognize no fuller life in such a move. Rather we confess that full life that has been bestowed upon God's people with the "one, holy Christian and apostolic church."

So, in a cursory way, it is fitting to review the biblical story with respect to how its description of God's people is inextricably related to God's character as expressed in His words and actions. It is particularly important in our context to inquire of the texts as to how God's people could be recognized in public ways, *i.e.*, to identify those contours that were not a matter of private experience but necessary and corporate expressions of the people who were chosen as God's own.

Further, within this corporate identity, what visible marks are central to the community's identity? It is within this world of meaning—the biblical world—that worship, office, service, and solidarity with others make sense. More than sense, they can be seen for what they are—the very truth about who we are before the God who has disclosed Himself to us. Without this world, our claims can appear no more than private preference or pious platitude.

Departure Point: God's Character—The Torah's Portrait

Sacred Scripture begins with the creative work of God. Our familiarity with Genesis 1 and 2 can obscure the radical and dis-

tinctive nature of its claims. The character of Yahweh-Elohim (Gen 2:4) stands in sharp contrast to the elaborate polytheism of the Ancient Near East.[14]

This portrait of God—One who is antecedent to and not identifiable with creation—constitutes a radical challenge to surrounding assumptions. A brief reading of an ancient text like the *Enuma Elish* in comparison shows that one is confronted with two different worlds. This portrait also challenges current cosmologies in which the real action and meaning of history are located in the evolutionary processes of the universe.

The remarkable position of man and woman is as distinctive as the portrayal of God in Genesis 1 and 2. God's self-address "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule. . . ." (Gen. 1:26) positions humanity as the culmination and apex of God's creative work. To be created "in God's image" (Gen. 1:27) entails life before and in communion with God and distinguishes man and woman from the rest of creation. The detailed account of God's direct involvement in the creation of man and woman (Genesis 2) underscores their natures as uniquely suited for relationship with Him.

The gift of life to man and woman is joined to freedom to enjoy all the gifts of creation (Gen. 2:16). Life with and before God requires only that the fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" not be eaten (Gen. 2:17).

The embrace of that knowledge in Genesis 3 constitutes a fracture of relationship with, and life in, God. The epoch of death now spreads as Adam hides in fear (Gen. 3:10), creation resists life (Gen. 3:17, 18), and blame is cast upon the other (Gen. 3:12, 13). This event is also the dissolution and death of human community through sin. Now there are people who are, tragically, not God's people. The first family and the first community of God have died through sin and face the prospect of eternal judgment.

The promise of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), the seed of Abram (Gen. 12:3), and the offspring of Judah (Gen. 49:10) point forward to a great reversal and restoration of community. Life will one day replace death (Is. 25:8), for God's agent will restore those who are in Him to communion with God and His community.

Hence, the Torah's portrayal of God's people is a record of those who confess Yahweh-Elohim as the only God in whom life and all of creation are restored. Abel's fitting worship over against the line of Seth, the evil state of all people over against God's grace upon Noah and family, the line of Shem over against the nations: From the fall, the Torah divides humanity on the basis of relationship to Yahweh's character. True community—the Priesthood of all Believers—exists only in Him.

With God's selection of Abram and the promise of blessing through His seed (Gen. 12:3), His people are defined precisely and concretely. It is in relationship to Abram's seed that relationship to God is restored: "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

The Torah describes Abram's seed—God's people—in more categories than promise. God chose His people without regard for their numbers or status.

> The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deut. 7:7–8).

If their numbers were not the occasion for Yahweh separating a people for Himself, this does not mean that they would be indistinguishable from the nations. God would reveal His character by calling His people to particular structures. These divinely ordered

marks, when faithfully observed, would be public displays and witnesses to the God whom Israel worshiped. These marks, from within the community, are rightly viewed as the means of God's gracious presence. They were not the incidental or accidental product of social and cultural forces, but the divinely stipulated expression of God's character, relationship, and presence.

From without, God's people could be recognized by a configuration of practices and institutions that revealed not simply their customs, but the character of the God they worshiped. Indeed, the prophetic literature of the Old Testament is a call not for the removal of these structures, but to integrity in the reception and use of the divinely given means, *i.e.*, authentic reflection of God's presence among them.

That there were such visible marks of God's people is significant. These institutions and practices were witnesses to God's character and entailed Israel's distinctive view of what it was to be God's people.

These "marks" are more than symbols, yet they function to convey all that is suggested in current literature by a cultural symbol. David Yeago provides a useful definition in a recent article:

> A cultural symbol is a particularly dense locus of significance which brings into focus what is important to a particular cultural community with uncommon intensity and compactness, so that it proves a fruitful and suggestive reference-point for reflection on all sorts of questions of communal identity and purpose.[15]

The marks then of true Israel and the church—God's people—are, I would suggest, "the particularly dense *loci*" where we can engage and explore the community's identity and calling as the people of God, people chosen by God to be His very own, set apart by God from the rest of humanity in order to be a kingdom of priests before Him.

If these marks are reduced by some contemporary biblical scholarship to mere expressions of sociological and political forces, Sacred Scripture resists and challenges such a reading. As Jon D. Levenson, Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at Harvard, writes:

> Historical criticism has long posed a major challenge to people with biblical commitments, and for good reason. What I hope to have shown is that the reverse is also the case: the Bible poses a major challenge to people with historical-critical commitments.[16]

Levenson is right. The Bible challenges the reductionistic assumptions of every age! It will not permit to go unchallenged the view that human beings can be reduced to a moment of acquisition, or a moment of pleasure, or a moment of power. The Bible challenges people in every age to behold the true God who also calls, gathers, and enlightens a community to be His people.

What would have defined the people of God among the nations? What will define them today? Were they then and are they now virtually indistinguishable from humanity as a whole?

To begin at the beginning, it is helpful to review Pentateuchal texts. The ease with which the Old Testament can be decanonized in practice exacts too great a price and weakens our capacity to speak scripturally.

Let us imagine a visiting Egyptian or a sojourning Mesopotamian who spends some time with Israel. What would they have seen that would make Israel distinctive among the nations?

Sacred Sacrifice and Shrine

The elaborate system of sacrifice associated with the tabernacle would have witnessed to Israel's identity before a God whose character required contrition for sins, etc. (Leviticus 1–7). Indeed, Israel's claim that the God who created the heavens and the earth

and all things in them now dwells in a portable shrine would have been remarkable. If our sojourner were well-traveled, he would have beheld the far more impressive iconography and temples of Egypt and Mesopotamia.[17] If he were told that the God of Israel had superintended the construction of the tabernacle in all of its details, he would know how closely this "tent" was identified with the will and presence of God. Could the true God really care about such details as these?

> Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked into them by a skilled craftsman. All the curtains are to be the same size—twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide (Ex. 26:1–2).

Israel's answer was "Yes!" The true God wanted the "blue, purple and scarlet yarn" and the curtains to be "twenty-eight cubits long."

The additional claim that the glory of the true God resided uniquely here was central to the people's confession of God's character in defining their community:

> Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34, 35).

Sacred Personnel

The centrality of altars and priestly service was another mark of the community's identity. The ancient world, to a much greater extent than our own, saw worship as inherent to a people's nature. Our visitor would have beheld the divinely ordered sacrifices being made by a divinely chosen priestly line in a divinely ordered liturgical worship setting.

The Torah's structure does not place the Priesthood of all Believers (Ex. 19:5, 6) over against the office of Moses as prophet or the priesthood of Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8 and 9). Rather, God's people are set apart from the whole earth (Ex. 19:5) and the priesthood of Aaron is set aside for the service of Yahweh and His people in worship. The golden calf episode in Exodus 32 and the subsequent history of Israel challenge any romanticized, egalitarian, or populist notions about the majority of the people. Similarly, the deaths of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10 indicate that the priests were called to fidelity in their office. To abuse the Office was a serious and, in their case, capital offense.

People and priests were to reflect the holy character and will of Yahweh. The priest was not called to service at the expense of the people, but to service that would bestow God's blessings. The priest proclaimed the Lord's Word to His people. Roland de Vaux summarizes:

> When the priest delivered an oracle, he was passing on an answer from God; when he gave an instruction, a torah, and later when he explained the Law, the Torah, he was passing on and interpreting teaching that came from God; when he took the blood and flesh of victims to the altar, or burned incense upon the altar, he was presenting to God the prayers and petitions of the faithful. In the first two roles he represented God before men, and in the third he represented men before God; but he is always an intermediary. What the Epistle to the Hebrews says of the high priest is true of every priest; "Every high priest who is taken from among men is appointed to intervene on behalf of men with God" (Heb. 5:1). The priest was a mediator, like the king and the prophet. But kings and prophets were mediators by reason of a personal charisma, because they were individually chosen by God; the priest was *ipso facto* a mediator, for the priesthood is an institution for mediation. This essential feature will reappear in the priesthood of the New Law, as a sharing in the priesthood of Christ the Mediator, Man and God, perfect victim and unique Priest.[18]

If the visitor were with Israel for more than a few days, the unique place of Moses as prophet and leader would have become clear (Num. 12:6–8; Deut. 18:14–22; 34:10–12). During a later period the central and defining role of David for the community's view of God would have been clear.

Sacred Time

A visitor might also be struck by Israel's sacralizing of time. The observance of the Sabbath would undoubtedly be in the foreground, but the feasts of Israel—Passover, unleavened bread, firstfruits, day of atonement, sabbath and jubilee year—were public observances that defined the self-understanding of God's people as inextricably expressed in the character of the God they worshiped.

Sacred Life

If our hypothetical visitor would have lingered with God's people for a time, he would have observed a variety of distinctive practices. Not only the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17), but the stipulations of the so-called "Book of the Covenant" (Ex. 20:22–23:19), the purity laws (Leviticus 11–15), dietary laws (e.g., Leviticus 17), etc., would have formed Israel.

The integration and coherence of the worship of God's people and the life of God's people is clear. The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 20:22–23:33) was received and affirmed by God's people in a worship context. The altar itself became an expression of the people's unity and responsibility before the God who had chosen them:

> When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered

> burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey." Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex. 24:3–8).

However inadequate their performance may have been at times, it was a life that was understood as ordered by the very God who had created them and called them together in Abram, Isaac, and Jacob.

Again, the point is that the Torah's portrayal does not regard these public expressions of community identity as accidental or incidental. The God who had graciously chosen this people now called them to these and no other expressions of His character. The scandal of particularity in these details is very close to the scandal of the cross, for they both reveal the character of the true God in structures that are an affront to human criteria.

Sacred Space

If one moves beyond the Pentateuch, it should be noted how pivotal the place of the Holy Land is in God's relationship to His people. Of all the places in the world, God chose to locate His people and His presence in one specific area. Of all the places He could have chosen, He chose the land of Palestine, and none other.

> So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant. Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:13–14).

Christopher J. H. Wright has succinctly summarized the importance of the land in Israel's relationship to God:

> The theology of the land with its twin themes of divine ownership and divine gift (and particularly the historical tradition associated with the latter) is inseparable from Israel's consciousness of their covenant relationship with Yahweh.[19]

Again God's people are defined by God's gifts. His gifts call them to live in the place that He has provided and in service to Him alone. In the midst of many other lands and very sophisticated cultures, God reveals His character in this particular place.

The identification of God's people with sacred space is also manifest in the centrality of the temple and the prominence of Zion. After the dedication of the temple, the Lord appears to Solomon and says:

> I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there (1 Kings 9:3).

Similarly, the manner in which God chooses Zion and Jerusalem is central to the identity of God's people.

> Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken, but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people both now and forevermore (Psalm 125:1–2).

It is hard to overstate the centrality of worship to Israel's life and identity. It is at the heart of everything the people of God were about, the very nature of their existence was to proclaim the true God in their worship. Indeed, as Hans-Joachim Kraus has written:

> The service of Yahweh, which God's people were chosen to perform, occupied a central position in the cult. The festivals were the high point of life, the source of all life and activity. Israel existed on the basis of the filled, meaningful time of the cultic gatherings.[20]

Sacred Seed

At the very core of Israel's identity was the chosen family line. God fulfilled His promise to Abraham to give him many descendants. God chose the line of David to continue His gracious presence among His people (2 Sam. 7:8–12). It was to David's line that God's people were to look for the promised agent of deliverance (Is. 11:1–11; Jer. 23:5–8; Ez. 34:23–24; 37:24–28).

What is being advanced by this brief survey is that God's people were defined neither abstractly nor in terms of sheer interiority, but by concrete structures and practices that were revelatory of God's character in that He Himself had bestowed on them and called them to such a community. These "marks" of the community, if you will, were not negotiable, *i.e.*, one could not worship and live in other ways and simultaneously confess the Lord's character. The large corpus of prophetic literature makes this point clear. Isaiah, for example, begins his work with an indictment that challenges whether Yahweh is defining their community:

> Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Is. 1:2–3; cf. Dt. 32:1).

Or, Hosea was called to name his son "Lo-Ammi" as a charge that God's people no longer saw the One who gave the gifts:

> She (Israel) has not acknowledged that I was the One who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold—which they used for Baal (Hos. 2:8).

The Culmination and Continuation of Israel's History in Christ

What does this survey contribute to an understanding of God's people in Christ? If it is true that Christ interprets His own life, death, and Resurrection by expounding the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44), it is also the case that the apostles describe Christ's community in the categories of Israel—now, of course, in the light of the coming of the messianic seed and His Kingdom. There is no utter and total discontinuity between God's people in the Old and the New Testament.

If the line of Abraham and David anchors christology against every docetic tendency, there is biblical value in viewing ecclesiology as grounded in Israel's history. The church is not a platonic community that supplants the rootedness in creation of God's people. Rather, as with Israel, God in Christ is gathering flesh and blood people to His name and real presence through the means that He has offered.

The real and visible character of the church is captured by C.F.W. Walther in his Thesis five:

> Although the true church in the proper sense of the term is essentially invisible, its presence can nevertheless be definitely recognized, and its marks are indeed the pure preaching of God's Word and the administration of the Sacraments according to Christ's institution.[21]

In a context where the visible structures of Christ's church are viewed as utterly marginal and optional to the private relationship of the individual to Jesus, God's people are called to confess continuity with the gifts that constitute the community. They are the *people* of God, gathered by their Lord.

Put another way, the church is not a new community—unlike and over against faithful Israel—but in Christ is the continuation of the one community that has been defined by God's character over against the nations.

The structure of Peter's description of the church shows how the language of faithful Israel, in Christ, is also the definition of the church:

> As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:4–10).

The Gospels, Romans, the letter to the Hebrews, Revelation: the canonical witness to this continuity is ubiquitous. When one peruses the exegesis of the early Lutheran theologians, their sense of the oneness and coherence of the New Testament church with faithful Israel is striking. This passage from Martin Chemnitz's *Loci Theologici* illustrates how complete this identification was:

> Above this mercy seat stood two cherubim with wings joined and facing one another. These signify the Ministry of teaching under both the old and the new covenants. The wings are touching one another and the faces looking at each other, signifying the consensus of teaching in both covenants. The message of the prophets and apostles is the same in regard to sin, the deliverance through Christ, eternal life, and finally the true knowledge of God and the true worship of Him. The whole ceremonial aspect of the ancient sacrifices

> typified the one sacrifice of the Son of God who was made a victim for us, endured the wrath of God that was poured out upon Him as if He Himself had committed our sins. . . . Further, these cherubim instruct us that there is no church where the ministration of teaching the doctrine of the prophets and apostles is not present. . . . Although this service on our part is imperfect and far inferior to the government of the ungodly, yet we should know that it is pleasing to God and necessary for the human race and that it is marvelously defended and aided by God among the terrible torments of life. Thus it is full of genuine dignity, and when we think of the importance of this work of ours, we should be eager to adorn our activity with diligence, patience, and modesty; and in the face of all perils we should sustain ourselves with the promises, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," Matt. 28:20, and "Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, Matt. 16:18."[22]

What then is the significance of seeing the church as the continuation in Christ of God's faithful Israel?

First, I would offer that it defines us as the community that arises from and is shaped by God's character. We, no less than Israel, have been called to a distinctive confession that there is "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5–6). This confession creates as sharp a tension for us as it did for Israel:

> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts (Eph. 4:17–18).

If we read sacred Scripture as the revelation of God's character in the life of Israel and in the Incarnation of Christ, Israel is a concrete, fleshly, and observable community. While God alone might

know who is truly a member, there is no people of God apart from "the marks" that define the church and distinguish it as a faithful witness to God's character. The Incarnation, life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Abram and son of David (Matt. 1:1) were concrete. The details of His life are as scandalous as the story of Israel. To assert that the God of all creation sent His Son to a remote portion of an empire unprecedented in its wealth to be born to an obscure Jewish maiden is to make a radical claim (1 Cor. 1:22–24).

It means also that the particular expressions of His story entail and impart character to the people who believe and act upon them. Our Lutheran conviction concerning the christocentricity of Scripture means that we will neither add to nor subtract from "the marks" He has given, namely, the prophetic and apostolic witness, the water of Holy Baptism, and the Eucharist.

Though these marks define us, they are more than Yeago's cultural symbols. They are not historical artifacts or ancient data. They are the real presence of the true God who "call, gathers, and enlightens" people through such sacred means and no other. The incarnational and sacramental character of the church reflects the character of the true God. The people of God are more than a group of convention-goers who affirm the party's platform. They are an expression of the one reality sacred Scripture describes, for they have been joined to the Christ in their Baptism, are nourished with His very body and blood, and are directed by His living voice (*viva vox Jesu*) in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. These definitions and marks do not exist in a fairyland. They cannot be abstracted into a meta-narrative that is either beyond history or locked in the shell of personal religious experience. Rather, they exist in flesh and blood people who have been joined to a resurrected Lord who was born to the Virgin Mary as Second Adam. We are not simply witnesses to, but participants in this one, true,

saving, and holy narrative, which is visible to the nations all about us—unless, of course, we are so acculturated that the nations see themselves when they look at us.

Lutheran Solidarity with the Biblical Witness

If the radical Reformation and enthusiasts interiorized the essence of the faith and the Roman Catholic Church multiplied external requirements and structures, a profound and biblical insight of the Reformers was to locate God's character in those particularities and structures where Christ Himself was present. The Apology provides remarkable clarity in the following passage:

> Yet the church is not only an association of external things and rites like other governments, but she is chiefly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in hearts, which however has external marks, so that she may be recognized, namely the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in agreement with the Gospel of Christ (Ap VII/VIII, 5).

This assumption explains why Luther and his followers could not regard the Sacraments as "extra" or "add-ons" to the Gospel. The Gospel itself was at stake in affirming Christ's presence in the Supper. To our peril, we view the Sacraments as mere "additions" to the Gospel. In his 1535 Galatians commentary, Luther writes:

> For the sectarians who deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper accuse us today of being quarrelsome, harsh, and intractable, because, as they say, we shatter love and harmony among the churches on account of the single doctrine about the Sacrament. They say we should not make so much of this little doctrine. . . . To this argument of theirs we reply with Paul: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." In philosophy a tiny error in the beginning is very great at the end. Thus in theology a tiny error overthrows the whole teaching.[23]

The apparently impending action of the ELCA in declaring pulpit and altar fellowship with a variety of Christian traditions should alert us to the contemporary relevance of Luther's concern.

The people of God or Priesthood of All Believers recognizes that Christ established the Office of the Pastor as a "mark" of His church. As in the Old Testament, He is not simply a transmitter of data, but a set-aside, flesh-and-blood servant who is to guide God's people on their daily pilgrimages. This office, established by Christ, is of the "esse" of the church and is defined by the Good Shepherd's pastoral model.[24]

> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away (1 Peter 5:2–4).

The Pastoral Office can be rightly understood only by knowing the narrative of sacred Scripture and its Christological center. To be Christ's servant and the servant of Christ's people does not mean to be servile. Faithfulness to Christ entails speaking His Word and administrating the Sacraments, which He instituted, when they appear outmoded and impotent. Hence, the people of God rejoice in a faithful pastor they can trust to speak Christ's Word rather than that of another. His care for them and compassion underscore his commitment to Christ and Christ's flock. God's people will rightly see the crucial place of the undershepherd in their life before God. The portrayals of Western society that render a pastor utterly optional for the Christian life will also be seen as harmful and corrosive to God's people. Pastors are Christ's gifts to the church, which she receives with thanks, not with the view that they are unnecessary options for the church.

In a culture dominated by questions of control and power, both God's people and God's pastors are called and defined by a different Word—the Gospel. The "marks" and structures that attend the Gospel are not constrictive but servants of Christ.

Edmund Schlink describes the complementary nature of the Pastoral Office and the Priesthood of all Believers:

> The Confessions do not permit us to place the Priesthood of all Believers as a divine institution over against the Public Ministry as a human institution. The idea of a transfer of the rights of the Priesthood of all Believers to the person of the pastor is foreign to the Confessions. The church does not transfer its office of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments to individuals in its membership, but it fills this Office entrusted to it by God, it calls into this Office instituted by God. In this Office the pastor therefore acts in the name and at the direction of God and in the stead of Jesus Christ. He acts with authority not on the basis of an arrangement made by believers, but on the basis of the divine institution.[25]

It is this balanced and biblical structure that is present in Walther. For Höfling, the Ministry comes into existence by the transfer of the spiritual powers of the individual priests. For Walther, the Ministry is a divinely instituted and mandated office, which the Priesthood does not originate, but which it receives, ready-made, from God, and in turn confers on or transmits to the incumbent. Not the terms "transfer" or "confer" matter ultimately, but the question that does matter: What is transferred and conferred: individual powers, or a divine office?[26]

Our Lutheran Confessions are a rich resource for addressing the relationship between pastor and people. To understand and practice assumes on the part of the people of God and their pastors an openness to and rigor in appropriating "the marks" of the church as Christ established them.

The "*Esse*" and "*Bene Esse*" of the People of God

If God's people are defined by God's character as revealed exclusively in His chosen means, are there structures that serve the Gospel beyond those that are of the very essence of the church, *i.e.*, can anything be said about the implications for the people of God who are born baptismally, fed by the Lord's own Supper, guided by His Word, and shepherded by His pastors, in how they conduct their common walk?

It is here that I would suggest our real work lies. How can structures and practices be articulated that are for the well-being (the "*bene esse*") of the church? A classic example is that of worship on Sunday. On the one hand, the church does not want to make indifferent things into divine obligation. On the other hand, it recognizes the value of those things that serve the Gospel. Our Lutheran Confessions state clearly: "Some argue that the observance of the Lord's Day is not indeed of divine obligation, but is as it were of divine obligation. . ." (AC XXVIII, 63).

The Large Catechism at the same time comments:

> Since from ancient times Sunday has been appointed for this purpose, we should not change it. In this way a common order will prevail and no one will create disorder by unnecessary innovation (LC I, 85).

If the distinction is held up clearly for God's people that the "*esse*" and "*bene esse*" of the church are very different matters, could they benefit catechetically by structures that would serve the biblical portrait of reality?

In a postmodern age, is there a way to counter the radical individualism and reductionistic view of Christ that renders Him exclusively in personal and private terms? Our biblical, creedal, and confessional convictions invite reflection on strategies that are both faithful and convincing.

Sacred Worship

If we recover the scriptural focus on God's people as those who are joined to Christ by Baptism, fed by Him at His table, and guided by faithful exposition of His Word, worship becomes central to what God's people are called to do corporately. For example, if the communicant views his action not simply as reception of private forgiveness, but as a pilgrimage with his brothers and sisters back to the upper room where the Lord chose Passover as the moment to institute His Supper and as a participation in the life of God through the very body and blood of Christ that are offered—would this not be a fuller appropriation of the scriptural witness concerning the Sacrament?

In the current discussion on worship, has adequate reflection occurred about the relationship between form and content in ritual? Has our catechesis failed to inform the people of God about the theological basis for the distinctives of Christian worship?

An interesting example is Walther's response to the charge that the Missouri Synod was Roman Catholic because its pastors chanted. His answer in *Der Lutheraner* of 1853 is striking:

> Whenever the Divine Service once again follows the old Evangelical-Lutheran agendas (or church books) it seems that many raise a great cry that it is "Roman Catholic": "Roman Catholic" when the pastor chants "The Lord be with you" and the congregation responds by chanting "and with thy spirit"; "Roman Catholic" when the pastor chants the collect and the blessing and the people respond with a chanted "Amen.". . . Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic Church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox Church. The chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teachings of Rome crept in. This Christian Church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from chanting. . . . For more than 1700 years orthodox Christians have participated joyfully in the Divine Service. Should we, today, carry on by saying that

> such joyful participation is "Roman Catholic"? God forbid! Therefore, as we continue to hold and to restore our wonderful Divine Services in places where they have been forgotten, let us boldly confess that our worship forms do not unite us with the modern sects or with the Church of Rome; rather, they join us to the one, holy Christian Church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.[27]

Walther's clear concern for the catholicity of Lutheran worship practice over against the sects as well as Roman Catholicism is noteworthy for the current debate.

Sacred Personnel

Is there benefit for the church in a fresh exposition of the centrality of the Pastoral Office and the high calling of the Priesthood of all Believers in biblical categories?

Might the Priesthood of all Believers and its pastors benefit from a conscious critique of surrounding models of community? For example, many organizations in which the people of God function from day to day are driven by questions of who has the largest slice of the "power-pie." When such thinking, or the administrative and leadership models on which it is based, begin to shape the minds of people and pastors, there is a loss of biblical vocation and identity.

Similarly, the biblical witness challenges the egalitarian and populist notions that define community apart from the character of God, and the means and structures He has called into being, the Word and Sacraments along with the Office of the Ministry He has given to the church. The church is not merely a collection of like-minded individuals doing as they please. The fact that Lutherans have never sided with the view that a majority are free to do as they wish is shown by Martin Chemnitz's reply to the question of whether the Anabaptists have the Ministry:

> But do the Anabaptists 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 the 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. . . .[28]

Might the church also be marvelously served by placing those apostolic texts that stress the solidarity and oneness of God's people in the foreground? When our very thought processes are captive to individualistic assumptions, should not passages like Rom. 6:3–6, 1 Cor. 12:13, and Gal. 3:27–28 be freshly expounded? Holy Baptism, described in each of these passages, provides a biblical and sacramental resource for defining the Priesthood of all Believers as the Body of Christ. Just as Israel was constituted a community through circumcision, so the church is through Baptism.

A baptismal grace valid for a whole community as such, namely, the people of Israel who pass through the Red Sea, is presupposed also in 1 Cor. 10:1ff, a passage that ought to be much more carefully observed in the discussion of child Baptism. It is here quite plain that the act of grace, which is regarded as the type of Baptism, concerns the covenant God made with the whole people. In this connection, reference must be made to the continuity between that covenant God concluded with Abraham on behalf of His people and the covenant of the Church which, as the Body of Christ, that is, of the 'one' (Gal. 3:16), brings that covenant to fulfillment.[29]

Similarly, a renewed appreciation for the Lord's Supper as a public expression of the oneness of the Priesthood of all Believers would provide a biblical response to the assumption that the life of

faith is a private journey in that one may or may not join the church at the Lord's Table.

> For the *koinonia* that according to the New Testament exists among the saints, the believers, finds its strongest expression in the fellowship of those who, gathered around the Lord's Table, receive His body and blood.[30]

Sacred Space

Is there benefit in recovering the concept of sanctuary—sacred space—where God repeatedly comes to us in His Means of Grace? If God's people would view the nave of their sanctuary as the ship in which they are passing through this world, where their life began in Baptism, where they will one day be given the church's "farewell" in worship that celebrates their life in Christ, would not the Gospel and God's people be well served?

Sacred Time

Is there benefit in a fresh exposition of the liturgical year so that God's people define their days as a rehearsal of the life of Christ and His church?

Sacred Life

Would the people of God and their pastors be well served by a new appropriation of classical Christian casuistry? To read C.F.W. Walther's *Pastoral Theology*, for example, is to illumine how he envisioned his position on Church and Ministry to be lived out in the daily life of the church. As one reads Walther's *Pastoral Theology* he cannot help but be impressed by the deep churchly piety formed by Word and Sacrament that animates his reflections. In the same way, would the language of virtue and character, so rich in classic Christian devotional texts, be a tremendous resource for the life of sanctification?

Conclusion

In a culture that seeks to define its people without reference to a God whose character and actions can be known, this paper is a first and modest effort to explore whether the greatest threat to the people of God and the Priesthood of all Believers is not an assault on the necessity and centrality of its own "marks"—those "particularly dense loci of significance" without which the church cannot be the church. The radical individualism and interiorizing of the life of the church at the expense of Israel's history, the Incarnation of Christ, and the Means of Grace have exacted a great price. Cut off from the flesh and blood of Israel and of Christ, the individual easily fills even biblical phrases with culturally generated content. So also, in defining the relationship of the Priesthood of all Believers to the pastoral office, both the people of God and the pastors of God's people are called to leave the reductionistic and individualistic assumptions of every decaying age and enter the true and fleshly narrative of sacred Scripture where the gift of life is bestowed in Christ.

The people of God, the Priesthood of all Believers by God's grace, defined by the church's marks, will then be a light to the nations. The centrality of confession and contrition in the church's life will attest that its life is yet under the cross rather than triumphant. At the same time, God's people will be recognized through lives that are formed by Christ's presence. Integrity in their daily vocations, heroism in keeping their marriage vows, their nurture of children and care of the elderly, their life of charity, etc.: these will bespeak a people who are "in Christ" and "bearers" of the biblical world.

The "marks" of that world—the church's definition in Word and Sacrament—will sustain and unite them in Christ and in a life that reflects His holy and saving presence. St. Paul writes to the Colossians:

> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Col. 3:12–17).

Notes

1. T. S. Eliot, "The Idea of a Christian Society," in *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. 1949), 24.

2. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), x.

3. Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 3.

4. Ibid., 23.

5. See Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

6. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 205.

7. Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 55.

8. Diogenes Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 1. How pluralism influences Western religiosity and "Christianity" merits more attention.

9. A detailed and challenging treatment of all religion as a "social construction of reality" is Peter L. Berger's *The Sacred Canop*y (New York: Anchor, 1967).

10. Eugene H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 1–2.

11. Philip L. Culbertson and Arthur Bradford Shippee, eds., *The Pastor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

12. David H. Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly. What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). See also, Thomas C. Oden's *Requiem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

13. The crucial role of sacred Scripture in defining a community's identity is recognized by a spectrum of notable scholars. J. Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1977); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

14. James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

15. David S. Yeago, "Messiah's People: The Culture of the Church in the Midst of the Nations," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (Spring 1997), 158.

16. Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 126.

17. Othmar Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts in Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954)

18. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Vol. 2: Religious Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 357.

19. Christopher J. H. Wright, *God's People in God's Land* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 23. The importance of the land in Israel's understanding of God has recently received major scholarly attention. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *The Land. Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); and W. D.

Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

20. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 101. Also, Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1985).

21. C.F.W. Walther, *Walther on the Church*, ed. August R. Suelflow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 34.

22. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J.A.O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 2:658.

23. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), AE 27: 36–39.

24. C.F.W. Walther's Thesis two underscores the divine institution of the Pastoral Office: "The Ministry of the Word or Pastoral Office is not a human institution, but an office that God Himself has established." Among other arguments, Walther stresses Christ's origin of the Office in the call of the apostles: "In the second place, the divine institution of the Holy Ministry is evident from the call of the holy apostles into the Ministry of the Word by the Son of God (Matt. 10; 28:18–20; Luke 9:1–10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21–23; 21:15–17). *Walther on the Church*, 75.

25. Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehneke and H. J. A. Boumann. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press,1961), 245.

26. Kurt E. Marquart, *The Church and Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance* (Waverly, Iowa: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990), 114–115.

27. C.F.W. Walther, *Der Lutheraner*, July 19, 1853 (Vol. 9, No. 24), 163.

28. Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, ed. and trans. Luther Poellet (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 34.

29. Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament*, trans.

J.K.S. Reid (London: SCM Press, 1950), 45. The corporate and Christological dimensions of Holy Baptism are described also in Edmund Schlink's *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert J.A. Boumann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 72–82.

30. Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 143.

Response to Presentation I

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I am honored to be here, and to offer to the paper by my teacher, colleague and friend a response with a two-part structure. First, I have a question and two possible clarifications to offer. Second, I would like to offer my own support to what I understand as the basic thesis of the paper, namely, that even before we can talk about the Priesthood of all Believers, we must reestablish—or perhaps establish—the categories in which we think and teach and preach to the people of God as the "holy nation, the royal priesthood." In that sense, my impression is that a subtitle of Dr. Wenthe's paper could very well have been, "prolegomena to the Priesthood of all Believers."

What Do the "Marks" of the Old Testament Narrative Say About the Character of God?

I have to confess that the paper left unanswered the basic question suggested by the title, namely, the specific connection between God's character and marks by which God's people are known. The paper does state clearly, on the one hand, that the Old Testament narrative of God and His people shows His character that requires "contrition for sins." But on the other hand, no further specific connections are offered, and questions remain. To frame questions

in the terms of the paper: what specifically is known about God's character from the fact that God Himself attended to the details of the tabernacle's construction, or that God Himself established for Israel sacred time of Sabbath and festival? The paper mentions the "scandal of particularity" and the "scandal of the cross," but does not flesh out the significance. Is it that God is One who "incarnates" Himself and works through earthly means? With this I would certainly agree, but I found myself uncertain as to the paper's intention. What is known about Israel's God from the fact that there were sacred personnel? In what way(s) does this transfer into the ongoing story of God's dealing with His people in Christ? This is my first and large question, suggesting the need for further exploration and reflection.

There is a need to qualify at all times the difference between New Testament "marks" of the church and that office that exists to offer up those life-giving "marks."

Though the Pastoral Office exists by God's institution and is for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, the Gospel is not confined to the Pastoral Office nor to the activities of the pastor, for God's people also carry His Word written on their foreheads and their hands and they speak of it when they are sitting in their houses and when they are walking in the way. I wish always to distinguish here, yet without separating. So, for instance, the paper rightly comments that

> Our Lutheran conviction concerning the christocentricity of Scripture means that we will neither add to nor subtract from "the marks" He has given, namely, the prophetic and apostolic witness, the water of Holy Baptism, and the Eucharist.

The author cites the Apology (VII/VIII,5) and its remarkable clarity regarding "the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in agreement with the Gospel of Christ."

Yet I could have wished for a different expression when Dr. Wenthe writes:

> The people of God or Priesthood of All Believers recognizes that Christ established the Office of Pastor as a "mark" of His church. As in the Old Testament, he is not simply a transmitter of data, but a set-aside, flesh-and-blood servant, who is to guide God's people on their daily pilgrimages.

The Pastoral Office is a "mark," to be sure, in that God has given it for the blessing of His priests and that it is a non-negotiable item. But it is not a mark in the same way that the Means of Grace are. The Office of the Ministry exists to point not to itself, but to point to Christ, whereas the "marks" of the church in themselves give what Christ offers.[1] To be sure, the Pastoral Office can never be separated from the "marks of the church." It belongs in the same breath, if you will. But I think it is important to distinguish between the "marks" of the church, and the "means to the marks," if I can be permitted a singularly inelegant phrase.

The difficulty of "how much continuity" exists between Old Testament "non-negotiables" and New Testament "non-negotiables." The problem: To what extent can we say, "Just as the Old Testament narrative, so also in our lives as New Testament priestly people of God?"

When speaking of the "non-negotiables" of sacred worship, here we stand on firmest ground. Just as God ordained for Israel means of atonement and forgiveness and hope, all in light of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, so also God ordained for His people the Means of Grace, entrusted to the pastor to administer faithfully. To speak of worship is to speak of the Means of Grace. To think "Lutheranly" and biblically about worship is to think first of what God in mercy gives to His people and does for His people when they gather around the gifts He has given.

But what about sacred personnel? The people of God are still "sacred," set apart by God's mercy and for His purposes. The New Testament emphasis is upon the Great High Priest and His once-for-all sacrifice. When we speak of New Testament correspondence to "sacred Levitical or Aaronic personnel," we must speak carefully, while noting the similarities and differences that exist now that Christ's priestly work is done, fulfilling the Old Testament priestly cultus. In this regard, the article by Dr. Paul Schreiber, "Priests Among Priests: The Office of the Ministry in Light of the Old Testament Priesthood" offers an excellent example of this kind of theologizing.[4]

Concerning sacred space we may speak, but only in a secondary sense. For Christ Jesus Himself is the very temple and presence of God, tenting among us, and wherever Christ is through His appointed means, there is sacred space. Can we show an appropriate reverence for the nave of the church building in which Christ comes to His people again and again? Of course. But that same awe is appropriate in the hospital ICU, when the pastor brings the body and blood of the Lord into the midst of the technological tangle of wires and sensors and tubes. One might further suggest a close correspondence between reverence for the Old Testament sanctuary and reverence for the human fellowship of the believers themselves wherever they are gathered, for we are God's house of living stones, builded for His habitation. If we treated one another with such respect as befits the temple of God, a lot of church meetings might proceed along different lines.

Concerning sacred time, we also may speak only in a secondary sense. Christ is our Sabbath rest, and the church year is a helpful tool that adorns the Gospel but is not necessary to it. It serves the purposes of the Gospel and serves them well and should continue to serve. But this particular way of expressing the sacredness of time is not of the essence of the Gospel itself.

Recapturing Biblical Categories

So far my questions, clarifications, qualifications. Let me register now my utter and complete agreement with the basic thesis of Dr. Wenthe's paper as I understand it, namely, that we must recapture and re-communicate the categories of the biblical narrative as it finds its fulfillment in Christ, in order even to speak about the Priesthood of all Believers. For the true Israel of God is the people who are called and gathered as the sons and daughters of Abraham, to whom and for whom God's ancient promises have come true and who look for the fulfillment of the prophetic hope when Messiah comes again in glory. And because all of God's promises find their "yes" in Christ and we are in Him, the biblical story is our story; we have been caught up into it and to live out our calling we must think in biblical terms.

Who are the priests of God? A people chosen from all the nations, for the whole earth is Yahweh's (Ex. 19:6). We have not volunteered. We have not qualified ourselves for status as God's priests. With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, God freed His people of old, and in the new exodus of the Christ we were liberated, for Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.

God determined that we would enter that covenant relationship when we were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands—when we were baptized into Christ. We crossed the Jordan water in Baptism's water, and entered into the promised land. That marks the priests of God. This is how God does it. How great is the need to explain and teach this baptismal identity—not with catch phrases or pat answers, but with clear meaning and joyful illustration! Perhaps we who are pastors among and to the priests may lead the way. God grant each of His pastors to possess by grace a personal piety that lays claim each day by faith to what is true because we were baptized into Christ's death and Resurrection.

Who are the priests of God? Those who are marked off from those around them—by God's Word.

> And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances which I teach you and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. . . . Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as Yahweh our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day? (Deut. 4:1–2, 6–8 RSV)

It is not the word of the culture, or of the media, or of the people around us that identifies us as God's priests. It is the Word of the Lord, "the Word that is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the Word of faith that we preach) because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:8–9).

Who are the priests of God? Those whom God has led into a pilgrimage in the desert places until they reach their final home. Until then, He feeds His people as ever He has done—with the bread of heaven, even Jesus our Lord, who came and fed the crowds in Galilee at Passover-tide and called upon the people to believe in Him. This bread of heaven continues to come to us, God's priestly people, as He comes to us in the bread and wine of His Supper, nourishing us with a true foretaste of the feast to come.

And what are the priests of God to do? The paper to which I am responding did not speak of that, so perhaps I may. If God's people can turn away from worldly categories and hold fast to their

blessed calling into the ongoing biblical narrative—what are the priests to do? The classic passage is, of course, 1 Peter 2. Their purpose is to proclaim the excellencies of the God who has called them from darkness into marvelous light. "To proclaim His excellencies." This expression is used only here in the Greek New Testament. In the canonical Greek Septuagint, it is found in the Psalter seven times as a translation for the Hebrew word that means, "to recount, relate." God's royal priests are to recount His praises.

Questions remain. To whom? How? Is there a limit to the audience? No, the proclamation will go out to anyone who will listen. And how are they to proclaim God's mighty deeds of compassion and salvation? Judging from the context of 1 Peter, there certainly will be an explicitly verbal element to it: "to give a defense to everyone who inquires of you about the hope that is within you" (1 Peter 3:15). God desires that His priests speak of the hope that is within them, to their friends, families, co-workers, proclaiming the saving Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and through their lives of service to others, bearing testimony to their hope in Christ.

Yet even the 1 Peter 3 passage is in the context of Christian behavior, of Christians maintaining a Christ-like attitude and deportment in the face of unjust suffering. The priests of God proclaim His excellencies also through their obedient lives of loving others, or returning evil with good, to the glory of the God who called them in Christ. The obvious passage here is Rom. 12:1–2, where, as priests who have been shown the mercies of God, we present our entire being, our bodies as living sacrifices, and each of us according to the particular gift and calling that God gives, so that none of us may think more highly of himself than he ought to think—a perennial problem with us sinners. And if the background of Matt. 5:14 is indeed the oracles of Isaiah 2 and 60 concerning the New Jerusalem to which the Gentiles will stream, then Matt. 5:14–16 is also important:

> You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket; rather, they put it on a lampstand and it illumines everyone in the house. In this way let your light shine before men—O priests of God—so that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven (my translation).

Priests of God are to offer sacrifices—their whole bodies, given in the knowledge of and the submission to the good and pleasing and acceptable will of God. Priests of God are to proclaim, in their deeds and their words, the wondrous things that God has done. If this is so, then it is clear that there is only one thing that can bring this miracle to pass among God's priests: the Gospel.

And where can the priests look, to find examples of good works of patient love and compassion and humble service? God wants them to find in their pastors such "examples" of good works (1 Peter 5:3). Where can the priests go to receive and hear and be filled with Gospel truth? The men God has given to His priests to speak good news and strengthen weak hearts and to rouse God's people to speak as they have opportunity and to fight the fight of faith and cast off the sin that so easily entangles, and to run with endurance the race set before them? God has given pastors—from among, and to His priests—to serve them and make them strong by pointing them to the sacred places where God has guaranteed He will forgive and strengthen. For God has made for Himself a royal priesthood, even a holy people. And only God can keep them, and cause them, through Jesus Christ, to offer up the sacrifices of praise and obedience that are acceptable in His sight, and that cause men to give glory to His name.

Notes

1. Again, on page 26, our essayist writes of the structures that are of "the very essence of the church, *i.e.*, can anything be said

about the implications for the people of God who are born baptismally, fed by the Lord's own Supper, guided by His Word, and shepherded by His pastors. . . ." Rather than items in sequence, I would have stated it in a different way.

2. Paul Schreiber, "Priests Among Priests: The Office of the Ministry in Light of the Old Testament Priesthood," *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988): 215–33.

Response to Presentation I

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Dr. Wenthe certainly has given us much to think about in his paper. I thank him for that. I would also like to thank Dr. Barry—I think!—for inviting me to offer a response to this paper.

The present tension within the Synod on the issue of Church and Ministry has two parts. One is the failure of the Priesthood to understand and honor the Pastoral Office and the one who holds it. The other is the failure of some pastors to accept the Office and to conduct it in agreement with the teachings of the Missouri Synod.

It is not my assignment to deal with the problem pastors. Concerning the problem priests, however, I have two suggestions to lay on the table for our consideration and discussion. I hope that these suggestions help us along in our prayerful consideration of these important issues.

First, in his paper Dr. Wenthe writes,

> Unless the people of God have a foundational sense of Scripture's narrative—the history of Israel and the life of Jesus—that can be understood and appropriated in a manner that actually defines the church's common life, discussion of office, vocation, and moral issues will not occur with satisfactory results.

I agree. But it strikes me that something even more fundamental is required. The people of God, that is, those holding the office of priest, need a knowledge of and faith in the true God. I submit that we no longer live in a time or culture in which this can be assumed.

In a recent essay titled "The Catholic Luther," David Yeago argues that, prior to 1518, the question driving Luther's theological work was not "How can I get a gracious God?" but "Where can I find the real God?" He writes, "All the evidence in the texts suggests that it was the threat of idolatry, not a craving for assurance of forgiveness, that troubled Luther's conscience."[1]

As evidence of this, Yeago quotes this passage from Luther's lectures on Romans (1515–1516):

> By the same steps people even today arrive at a spiritual and more subtle idolatry, which is now quite common, by which God is worshiped, not as He is, but as He is imagined and reckoned to be. For ingratitude and love of vanity . . . violently blind people, so that they are incorrigible, and unable to believe otherwise than that they are acting splendidly and pleasing God. And in this way they form a God favorable to themselves, even though He really is not so. And so they more truly worship their fantasy than the true God, whom they believe to be like that fantasy.[2]

This sort of subtle idolatry is a grave temptation for Christians in every age and culture. And in every age and culture, some of God's covenant people, some of His royal priests, have succumbed. I believe that this kind of idolatry is a special threat in our day.

The primary place where our understanding of God is shaped and sustained is in the liturgy of the church. It is here as we gather around Word and Table week after week that our faith in God and our knowledge of God is nourished and sustained. It is here that our covenant relationship is exercised and, in part, lived out.

It is precisely here that our culture intrudes. The current debate within our Synod about worship and liturgy is much more, I would suggest, than simply a debate about orders of service. It is finally and ultimately an issue about idolatry.

It was O. P. Kretzmann who once wrote, "Our faith, to maintain its balance, must see the plan of God in two's. . . . The weakness of the manger and the power of the angels. . . . The shame of the cross and the glory of the tomb. . . . The loneliness of the garden and the fellowship of the saints."[3]

The liturgy of the church, at its best, combines these two elements in an appropriate balance and focuses our attention on the true God. Aiden Kavanagh describes it well:

> In the Incarnation of His Son the living God has been pleased to weld us into Himself and fill us with His Spirit, which is a consolation. But that in doing so He never becomes subordinate to us is fearsome. There is nothing unusual about a deity being fearsome. Deities are well known for this quality. Nor is there anything unusual about a deity consoling its devotees. But there does seem to be something unusual about the way in which the God of Jesus Christ is fearsome with such tenderness, consoling with such towering justice. The perfect icon of this is painted by the Christian Bible three times: in the accounts of Jesus' birth, His Transfiguration, and His death and Resurrection. The perfect enactment of this is the liturgy of Christians. For when they come to their liturgy, Christians approach not just a text, a proposition, a doctrine, an option, or a chance to grab the brass ring of grace or passing moral uplift. In their liturgy, Christians disport themselves warily with the One for whom their universe is but a snap of the finger. They have the impertinence to play with the One who did not hesitate to yield up His holy Son into our bloodstained hands. This is the One at whose table we sit by grace and pardon.[4]

When the balance that Kretzmann described is lost or distorted and when the Divine Service becomes something other than

what Kavanagh describes, then the subtle idolatry Luther feared emerges. And when it appears, it affects how those called to be royal priests view themselves. It also affects how they think about Church and Ministry, about office and vocation. And the effect is not good.

My second suggestion is this. In his paper Dr. Wenthe writes that our classic Lutheran view of the Priesthood of all Believers in relationship to the Pastoral Office provides the scriptural substance and rich pastoral resources to address our current setting (8). Again, I agree. But in addition to the helpful scriptural substance concerning God's character that he assembled, it might also be helpful for our purposes to take a closer look at Exodus 19 and 1 Peter 2 where the Priesthood of all Believers is most clearly taught. These portions of Scripture, since they do clearly teach these truths, must be our starting points for any discussion of these issues.

The Exodus passage reads:

> And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him out of the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Ex. 19:3–6 RSV).

And Peter writes:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Peter 2:9–10 RSV).

The first thing that strikes me is that God's declaration concerning the Priesthood is given in connection with and as part of His covenant with Israel. I know of no place in Scripture where God commits Himself to deal graciously with people apart from His covenant—either the one established with Abraham and expanded under Moses or the one mediated by Jesus Christ.

If this is so, it amounts to a comprehensive repudiation of the radical individualism that is so strong in our culture. It is a decisive rejection of what I call "lone wolf" Christianity, the idea that I can be a Christian apart from the church. Because, if I can be a Christian apart from the church, the Pastoral Office exists simply as a resource to serve me as I have need. To this way of thinking—which is quite common among the members of our congregations—the pastor is like the operator of the neighborhood service station. I go to him only when my car needs gas or repairs. In the same way I go to the pastor only when I need spiritual refreshment or counsel or some pastoral service like a wedding or a funeral.

The second thing that strikes me in both passages is that the phrases "kingdom of priests" and "royal priesthood" are closely connected to the phrase "holy nation." God's covenant people, His royal priests, are to see themselves as set apart from the culture that surrounds them and separated for a single-hearted loyalty to God, the Lord of the covenant.

It is precisely at this point that a serious breakdown takes place today in many congregations. There is a sad loss of this sense of being "set apart" from the culture that surrounds us. This loss, among other things, has a direct impact on how the Office of the Public Ministry is viewed and honored in the congregation. Norms and standards from the prevailing culture rather than from the Word of God are used to evaluate the pastor and his ministry and thus there result unbiblical expectations of ministers and understandings of their duties and responsibilities as God's servants.

Permit me to give one example. Some years ago, workshops were conducted throughout the Synod by Donald Abdon. His intentions undoubtedly were good, but the results in many places have been otherwise. Following Abdon's advice, new constitutions were adopted by a number of congregations in which the church council was replaced by a board of directors, the office of chairman by the position of executive director, and the ancient office of elder by something called the board of lay ministry. Whatever the original intent, this change of structure introduced a cultural business model into the life of the church. This model implies that we are not "set apart" from the surrounding culture but are, in fact, a part of it. Among other things this has resulted in a significant change in attitude and understanding of the Pastoral Office. In my experience this is particularly true in those congregations where lay leadership is provided by men and women who work at jobs in middle management.

The third thing that strikes me is Peter's description of believers as the people of God. Peter uses the phrase to emphasize the special relationship that exists between God and His royal priests. In the words of Exodus 19, "you shall be my own possession among all peoples" (v. 5 RSV). To emphasize this same relationship, Paul uses the phrase "Body of Christ." To the Corinthians he writes: "Now you are the Body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27 RSV). He also uses the phrase "Body of Christ" to emphasize the kind of relationship believers are to have with each other, and by extension, with their pastors. To the Romans he writes ". . . so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5, RSV).

Here again our culture intrudes into proper Biblical understandings of these issues. What it would have us understand by membership and what many of our people understand is almost the reverse of what Paul means.

C. S. Lewis put it this way:

> The very word membership is of Christian origin, but it has been taken over by the world and emptied of all meaning. . . . I am afraid that when we describe a man as "a member of the Church" we usually mean nothing Pauline; we mean only that he is a unit—that he is one more specimen of some kind of things as X and Y and Z. . . . True membership . . . may be seen in the structure of a family. The grandfather, the parents, the grown-up son, the child, the dog, and the cat are true members. . . . They are not interchangeable. Each person is almost a species in himself. The mother is not simply a different person from the daughter; she is a different kind of person. The grown-up brother is not simply one unit in the class children; he is a separate estate of the realm. The father and the grandfather are almost as different as the cat and the dog. If you subtract any one member, you have not simply reduced the family in number; you have inflicted an injury on its structure.[5]

This understanding of membership is hard to find in our congregations. Its lack, among other things, significantly affects the way the Pastoral Office is regarded and honored in the congregation by the priests of God. In place of an attitude of encouragement and support, one often finds an attitude of criticism and judgment.

In this brief response, I have attempted to lay some additional items on the table for us to consider as we address the tensions that have arisen among us.

In his paper, Dr. Wenthe wrote: "What faces us is a comprehensive task of catechesis in Christian thinking." I agree, and it is no small task. But if the tensions are to be resolved, the problem priests will need such comprehensive instruction from the Word of God. I suspect the task of helping problem pastors will be equally challenging. May God grant us grace and the help of His Holy Spirit as we address this assignment!

Notes

1. David Yeago, "The Catholic Luther" in *The Catholicity of the Reformation*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 17.

2. Quoted in Yeago, 19 (WA 56:179).

3. O.P. Kretzmann, *Hosanna in the Whirlwind* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), 9.

4. Aiden Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1984), 119–20.

5. C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1980), 110–11.

Presentation II

The Office of the Pastoral Ministry: Scriptural and Confessional Considerations

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"Surely there is no more complicated task in the repertoire of contemporary theological needs," opines the Roman Catholic priest, Aidan Kavanagh, "than that of accounting for the traditions of ordained ministries and the effects these have had on the Ministry of the church over the past two thousand years."[1] While Lutheranism has not experienced the arguable luxury of institutional existence for as long as the tradition of Father Kavanagh, his sentiment is easily extrapolated to our own historical context.

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Scriptural Foundation

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

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

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

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

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

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

of the apostles, established a specific Office of the Ministry. "But how are men to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?" (Rom. 10:14–15; RSV). The Ministry or Office of the Word is necessitated not merely by the concern for order in the church, albeit that is not an unimportant consideration. The Office of the preaching of the Word is required for the sake of the creation of saving faith.

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

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

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

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

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

tify from my modest survey are these:

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

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

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

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

The Lutheran Confessions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Three Issues in Dialectical Context

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

The Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Office and Function

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Servanthood and Authority

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In other words, any so-called pastoral "authority" establishes itself "through the Word preached and heard, the Sacraments given and received."[16] Bishop Jobst Schöne writes,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 356.

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

11. Ibid., 246–47.

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

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

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

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

16. Ibid., 130.

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

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

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

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

Response to Presentation II

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

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

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

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

presentation of the unbiblical character of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the priesthood."[2] Of course that complicates matters considerably.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962).

2. Herman Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 75.

3. E. Schott, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, s.v. Amt, 1:338–39.

4. Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1:335–38.

5. Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), AE 41:154, 160, 164.

6. Compare J. T. Mueller's mistranslation, in *Church and Ministry*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 268.

7. "*Ministerium est status sacer, a Deo institutus, ut vera divini verbi doctrina et legitima Sacramentorum dispensatione homines peccatores fidem consequantur, et per fidem aeternam salutem*" (Abraham Calov, *Exegema Augustanae Confessionis* [Wittenberg, 1665], 451). Carpzov speaks of a divinely instituted "*ordo ac status*" (*Isagoge in Libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranorum Symbolicos* [Leipzig, 1675], 245).

8. John Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* [Tübingen, 1774], 12:4.

9. John Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

10. Oscar E. Feucht, *Everyone a Minister* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974).

11. Collins, 234.

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

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

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

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

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

Response to Presentation II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Presentation III

The Pastor: God's Servant for God's People

Dr. James Kalthoff, President
The Missouri District
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Several months ago, Dr. A.L. Barry, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, began the publication of a newsletter to pastors of the Synod's congregations. He named it *The Noble Task*, taking as his key the New International Version's translation of 1 Tim. 3:1: "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."

Those who hold the Office of the Holy Ministry have a "noble task." However, it may not seem so "noble" today—especially since pastors no longer enjoy the status and public image they once had. The "noble task" has become tarnished by the "disinformation" of the world's media and by the public sins and foibles of many famous, as well as not-so-famous persons holding the Office.

At the risk of understatement, I honestly believe that being a pastor in our day in America is one of the most challenging, yet undervalued vocations among most people in our country. The range of duties is nearly astounding as we examine them closely. The prestige that the Office of the Holy Ministry once had is long gone. Joseph Stowell has observed:

> A brief look at American history reminds us that in the early days of our country, it was the local minister who held the highest level of prestige. He not only pastored the church, but also served as a teacher of the school and as such was looked at as the prime authority in the community. We no longer hold that status. The secularization of our culture has devalued the position of spiritual leadership to that of a civil servant for marriage and funerals, to be little more than the local holy man who basically deals in nonessentials and irrelevancies. Just watch the surveys of the most prestigious positions in America, and you'll note that clergy never even make the list. Add to this the growing cynicism toward our kind from our self-inflicted wounds of public failure and you begin to understand why we are so marginalized in terms of influence.[1]

A pastor today is faced with ministry to a group of multigenerational persons who are divided not only by age, but also by attitudes, lifestyle, and personal preferences.

Stowell has written in this regard:

> When my grandparents passed the torch of their generation on to my parents, and when my parents passed the torch of their generation to me, there were some differences, but nothing major. We sang the same hymns, worshiped in the same forms, lived in a similar social setting, and basically affirmed the same perspectives regarding lifestyle and mind-set. As I am passing the torch of my generation on to my children, I am very much aware (and sometimes painfully so) of what a phenomenal difference there is between my generation and theirs. The gap, or should we say the "gulf," is measured in musical styles and preferences, perceptions of truth, perspectives on material goods, purity, commitment, and a host of other issues. This makes doing church in our day a far more difficult task. Take, for instance, the phenomenal upheaval in terms of ministering to people through music. The continuum is broad from people who are comfortable worshiping through the forms of traditional church music to others who have no identity with that form but whose cultural context is more in tune with contemporary styles of worship—idioms resembling the music that they have been brought up with

> and have learned to relate to. If you're a pastor I don't have to convince you about the struggle.
>
> Churches are full of older folks, middle folks, boomers, busters, and teenagers. Teenagers and young adults have grown up in a fractured, video-oriented society where there is little tolerance for cognitive contemplation. A world where deep-seated needs for experience, involvement, and sound bites drive the nature of both their existence and expectations. And then there are the older folks who just want it the way it's always been.[2]

Yet, despite the decline in prestige and the complexity of serving multigenerations, the expectations of congregational members for the person holding the Office of the Public Ministry have never been higher. I have found in my personal ministry as a district president that many times I am called upon to be a peacemaker between a pastor and leaders of a congregation who are extremely dissatisfied with the pastor's leadership and performance. The congregations expect vibrant, dynamic leadership that will prove itself with the evidence of a congregation's growth in membership, in worship attendance, in the offerings, and in community influence.

As a result of such expectations, pastors feel they are being pulled in so many directions that they feel stressed out and inadequate for what was thought of as "the noble task." Not measuring up to expectations, many of them fall under harsh criticism by their members. Then comes discouragement.

Not too long ago, I had a pastor in my office who wanted to receive a call elsewhere because, in part, his congregation's leadership wanted a more vibrant and visionary pastor with the preaching skills of a Billy Graham and the corporate skills of a CEO. Many of the leaders were of the opinion that the pastor did little or no work and could never be found when wanted or needed. Their congregation was declining in membership, yet they were in an area of fast population growth. Key supporters were leaving and

the offerings were dwindling at a fast pace. The pastor admitted he did not have the gifts and abilities they were requesting. He felt he was gifted in preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, and counseling, but was not very good in administration and also lacked visionary leadership. We add his name to those whom President Barry spoke of yesterday when he said: "We have a bundle of disheartened, downtrodden pastors out there. They crave . . . encouragement."[3]

The discouraged feelings of a great number of our pastors engaged in "the noble task" is due in part, I believe, to the severe judgment from parishioners who feel the pastors have not fulfilled the "expectations" of the congregation. A few years ago, Fred Kling, a minister in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., did an analysis of statements about clergy expectations from six major denominations. The expectations of "the noble task" were these, although not in the order of priority:

1. Maps out objectives and plans the overall church strategy and program
2. Teaches and works directly with children
3. Leads public worship
4. Ministers to the sick, dying, and bereaved
5. Counsels with people facing the major decisions of life—marriage, vocations
6. Fosters fellowship at church gatherings
7. Teaches and works directly with young people
8. Talks with individuals about their spiritual development
9. Visits new residents and recruits new members
10. Supplies ideas for new activities and projects
11. Works with congregational boards and committees
12. Recruits, trains, and assists lay leaders and teachers
13. Manages the church office—records, correspondence, information center
14. Preaches sermons
15. Follows a definite schedule of reading and study
16. Promotes and creates enthusiasm for church activities

17. Maintains a disciplined life of prayer and personal devotion
18. Cooperates with social, legal, medical, and educational workers
19. Helps manage church finances
20. Administers Baptism and Communion; conducts weddings and other sacred rites
21. Participates in denominational activities
22. Teaches and works directly with adults
23. Counsels with people about their moral and personal problems
24. Cultivates his or her home and personal life
25. Participates in community projects and organizations
26. Mixes socially to develop contacts
27. Maintains harmony, handles troublemakers, averts or resolves problems
28. Assists victims of social neglect and injustice
29. Speaks to community and civic groups
30. Visits regularly in the homes of the congregation.[4]

Thus ends the list. When we survey all these expectations, do they not make our heads swim? Is it a wonder that we have a high rate of burnout among clergy today? Is it little wonder that fewer men in our Synod desire to train for the Ministry?

Some time ago, I was talking with a son of one of our pastors. I asked him why he had not followed in the footsteps of his father into the Ministry. He quickly replied: "When I saw the demands made on my father's time and the continual onslaught of 'alligators' in the congregation taking him to task, I knew I couldn't take it!"

There can be no doubt that the Office of the Holy Ministry is one of high demands, duties, and expectations. The purpose of this essay is to allow the Scriptures, Lutheran Confessions, and the teaching of our church fathers to help us evaluate and supply God-given duties and expectations of the one who holds the Office of the Public Ministry. In this presentation, we shall also take a look

at some misunderstandings and misconceptions of both clergy and laity concerning the task, responsibilities, duties and expectations of this office. My hope is that this examination will also help alleviate some of the excessive pressure our pastors feel because of inappropriate expectations on the part of many of today's congregation members. I also have a goal to help God's "royal priesthood" grow in their respect for those who are "the called and ordained servants of the Word" and to have our pastors better understand what is being billed in our day as "the ministry of the laity."

The Pastor, Called to Be God's Servant
Jesus, the Pastor's Pattern for Servanthood

For our purposes we will begin with the New Testament's concept of the Ministry, which begins with Christ as teacher and pattern. One mother's expectations for her sons entering the Ministry presents us with an antithesis. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us about the time when the mother of James and John came to Jesus with the request that "one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your Kingdom" (Matt. 20:21). This brought some indignation from the other disciples. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to teach. He says,

> You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25–28).

At another time, on the night of His betrayal and before the Passover meal, Jesus wrapped a towel around Himself and washed His disciples' feet. The disciples, especially Peter, simply could not understand why the Lord would demean Himself to do what a

household slave was supposed to do for guests. Putting aside the basin and towel, Jesus teaches them the concept of ministry as servanthood. Listen to His words from John's gospel:

> Do you understand what I have done for you? . . . You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:12–17).

An Office of Servanthood

The pastor is called into the Office of the Public Ministry. We could call it "the office of public servanthood," for that is what the word "Ministry" means. Shortly after Jesus' Ascension, Peter suggests that it was time to elect a replacement for Judas, whom he described as being "one of our number and shared in this ministry" (*diakonia*, service; Acts 1:17). The apostles designate their task as being engaged in "prayer and the Ministry (*diakonia*) of the Word" (Acts 6:4). St. Paul wrote to Timothy: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the Ministry" (*diakonia*; 1 Tim. 1:12 NKJV).

It is interesting to note that the word *diakonia*, etymologically, means "through the dust." Originally, it could well have connoted the activity of a household slave or servant in ancient times who hastily moved back and forth across the dirt floors to serve his or her master or who at least ran errands through dusty streets for the master. Closely connected to the word *diakonia*, is the word *doulos* or "slave." The apostle Paul presents himself to the Roman Christians as a "slave" of Jesus Christ. To the world this was a demeaning title, but to him it was an honorable one.

A servant serves another. A pastor is first and foremost a servant of God. It is God who has called him into service. He is one "under orders" from God and his responsibility to God outweighs every other consideration.

Various Views of the Pastor's Servanthood

Currently among the Lutheran denominations in America, we have approximately three views concerning how a pastor's "servanthood" is lived out through his call from God.

There is first of all what could be called "the functional view" of the Office of the Public Ministry. In this view the Ministry is seen as a logical outgrowth from the doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers. The Augsburg Confession's statement, "God instituted the Office of the Ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments" (AC V, 1) is taken to mean that the Office does not flow from Christ's command, but from the needs of the church to proclaim the Gospel and administer the Sacraments in an orderly manner. Not Christ, but the church has established various and equal offices to administer the Gospel and the Sacraments in the congregation. The offices of pastor, teacher, director of Christian education, deaconess, etc., have been established by the church for reasons of expediency. This view has led the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod into the practice of "ordaining" teachers as well as pastors. They see pastors and teachers as having different but equal functions of ministry for the purpose of dispensing the Means of Grace. This is not the view of the Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but occasionally one does find some aspects of it among its clergy and laity.

The second view of the Ministry I choose to call "the aristocratic." According to this view, Christ has established an apostolic office and order, which exists alongside the congregation being served. In our circles, the best-known persons who are generally

thought of as holding this view were J.A.A. Grabau and Wilhelm Löhe. Conrad Bergendoff has stated, for example, that Löhe taught the "autonomy of the Ministry, speaking of the divine rite of the order which did not come from the Priesthood of all Believers but was constituted by Christ, maintained itself in a ministerial succession, and existed parallel with the congregation it served."[5]

The third view of the Office of the Holy Ministry is what I call "the conferral view." It was the one held by C.F.W. Walther and is the official public doctrine of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In 1852, Walther authored his well-known book *Kirche und Amt*, translated into English as *Church and Ministry*. In it he presented nine theses concerning the church and ten theses regarding the Office of the Public Ministry. The first three theses on the Ministry strongly upheld the divine institution of the Office. In his first thesis, he states: "The Holy Preaching Office or the Pastoral Office is an office distinct from the Priesthood of all Believers."[6] The second thesis offers further clarification: "The Preaching Office or the Pastoral Office is not a human institution but an office that God Himself has established."[7] We quickly see this as an obvious rejection of the functional view of the Ministry, which was mentioned earlier. The third thesis focused on the congregation's duty to establish this God-instituted office in its midst: "The Preaching Office is not an arbitrary office, but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time."[8]

In thesis four, Walther rejects the "the aristocratic view" of the Ministry. He says: "The Preaching Office is not a special or, in opposition to that of ordinary Christians, a more holy state, as was the Levitical priesthood, but it is an office of service."[9]

Thesis seven reveals how the Office is conferred. "The Holy Preaching Office is the power, conferred by God through the con-

gregation, as the possessor of the priesthood and all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office in the name of the congregation."[10]

Thesis eight states that the Pastoral Office is the one office instituted by God and affirms that all other offices in the church stem from it. "The Preaching Office is the highest office in the church, and from it stem all other offices in the church."[11] He goes on to say,

> Every other public office in the church is part of the Ministry of the Word or a helping office that supports the Preaching Office. . . Therefore, the offices of Christian day-school teachers . . . and others are all to be regarded as ecclesiastical and sacred, for they take over a part of the one church office and support the Preaching Office.[12]

In thesis nine, Dr. Walther shows the extent of the authority of the Public Ministry.

> To the Preaching Office there is due respect as well as unconditional obedience when the pastor uses God's Word. But the minister must not tyrannize the church. He has no authority to introduce new laws or arbitrarily to establish adiaphora or ceremonies. He has no right to inflict and carry out excommunication without his having first informed the whole congregation.[13]

Thus we see that Walther, and we believe rightly so, walked the middle road between the functional and the aristocratic view, while maintaining and upholding the doctrine of the universal Priesthood of all Believers. Walther wanted to assert the Scriptures' teachings concerning both the Ministry and the Priesthood. This view, supported by the writings of Luther and the orthodox Lutherans, has been adopted by the majority of Lutheran bodies in North America today.

Controversy Regarding the Various Concepts of Ministry

Controversy over the Office of the Holy Ministry erupts from time to time among us whenever we see an upsurge of either the functional or the aristocratic view of the Ministry. We see the functional view causing controversy, for example, in "team" ministry. As a district president, I have had to deal with situations where auxiliary offices such as "director of Christian education" (or DCE, in popular terminology) were held to be a Ministry of the Word, slightly different, but parallel to and equal with the Pastoral Office. To cite a similar incident not involving a "called" worker, a Sunday school superintendent in a local congregation resented the "interference" of the pastor because she felt he was keeping her from fulfilling the duties of this congregational office. Or in another instance the "minister of music" was perturbed at the pastor for informing her that a piece of music she had selected was not proper because it contained doctrinal error and therefore told her she could not use it. "The pastor needs to keep his nose in his own business and out of mine! He has his duty and I have mine!"

Dr. Edwin Lehmann, former president of the Lutheran Church—Canada recently wrote the following in a paper that he presented to the Alberta-British Columbia District church workers conference:

> On the surface, the controversy over whether the Ministry is primarily a function or an office is of little relevance to those who are not pastors. In reality, however, it has many implications. It would be easy for teachers, directors of evangelism, even assistant pastors, to think that a functional understanding of the Ministry would be to their advantage. After all, they perform certain functions; in many cases, functions the pastor is not well qualified to carry out. There is, however, a dangerous downside to this line of thinking. Whenever our worth or legitimacy depends on the things we are able to do, we are setting ourselves up for disastrous consequences when either we are not able to do something as well as we would like, or

> someone else comes on the horizon who can do it better. Where is our legitimacy then? Much better to grant that a pastor has worth because of who he is: God's called servant—regardless of how well he can carry out certain functions. Much better to grant that a teacher or a deaconess or a director of Christian outreach or a director of parish services, or an assistant pastor, for that matter, have worth and legitimacy because of what God has made and called them to be, rather than what they are able to do. One does not have to be a "head pastor" to be instrumental in sharing the Gospel. One does not even have to be a pastor to have a legitimate vocation. Luther's reminder is very appropriate: "Although we are all equally priests, we cannot all publicly minister and teach. We ought not do so even if we could."[14]

In this same presentation Dr. Lehmann remarks:

> The fact that a significant proportion of the laity, and a growing number of other full-time church workers have been influenced by the functional understanding [of Ministry] may well be a contributing factor in the conflicts between pastors and people, and among members of multiple staff in a congregation.[15]

When the aristocratic view of the Ministry intrudes into a congregation's life—controversy also soon follows. Who of us has not experienced this? Here is a new pastor who comes into a congregation and immediately, without any consultation with or permission from the congregation or its officers, begins to change everything around—from the type of worship the congregation is used to, to the placement of the baptismal font. After all, he is the pastor and in charge of these things too! The thinking of such pastors is that whatever they say and do is necessarily right because they have a divine call and thus their opinions are to be heeded, no matter what the issue might be. He can even give orders in matters the church has always considered to be adiaphora. After all, "*Ich bin Herr Pastor!*" "I am lord pastor!"

One of the controversies that a few district presidents of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have encountered involves a certain concept connected with this "aristocratic view" of the Office of the Public Ministry. A number of them have reported instances where pastors have made statements to the effect that whenever they are serving before the altar they should be looked upon as being "the ecclesiastical embodiment of Christ." When a pastor is serving before the altar, it is sometimes said, he "becomes the Christ."

How do we respond to something like this? The Office of the Holy Ministry was instituted by Christ. Pastors are called to speak God's Word. In fact, in the church there ought to be not only respect for, but also complete obedience to, the pastor when he relays God's message. Every sermon he gives should not be, "This is what I think!" but rather, "This is what God has said." Over Christian radio broadcasts we often hear the disclaimer: "The views and opinions of this program do not necessarily reflect the views of this station." Such disclaimers should never be thought of in connection with a pastor's sermon.

The pastor is to relay only God's message. But the pastor does not become Christ as he serves in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. He does not have any authority in the congregation besides that of the Word, certainly no authority apart from the Word. And if he would leave the Office of the Public Ministry, nothing would set him apart from any other Christian. Concerning this Luther has written:

> And he who has not such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant of others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude of Christians. His office is conveyed to someone else, and he becomes a Christian like any other.[16]

Holy Scripture teaches that pastors represent Christ. This is clearly the view of the apostle Paul who wrote: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:20). An "ambassador" is a person who represents something or someone else, *e.g.*, a nation, a king, a president. While this expression can be misapplied, what it says is clear in context.

Our Lutheran Confessions likewise teach that pastors represent Christ. Dr. William Weinrich has written:

> In the Apology, in the article "On the Church," Melanchthon discusses the question of the validity of the Sacrament administered by unworthy ministers. He writes that Sacraments administered by such ministers are true Sacraments because "they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the Church's call, as Christ testifies, 'He who hears you hears me'" (Luke 10:16). The reference to Luke 10 makes it virtually certain that the confessor thought of the minister as the voice of Christ rather than any kind of physical image of the Savior. In the words of the minister one hears the words of Christ, and therefore, the one who hears must receive in faith the very spoken words of the minister.[17]

This particular confessional truth needs clarification at the present time. In relation to this, another writer has remarked: "We Lutherans should know from the Lord's Supper controversies that there is a big difference between saying that a pastor represents Christ to the congregation and saying he is Christ to the congregation."[18]

It is time for us to put a halt to this kind of careless and very misunderstood description that some of our pastors have been appropriating to themselves! Again, they represent Christ; they do not become Christ when they are carrying out the duties of their office. Jesus Christ is Lord, but His servants do not appropriate to themselves that title or even seek that kind of recognition. On Paul's first missionary journey, he healed a crippled man. The mir-

acle created quite a stir among the locals. They brought forward a priest of Zeus to offer sacrifices to the missionaries! "Men, why are you doing these things?", Paul cried. "We are only men, human beings like you" (Acts 14:15 EB). They did not see themselves as in some way having become, in that moment, the Divinity they served, but rather mere men, just like everyone else. Likewise, it is true of pastors today, they represent Christ, it is true, but they are men, like everyone else in every way.

God's Servant, Not a People Pleaser

The pastor is called to be God's servant. He is not called to be a people-pleaser, but to please God through faithful servanthood. The pastor is called by God through the congregation to do what God has called him to do.

In his *Ministry, Word and Sacraments: An Enchiridion*, Martin Chemnitz writes in answer to the question: "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. 4:11; 1 Ptr. 5:2. II. To administer and dispense the Sacraments of Christ according to His institution. Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 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 fulfill all these things and the whole Ministry (as Paul says, 2 Tim. 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.[19]

The pastor's duties are: (1) preaching and teaching God's Word in its truth and purity; (2) administering the Sacraments according to their institution by Christ; and (3) forgiving the sins of the penitent and the retaining the sins of the impenitent.

A Steward of the Mysteries of God

As a servant of God, a pastor is also called to be a "steward of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1 RSV). Paul in this passage uses the word "mysteries" to cover all that God has revealed through His Word, as spoken by the prophets of the Old Testament and as given in that final revelation through "the Word made flesh," our Lord Jesus Christ. These mysteries certainly include what Paul calls "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), which in our day we find in the Holy Scriptures—which we as Lutherans affirm are the only source and norm for teaching and preaching in the church—and in the Holy Sacraments whose institution and administration are normed by the same Holy Scriptures. When Paul writes in his day "You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20), he certainly has in mind not only the teaching of the apostles and prophets of his day who were receivers and eyewitnesses to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, but also the Old Testament prophets who wrote of His coming. The written Word of God, then, as we have it in the canon of Scripture is the source and norm of the "mysteries of God," of which pastors in the church are to be "stewards." The heart of "the mysteries" is the Gospel, *i.e.*, the good news of what God has done for sinners through Jesus Christ that they might have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. To Jeremiah, God gave this word of encouragement: "Let the one who has my Word speak it faithfully" (Jer. 23:28). That same word of encouragement must constantly be in the heart and mind of a pastor called to be the servant of God.

A pastor must remember that his authority lies in the written Word of God, in "the whole counsel of God" and in the "apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). It does not extend to every matter that may come before the congregation. Decisions regarding organizational structure, building plans, furnishings, and even liturgical ceremonies are recognized by the Confessions to be in the area of adi-

aphora, and these are to be decided by the congregation, not the pastor. The pastor can certainly give his advice and opinion, but he cannot speak with the authority with which he proclaims the Word of God.

Distinction Between Law and Gospel in Preaching of the Word

In his work as God's servant, a pastor will be most careful to distinguish properly between Law and Gospel. When speaking God's message, Dr. Martin Luther emphasized how important the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is to preaching when he wrote:

> Therefore place the man who is able to nicely divorce the Law from the Gospel at the head of the list and call him a Doctor of Holy Scripture, for without the Holy Spirit the attainment of this differentiating is impossible.[20]

This most important aspect of his Pastoral Ministry must be observed not only when he is publicly preaching and teaching, but also when he is taking care of individual souls in private counseling. To impenitent sinners, the Law is to be preached in all its severity, but to sinners who sorrow over their sins and are burdened in their consciences because of their sin, the Gospel is to be proclaimed in all its sweetness. The servant of God will ask for wise discernment as to which, whether Law or Gospel, is to be applied in a given circumstance. By the preaching of the Law, people are led to see their wretched, sinful condition before God and how they are subject to His eternal wrath on account of sin. By the preaching of the Gospel, people are led to see that God, for the sake of the innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, forgives sin and opens heaven's gates to them—and all this without any merit or worthiness in them, but on account of the merits of Christ! What a marvelous message we are given to proclaim!

Our emphasis so far has been on the pastor as God's servant. Now, I wish to proceed to the second part of this presentation where it will be shown that he serves God by serving God's people. It is interesting to note in the Scriptures how Christ identifies with people. This concept is in keeping with our Lord's saying:

> I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . I tell you the truth whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me (Matt. 25:35–36, 40).

We see this truth also implicit in the account of the conversion of Saul, the persecutor of the church. When Christ appeared to him, He asked the question: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). When Saul asks "Who are you, Lord?" the Lord replies, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). He was persecuting the church; he was thus persecuting Christ. The principle I desire you to see is this: Christ is intimately bound up with His people and thus the pastor serves Christ by serving the people who belong to His church. But his service also goes out to all who are not in Christ's church—to all human beings who are by nature under sin and death, but who have been redeemed by Christ.

The Pastor, Called To Be a Servant for God's People

In our introduction, we mentioned how many pastors today are very disheartened due to the overwhelming expectations their congregations have of them. Their basic calling is simple. They are to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. Yet, people expect much more of ministers today than they did just several years ago. Already at the turn of the twentieth century, a professor in the Anglican Church wrote:

> The authority of the preacher was once supreme. He bearded kings and bent senates to his word. He determined policies, ruled fashions, and prescribed thought. And yet, he has proved unable to maintain the position he was so able to take. He could not insure against the reaction which has now set in as severely as his authority once did. That reaction has long been in force; and to-day, however great may be his vogue as a personality, his opinion has so little authority that it is not only ignored but ridiculed.[21]

In 1980, Willmar Thorkelson wrote:

> Lutheran pastors, like other clergy, may no longer enjoy the status with the public they once had, but the expectations of lay Lutherans for their ministers has never been higher. And the future may require continued change in direction and emphasis of Pastoral Ministry, although its functions will remain basically the same.[22]

New Emphases on Goals and Performance

In recent years, with the advent of the "baby boomer" generation, there has been a new emphasis on professionalism in the Ministry. Such professional expectations of the pastor have increased as the educational level of the average parishioner has increased. The idea of professionalism has meant that higher expectations have been set for pastors by congregations. A corporation mentality has entered the church. Congregations are now into such things as performance evaluations of pastors and other professional church workers. And the Synod and district presidents are asking questions of pastors concerning how they view their ministry, where their ministries have moved, what goals they have set for themselves in the year ahead—questions that flow from more of a corporation mentality.

Generally speaking, the focus on Pastoral Ministry before World War II was on preaching, teaching and the availability of the pastor to lead in services, weddings, funerals, and special occa-

sions. Since then, there has been a great expansion in the expectations parishioners have of their pastors, such as counseling, training of lay leadership, community involvement and leadership, organizational skills, etc. In addition, congregations are looking for the pastor to spearhead and promote all kinds of parish activities and to be an entertainer with a good sense of humor. In our day of television and mass entertainment, to which our people are accustomed, he is challenged in sermons even to be able to hold the congregation's attendance beyond fifteen minutes, and to do this week after week. These are high expectations indeed, and he will be roundly criticized if he does not live up to them.

In his opening essay to this convocation, President Barry pointed out that two of the reasons why we have so many problems relating to pastors over against congregations and congregations over against pastors is the rampant, radical equality (called "egalitarianism") and rugged individualism pervading the culture of America. These tendencies are only increasing, certainly not decreasing, as we move into a new century and new millennium. In response to this Dr. Barry states:

> In various combinations. . . radical equality and individualism . . . present great challenges for us even yet today when it comes to Church and Ministry. For instance, Christians who are unprepared, uncertified and uncalled can too easily begin to assume the public role and responsibilities of the pastor. If they are not satisfied with his "performance," or if he has frustrated them by telling them something they do not wish to hear, they may start thinking about "firing" him and "hiring" another. Or interestingly, they may begin to conceive of the church according to the model of a business where they own stock but where they have little or no active involvement unless they want to.

To defend against such egalitarian, individualistic, and "corporation" mentality, I know of pastors who have read their call docu-

ments before the congregation as a means of defense against this way of thinking in regards to the Office of the Public Ministry. "Here is what you called me to be and do!" is his pronouncement. Then comes the careful reading:

> 1. We authorize and obligate our called minister "to administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord; to administer the holy Sacraments in accordance with their divine institution."
>
> 2. We authorize and obligate our called minister to discharge "the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner," in particular "to visit the sick and the dying" and "to admonish indifferent and erring" members; To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation. . . . To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct; to endeavor earnestly to live in Christian unity with the members of the congregation, and fellow workers. . . .[23]

There is nothing here about goals or quotas or being "a chief executive officer!" he concludes with relish.

Certainly, not one of us would disagree with what is mentioned in the document called "Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation for Pastor." This document is, I believe, absolutely correct. A pastor is indeed charged with the spiritual feeding and leading of the flock committed to his care and keeping.

The Shepherd of God's People

This charge is implied in the title most often used for a minister of the Gospel in the church. He is a "pastor," *i.e.*, a "shepherd." This is what Christ called Himself: "I am the Good Shepherd...." (John 10:11). Peter calls Him "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4). The shepherd image has profound significance for our comprehension

of Christ's own work, and therefore also for our understanding of what it means with respect to the Office of the Ministry.

The image of "shepherd" is rich in the Old Testament. This is the most frequently used comparison employed in reference to the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt: the shepherd leading forth his flock. The word is also used in the Old Testament of anyone in a leadership position in Israel, whether king, prince, judge, elder, priest or prophet. Psalmists and prophets use this imagery as they look back to the former deliverance and forward to the new redemption under the Shepherd-Messiah. Ezekiel denounces the false shepherds of his time and declares that in the future, God Himself will become their Shepherd (Ezekiel 34). Isaiah and Jeremiah describe the Shepherd who is to come (Isaiah 40; Jer. 23:3, 31:10).

In light of this Old Testament background, our Lord's reference to Himself as Shepherd takes on great depth of meaning. Frequently, in the synoptic Gospels, the image of shepherd and sheep is used (e.g., Matt. 15:24; Mark 6:34; Luke 12:32). John is most vivid in portraying Jesus as "the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

In the book of Acts and the epistles we find the designated leaders of congregations called "pastors," *i.e.*, "shepherds." I find it quite interesting to note this imagery in Acts where Paul is meeting with the "presbyters" of Ephesus. As he was leaving them, he tells them: "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28 RSV). Note the word "flock," and that where we would expect the word "shepherd" we find "overseer" (*episkopos*, *i.e.*, "bishop"). Paul speaks of the ascended Christ as One who "gave some to be . . . pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). The better translation here may be "shepherds who are teachers."

The Shepherd Seeks the Lost Sheep

The shepherd imagery pertains to far more than just those sheep who are already under the shepherd's care—those who are within the range of his immediate oversight and protection. It is the lost sheep the Shepherd seeks. It is the scattered sheep He would gather in. Although there is a great difference between those who are in and those who are outside the fold, those who are without are His "other sheep" (John 10:16). We must never forget that the shepherd's deepest concern is for those farthest away. Thus a pastor will also be busily engaged in the work we call "evangelism." It is only as evangelism is motivated by pastoral compassion that it can be truly Christian evangelism. It is only as shepherds care about the sheep outside that they can begin to understand the needs of the people within. I have had pastors tell me, "I do not have the gift of evangelism." To them I respond with the words of Paul written to the young pastor Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist; discharge all the duties of your office" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Shepherds, Not Lords

Pastors are shepherds and not lords. There were a few such pastors in the days of the apostles who conceived themselves as being "lords." For example, Peter writes: "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder . . . be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers . . . not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1–3).

The apostle John encountered one such pastor and wrote of him:

> I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church (3 John 9–10).

One certainly can identify in Diotrephes, whoever he was, the tendency of lordship over the flock, rather than that of gracious and kindly shepherding.

A key to the pastor's or shepherd's work is to love the flock over which God has placed him. It is interesting to note that Jesus asked Peter "Do you love me?" before He gave him the commission "feed my lambs" and "feed my sheep"—for it is first from love of the Good Shepherd that there flows love and care for the sheep of His pasture.

The Shepherd and the Royal Priesthood

For a faithful pastor, love also means having respect and consideration for the prerogatives of the sheep. In this context I direct our attention to a doctrine that is dear to all Lutherans. I'm referring to the doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers, the rights and privileges of that priesthood, and its relationship to the Pastoral Office.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as noted previously, has always taken into account this doctrine of the Priesthood of all Believers in its discussion of the Office of the Holy Ministry. This has been a strength of our Synod down through the years. The Synod in its 1851 convention approved a set of theses on Church and Ministry prepared by C.F.W. Walther. This convention subsequently approved these theses as the Synod's statement and unanimous confession. Thesis seven on the Ministry is very significant for our consideration and bears repeating here. Permit me now to quote it for you:

> The Preaching Office [*Predigtamt*] is the power conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of the priesthood of all church power, to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in public office on behalf of those who possess them together.[24]

Pastors need to recall this truth repeatedly as they function among God's people. God has conferred their office to them through the congregation to whom Christ has originally given the Keys. The Office of the Keys is entrusted to pastors for "public" administration of them. But every Christian, as a priest of God, may use the Keys in private by sharing the Gospel with unbelievers and by absolving a brother or sister who confesses sin to them. This clearly is the teaching of Scripture and the Confessions In our day, we occasionally hear of controversy brought on by some pastors who are insisting that the work of the Great Commission of Matthew 28, that of "making disciples of all nations," was only given to the apostles and that therefore lay persons should not assume this responsibility belongs also to them. Or that only pastors may carry out the Great Commission. The great Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse has written concerning this:

> 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. To the Twelve Jesus gave the office of preaching the Gospel to every creature and making disciples of all nations by baptizing them. To them He gave the mandate at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of Me." Who were the Twelve? They were the first ministers (*Amtsträger*). From them proceeds "the Ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments "[AC 5]. But they are at the same time the church, the *ekklesia*, the representatives of God's new people of the end time. It is therefore, in fact, 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.[25]

In its original context, the Great Commission given by Jesus, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing . . . and teaching them" (Matt. 28: 19–20) was indeed originally spoken only to the eleven apostles. But in the context of the whole New Testament we see that every Christian, as a member of the Priesthood of all Believers, has the responsibility to "declare the wonderful deeds of Him who has called [them] out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9 RSV).

We see this priesthood at work when we read in the book of Acts: "On that day [the stoning of Stephen] a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. . . . Those who had been scattered preached the Word wherever they went" (Acts 8:1, 4). For the spread of the Gospel, it is the matter of "both/and"—Public Ministry and the royal Priesthood of all Believers in Christ. Yet at the same time, I would like to suggest that the fulfillment of the Royal Priesthood's responsibilities lies not in things that laypersons do at the church to "assist" the Public Ministry, such as serving as lay lectors to read the lessons, or assisting with the liturgy, etc. It lies in their being witnesses to Christ by word and deed to relatives, friends, neighbors in the context of their family, their workplace, their social life and their community involvement. A colleague of mine has written:

> Christians telling the Good News and pastors telling the Good News do not stand in some sort of competition with one another. While both have the same Good News to tell, the Lord has provided a sphere where each tells it. The individual Christian tells the Good News privately, that is, in his family and with his friends—or when he is in a situation where there are no Christians to be found. The pastor tells the Good News publicly, by God's command and institution, as the called spokesman both for the Lord and the congregation. You might detect areas of overlap between these two spheres. But if we are telling the Good News in the Name of Christ

> for the sake of the people who need it—not to build a reputation for ourselves—we will have no problem with the vocations into which the Lord has placed us. Laypeople will not climb into the pulpits, and pastors will not leave the telling of the Good News to laypeople while they themselves act like corporate CEOs [Chief Executive Officers]. We maintain cooperation between pastors and people in telling the Good News not by blurring necessary distinctions between Church and Ministry, but by continuing to observe these distinctions.[26]

Extremes To Be Avoided

In this connection, I would like to suggest that in the church there are two extremes to be avoided: (1) that laypersons must be involved in all aspects of the worship life of the congregation, such as reading the Scriptures, leading the liturgy, having the general prayers, having an occasional sermon, etc.; and (2) the "staff-driven" approach seen so often in larger congregations where all key decisions are left basically to the pastors and other professional church workers while laypeople pursue other interests.

In summary, I wish to encourage the pastors in our churches to cultivate a healthy respect for the Priesthood of all Believers, and the Priesthood to have a deep respect for the Office of the Public Ministry. Mutual respect will go a long way to the alleviation of many of the problems we face in Church and Ministry today.

Obedience to Pastors

This brings me to a very unpopular truth that in our individualistic society is often frowned at by the world and also by members of Christian congregations: people do owe obedience to pastors. The holy writer says to Christians: "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account" (Heb. 13:17 RSV). Such obedience, however, is not absolute; it pertains to obeying them when they

proclaim God's Word in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. If pastors depart from this source and norm of preaching and administration of the Sacraments, the Royal Priesthood has the right to admonish and correct. On the other hand, congregations have a responsibility to honor and uphold the preaching, teaching and administration of the Sacraments, which are in accord with the Holy Scriptures. Paul writes this word of encouragement to the Christians of Thessalonica:

> We beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thess. 5:12,13 RSV).

One of the Synod's district presidents, Dr. George Wollenburg, has called our attention to the imagery used by some of the old Lutheran dogmaticians to reflect on the scriptural teaching of the Priesthood of all Believers. When the church as the bride of Christ commits to her servant (*i.e.*, the pastor) the Keys, they come with a manual. It is the book written by the bride's husband. He determines how the servant is to serve the bride. The ordination vow of a pastor, reiterated every time he is installed in a new congregation, is highly significant in our Synod. For here the church in effect says: This is how Christ wants you to serve, how He wants you to be a pastor. You can only serve us this way, according to Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. And even if at some later point the church seems to change its mind and demands some different teaching or ministerial activity, the biblical way is the way the pastor is to keep on going because he is God's servant.

Martin Franzmann has written:

> The hard thing is to march: to be good, not clever; to be faithful, not brilliant; to be honest, not urbane; to be the rough wool blan-

> ket that keeps the faithful people warm, not the flapping scarf of changeable silk that men admire. No one has promised us that confessing the truth will make us happy, but we shall be blessed—of this we may be sure.[27]

True Christian love, *agape* love, means "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), even when groups large and small in the congregation may not like it!

The Pastor and His Relation to Other Members of the Staff

The pastor as servant to God's people includes yet another aspect often bypassed in presentations such as this. I am referring to the service he renders to his fellow-servants who are called to auxiliary positions in the congregation that aid and support the one Ministry of Word and Sacrament. As our congregations grow larger, additional staff—teachers, directors of Christian outreach, directors of Christian education, deaconesses, etc.—are called for special supportive work to the Office of the Public Ministry. It is no secret, that in many cases, multiple staff ministries in our churches are not healthy. Many times a district president is called to help strengthen relationships between professional church workers who have almost reached, or have reached, the breaking point.

Quite often the problem stems from the "authoritarian" style of the senior pastor or from a lack of respect the one who holds the auxiliary office has for the pastor.

In this regard one of our respected colleagues has written:

> A view of the Pastoral Office that emphasizes its divine institution does not have to translate into an authoritarian style of dealing with a co-worker. Quite the contrary. The more certain the pastor is that his call is from God, the more prepared he should be to humble himself as a servant. For, with his call being from God, no one can legitimately despise him for reaching out to those who are in need of support and encouragement. And for the co-workers, working

> with someone else who is secure in his call, should actually make it possible to be more confident, not less so, in carrying out assigned responsibilities. Much, therefore, centers around how the pastor sees himself. If he is one who occupies a position, he will want to defend it. If he is in charge of certain responsibilities, he will want to make sure they are done right. But if he sees himself as a steward of that which God has entrusted to him, he will want to discharge that trust. Because that trust is in the Gospel, such self-understanding will place priority on forgiveness, acceptance, reconciliation and encouragement, rather than on self-preservation, rejection, conflict and rebuke.[28]

A key to good team ministry is, once again, a Christlike servant attitude. He had His co-workers—apostles-in-training—around Him, and to them He said: "I am among you as One who serves" (Luke 22:27).

Some conflicts in team ministry stem, in part, from a wrong view of the Office of the Ministry. I have found that some of the commissioned ministers of religion have a functional view of ministry in which they see the pastor as having a call to do specific things, while the co-worker is on an equal status, called to fulfill his specific duties outlined in his or her call. There is no responsibility toward the pastor, but only toward the congregation. Each works in his sphere of responsibility, with accountability given to a certain board and/or the congregation itself. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's view of the various offices in the church is given in Walther's *Church and Ministry*, in Thesis eight: "The Preaching Office is the highest office in the church and from it stem all other offices in the church."[29] A pastor has the call also of *episcope, i.e.*, oversight over the whole congregation, including over those who function in auxiliary offices directly related to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, or to other church offices of administrative function. It is, therefore, natural to assume some accountability of the auxiliary offices to the one who holds the Office of

the Public Ministry in keeping with the pastor's responsibilities for oversight of the Ministry in a given place and time. He is to be attentive to all persons serving the congregation.

Although this is our position, pastors must refrain from an authoritarian style in working with co-workers. To them he must be a "shepherd" and a "servant." In their book on team ministry, the sainted Ervin Henkelmann, and Stephen J. Carter discuss a deteriorating team ministry led by a senior pastor with an authoritarian style. Listen to their helpful commentary:

> Apparently he fails to see himself as a servant of God and the people. They [the other ministers of religion on the team] should be able to learn from his humility, personal caring for them, willingness to listen, and cooperative spirit. Then he would be leading by serving rather than lording it over them like the Gentile rulers. God's Word has also taken root in the hearts and lives of the teaching ministers and lay leaders. They will be more faithful to the Word and better stewards of the mysteries of God if they are encouraged by his example of service. As he shares leadership with them, they are more likely to accept their God-given responsibility to lead in assigned areas. The team will function to God's glory. Christ will be honored as the Suffering Servant who possesses all authority, and Pastor Schmidt will be revered as the spiritual leader of the congregation and a loving minister of Jesus Christ.[30]

A wise pastor indeed is he who, with God's help, ministers to his called co-workers in a humble, sensitive, loving, respectful, and caring way—even to those with whom he has differences of personality and opinion. He will be open to their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, as well as their constructive criticisms—and indeed, will regularly ask for them. He also needs to have enough confidence in the co-worker to allow him to use and expand in the use of spiritual gifts and natural abilities. Such a working relationship can be summarized by that small but wonderful word "trust."

Being a servant to co-workers certainly means that the pastor will take the lead in establishing relationships around the Word of God. Staffs need to meet regularly (daily, if possible; weekly at the least) to study God's Word together and to discuss parish planning and ministry concerns. Good communication must be constantly stressed and adhered to. To summarize, let us note again that the Pastoral Office has been created by Christ. Through the course of the years, the church has added various assisting offices to the Pastoral Ministry for the life and well-being of the church. All such offices embrace the full aspect of servanthood represented by the Pastoral Office ordained by Christ Himself. While we cannot say that Christ has instituted the myriad of offices we have in our churches today, they are to be seen as extensions of the Pastoral Office and should be accorded respect and honor. Such an understanding and actions based upon it will lead to greater harmony and unity in congregations with multiple staffing.

The Pastor and His Care of the Individual Soul

There is one final aspect of the pastor as God's servant with which I would like to conclude this paper: the pastoral care of the individual soul. So often our discussions concerning the servanthood of the pastor have to do with public acts such as preaching to the multitudes, administering the Sacraments to the members of the congregations in the setting of public worship, and teaching Bible classes. As a servant, our Lord certainly ministered to the multitudes. Huge crowds flocked to hear His preaching in the open air. He preached to congregations large and small gathered in the synagogues of His day. But a good share of His ministry was spent ministering also to individual souls, giving them the spiritual care they needed. I think of Jesus' dialog with Nicodemus, the Pharisee; or of His discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well; or of His miracle of the healing of the man born blind; or of His visits

to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, which were certainly filled with words pertaining to their spiritual nurture and care. The apostle Paul hints at both public proclamation of the Word and individual ministry when he says: "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20: 20–21 RSV). Paul was not only a public preacher of the Word, but one who shared that Word in a personal visitation program "from house to house."

One of the most frequent criticisms I hear of pastors is that they neglect to make personal calls on the members of the congregation. I do not place the fault for this entirely on the pastors. Congregations have a multitude of meetings the pastor is expected to attend. The pastor's work also involves administrative tasks, preparations for sermons and Bible studies, preparations for weddings, funerals, etc., coupled with his need to spend some worthwhile time with his family. Responsibilities such as these have contributed to the demise of pastoral visitation. Almost 50 years ago a German wrote of the "bureaucratizing of the Pastoral Office." He said, "One does not solve this problem by expanding the rights of the laity [that is, pretending that they are the ones who provide the real ministry in the congregation] but only by once again making bureaucrats into pastors."[31]

Frederic Greeves in his book on soul care observes:

> In the United States . . . the minister is regarded as a "counselor." Even to visit the church office of an American minister is to be reminded of the professional character of the pastor's work. Am I wrong in thinking that the problem which faces ministers in North America is that they are primarily consulted as psychologists? . . . When people turn to the Ministry for counsel, that is a matter for gladness; but what if they turn for psychological rather than for

> spiritual counsel? What if their very eagerness to be helped with needs of one kind forms a hindrance to the satisfaction of needs of a deeper kind? In England, it is not uncommon to meet devoted Christian ministers who confess that many weeks, even years, pass with little private conversation with men and women about the things of God. This is a state of affairs which our Christian fathers would have deemed unthinkable.[32]

In our day, I see a great need to stress both with pastors and with the laity that part of the pastor's servanthood includes the proclamation and application of God's Word for "the cure of souls." In German, this duty is expressed with the word *Seelsorge*, for which there is no single-word equivalent in English. In *Sorge* there is a reminder of deep concern for souls and of compassionate actions to which such concern leads.

The scope of such individual pastoral care was described by St. Augustine in this way:

> Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low-spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused, the contentious constrained, the haughty repressed, litigants pacified, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved.[33]

Martin Bucer, a theologian of the Reformation period who was very much influenced by Luther, liked to describe Protestant, evangelical care of souls in terms of Ezekiel 34:16: "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over." In his exegesis of this text Bucer gave a fivefold analysis of the meaning of the care of souls:

> to draw to Christ those who are alienated; to lead back those who have been drawn away; to secure amendment of life in those who

> fall into sin; to strengthen weak and sickly Christians; to preserve Christians who are whole and strong, and urge them forward in all good.[34]

Every synodical or district president can recall specific complaints about a pastor's neglect of this responsibility of his calling. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has written this about the spiritual care of souls:

> The mission of spiritual care falls under the general mission of proclamation. Caring for the soul is a special sort of proclamation. The minister should proclaim wherever possible. The minister is the pastor, that is, the shepherd of the congregation which needs daily care (2 Tim. 4:2). "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching." Caring for souls is a proclamation to the individual which is part of the Office of Preaching. . . . Spiritual care . . . comes down "from above," from God to the human being. . . . In spiritual care, God wants to act. In the midst of all anxiety and sorrow we are to trust God. God alone can be a help and comfort. The goal of spiritual care should never be a change of mental condition. The mission itself is the decisive element, not the goal. All false hope and every false comfort must be eliminated. I do not provide decisive help for anyone if I turn a sad person into a cheerful one, a timid person into a courageous one. That would be a secular—and not a real—help. Beyond and within circumstances such as sadness and timidity it should be believed that God is our help and comfort. Christ and His victory over health and sickness, . . . misfortune, birth and death must be proclaimed. The help He brings is forgiveness and new life out of death.[35]

In the care of souls, the pastor will use "the whole counsel of God" in the Holy Scriptures. He must watch very carefully that he rightly divides the Law and the Gospel in every situation. This is one of the most difficult tasks of pastoral care, but it is one of utmost importance. The Formula of Concord states:

> We believe and confess that these two doctrines [Law and Gospel] must be urged constantly and diligently in the church of God until the end of the world, but with the due distinction, so that in the Ministry of the New Testament the proclamation of the Law with its threats will terrify the hearts of the unrepentant and bring them to a knowledge of their sin and to repentance, but not in such a way that they become despondent and despair therein. Rather, since "the Law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24), and hence points and leads not away from but toward the Christ who is the end of the Law (Rom. 10:4), the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Christ will once more comfort and strengthen them with the assurance that if they believe the Gospel, God forgives them all their sins through Christ, accepts them for His sake as God's children, and out of pure grace, without any merit of their own, justifies and saves them (FC SD VI, 24–25).

Bonhoeffer writes in his book on the care of souls that

> particular attention must be paid to Law and Gospel in spiritual care . . . The Law must be preached just so that the Law does not lead to despair. The Gospel must be preached just so that the Gospel does not lead to false security.[36]

It is in the care of souls and actual situations pertaining to individuals that Confession and Absolution can occur in an informal way. This takes place best, in our day, when the pastor visits individuals and listens carefully to their expressed feelings of guilt, their anxieties, their failures, and their bouts with unbelief and doubt. I know of some pastors who regard our confessional stance on Confession and Absolution so highly that they have re-instituted regular times when people may come for confession at the church. This is often misunderstood by the laity of the church, yet it may be a step to restore private confession to the prominence that it once held in the Lutheran Church immediately following the Reformation. A pastor who visits his people, listens to, and shows concern

for the souls of each of his members opens up doors for the personal pastoral care that every child of God needs in some way. And Confession and Absolution will often take place in such an informal setting of pastoral visitation.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this essay, we have expanded the thesis that the pastor is called to be God's servant for God's people. Although our focus has been on the pastor as servant of God's people, I think we can readily see that every Christian, whether a pastor or a layperson, is to follow Paul's injunction: "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 KJV).

It is this Christ, the Chief Pastor of the church, whom Paul followed. And, he followed Him along the path of servanthood. May God enable all who have a call to serve Him in the Pastoral Office to be His servants always by serving His people with Word and Sacrament. Whether it is in public teaching and preaching to two or three or a multitude, or whether it is through a faithful sharing of "the mysteries of God" with the individual soul who needs a shepherd's care and concern, may the Holy Spirit enable us to be faithful to the call of God. We have this ministry by the grace of God, and like the apostle Paul, let us serve faithfully in all humility and say with him: "To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8 NKJV). With such humble understanding of the grace of God and the unfathomable depths of the treasures he has in the Word and Sacraments, a pastor will be formed more and more into being God's servant for God's people.

Notes

1. Joseph M. Stowell, *Shepherding the Church into the 21st Century* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 18.

2. Ibid., 19.

3. A. L. Barry, *The Noble Task: A Letter to the Pastors of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*, vol. I, number 1, Lent 1997.

4. Thomas E. Kadel, ed., *Growth in Ministry* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1980), 13–14.

5. Conrad Bergendoff, *The Doctrine of the Church in American Lutheranism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 31.

6. C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, trans. J. T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 161.

7. Ibid., 177.

8. Ibid., 191.

9. Ibid., 198.

10. Ibid., 268.

11. Ibid., 289.

12. Ibid., 289–290.

13. Ibid., 303.

14. Edwin Lehmann: "The Pastor As Servant," an essay presented to the Alberta-British Columbia District Church Workers Conference, October 22, 1996, 6–7. The Luther quote is from *The Freedom of a Christian* (1520), AE 31:360.

15. Ibid.

16. Martin Luther, *Sermons on Psalm 110* (1535), AE 13:332.

17. William C. Weinrich, *It Is Not Given to Women to Teach: A Lex in Search of a Ratio*, n.p., 1991, 19.

18. Ken Schurb, "Church and Ministry," Proceedings of the 27th Convention of the Montana District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, June 16–19, 1997, Billings, Mont., 81.

19. Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments, An Enchiridion*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1981), 26.

20. Edwald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 2:732

21. P. T. Forsythe, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*

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22. Kadel, 1.

23. Supplement to Diploma of Vocation for Pastor (Ordained Minister), 1.

24. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 268.

25. Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 78.

26. Schurb, 76.

27. Martin H. Franzmann, *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 84.

28. Lehmann, 21.

29. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 289.

30. Ervin F. Henkelmann and Stephen J. Carter, *How to Develop a Team Ministry and Make It Work* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1985), 30–31.

31. Hans Asmussen, quoted by Armin H. Moellering in "Some New Testament Aspects of the Ministry Identified and Applied," *Concordia Journal* 14 (July 1988), 232.

32. Frederic Greeves, *Theology and the Cure of Souls: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology* (London: The Epworth Press, 1960), 18–19.

33. Augustine, *Sermo CCIX*, cited in J.T. McNeill, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), 100.

34. Martin Bucer, *On the True Cure of Souls and the Right Kind of Shepherd*, quoted by Frederic Greeves, *Theology and Cure of Souls*, 11.

35. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Spiritual Care*, trans. Jay C. Rochelle (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 30.

36. Bonhoeffer, 43.

Response to Presentation III

Dr. Leopoldo Heimann, President
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil
Porto Alegre, Brazil

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep" (John 21:16).

Introduction

The apostle Paul said to Timothy: ". . . discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Melanchthon wrote: " . . . the Ministry of the New Testament is scattered through the whole world and is found wherever God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, doctors . . . given . . . for the edification for the Body of Christ" (Treatise, 67; my translation of the Portuguese translation of the Book of Concord). In view of this perspective of the Pastoral Ministry, I wish to comment on the essay by Dr. James Kalthoff: "The Pastor: God's Servant for God's People."

The Author and the Essay

Even if I did not know who the author is, after hearing and reading this essay, I would know with certainty that the author is a pastor-theologian, a Lutheran pastor, a pastor of the Missouri Synod. Theology can be a blessing to the church as long as it is proclamation. Dr. James Kalthoff's essay is proclamation.

The essay was presented according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, within the historical context in which The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod lives. It was written by a pastor, teaching what the Lutheran Church believes, teaches and confesses.

The essay was written in a concise and exact style, clear and easy; avoiding academic, complex and pompous sentences. Anyone who reads and listens also understands what Dr. Kalthoff is saying. It is a pastor speaking and writing with the presupposition that his reader or listener really does understand the message about the church and the Pastoral Ministry. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Emphases of the Text

1. The Pastor's Image. In the church as well as outside of it, the pastor, at the end of this millennium, has lost his image. His prestige, his respect and his authority are being contested in today's world and also in the church. The church has to put the pastor back into the place where Christ, the Lord of the Church, wants him to be. I was fourteen years old and a young student at our seminary in Porto Alegre. One day the president of the church visited the seminary. That day after school, I did not play soccer with my colleagues. I went to my room and wrote to my parents, "Today I have seen the President." It was the greatest emotion of my life, at the time. What a good image of the pastor!

2. Ministry Is Service. There might be theological divergence about "functional," "aristocratic" or "conferral" ministry, but there is convergence as to the ministerial function—it is service! *Diakonos* and *doulos, diakonia* and *douleia* all speak of serving, of acting in favor of the other or for the other, in order to help the other. The pastor serves God and men. Ministry is service. Ministry is not for the lazy or the "tired." It is challenging and difficult work that requires persons who wish to serve their Lord and His church.

3. Laymen and Pastors. The church is one of the great orders of God's creation. Within the church, the same Creator has installed two smaller orders in order to accomplish the purposes of the church: the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Ministry. For a long time the layman was somewhat ignored in the Lutheran Church. There was a strong "pastorcentrism." Today, the church wants the pastor and the layman (Priesthood and Ministry) to be together and with each other as God's team, doing the work of the church—including the public worship service. And that reality is a blessing to the Lutheran Church. It is the concept of the AC VII and VIII on the church.

4. Counselor/Pastor. The pastor is not only a teacher of and preacher to people. He is also a counselor and comforter to the individual person. He is the one who cares for the souls (*Seelsorge*). The Christian/sinner is not the multitude. He is a person. To let the individual person get lost in the multitude is dangerous. Jesus is our example: He left the multitudes to take of the individual. The pastor has to be more of a spiritual counselor.

Other Topics and Suggestions

I have read and heard the essay "The Pastor: God's Servant for God's People." I listened to the two essays yesterday. From a Latin American and Brazilian perspective, and as a man from the Third World, I would like to suggest an emphasis on these topics:

1. Relationship between Old Testament and New Testament. What is the relationship between the function of the Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament (including prophets) and the Pastoral Ministry in the New Testament? What is the relationship between the election of God's people in the Old Testament (Israel) and the people of God in the New Testament (new Israel). More clarification is needed as we seek together to appreciate the Christ-centered connection between the Old and New Testaments.

2. "Suffering Servant." The minister was presented as "servant" and "pastor" or "shepherd," having Jesus as example or model for both. Christ as "Suffering Servant" (Old Testament) should be included as a model for the "servant-pastor" because of the consolation and promise for the servant of God: "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Is. 53:11).

3. Members' Support of the Pastor. The pastor, despite his being regarded as a "man of God," is no genius or superman. And yet the profile of the pastor, according to the Pastoral Epistles, is in a sense that of a superman. The pastor does everything in order to shepherd the people of God. It would be good to show what the people of God can do for the Ministry, the pastor himself and his family—visiting, comforting, etc. The Bible says much about this.

4. Preparation of the Sermon. The public worship service is the spiritual feast of the week for the members, for the people of God. The sermon has a special place during this service. Statistically, 88 percent evaluate the whole worship service on the basis of the sermon. The sermon needs more preparation and less improvisation. As pastors, we need to study the text more carefully and to address the real-life-situation of the people.

5. The Pastor's Call. The author speaks much about the call of the pastor. I hoped to find more about the meaning of the "legitimate call" or "regular call" (AC XIV), as well as more about whether a call is for a determined time or indeterminate time. I also looked for something about the difference between vocation, call, ordination and installment (installation).

6. Service of Women. In preparation for the Theological Convocation, it was mentioned that there would be a word about the ministry of women. I thought that it might appear in Dr. Kalthoff's or Dr. Johnson's essays. I missed it. This would have been the appropriate moment. The Lutheran churches need and expect a clear and convincing answer.

7. Joy in the Ministry. Despite the responsibilities and difficulties involved in the Pastoral Ministry, I would have liked to hear something about the need, importance, privilege, blessing, joy and reward of the servant of God who consecrates his life for the people of God! A pastor needs to hear: You are important! You are needed! You are doing the most important work in the world: Preaching salvation in Jesus Christ! As pastor, you are always in the minority. But never forget this: With God, you are always in the majority. Go ahead! In Christ, you are victorious (you are a winner).

Conclusion

1. Gratitude. As chairman of the International Lutheran Council, I thank The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for the invitation extended to the presidents and theologians of the Council churches to the Theological Convocation. I thank Dr. James Kalthoff for his direct and clear teaching on the Pastoral Office that a pastor is a *doulos tou Christou*.

2. Acceptance. Whether any suggestions are accepted or not, I want the 617 pastors of my church in Brazil, and all pastors of the ILC churches to read this essay in their language.

3. Encouragement. Luther in the Preface to the Small Catechism says:

> Our office . . . involves much fatigue, danger and temptation . . . little reward and gratitude from the world. But Christ Himself wants to be our reward, if we work in truthfulness (my translation from Portuguese).

Response to Presentation III

Dr. Diethardt Roth, Bishop
Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Germany

Dear Fathers and Brothers in Christ: It is an honor for me to be invited. Thank you very much, President Barry. My name is Diethardt Roth. I am the bishop of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany. I am the successor of Bishop Schöne. This is my first time in America and the first time to speak in English at a theological convocation. Please excuse some German-English.

Dr. Kalthoff has delivered an enlightening lecture and there has been a clear first reaction to it from the chairman of the International Lutheran Council, Dr. Leopoldo Heimann. For that reason I fear that it will be very difficult for me to say anything at all that is wise and helps us further. I would very much like to thank Dr. Kalthoff for sharing his ideas with us on the interrelation of the Pastoral Ministry and the Priesthood of all Believers, and on the problems that have currently arisen as these two entities work together.

In the significant essay *Ministry and Congregation* (July 1949) that Hermann Sasse wrote to Lutheran pastors, he said:

> One of the most grievous events in the history of the Lutheran Church in the 19th century was the fact that the two great church-

> men Wilhelm Löhe and Ferdinand Walther went separate ways after the great theological leader of the Missouri Synod had, in 1851, a most promising meeting with Löhe in Neuendettelsau. . . . No one could imagine that out of the laborious work of organizing these congregations on the fringes of civilization would come the great churches in whose hands, so far as it lies in human hands, today rests the future of Lutheranism. So also no one could foresee the consequences of the break between Walther and Löhe, between Missouri and Iowa.[1]

Herman Sasse states that the task of this century

> cannot be to repeat the formulations of both sides and to take up the discussion where it came to a stop a century ago. Rather our task is again to think through what at that time remained unresolved. For this task we have the help of what the church has experienced since then and of what may have been given of deeper insight into the teachings of Holy Scripture.[2]

In recent years this matter has undergone intensive examination by SELK's Commission on Theology. In 1997 it published a report on this topic titled *The Office of Pastoral Ministry in the Church.* This report comments on many issues.

To discuss this document in its entirety would go beyond the scope of this lecture. In addition to points that Brother Kalthoff listed in his lecture come two more areas that the Commission on Theology emphasized. The epistles of the New Testament, as well as the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, show us how the Office of Pastoral Ministry and the congregation are inextricably connected and nonetheless clearly distinguished from one another. They belong together because the means by which Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered to the congregation may not be absent from the congregation. In addition, the Office of Pastoral Ministry was created to serve in the congregation and has, therefore, the congregation as its focal point.

They are distinguished from one another, however, because the Word and Sacrament are not administered to the congregation in its own name, but rather in God's name, and because the service of the office-bearer is directed toward the congregation.

The Divine Service of the congregation that has gathered in the name of Jesus is the particular place where one can become most aware of how the Office of Pastoral Ministry and the congregation are related to one another. The missionary or pastor proclaims the Gospel to the congregation and administers to it the Sacraments. He confesses his sins, together with the congregation, makes intercession and prays fervently, praises and thanks, just as all witnesses to the Gospel do.

Sasse writes in the essay from which I quoted earlier:

> How unimportant then becomes all that has grown onto this office through the modern overorganization of the church; one has only to think of the church politics with which modern bishops kill their own time and that of others. Each sermon then becomes more important than all those sessions which spend their time discussing big church resolutions. . . . Conversely, the more seriously we take the Holy Ministry, the more seriously we take the Christian congregation.[3]

Yes, let us take very seriously our profession and our call into essential matters of the Gospel. Let us concentrate on the tasks and service entrusted to us at our ordination. And let us teach that to the congregations.

Many of the deliberations of C.F.W. Walther, which Brother Kalthoff laid out for us, can be found in the ideas the theological commission has presented. Even a precise theological definition of the interrelation of the Office of Pastoral Ministry and the congregation cannot guarantee a problem-free working environment between the pastor, his staff and the congregation.

Keeping Brother Kalthoff's lecture in mind, I believe I can say that we in the SELK sometimes have problems in the parish that are similar to those that Brother Kalthoff has described. The declining image of the church and of its pastors, the burn-out effect among the clergy and the co-workers in the parish, despondency, ever-increasing demands upon the pastor's professionalism, unmet expectations and many more—all these are, and this is the first of three points in this connection that I would like to make, manifestations of the "holy possession of the sacred cross," as Luther called it in his work *On the Councils and the Church*.[4]

So that they can grow to conformity with Christ, the church's head, God's people, Luther writes:

> must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord's Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God's Word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5 [:11], "Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account." They must be pious, quiet, obedient, and prepared to serve the government and everybody with life and goods, doing no one any harm. No people on earth have to endure such bitter hate. . . .[5]

We must constantly be aware of the fact that we are the *ecclesia pressa*, the church under the cross, and not the *ecclesia triumphans* (church triumphant). Keeping this in mind, a pastor should go about his work calmly and patiently—even in the face of temptation. The words of Martin Luther concerning the three things that make a theologian should be brought to mind here: *oratio, meditatio, tentatio* (prayer, meditation and spiritual struggle). In light of the questions, distress and problems in congregations today, the pastor should recall these words of Luther and practice them con-

stantly. Moreover, he should discover anew the power of prayer and then he will fight against misunderstanding through himself and others.

Philip Melanchthon, whose 500th birthday we are commemorating this year, wrote down thousands of prayers that we still have today—more than from any other Reformer. The times are difficult; shouldn't we pastors learn the art of prayer anew and practice it often? Don't we sometimes lack the energy we need, because our prayer, along with the certainty of its being heard, has been found wanting among us?

The second point I would like to make is that, as Dr. Kalthoff's lecture has elucidated, controversies in the congregations that lead to mutual misunderstanding and condemnation clearly show us that we all are "*simul iustus et peccator*" (at the same time saint and sinner), that we all live under the Law and the Gospel. Of importance to us in our deliberation today is the fact that the first person to hear the Law and the Gospel is the pastor. His self-righteousness, his arrogance and his haughtiness are thereby revealed and shattered to pieces. But he is also comforted by the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the pastor's work is to be christocentric, and in the same way the congregation is to see that all its doings are christocentric. The freedom of the Office of Public Ministry is threatened when the bearer of the Office becomes a functionary and tool of man and no longer a servant of Christ. In, with and under Jesus Christ the congregation comes together. Together with the whole Christian church on earth, it is called, gathered, enlightened, sanctified, and kept with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. It is the will of Christ that His congregation be seen in the world like a city on a mountain, and that it be "read" as if it were a letter that God has written to the world. We do not have to make ourselves to be this city and this letter, for God causes us to be this for the sake of

Christ Jesus, who was crucified and was raised from the dead. God chooses and calls His servants so that in the congregation, the Word of God may be preached and the Sacraments be administered. As Luther wrote,

> Now, if the apostles, evangelists, and prophets are no longer living, others must have replaced them and will replace them until the end of the world, for the church shall last until the end of the world [Matt. 28:20]. Apostles, evangelists, and prophets must therefore remain no matter what their name, to promote God's Word and work.[6]

God Himself desires that the Office of the Pastoral Ministry exist. At the same time, however, He desires to have as many members of the congregation as possible called into the service of witnessing to the Gospel. To this end, God bestows upon the congregation through the Holy Spirit many spiritual gifts, which His believers then combine with the various talents that God has given and continues to give them. It remains a challenge for us to discover these spiritual gifts and help to bring them to fruition in the work of the congregation.

There is yet a third issue in this context that I would like to touch upon: The causes of the problems that are currently arising between office-bearers in the church, the professional staff and the congregation. These problems are certainly of a theological nature, as Brother Kalthoff has shown in his lecture. There are also, however, socio-cultural and psychological factors that lie under the surface of these problems.

There is first the personality of the pastor with his problems. Then there is stress and severity on the job, which workers often carry into the congregation. Viewed as the manager of a service-oriented business, the pastor is quickly made responsible for everything that takes place in the congregation.

A society that is so deeply experience-oriented expects its pastors and the co-workers in its congregations to have the same orientation. As Erich Fromm puts it, from the perspective of society "[W]whoever doesn't perform well as a marketing man is to be replaced."

In regard to the psychological factors, I would like to refer to the anxieties that plague so many people—members of the congregations and their pastors included: fears about the existence of the church and the congregation, fears that often let man become the center of our thought and not the triune God and His ability to effect His purpose.

For the accomplishment of their goals and the doing of their work, both pastors and laity need a good theological education, as well as continued training. In light of modern problems that pastors face, the SELK is at present restructuring its seminary's curriculum. Pastors today are said to need more competence in the following areas, broadly defined: theological-hermeneutical, context-analytical, mission-pastoral, personal-spiritual and dialog-self-critical. In this connection the commission for restructuring the curriculum stresses the importance of measures that enhance the personality of pastors while at the seminary—something that I gladly endorse. A good theological education of tomorrow's pastors helps the church continue on course. Therefore, our seminaries are very important for the future of our churches. This is also true of continuing education and training, which must be offered on a regular basis in order to be able to reflect on and accompany aberrant tendencies in a prompt and critical fashion. All this is not intended only for the pastors of our church, but also for all the other co-workers and staff, be they professionals or volunteers. We always have to learn to practice good communication in our congregations as we together continue to study and discuss the treasures of Lutheran theology. There we give a sign to the world.

One area of activity in particular that you have emphasized, Brother Kalthoff, and that our churches have in common, is in my opinion *Seelsorge* (soul care). We are certainly not only a "come-church" but also a "go-church," which reaches out to those within our congregations and to those who are unchurched. However, the larger the congregation, and the more spread out, the more difficult it is to approach *Seelsorge* adequately. Without having a notion of how to solve the problem, I would challenge the church nonetheless to reflect carefully on new ways to go about *Seelsorge*—ways that appropriately administer the Law and the Gospel. Pastors, co-workers and staff will almost never meet the expectations that are placed on them. But what is the church able to do to eliminate the "bad conscience" that results from these unmet expectations? And we also have to bear in mind that an integral part of the congregation is the pastor's family, which in his pastoral duties he dare not neglect. Perhaps we should consider all the more what Wilhelm Löhe wrote: "Refrain from methodology and hold fast to the rule that all *Seelsorge* depends upon the individual case. Wait for opportunities and take advantage of them."[7] It was Löhe's desire to assist the *Seelsorger* in concentrating on his work. The pastor should "equip the saints" for the *mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum*, the mutual comforting among brothers, so that in this way, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the congregation becomes a living organism.

There are many other aspects of Dr. Kalthoff's lecture that are worthy of consideration with respect to the interrelation of the Office of Pastoral Ministry and the congregation. Moreover, Pastor Gottfried Werner made the following valid point in his book *Tröstet Euch der Ordination*:

> The Office is Christ's mystery. With Him and in Him we find ourselves always at the limits of our ability to comprehend. In the secure

> realms of student cubicles and of the professors' desks we will certainly never be able to unravel the last of these mysteries. One has to do the Office, to be active in his pastoral duties. Only when we act concretely will we be able to approach this secret. But there will always remain one last incomprehensible rest.[8]

According to the judgment of many of its most able theologians, the Lutheran Church is not "done" understanding the Office and she never will be! If she were ever to understand it completely, the Office might begin to be understood as a part of the Law, as is the case in the Roman Catholic Church. It would then no longer be what it is and what it should be, namely, a consequence of the saving Gospel and an ever new creation of the Holy Spirit, whose continual vivification will never end until the close of the age.

Thank you for your attentiveness.

Notes

1. Herman Sasse, "Ministry and Congregation" in *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 69–70.

2. Ibid., 74.

3. Ibid., 82.

4. Martin Luther, *On the Councils and the Church* (1539), AE: 4:164.

5. Ibid., 164–65.

6. Ibid., 155.

7. Wilhelm Löhe, *The Evangelical Minister*, (Stuttgart, 1852), 92.

8. Gottfried Werner, "Tröstet Euch der Ordination" *Theologische Hefte Concordia*, Nr. 1–o.j.

Response to Presentation III

Reverend Richard H. Warneck, Professor
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At every point of contact with St. Paul's ministry, the reader is turned to Christ! For what cause preaching and teaching, shepherding, caring, except that people may know and trust Christ for the forgiveness of their sins and for eternal salvation? Royal indeed is such a servanthood ministry!

Would that it were so in the eyes of the church and the world. Alas! Our essayist, Dr. Kalthoff, has demonstrated how this generation in America holds pastors in low esteem. That should be a minor concern. We walk in the shoes of the servant apostle who expressed his own low rating and that of his partners too—men who were portrayed as a spectacle pitied by angels, derided by men, tromping off to the arena of persecution, like dead men, fools for Christ (1 Cor. 4:9–10). Such indignities and lowliness are the brand of royalty when their service is for Christ!

Yet, the Lord for whom we gladly become fools has little patience with "foolishness." Much of what Dr. Kalthoff reports—rank confusion over Church and Ministry, unreasonable expectations placed upon Christ's men, or pastors satisfied to be and remain dysfunctional and even unfaithful in the performance of pastoral tasks—is altogether a kind of "foolishness."

If that were not enough, the tensions heating up between congregations and pastors is another exhibit of "foolishness." Dr. Kalthoff appeals to the sainted Dr. Hermann Sasse who cools things when he observes that the Office of the Keys is not turf we should be fighting over, not when Peter, the apostles, and the church are all recipients of the Office of the Keys from the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 16, 18; John 20). This is to say, there are different callings according the Lord's giving of His gifts (1 Cor. 12:28–29; Eph. 4:11), but there shall be no contest, no conflict among those so gifted and called or appointed. To pastors who tyrannize the flock and to congregations who wield heavy clout over pastors from a position of bureaucratic or democratic autocracy, Hermann Sasse's words referenced by the essayist have special application: "Office and congregation belong inseparably together. The life of one is also the life of the other. If the Office falters, so does the congregation. If the congregation falters, so does the Office."[1]

Dr. Kalthoff observes both the "aristocratic" and "functional" views of the Holy Ministry. It appears that the hierarchical view projects the Pastoral Office as if there were no other ministry. The functional view embraces every ministry exclusive of the Office of Pastor. Aristocracy is an abuse; functionalism is convenient neglect. We have censured the former. To the functionalists we say that exegetically, historically and confessionally the Pastoral Office is clearly identified in the New Testament, in the understanding and practice of the early church, and in the teaching of the Lutheran Confessions. Dr. Kalthoff notes that those who exercise the Pastoral Office are sometimes named bishops (1 Tim. 3:1; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1) and sometimes elders (*presbyteroi*), or ruling elders (1 Tim. 5:17, 19; James 5:13). At other times they are called shepherds (1 Pet. 5:1–4; cf. 2:25), even shepherds and bishops in the same breath (Acts 20:28). Why, then, do functionalists refuse to get the point (cf. Ap. XIII, 11–13; Treatise, 67–72)?

Is the trend toward functionalism a rejection of the Pastoral Office, or is it a reaction to a much-dated treatment of Church and Ministry, specifically a 19th-century framing of the issues by Löhe, Walther and Höfling? For a bit of freshness, Dr. Herman Sasse suggests that some flexibility or even elasticity in the exercise of the Public Ministry of preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments may be permissible for the church, without either challenging or diminishing the Pastoral Office.[2]

In any case, the present situation certainly calls for clear definition of the Office of Pastor. The Synod's Nomenclature Study Committee is wrestling with definition of all ministries in the church. Our plea here is that Lutherans consider restoring to usage the terms "bishop" and "pastor" as synonyms, making it clear that the pastor of a Christian congregation is indeed the "bishop." The New Testament would have it so, and early church practice adopted the usage. Dare we suggest that to know the name is to comprehend the thing so named? We mean no disrespect to the sainted Dr. Feucht. Still, until we come to the point of saying, "everyone a minister, but not everyone a bishop," we shall continue to have confusion over offices in the church.

Such attempts at definition can, however, go too far. Dr. Kalthoff cites the case of the pastor who tells his people that when he is at the altar he is "Christ" to them. President Kalthoff presents good reasons for discouraging this practice. If any should teach that the pastor is the embodiment of Christ, let the caution of the early church be noted. Not only the true doctrine, but Christ's honor, His person, and the divine and human natures were at stake when the fathers fought Arianism and Docetism and variations of these two heresies. How can our Lord be honored if any man should name himself "the Christ" in the company of our Lord's Body, His church? Let us avoid any affront to our Lord and offense to Christians by refraining from this ill-advised practice.

Dr. Kalthoff devoted a substantial portion of his paper to exaggerated expectations placed upon pastors by ambitious congregations. No congregation should expect the pastor to accomplish what the Holy Spirit alone can do to strengthen and add numbers to the church (cf. Acts 11:21). But, there is work the pastor is called to do. Here I play the part of the devil's advocate. High expectations? Let pastors rise to them! Certainly, pastoring today is an improvement over former days when honoring the pastor was perceived as benign tolerance of his half-hearted effort and mediocre performance of duties. Expectations can be a stimulus to pastors. And much of the pressure can be alleviated when the pastor pursues his ministry for what it is, not only a noble task, but verily a good "work" in the literal sense of that term. That was Dr. Victor Bartling's interpretation of 1 Tim. 3:1. What does it mean to work, to really work in the Pastoral Ministry? One might recall a 19th-century vignette of the village men coming down the lane on their way to the mills before dawn. They saw in the window of the parson's study a candle burning brightly. We might imagine that when the men returned to their homes after dark, they saw the candle still burning, giving light to the parson's tasks.[3]

But many a hard-working pastor is abused by mean-spirited persons in our congregations. Dr. Kalthoff speaks to this sorry situation. And, seminary students returning from their vicarages report how their supervising pastors are, in many instances, "taking it" from unloving congregations. Persecuted pastors need support. They need help. Most of all, they need an advocate. To whom shall they turn? District presidents, this is a fervent plea! Upon hearing of a pastor abused, please go and counsel both the pastor and his family. Then admonish the congregation, saying in effect, "Missouri Synod congregations do not abuse their pastors!" The word is out that pastors are fair game. Let a counter word get out! Abuse, harassment and bullying of pastors will not be tolerated in

the Missouri Synod for reasons cited by President Kalthoff, namely, those given in the apostolic Word (1 Thess. 5:12–13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

And may we direct serious pastoral attention to a related issue? How has it happened in the Lutheran Church that certain parties consider it cricket to destroy good names and reputations in the interest of orthodoxy?

Now, pastors themselves may generate dissatisfaction and frustration among their people. The belligerent spirit of a misguided pastor daring his people to challenge his divine call, while he shirks his duty and responsibility, is another situation calling for admonition, repentance and correction. To be faithful as pastors, to fulfill our ministry, we are to be fruitful in our work, yes, productive! Recognize that our people are working where they are required to be alert, efficient and industrious. And, they must demonstrate a certain eagerness to effect the greatest good for their employer. Many work at honing skills. They are models for us. Perhaps the ordering of our pastoral duties could benefit by taking up a few of their work tools: for example, thinking ahead, setting goals, executing by plan and holding ourselves accountable.

In one area especially we may improve. So much preaching in our churches suffers from inadequate preparation. Our sermons may be doctrinally correct, true to the Scriptures, rightly dividing between the Law and the Gospel. Still, if sermons are manifestly dull and unpalatable for the hearer, preaching may be heading for obsolescence of a kind. The remedy is intense, dogged preparation week to week, giving just as many work hours to sermon composition and writing and practice delivery, as to study and exegesis. Both sides of the discipline deserve greater investment of our time, yes, our very lives!

Dr. Kalthoff encourages pastoral care of the individual. He suggests that contacts with congregation members at their homes or

elsewhere can be an open door to that blessed person-to-person Gospel Ministry, the administration of Holy Absolution. In this regard, Dr. Kalthoff's reference to Bucer's pastoral care may either get a chuckle or raise an eyebrow. The quotation from Bucer is typically pietistic. Something notable is missing. There is no mention of speaking the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to Luther and the confessors who enrich our pastoral care with encouragement to use this gift from our Lord—the Absolution!

Dr. Kalthoff's wise counsel regarding pastoral leadership of the church's ministry team addresses functionalism and seems to imply that when individual members of the team are bishops unto themselves, the result may be dysfunctionalism. Dr. Lyle Schaller reminds us of how difficult and extremely demanding is the responsibility of the senior pastor in our large parishes. Therefore, we repeat our earlier plea, let the pastor be what he is by virtue of his call to the Office. Let him be the *episcopos*, the bishop! Let him be singularly accountable to congregational leaders for the fruitful labors of other members of the staff. And, let them be accountable to the bishop. Neither tyrants nor benign enablers, senior pastors are "Barnabases," or encouragers. Patiently and in Christian love, they dedicate themselves to helping each team member experience a joyful, fulfilling ministry.

Joy, yes, joy in the Ministry, is for pastors too! At the close of the pastoral theology course at Concordia Seminary, we encourage the candidates to go for the joy. If we love the Lord and His people with a love Christ inspires by His Spirit, then joy, unmistakable and sometimes unspeakable, is the happy result. As the Lord's servant, the apostle took his licks (cf. 1 Cor. 4:11–12; 2 Cor. 6:4–10; 2 Tim. 2:9–13). But, listen when he speaks about his ministry. It is all praise, thanksgiving and joy! What we may best do for pastors in the face of problems and difficulties is open their eyes to joy in

the Spirit working faith and new life through the Means of Grace.

This is our response. We commend Dr. Kalthoff's paper to you with the hope and prayer that church leaders here may share his concerns and join his efforts in behalf of a Lutheran Pastoral Ministry serving faithfully our Lord and His people.

Notes

1. Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Church*, trans. Norman Nagel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 78.

2. Citing Luther's position that Christ gave His church no such law prescribing one right organization, government, and polity (*de constituenda ecclesia*), Sasse says, "Any way of organizing things may do, so long as the Means of Grace are going on and are not frustrated." Ibid., 71. Note, furthermore, Sasse's observation that the beginning of the Christian church was marked not by uniformity but by diversity.

3. cf. J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher His Life and Work* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1912), 116.

Presentation IV

Contemporary Issues Regarding The Universal Priesthood

Reverend Raymond Hartwig, President
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This presentation, as assigned, will address the manner in which God expects His people to think about the Priesthood of all Believers and how He intends for them to relate to His set-apart servants their called pastors. It will address such contemporary issues as the "hire-and-fire" mentality, the "everyone a minister" mind-set, and the involvement of laypeople in distinctive functions of the Pastoral Office. It will also identify some of the contemporary conditions impacting the relationship of the people of the church with their pastors. As we explore these conditions, we will better appreciate this relationship.

The presentation will be divided into three parts:

1. Another look via illustration at the relationship of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry;

2. Current conditions that are strongly impacting this relationship; and

3. A first step, especially on the part of the laity, toward resolution of the tensions that exist in this relationship.

The Relationship of the Priesthood and the Ministry

Various illustrations have already been advanced in this convocation and elsewhere to help picture and discuss the relationship between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry. The picture which first comes to mind is that given by Martin Chemnitz in his *Enchiridion*, that "as to His spouse has Christ entrusted the Keys of the Kingdom" to His church.[1] C.F.W. Walther, among others, also advances this illustration in his *Kirche und Amt*. He depicts Christ as the Bridegroom who gives to His bride, the church, the Keys of the household, that is, authorization to administer the Gospel. She, in turn, gives these keys to the head servant of the household—the pastor. While the pastor uses these keys to carry out his duties, they remain the church's keys, hers nonetheless to use in emergency situations.[2]

In his opening address to this convocation, Dr. A.L. Barry introduced another illustration—that of receiving a car as a gift and then handing the Keys to another person to help use the gift. The illustration is offered, again, to promote a better understanding of both the rights and the limitations in this "vital relationship that must exist between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Public, Pastoral Ministry."

To the already existing collection of illustrations, I offer yet another—one that may not only prove helpful for appreciating this relationship, but one that hopefully will also prove helpful for viewing and addressing the tensions presently troubling the church. This illustration will be that of the loving and caring marriage relationship of husband and wife.

When C.F.W. Walther spoke the oft-quoted words of his twentieth evening lecture on Law and Gospel as he was preparing young candidates for the Pastoral Ministry, he was also describing a future beautiful marriage—that of the Office they would soon be called to fill, with the congregation they would be called to serve.

Walther said,

> When a place has been assigned to a Lutheran candidate of theology where he is to discharge the Office of a Lutheran Minister, that place ought to be to him the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. He should be unwilling to exchange it for a kingdom. Whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert, to him it should be a miniature paradise.[3]

The kind of relationship suggested by those words can only exist when the two joined together enjoy a mutual appreciation for each other. The young bride must truly believe that her husband is the God's gift to her. The young husband must be awed by the beauty of his wife and must regard her as God's gift to him. Both together must think of themselves as the most blessed couple on earth and theirs a marriage truly made in heaven.

So it must also be in the household of God when laity and pastors are brought together by God's Word and Spirit in a unique and special marriage instituted by God. The laity have every reason to think of their pastors as gifts of God, with appreciation borne out of a right understanding of the origin of the Pastoral Office. A.H. Schwermann underscores this point in his essay to the 1955 convention of the South Dakota District titled, *The Glorious Office of the Holy Ministry*:

> The Office of the Holy Ministry did not come into existence because in the flux of human events as man gradually planned and evolved it. No; it was God who planned it and gave it to the Church. . . . Counselors tell us that there are today in North America about 30,000 different professions and occupations. Some of these were planned by seamen, some by aviators, some by surgeons, some by engineers, some by farmers, and one of these 30,000 was planned by God—the Office of the Holy Ministry.[4]

When the congregation recognizes that the Office of the Public Ministry has been created by the will and ordinance of God, responses important to a happy and loving marriage relationship necessarily follow. As a bride happily gives her love, honor and support to her husband, so also does the congregation to her pastor. St. Paul writes to Timothy: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17). And, with such honor there must also be love and respect, what E.E. Foelber in his essay in *The Abiding Word* calls "the golden band that ties both pastor and people into a social unit that reflects the love of God which brought them into being."[5]

Foelber also quotes St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians as a reminder and encouragement of this love and respect of the congregation for its pastor: "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work" (1 Thess. 5:12–13). And he offers St. Paul's words to the congregation in Galatia as a love letter written by a man of the cloth marveling at the love he has received from his God-given partner: "As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the Gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself" (Gal. 4:13–14).[6]

A happy marriage must be a mutual admiration society. The very congregation to which the pastor is joined by his call

> . . . is a body of people differing from all human organizations by its unique spiritual character divinely granted to it. . . . The local congregation stands supreme, unequaled in splendor, power, and influence among the organizations of the world and surpasses in importance all other institutions.[7]

Accordingly, St. Paul calls the members of the Christian congregation at Ephesus "saints" who have been chosen before the foundation of the world, predestined to be a part of the household of Christ (Eph. 1:1–5). St. Peter tells the congregations of Asia Minor: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9). This is one beautiful bride!

And she also is gifted. Not only does she have the usual variety of gifts, "the work of one and the same Spirit, . . . just as He determines" (1 Cor. 12:11). She also has keys, the rights, privileges, and powers granted by the Almighty God to all Christian congregations: the authority and privilege of preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and remitting and retaining sins. These rights and privileges have been bestowed upon her by Christ, extraordinary treasures accompanied by solemn responsibilities: to keep pure the doctrine committed to her care and to give this doctrine to the world. The Christian congregation is indeed one special lady!

As in any marriage, however, this mutual admiration society must also be marked by high regard for those distinguishing qualities that maintain the uniqueness and individuality of each partner, the respect for the other that is so important to a happy marriage. In his sermon on Psalm 110:4, Luther sets forth the unique rights, privileges, and powers of the spiritual priesthood, leaving no question regarding the authority of not only the congregation as a whole, but also of every member in it:

> After we have become Christians through this Priest and His priestly office, incorporated in Him by Baptism through faith, then each one, according to his calling and position, obtains the right and the power of teaching and confessing before others this Word which we have obtained from Him. Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to

> teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, or the Lord's Prayer. And he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God's Word and publicly to confess it.[8]

Luther goes on to make fully clear that the Means of Grace have the same nature, power, and effect whether administered by common Christians of the Priesthood of all Believers or by pastors who hold the Office of the Public Ministry:

> There is no other Word of God than the one all Christians are told to preach; there is no other Baptism than the one all Christians may administer; there is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than the one any Christian may celebrate; also there is no other sin than the one every Christian may bind or loose; again, there is no other sacrifice than the body of every Christian; also, no one can, or may, pray but only a Christian; moreover, no one should judge of the doctrine but the Christian. These, however, certainly are the priestly and kingly functions.[9]

But even as high regard on the one hand must be accompanied by the same on the other if there is to be a happy marriage, so also the pastor's high regard for the uniqueness and gifts of the congregation must be answered with a similar high regard for his office by the congregation he serves and the church at large. This has nothing to do with superiority; it has everything to do with respect for the Office. Walther underscores this point:

> The Public Ministry is not a special order, distinct from and holier than the common order of Christians, as the priesthood of the

> Levites was, but it is an office of service.[10] On the other hand, the [pastoral] Ministry is not to be degraded and made common. The office of Word and Sacrament not only lends dignity and authority, but also makes exacting demands. . . . [The pastor] must, therefore, stand before his people as one of them, a fellow-sinner, and yet in the full dignity and authority of his office, which he "strives to adorn with a holy life and conversation." . . . He stands before the congregation as the bearer of the Office of Word and Sacrament upon which the congregation is dependent.[11]

This high regard and respect for the Office of the Pastor was modeled, in my personal experience, in one of the rural parishes I was privileged to serve as pastor. My predecessor retired from the Ministry and remained in the parish to serve as master of the beautiful organ that adorned the congregation's worship. He was neither a quiet man nor very personable. He wasn't even a very good preacher or teacher by most standards. But he was unique, and among other less-than-agreeable things, he was a master of outrageous comments that today would prompt a call to the district president within two weeks of a pastor's arrival in a parish. And yet the congregation loved and respected him because of the office he held among them. They loved him for 28 years and then gave him their parsonage when he retired.

As a district president, I recently came upon a similarly outstanding situation. I missed a signal from another district president as I was gathering names for a call list and as a result was not aware that this particular pastor had some problems that had called into question his ability to remain in the Pastoral Ministry. Out of the list of pastors I provided to a vacant congregation, this pastor received and then accepted their call. When the pastor and his family arrived, I immediately recognized some concerns. Since that time I had been expecting the inevitable telephone call or letter asking that something be done.

That telephone call came several weeks ago, eight months into this pastor-parish relationship. I anticipated what I would hear from the president of the congregation as I picked up the telephone. But, in fact, I was surprised—and elated. Speaking on behalf of his congregation, the layman had one question: "A number of us were talking and could it be that there has perhaps been a serious physical injury in our pastor's past?" They had noticed that sometimes his thinking seemed to skip a beat, a difficulty that two other people in their community with past serious head injuries also experienced at times. They did not want to ask the pastor himself because they did not want to hurt his feelings. They just wanted to know so that they could be helpful to him.

I asked how the pastor was doing otherwise. The response was that he is doing just fine. He preaches good sermons, well thought out and prepared. He is faithful in visiting the sick. He is not as good at working with their young people as their previous pastor had been, but he gives them his time and attention, helps them plan their activities, and really does OK. For the first time ever their congregation had a float in the town's Fourth of July parade. And then the royal priest spoke frankly about his servant pastor: "Oh, we know that he is not the perfect pastor, but his heart is in his ministry and we are just a small parish. We know he serves us the best he can. We have a high regard for his office and for him and want to help him as much as we can."

The people of both these parishes modeled so strikingly and well that essential respect, which must undergird any successful marriage, and which necessarily must include a willingness to grant and lovingly accept the humanness of the other. Our Lutheran Confessions recognize this too. They speak of the strong not only enduring, but also bearing, the weak in Christian love, out of regard for the love Christ has for the person and the gifts He has given to him out of love and mercy.

> . . . when the people also have patience with their pastors, [and] when the bishops and preachers in return can (when the opportunity arises) see in a good light all sorts of weaknesses and shortcomings on the part of the people. So now, Peter's statement [1 Peter 4:8] is to be understood thus: "Love covers a multitude of sins," *i.e.*, love covers the sin of our neighbor. . . . Peter means that a person in whom Christian love dwells is not obstinate, not harsh or unfriendly. On the contrary, he sees the neighbor's mistakes and faults in a good light, forgives him as a brother, appeases him, and shows himself to be willing to yield for the sake of peace. . . . If the people, then, are to be or remain united with one another—whether in the church or in secular government—they must not carefully count up every fault against one another. They must allow many things to flow by [without noticing them], always seeing them in a good light and having patience with one another in brotherly love.[12]

Walther brings this point home with a further discussion:

> See to it that you don't expect too much from your people, as our quotation reminded us. You can't turn every (piece of wood) into a dowel. It simply can't be done; not all wood is suitable for dowels. "Divisions also will easily develop if the people immediately want to master and nitpick everything in the life and conduct of the bishops or pastors," says the Apology. Also our dear congregations should note this carefully. When a pastor makes an occasional mistake, they should not be too harsh in their judgment but should consider, "Did he do that out of weakness? Is it really serious enough to sound the alarm or not?" And if you determine that it was done in weakness and is [a matter] of little importance, then you should either ignore it or tell him in a friendly way, "You did not handle that correctly." Otherwise, if the congregation insists on nitpicking (*ausecken*) about every little thing, then the beautiful relationship . . . will come to an end. Then the devil laughs up his sleeve, when the people no longer heed the pastor's word; then he has torn the members from their orthodox pastor. We must support one another! The pastor should not expect the members of his congregation to be nothing but angels, and the members should not demand that their pastor be an angel either, for that he cannot be.[13]

It sounds almost simple and easy: Two partners recognizing each other to be God-given and unique, living and working together in mutual admiration, allowing each other sufficient space for individuality and error. This is the stuff that "happily ever after" and "till death us do part" is made of. On the other hand, this relationship of people and pastors would not be the critical topic of discussion that it is in our day were that always the case. Instead, we see those serious concerns Walther warned about becoming a too-frequent reality in our parishes, leading to serious concerns church-wide. Large responsibility for this lies with a number of current conditions impacting this relationship.

Current Conditions Impacting the Relationship Between the Priesthood of All Believers and the Pastoral Office

The relationship of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Office has never been an easy marriage happily and peacefully to preserve and maintain. As we know, discussions and disputes regarding proper roles and distinctions in this relationship were a significant element of the formational moments both of Lutheranism and also The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Tendencies toward "overages" on the part of both marriage partners have kept discussions of this significant relationship current and often heated, as is the case also in our day.

We collectively cringe to hear of statements made by some pastors today, which fail to regard rightly the priesthood of the believers they serve. These pastors suggest that the efficacy of the Sacraments is emptied in the hands of a lay person, and imply or even maintain that there is no biblical or confessional foundation for the Priesthood of all Believers. They propose that it is an error to assert that in Matt. 18:19–20, Christ is commissioning all believers to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. They contend that Lutheran school teachers can only convey information

but not confer forgiveness and life because the teacher is not a pastor. They hold that fathers and mothers can only offer their own personal forgiveness to their children since forgiveness from Christ can only come from the pastor, even proposing that Christ is bodily present in the pastor when the pastor performs the duties of his office.[14]

We also cringe to hear and observe the overages committed, on the other hand, by some laymen (the primary interest of this presentation) who reduce the Pastoral Office to something different from its institution by Christ. That current lay attitudes have already been some time in coming is clear from a report in a 1986 issue of *Nation* magazine:

> Indeed, so far has the church caught the spirit of the age, so far has it become a business enterprise, that the chief test of ministerial success is now the ability to 'build up' a church. Executive, managerial abilities are now more in demand than those which used to be considered the highest in a clergyman.[15]

Conditions have not improved in the past 11 years. Os Guinness in his book, *Dining With the Devil*, demonstrates how those century-old distortions have deepened and expanded:

> In a massive study in 1934, pastors were said to have five distinct roles—teacher, preacher, pastor, leader, and administrator. These roles are notable for being few in number and biblical in content. But in another huge study in 1980, involving 47 denominations, evidence showed that the pastor's profile both expanded and grew more secular. Pastors were expected to be open, affirming, able to foster relationships, experienced in facilitating discussion, and so on. The new premium was on skills in interpersonal relationships and conflict management. Biblical and spiritual criteria for ministry were notably optional. . . .
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> Anyone who doubts this shift has only to look at church-growth literature and check for such chapters as "portrait of the effective

> pastor." In one such best-seller, theology and theological references are kept to a minimum—little more than a cursory reference to the pastor's "personal calling" and to "God's vision for the church." The bulk of the chapter is taken up with such themes as delegating, confidence, interaction, decision-making, visibility, practicality, accountability, and discernment—the profile of the thoroughly modern pastor as CEO. . . .
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> [These] leadership qualities could apply in a hundred other organizations—after all, they once did, and were simply borrowed. Worse still, the disadvantage of the CEO-Pastor, as increasing numbers of them are discovering, is that those who live like CEOs are fired like CEOs—and spiritual considerations have as little to do with the ending as with the beginning and the middle."[16]

Dr. George Wollenburg, in a presentation to the *1996 Lay/Clergy Conference on Church Issues* of the South Dakota District, advocates that a publication out of our own circles and history has made a further contribution to this spirit of the age. Beginning with its title, *Everyone a Minister*, it helped prepare the way for the generic use of the terms "ministry" and "minister." As a result, every form of Christian service in the church became titled a "ministry" (e.g., "ministry of music," "youth ministry," or even "my own personal ministry"). According to Wollenburg,

> this creates theological and doctrinal confusion. It tends to erase the distinction between that "ministry" which God has instituted in order that we might have faith, and the sanctified service of Christian people which is the fruit of, or the consequence of faith. A confusion between sanctification and justification results.[17]

Dr. A.L. Barry in his 1994 essay to the South Wisconsin District Pastors' Conference, *The Shepherd and His Sheep*, singles out some of that confusion on the part of the Priesthood over against the Pastoral Office and offers very helpful and practical advice on these complex issues:

> We notice an increase in what I and others refer to as a "hire and fire" mentality on the part of our congregations. . . . Because so many of our people work in situations where employees are hired and fired as a matter of routine, it is all too easy to slip into this same sort of attitude in regard to their pastor.
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> A second tension we encounter in the relationship of the Royal Priesthood and the Pastoral Office is keeping clear the distinction between the two . . . as when certain laypeople and even pastors take ministry in the wide sense and begin to edge it into those responsibilities that would fall within the scope of ministry in the narrow sense. . . .
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> There is yet a third tension in the relationship. . . . I have encountered this tension more often than the "hire and fire" mentality. With our very proper understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the Pastoral Office, I find that it may be tempting for some of the laypeople of our church to think that all they have to do is to stand on the sidelines and let the pastor do all the work—the attitude that the duty of the laity is simply to "pray, pay, and obey."[18]

Excesses in any partnership, including that of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry, result in tension and strife not so different from that which troubles struggling marriages when both parties begin to cling to personal rights and interests. In marriages we recognize the need to sit down and to put heads and hearts together to work toward regaining a proper marital balance based upon mutual love, honor and esteem. Such sitting down to put heads and hearts together ought to be most possible in the church, where heads and hearts are already joined together in Christian faith and love. But cultural and environmental factors today make such sitting down together increasingly difficult, and at the same time add to the difficulties the church is facing.

We do live at a unique time in history, amid conditions never encountered before by the church. These societal conditions that

are having a tremendous impact upon everything having to do with Christian faith and life are also impacting the relationship of the Priesthood of Believers and their pastor. However these cultural phenomena may be labeled or described, and to whomever or whatever they may be attributed, today's "modernity"[19] or "post-modernism"[20] are certain ultimately to affect every Christian church body in every nation on earth.

Os Guinness maintains that this momentous cultural surge is the fruit of capitalism and industrialized technology. It is, therefore, strongest in North America and certain to have global consequences.[21] James Turner in his book, *Without God, Without Creed*, places some additional responsibility elsewhere in North America:

> On the contrary, religion caused unbelief. In trying to adapt their religious beliefs to socioeconomic change, to new moral challenges, to novel problems of knowledge, to the tightening standards of science, the defenders of God slowly strangled Him. If anyone is to be arraigned for deicide, it is not Charles Darwin but his adversary Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, not the godless Robert Ingersoll but the godly Beecher family.[22]

Wherever credit may be given or blame placed, the result, according to Guinness, is a "crisis of cultural authority":

> Modernity creates problems far deeper than drugs, crime, illiteracy, AIDS, broken families, or the plight of the inner cities. It creates a crisis of cultural authority in which America's beliefs, ideals, and traditions are losing their compelling power in society. What people believe no longer makes much difference to how they behave. Unless reversed, this hollowing out of beliefs will finally be America's undoing.[23]

This new frame of mind comes with an attitude, one which Christian philosopher Elton Trueblood has called the disease of

contemporaneity and an absolutely intolerable conceit. Trueblood in his writings bemoans today's too-prevalent attitude that mankind has finally come into its own and has outgained and outlived the relevance of past wisdom, of even the Word of God.[24] Thomas Oden similarly shakes his head at what he calls "modern chauvinism"—tendencies to use the tools of modernity uncritically and "to exaggerate the newness, uniqueness, universality, and permanence of the present," at the expense of age-old, God-given beliefs and standards.[25]

John Paul II joins the chorus of bemoaners by expressing his own concern over current conditions. In his encyclical letter on the value and inviolability of human life, *Evangelium Vitae*, he too looks to "the deepest roots of the struggle" and attributes today's deplorable conditions to secularism:

> We have to go to the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: the eclipse of the sense of God and of man, typical of a social and cultural climate dominated by secularism, which with its ubiquitous tentacles succeeds at times in putting Christian communities themselves to the test.[26]

According to James Turner, the current social and cultural climate has indeed put the entire Christian community to the test:

> Developments external to religion produced the climate in which unbelief grew. The rise of modern science challenged believers to rethink the intellectual bases of their belief. Social and economic change stripped away much of the insulation that protected belief from corrosion, and it created an environment in which old conceptions of God made less sense, even became repugnant.[27]
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> A religion of humanity, (ritualized in science), a cult of art, the worship of nature. . . . No neat creedal lines separated these godless denominations; unbelievers were free to worship at all three altars. Most did, distributing their piety as temperament and circumstance inclined them. They found in this way objects of reverence and

> sources of consolation sufficient to permit them to let go of their Father in heaven.
>
> Rendered intellectually incredible and morally repugnant, belief in God thus faded in favor of an entirely human morality and a religion of this world.[28]

This fading belief in God has resulted in a corresponding denial of basic Christian concepts formerly accepted by most people, as indicated by perplexing sets of statistics regarding present-day personal beliefs. A recent poll conducted by the Barna Research Group reports that 87 percent of Americans still claim that their faith is very important in their life and 83 percent claim that their religious beliefs actually change the way they behave. But only slightly more than half believe that the Bible is accurate in all it teaches, and this accompanied by a growing acceptance of homosexuality, pornography, and dishonesty. Barna sums up his findings:

> We are living amidst the dilution of traditional, Bible-based "Christian" faith. Millions of Americans are comfortable calling themselves "Christian" even though their beliefs suggest otherwise. . . . Rejection of orthodox Christian beliefs, coupled with a relativistic culture, has led millions of adults to embrace a worldview totally at odds with the faith they allegedly embrace.[29]

This nonchalance toward, and even disdain for, correctness of doctrine must inevitably impact the church's relationship with her clergy, beginning with a growing disdain for classic seminary education. Guinness summarizes today's all-too-prevalent attitudes toward theology, which is viewed as

> cerebral, theoretical, wordy, divisive, specialized, remote—an obviously unwelcome intruder to the Holy Family of the spiritual, the relational, and the practical. . . . [To this way of thinking] the traditional seminaries and their training can be ignored. They are on their way to joining the Dodo bird.[30]

The result of all this is a marriage problem that has been just waiting to happen. However much people in Christian congregations may understand the call to be divine, when doctrine-conscious pastors join with congregations of late-20th-century people and attitudes, congregations are too often most interested in their pastor's skillfulness in interpersonal relationships, conflict management, and managerial abilities. This marriage is certain to have its challenging moments. And then, place all of this in a postmodern environment—one which looks with disdain on any insistence on truthful revelation to govern not only who this couple is but also how they are to live with and in relation to each other—it is no wonder that this relationship struggles as it does today.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod cannot avoid participation in this struggle. To be sure, doctrinal concerns exist on both sides of this partnership of the Priesthood and Pastoral Office, doctrinal concerns that should not be minimized and that beg to be resolved. But these are not the only, and may not be the most compelling, concerns. In reality, they may be more symptom than malady: the unfortunate but not unexpected byproduct of a typical marital struggle in which the participants are tempted to overreact to overages on the part of the other party by resorting to overages of their own.

On the one hand, we have the classically and confessionally trained clergy of our church body, men who are well instructed regarding Bible-based doctrine and practice upon leaving our seminaries. They have at heart the very best ways of doing things in the church, and after countless hours in classrooms sitting at the feet of esteemed teachers, they also wholeheartedly believe in and are ready to staunchly defend and actively promote the proper doctrine and practice of their church. With C.F.W. Walther, they do not merely consider the Lutheran church the best among many. They consider it the orthodox over against the heterodox, the true

visible church on earth that is significantly different from other churches—a difference not just in degree but in kind. They have learned to say with the first president of their Synod,

> The Lutheran Church is therefore not only a real but the true visible church of God on earth, insofar as "true" means nothing other than "as it should be according to the Word of God." The less we can or want to boast before other churches of our pious way of life, the more we can and must nevertheless boast before others about the pure doctrine, which, thanks to the undeserved mercy of God, shines upon us poor sinners like the clear, bright light of the sun.[31]

These men now receive calls from congregations throughout the church through its placement process, from a variety of congregations likely to have already experienced a variety in pastoral practice. They receive these calls often to congregations whose pastoral expectations and interest in pure doctrine and practice have been colored to varying degrees by the culture already described. In some cases, they go to well-seasoned congregations who have seen pastors come and go and who decide early on that they will outlast this one too. In other cases they go to well-wounded congregations grown tired of the pain that comes with division after division over issue after issue. In every case, these pastors go without pastoral experience, uncertain of pastoral boundaries, and with much still to learn about working with the Priesthood of Believers. In too many cases, conscience ends up pitted against culture, neither readily giving way nor holding sway.

A current situation in my own district offers a case in point. Several years ago, a pastor who was new to the Ministry—a former dairy farmer entering the Ministry as his second career—accepted his first call to serve a well-seasoned but already somewhat wounded rural parish. Initially, this looked like the proverbial "marriage made in heaven" with very favorable early reports. The people were

so thankful that they did not have to teach their pastor what a combine was. Instead, his fame quickly spread as one who helped farmers tear down and repair their combines. The proverbial honeymoon was on.

It was also brief. This pastor had also been an excellent and eager student at the seminary, and he carried his considerable knowledge of the Scriptures and Confessions to the parish in the forepart of his pastoral awareness. He could not but believe strongly in doing things the proper way and found it difficult to settle for less. The congregation on the other hand had not been an excellent student of the Scriptures and Confessions. Church membership had been more of a Sunday morning family thing than a matter of confessional commitment. Practice, especially Communion and worship practice, had varied of late, dependent to a large extent on the practice of a variety of pastors as well as Missouri Synod's changing relationship with the American Lutheran Church. Two pastors ago they practiced open communion and participated in joint worship services with the other churches in town. One pastor ago they underwent serious tumult when that candidate pastor, bound by conscience, led the congregation into a more proper fellowship practice, but this was at the price of his early departure.

Predictably, the very short honeymoon led to very serious strife. Even though encouragements to speak and study together and to talk things out were given, divisions developed and disgruntled members began to absent themselves, some leaving the already small and struggling congregation noisily and permanently. When the remaining members were asked to identify the issues that were causing the strife, the more significant of the congregation's list of twelve items included the following: the pastor's chanting, his moving the baptismal font from the back of the chancel to the front, his determination that the Christmas tree lights not be turned on until Christmas Eve, the length of his Bible studies, his decision

that confirmands leave the worship service prior to the celebration of the Sacrament, his practice of not allowing parents of confirmands to commune with their children at the time of their first Communion, and several more issues of similar consequence. All of these were intensified by several truthful but blunt comments made by the pastor in various heated discussions and conversations since his arrival.

The paltriness of these issues, which are destroying a parish and scattering a precious flock of Christ, is particularly striking. But they are only paltry until emotions become heated. Striking also is the absence from the list of the most significant issues troubling this marriage: fellowship and worship practices, family and community ties, problems engendered by past practice and aggravated by the knowledge that sister congregations elsewhere are doing the very things that this pastor won't allow, matters held against the pastor and coloring every other aspect of his ministry. You had to be there at the meeting I requested, of course, to observe pastor and people exchanging looks and accusations across the table and to witness how woefully divided these Christians are. The pastor was well entrenched, insistent upon his rightness and his rights to receive the honor and respect due to his office. The flock was busily pointing out his every last fault, to include even the way he smiles. We have all witnessed such scenes in troubled marriages of the Gen. 2:24 kind. We have too often also witnessed these same scenes between pastors and people, neither party any longer reaching out to the other with love and esteem. The marriage that began with joy, moves toward collapse as pastors and people continue to bicker, feud and find fault with one another. What began as a joyful relationship ends in bitterness and anger.

It must be recognized and noted, of course, that this is the devil's doing, as Walther notes in an essay to the 1879 Iowa District Convention:

> You see, the devil's great craftiness is that if he cannot plunge a church group into false doctrine, nor destroy their unity in confession, he then tries [to destroy it] through their lives. He creates divisions among the members. One person offends another, perhaps without wishing to do so. The second person then becomes angry and imputes malice to him. And if the offense was great enough, perhaps even intentional, then true brotherly fellowship has been destroyed, and the result is that there is no longer any real joy of standing in confessional fellowship with the offender. And that is precisely what the devil wants! [32]

Walther correctly reminds us that here too, as in other areas of Christian life, our wrestling is not altogether against flesh and blood—a critical aspect of the struggle to be borne in mind. But there certainly are contributing factors also from the human side. Significant pressures exerted by today's society undermine the leadership of pastors and challenge the convictions of the laity. And do we not also supply additional pressures from within our own church body, when the training we provide for our pastors is so often different from the practice of the church at large and the practice of the congregations they are first called to serve. Heavy strain is certain to be placed upon what should be a wonderful relationship of pastor and people.

These conditions lead to overages on the part of clergy and misunderstandings on the part of laymen, and they bring harm to the fellowship of faith locally and at large. But they also offer leads for addressing the tensions that exist in today's church between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry—our great interest as we meet for this convocation.

Toward Resolution of Tensions in the Church: A First Step

As a parish pastor, I offered counseling to couples who came to me to be married. Our Bible study together helped to promote a proper understanding of marriage and of living together in the

name of Christ. Our time together also provided occasion to address those areas of married life most likely to cause difficulty until such time as death would do its parting. To facilitate this counsel I often used a set of cards on which were printed statements broaching significant spiritual and secular issues having to do with living together in marriage "till death us do part." With these cards couples were caused to make judgments independent of each other regarding the correctness of each of forty-four statements, their compared answers hopefully leading into meaningful discussion.

It was my practice also to ask these couples to meet with me again after six months of marriage, just to touch base with them to learn how they and their marriage were doing. At times we would end up repeating their pre-marriage counseling, often using the same set of counseling cards, this time with their greater interest and whole-hearted participation. Do we not find ourselves at a similar point in time today? The partnership between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry, like a challenged marriage, is in dire need of a six-month visit and renewed attention among us.

Especially beneficial will be the relief and restoration that the counsel of God's Word alone can provide, to restore a proper understanding of this relationship and with that to accomplish four additional and critical goals: (1) Such study will surely help to counter the overages troubling both sides of this partnership in Christ. (2) Such study will help to spark a new or renewed appreciation of the "significant other" in this relationship. (3) Such study will help our laypeople contradict the spirit of the age in which the church must live and function today, a spirit that resists the very things pastors are called to do in Christ's name. (4) And, as an added benefit, such study will also lead our church fellowship to address other significant issues that are driving wedges between so

many of our members, and so often between pastors and the people God has placed into their care.

Already in his day, Walther saw in districts and the Synod a strong potential for the overages that have become rife in our circles in our day. He gave strong warning:

> My dear brothers, let us be on our guard! Satan is sly. Right now we are brothers, living together in peace and love. But Satan will most certainly lay for us snares by which he hopes to destroy the sweet, brotherly love we now have in our hearts. We dare never think that it is enough if we just remain united in our faith and doctrine. No, once love has been destroyed, it won't be long before one person believes what the other person rejects, and the other teaches what the first considers an error. . . . For example, one person takes a stand [on the given issue], and another person takes the opposite stand. Perhaps the one person dislikes the other; he simply can't stand him, and for that reason he inflexibly maintains his position. It is frightening (*schrecklich*) what harm can result when members of a church organization do not vigilantly guard their fraternal love.[33]

The Apology to the Augsburg Confession also warns against the kinds of conditions that are threatening to prevail in the church of our day for the same kinds of reasons:

> In all families and communities harmony should be nurtured by mutual aid, for it is not possible to preserve tranquility unless men cover and forgive certain mistakes in their midst. In the same way Paul commands that there be love in the church to preserve harmony, to bear, if need be, with the crude behavior of the brethren, to cover up minor mistakes, lest the church disintegrate into various factions, and heresies that arise from such schisms.
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> For harmony will inevitably disintegrate if bishops impose heavy burdens on the people or have no regard for their weakness. Dissensions also arise when the people judge their clergy's behavior too strictly or despise them because of some minor fault and then

> seek after some other kinds of doctrine and other clergy. On the other hand, perfection (that is, the integrity of the church) is preserved when the strong bear with the weak, when the people put the best construction on the faults of their clergy, when the bishops take into account the weakness of the people (Ap IV, 232–34).

Mutual study of the Scriptures, the clergy leading the way and leading their people, will go a long way toward a renewed understanding of their God-given relationship while also re-igniting the love and esteem so essential to their life and work together. Pastors and congregations carefully and caringly studying together locally and as a church body must surely result in a reduction of the animosity that lurks behind extreme positions. At the same time, such mutual study will transport the laity of the church to a mindset not entirely unlike that of hymnist Samuel Rodigast and the words he wrote for a close friend who was ill:

> What God ordains is always good; His will abideth holy.
> As He directs my life for me, I follow meek and lowly.
> My God indeed In ev'ry need
> Doth well know how to shield me;
> To Him, then, I will yield me.[34]

Pardon the play on words, but a little more of a "*whom* God ordains is always good" spirit would not be altogether bad. God's people would recognize that those who are ordained may not always be "good" in all they say and do. However, the people would also recognize that the Office of the Public Ministry is always good. For it is by God's will and "His will abideth holy"—also to include the ministry of the man who currently fills the Office among them.

Mutual study will also lead to a renewed lay understanding and appreciation that this Pastoral Office is one of the most significant ways in which the Lord "directs my life for me," engendering the necessary patience and holy submission that enables one to "follow

meek and lowly." With such a mind-set there obviously will be no room for a "hire-and-fire" mentality, nor will there be great interest in usurping the pastor's rightful responsibilities. Indeed, when in the eyes of the laity the Pastoral Office is seen in the proper light, and its responsibilities and benefits are rightly understood, it also will be recognized that this really is a marvelous and beneficial relationship. The hymnist's acclamation "My God indeed in every need doth well know how to shield me" evokes the God-pleasing response, in this case to the pastor's ministry, "to Him, then, I will yield me."

This "yielding" is pictured vividly in the book by Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God*. Giertz writes about the young pastor, Savonius, who totally bungles a pastoral call. The situation is rescued from total failure by a godly woman who brings the Gospel to bear upon a dying man's troubled conscience. And yet when it is time for the Sacrament, the attention of everyone in the room turns nonetheless to the pastor. He will bring the Sacrament. Later, as the pastor departs, he apologizes for his failure to do more for the dying man, declaring that he feels as though he had so bungled the call that he had failed to bring God's comfort. The response he receives is truly accepting of his faults and "yielding" to his office: "Pastor, have you not brought him Christ's body and blood? Have you not exercised the blessed authority of the Keys, which comes from God? Can a man do more?" [35]

And, I love those words of Mother Lotta, the saintly Christian woman who visits another young pastor Torvik to question his carelessness regarding Holy Baptism. Pastor Torvik comments that she is "talking like a real minister" to which she responds,

> God help me! Rather than let them see Mother Lotta standing in the pulpit, I would lay my old head on the railroad track. It has been more than enough that God has given me five children whom I have tried to nurture by the Word of God. And if a troubled soul

> has come, I have of course tried to comfort and help with the truths of Scripture. But to be a teacher in God's church and a shepherd of the flock, that is another matter. Only an ungodly self-security would make one believe oneself capable of that, when one was not called or ordained. [36]

That kind of "yielding" is truly a tall order in our present day, given the spirit of the age that is loose in our times and among our people: An overly expectant spirit that often highlights pastoral failures, a haughty spirit with very strong influence on Christian laity as well as pastors, a powerful spirit that so strongly encourages neither to fully accept nor even to care to hear the whole truth as revealed by God. And should the claim be made for having, maintaining, and proclaiming the only truth, and should this appear to judge others adversely who are also readily numbered in the wider Christian community—including especially family members and neighbors and friends—it not only engages today's church in what George Barna calls "the most severe struggle it has faced in centuries"[37] it all too often also places Christians in the pew at odds with those who have been called to serve and preach.

Walther predicts our day, not so different from his own, as he addresses the laymen of his day:

> When a pastor proclaims the truth, he will often meet with opposition because the people don't consider his proclamation to be true. Then the congregation comes to the pastor with the assertion: "Pastor, you seem to have a completely different religion and we simply don't want that!" . . . Dear brothers of the laity, it cannot be any other way. We pastors must tell you the truth, whether you like it or not, and we would be despicable traitors and murderers if we did not do so.[38]

Nathaniel Hawthorne has written a delicious parody of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* titled *The Celestial Railroad*. Although a

century old, it nonetheless captures wonderfully the spirit of our present age, a spirit not entirely different from its own. Hawthorne pictures by dream a new and improved route to the Celestial City, one quite different from the earlier pilgrim's way of repentance and sacrifice and faithfulness to the truth. His new and modern pilgrim and his companion, Mr. Smooth-it-away, ride the rails of the Celestial Railroad, in due time arriving at Vanity Fair, the final stop before their heavenly destination. This is the worldly city where many travelers end up distracted from their journey. Hawthorne's pilgrim identifies with the plight of so many church people of his day and ours when he says,

> Day after day, as I walked the streets of Vanity, my manners and deportment became more and more like those of the inhabitants. The place began to seem like home; the idea of pursuing my travels to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind.[39]

How easy it is for pilgrims of every day and age to be enculturated by their surroundings, by the peculiar and yet commonplace vanities of their particular time, drawn in and captivated by it. Hawthorne's pilgrim was always brought back to his senses by a pair of simple pilgrims doing it the old way, Bunyan's pilgrim's way. One of these faithful pilgrims, Mr. Stick-to-the-right, offers him counsel:

> Alas, friend, I do assure you, and beseech you to receive the truth of my words, that that whole concern [namely, the celestial railroad] is a bubble. You may travel on it all your lifetime, were you to live thousands of years, and yet never get beyond the limits of Vanity Fair! Yea; though you should deem yourself entering the gates of the Blessed City, it will be nothing but a miserable delusion.[40]

So many people in our own day, including many Christians, are being similarly deluded into thinking that there is no need for

truth or sacrifice, that almost anything by way of faith and life will ultimately provide transport to the Celestial City. This cultural environment, which makes the proclamation of God's truthful Word unseemly and uncomfortable, can only be countered by leading today's pilgrims into the truth. God's truth, in turn, will bring them a long way not only toward the Celestial City but also toward addressing the significant issues driving wedges between them in their fellowship together—wedges that are being driven ever more deeply, wedges that we cannot afford to ignore.

We cannot afford to continue to train our clergy so well in doctrine and practice as we do, only to have their training be so frequently and so dramatically different from what they will encounter during the first weeks of their parish ministries. This is the case particularly in regard to the relationship of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Office, and in regard to other significant issues troubling our church body (*e.g.*, Communion practices, worship practice, and the church growth movement). We cannot afford to send confusing messages to our laity regarding orthodox versus heterodox by appearing publicly to promote and even officially condone, doctrines and practices contrary to stated positions and that vary so often and so obviously between pastors and places. Furthermore, we cannot afford so quickly and impatiently to attribute difficulties in pastors' ministries to personal ineptnesses—which, of course, do exist—without allowing that in many cases pastors are only applying their training. They are only trying to do right things, following the lead of the first president of the Synod, of which they have just become members, who wrote words that have been by seminary training highlighted, underscored and deeply impressed on their pastoral consciousness:

> The members of the Iowa Synod also accuse us of always being dogmatic. They are right to this extent, that we never give in and do not yield when it comes to the Word of God, but insist that we are

> right in proclaiming that Word, and especially proclaiming it when it seems that proclaiming it would destroy the congregation. We must concede that sometimes there is terrible unrest, that factions arise, that peace ceases to exist, one opposes the next person, and it seems as if the pastor had only come to destroy, to bring a curse. But it is our Savior who says, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). That's the only way it can ever be in this present world. Where there is an orthodox teacher, there can be no peace. Those who don't like that kind of turmoil will have to tell Christ, "You can stay where you wish, [but don't come here]." For wherever the Lord Jesus comes, there will be fighting, wars, and an absence of peace.[41]

Those are fighting words, of course, and can easily be abused by pastors who wish to excuse excessiveness and belligerence. But they are also important words for any who may prefer to be accommodating when there is need to be faithful. Faithful study of God's Word by pastors and people will help all to know the difference. And faithful study and progress toward resolution of the currently divisive issues by those who lead in the church, whether from seminary classrooms or synodical offices, will go a long way toward reducing the tensions that exist in the church today. Thereby, the tensions, which too often result in what should be the beautiful marriage relationship of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry, will also be reduced.

Conclusion

The final card in the stack of forty-four marriage counseling cards was the most interesting. The couple is asked to decide whether to answer "agree" or "disagree," in response to this statement: "Marriage is a 50-50 proposition." Equally interesting were the responses. Most went along with conventional wisdom, that marriage should indeed be a 50-50 arrangement, give and take, fair and square. Such is also the prevailing attitude regarding the rela-

tionship of the Priesthood of all Believers and the Pastoral Office: 50-50, give and take, fair and square. It is an attitude that can work fairly well, as long as both parties are happy, fair and generous. It is an attitude that no longer works, however, when one party or the other becomes overly self-interested or protective of rights and possessions. There is a better way.

Most couples who came for counseling needed a little help to see that the truly happy and successful marriage is modeled after the relationship between our Lord and His church. It is never 50-50. It is 100-0, our Lord first giving His all for His bride, one hundred percent, as St. Paul has so wonderfully described in his letter to the Philippians: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:6–8)

The church responds with one hundred percent attention of her own to her Lord who has given His all, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10–11).

A truly happy marriage is one that is modeled after the relationship between the Lord and His church, in which each party looks only to the other, to that loved one's specialness, and to that loved one's welfare. When both relate in this manner, happiness is bound to ensue. To do so, the motivation of Christ's love is essential. How insightful is that line from the hymn sung at many church anniversaries, *For Many Years, O God of Grace*. These words reflect on all that has taken place in the celebrating congregation. At the beginning of its third stanza it celebrates the marriages consecrated at this particular altar and advances this thought:

> Here when the marriage vows were made,
> Both bride and groom besought Thine aid,
> Thy love their own transcending.[42]

Again, if we as a fellowship of Christians hope to address the concerns that trouble our relationships and especially that between the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry, this will best happen with a 100-0 attitude. Each party will regard the specialness of the other and guard the welfare of the other. Pastors with hearts full of caring will recognize again that their congregations are beautiful and gifted brides. Congregations with hearts full of patience will look beyond the faults and shortcomings of their pastors to recognize them as their God-given shepherds. When both are thus able to see their partners in and through the love of Christ, everything else from local problems to cultural pressures can and will be transcended.

A German proverb that graces many a Lutheran wall speaks so well of the necessary progression for all to properly take place in Christian life:

> Wo Glaube, Da Liebe;
> Wo Liebe, Da Friede;
> Wo Friede, Da Segen;
> Wo Segen, Da Gott;
> Wo Gott, Keine Not.[43]

As we bear in mind the truth of these words—that out of faith flow many other blessings in our Christian lives, including also the particular blessing we desire today, the resolution of the difficulties and challenges we face regarding the Priesthood of all Believers and the Office of the Public Ministry—we also remember the words of hymnist William Bathurst who surely offers our collective prayer in the final stanza of his hymn:

Lord, give us such a faith as this;
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste e'en now the hallowed bliss
Of an eternal home.[44]

Notes

1. Martin Chemnitz, *Ministry, Word, and Sacraments*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia, 1981), 33.

2. C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* (*Kirche und Amt*), trans. J.T. Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 269.

3. C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), 207.

4. A. H. Schwermann, "The Call Into the Glorious Office of the Holy Ministry," Convention Essay to the 1954 South Dakota District Convention, 2.

5. E. E. Foelber, "The Office of the Public Ministry," in *The Abiding Word*, ed. Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 2:485.

6. Ibid., 485–86.

7. George H. Perlich, "The Lutheran Congregation," *The Abiding Word*, 2:449

8. Martin Luther, "Psalm 110," 13:333.

9. Quoted by F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), 3:442

10. Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 221.

11. C.F.W. Walther, as quoted in "The Report of the Commission on the Doctrine of the Ministry" adopted by the 1952 convention of The United Lutheran Church in America, 553–54, referenced by Donald R. Heiges, *The Christian's Calling* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 97.

12. C.F.W. Walther's quotation from Ap IV, in *Essays for the Church*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 2:56

13. Ibid.

14. Cf. George F. Wollenburg, "The Priesthood and the Office of the Holy Ministry," an essay delivered to the 1996 South Dakota District Lay/Clergy Conference on Church Issues, 1–2. See Paul T. McCain, "A Response to 'It's Jesus'," *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 6 (Holy Trinity 1997), 47–49.

15. Quoted by Os Guinness, *Dining With the Devil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 52.

16. Ibid., 52–53. Guinness refers to studies reported by William Adams Brown, *The Education of American Ministers* (New York: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1934), 1:21; and *Church Planning Inventory: Comparative Tabulations*; 72 Congregations (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Center for Social and Religious Research, 1986), 6.

17. Wollenburg, 1.

18. A.L. Barry, *The Shepherd and His Sheep: The Pastoral Office and the Priesthood of all Believers*, essay delivered to the South Wisconsin District Pastors' Conference in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, April 11–13, 1994, 22–25.

19. Term used repeatedly by Os Guinness in his book, *Dining With the Devil*.

20. Term used repeatedly by Gene Edward Veith in his book, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994)

21. Guinness, 19.

22. James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), xiii.

23. Guinness, 18.

24. See Elton Trueblood, *The Predicament of Modern Man* (New York: Harper, 1949); *The Life We Prize* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1951); and *Declaration of Freedom* (New York: Harper, 1959)

25. Thomas C. Oden, "On Not Whoring After the Spirit of the Age," *No God But God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age*, ed. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 193.

26. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, publication No. 316–7 (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1995), 37.

27. Turner, 260.

28. Ibid., 259.

29. "Research Report Shocking; Christians Drowning in Sea of Non-Biblical Theology," *The Kansas Christian* (May 14, 1997).

30. Guinness, 84.

31. C.F.W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, 1:204.

32. Ibid., 2:55–56.

33. Idem., 2:56

34. *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), Hymn 521.

35. Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), 41.

36. Ibid., 286.

37. George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle: What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), 123.

38. C.F.W. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, 2:42–43.

39. Quoted by Os Guinness, 104.

40. Ibid., 105.

41. Walther, *Essays for the Church*, 2:43.

42. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 639.

43. Translation: "Where there is faith, there is love; where there is love, there is peace; where there is peace, there is blessing; where there is blessing, there is God; where there is God, there is no need."

44. *The Lutheran Hymnal*, Hymn 396.

Response to Presentation IV

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Thank you very much, President Hartwig. I enjoyed your presentation very much. Especially since I happened to celebrate my 29th wedding anniversary a couple weeks ago during my study of your paper, your final words "100-0 attitude, not 50-50" are very impressive and inspiring. Maybe it is very difficult for me to follow your proposal exactly, but it has something good. Jesus Christ is the One who has done it for us, so that we can follow Him with joy and thanks.

While I was trying to do critical readings on the essay as much as possible, my thoughts were quite often going back over my own marriage life of 29 years and also over my own pastoral career in which I have served—so far—four congregations. The essay enabled me personally to renew and appreciate the enrichment of the God-given ministry of the pastor. For that reason I am not sure to what extent I can objectively make my response to the wonderful presentation by President Hartwig.

As my response to the presentation, first of all, let me give a brief summary of the presentation with some of my own comments. As my conclusion let me present some ideas that I would like to offer as a proposal for how our church could live and work together in such a secularized culture and society as we live in today.

What the presentation by President Hartwig says seems to me to be very clear, sometimes encouraging like counseling advice, and sometimes beautiful like a sermon. I especially enjoyed the second part regarding current social conditions that impact the church today.

Let me say here a little about our own church's calling system. We in the Japan Lutheran Church are adopting a so-called combination system of both congregationalism and centralization. To put it concretely, self-supporting congregations can call their own pastors on the one hand, but on the other hand, the executive committee of the whole church body calls pastors for the purpose of assigning them to congregations that are not self-supporting. The reasons for this are the following: 1) the smallness of congregations, and 2) centralization is more congenial to Japanese mentality. So far I think that this system has been working well, easing the tensions between the people and their pastor.

Question 1: What is the relationship between the people of the church and the pastor?

The relationship can be well illustrated, President Hartwig says, by the marriage relationship of husband and wife, because it is helpful for appreciating the relationship, and for considering the tensions in the relationship. For the congregation, her pastor is the special gift of God to her, because the Pastoral Office is created by the will and ordinance of God and given by God to the church.

But the problem is that the marriage relationship is changing so much today. More people view it as a matter of give and take, or rights and duties.

Question 2: What is the congregation in this relationship?

The congregation is a people belonging to God, what the Scriptures call "saints" *(hoi hagioi*). President Hartwig quotes Luther:

"Even though not everybody has the Public Office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary."

These gifts of the congregation and her uniqueness deserve the pastor's high regard.

Question 3: What is the pastor in this relationship?

C.F.W. Walther's explanation is quoted by President Hartwig:

> [The pastor] must, therefore, stand before his people as one of them, a fellow-sinner, and yet in the full dignity and authority of his office, that he "strives to adorn with a holy life and conversation." . . . He stands before the congregation as the bearer of the Office of Word and Sacrament, upon which the congregation is dependent (7).

For that reason, the pastor's high regard for the gifts of the congregation must be answered with a similar high regard for the Office by the congregation he serves. The peaceful relationship between the congregation and her pastor depends not only on such mutual high respect, but also—and this is more important—on mutual love, Christian love that covers the sin of the other. Good understanding, however, is one thing, and whether people can do just as they understand is another thing. Reasons for that are many and varied. President Hartwig takes up one of the most challenging.

Question 4: What is going on in today's society and culture? And how are the social conditions impacting our church life?

President Hartwig says, "We do live at a unique time in history, amid conditions never encountered before by the church." Many specialists point out that it is secularism, modernity, or postmodernism that constitute a new prevailing frame of mind in

today's society and culture. People are trying to outgrow or outlive traditions, ethics and even religions, displaying their own autonomy. There are current tendencies to make too much of the newness, but to disdain the oldness.

This social and cultural change has necessarily had a great impact on Christian communities too. President Hartwig points out the shift in the pastoral profile. It seems to me to be rather extreme, but pastors are like CEOs and are better qualified as secular rather than spiritual leaders.

One of the modern tendencies in our church, and also in many churches, is that the pastor's lifestyle looks like that of salaried workers in business. This indicates, people complain, the dilution of commitment to the divine call. When pastors treat their call in a disrespectful manner we are not surprised that others do.

Another problem on the side of the congregation, that I have personally experienced recently, is the attitude of "Let the pastor do all the work." This was going on for many years before I was called by the congregation. The previous pastor himself told me that he and his wife did everything and the people were just like an audience in the theater.

Question 5: How are Christians to see themselves living in a "grown-up" world?

Elton Trueblood's interpretation of the prevalent attitude in today's society, referred to by President Hartwig, is that "mankind has finally come into its own and has outgained and outlived the relevance of past wisdom, of even the Word of God." This reminds me of the terminology used by Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "*die mündig gewordene Welt*," which means "the grown-up world." Bonhoeffer, however, does not use the term negatively, but positively. He means that, paradoxically, the "grown-up world" manifests the real presence of God.

Religious people in general see the current climate of today's society and culture as challenging to Christian communities. Indeed, "significant pressures exerted by today's society undermine the leadership of pastors and challenge the convictions of the laity" and, as President Hartwig goes on to conclude, "These conditions lead to overages on the part of clergy and misunderstandings on the part of the laymen, and harm to the fellowship of faith locally and at large."

I agree that "mutual study of the Scriptures" is the most important and indispensable activity in Christian communities for the restoration of a peaceful relationship between the congregation and her pastor. For only the Word of God can change the mind and life of people.

At the beginning of my response, I took up President Hartwig's proposal in his conclusion, namely, a "100-0 proposition" is a better way in the true relationship. This is the Christian life together in which, as St. Paul writes, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9) is to be rightly reflected.

Because of our young tradition of Christianity, we are not as familiar with such terminology as "the Ministry," in distinction from "the Priesthood." But we are familiar with Luther's explanation of "the Priesthood of all Believers," which is quoted by President Hartwig.

In order to soften the tensions between the congregation and the pastor, I would like to point out that the role of the laypeople in everyday life should be emphasized more. Do they really enjoy the relationship with Christ by the Word of God and prayer? And do they also share Christ's love with other people in their own working shops, factories, offices, etc.? It is, of course, their pastor's ministry that can prepare them to fulfill their role of Christian witness. Thus, indirectly, such a spiritual growth on the part of the

laypeople does result in a better relationship between the two partners of the church.

Finally, as Bonhoeffer predicts, we cannot reverse the changing of the world. Even if we could, it does not make sense. Let's not look at change merely as something negative. We can do something forward, not backward.

Response to Presentation IV

Dr. Edward G. Kettner, Professor
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The relationship between the Priesthood of Believers, or the priesthood of the baptized, and the Office of Public Ministry is a question fraught with tension in several senses of the term. On the one hand, there is the tension within the Office of Public Ministry itself between office and function. This can result in turning the pastor into an autocrat who focuses on maintaining power by divine right for its own sake rather than exercising the authority of the Word alone. One the other hand, the pastor may become one who sees himself merely as a CEO or "facilitator" who is little more than a motivational speaker, an "equipper" whose job is to work himself out of a job by training others to do the "real work" of ministry.

There is also the tension between the church's possession of the Office of the Keys and the public exercise of that Office by those called into the Holy Ministry, both of which have been mandated by God, though exercised in different ways and in different spheres.

And, finally, there is the tension that sometimes exists between the pastor and his flock when conflict arises between the two, when one, the other, or both seek to assert their rights in the face of the seeming attempts by the other side to usurp them. President

Hartwig, from his experience both as a parish pastor and as a district president, has spoken well concerning each of these forms of tension, tension that both exists and finds its resolution in the Gospel.

The Office of Public Ministry was created by God for the sake of the Gospel, that is, for the creating and sustaining of the Priesthood of all Believers through the Means of Grace. It is through these means that the Body of Christ becomes living and active. The Priesthood is a priesthood of the baptized because one enters into it by Baptism, that is, by God's action. It is a Priesthood of Believers because the members of the Priesthood respond to God's activity with a living faith. It is for the sake of the Priesthood, the Body of Christ, that those who hold the Office of Public Ministry are called to be faithful. Apart from the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, there is no forgiveness of sins, no life, no salvation, and hence, no priesthood.

As the church seeks to bring the Gospel to the world, it must be sure that it is asking the right question—a question that shows the tension between the *fides quae*, the body of truth that must be faithfully proclaimed, and the *fides qua*, the faith that trusts in the Christ, who is proclaimed in accordance with the truth. We must avoid the temptation to bring people into the visible congregation by smoothing away all obstacles and eliminating all offenses (least of all the offense of the Gospel itself.) We must avoid answering the question, "How do we get our churches to grow?" in a way that eliminates the objective truth of the Gospel in favor of a faith that consists of little more than an emotional state of being, divorced from any question of theological truth. In some areas of Christendom, even though the name of Jesus is continually spoken, the Jesus proclaimed seems at times to be teacher, lawgiver and taskmaster, with the central task of the church becoming "teaching people to obey," in the sense of external obedience to various com-

mandments, or else a Jesus with whom one is encouraged to form some sort of emotional attachment for its own sake apart from the Means of Grace. In the face of these concepts of Jesus, one uncomfortably remembers Jesus' words, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

In reaction to this, the challenge to the orthodox faith, that is, to the church and to the teachers of the church, is the creation of a *fides qua* that has as its object the Christ who saves sinners. One falls into error when there is a proclamation of a mere word about the Gospel, a word of objective truth that people are required to accept intellectually, but that fails to create a living faith. While that is not a problem among those gathered here, it is always good to remind ourselves that our goal is not merely to create an intellectual faith in secondary discourse, forgetting that, as Gerhard Forde put it in the title of one of his books, theology is for proclamation. This means that our secondary discourse ("getting the message straight.") exists for the purpose of proclaiming the saving Gospel ("getting the message out."). Both pietism and "dead orthodoxy" (that is, orthodoxy for its own sake, that proclaims itself rather than the Gospel or that merely sets forth the claims of Christ) are to be avoided, because both fail to announce clearly to the hearer the saving Gospel: "Your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake." Theology is always a matter of proclamation. The Lord's Word is always living and active, never static.

We can maintain the proper tension between the *fides qua* and the *fides quae* by asking the right question, which is: "How do we faithfully proclaim the Gospel in a modern (or postmodern) culture?" Or, to use the analogy that I like to use with my students, we study to get the wiring right so that the light will come on when we open our mouths to proclaim.

Thus, the creation of a living, active priesthood involves properly proclaiming Law and Gospel, neither of which our culture (or

really, any of our cultures) in and of itself understands. Attempts to reinterpret the Gospel or to attune it to the ears of the culture—whether it be proclaiming liberation to the economically oppressed, acceptance to the alienated, or empowerment to the helpless—may create a *fides qua* of sorts and may be good news to various bad situations. But such reinterpretation of the biblical message will lead to destruction rather than salvation because the object of trust, is not the Jesus who came to save sinners.

Because the culture in every age is offended by the Gospel and because the people of God live in the world, the temptation is present to accommodate the church to the culture rather than to fit the saints of God with the whole armor of God for their life within their culture. When heaven and earth meet in the Divine Service, it is the work of heaven that is being brought to earth, not the work of earth that is being held up to heaven. When the saints go marching out into the world they take heaven with them and make use of the things of heaven in their daily lives, as they offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. It goes too far to say that the pastor is Christ in the sense of being the Incarnation of His person among His people (as J.A.O. Preus III ably notes in the July 1997 *Concordia Journal*, the answer to the question, "Is the pastor Christ?" is "Yes and No"). Nevertheless, the one who holds the Office of Public Ministry is privileged to be the mouthpiece of Christ, called by Him to publicly bring His Word of forgiveness to the people of God as from the mouth of Christ Himself, and to administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution so that the people recognize that the acts performed are God's acts and not those of a mere man. Through the public acts in the Divine Service and their extension in the day-to-day task of the care of souls in homes, in hospitals, and elsewhere, the ministers of Christ feed and sustain the living members of the Body of Christ and then send them out to bear Christ into the world.

It is quite clear, then, that the Office of Public Ministry is a noble task, as Paul tells Timothy. But the task of the people of God is also a noble one, not to be spoken of lightly or belittled. The quotation from Luther on Psalm 110, that President Hartwig made use of, makes it clear. And this task of bringing God's Word of forgiveness to the world is not to be seen as drudgery, but as joyful privilege. I have recently seen statements made to the effect that Luther only spoke of the Priesthood's exercise of the Office of the Keys in his early years, and that the mature Luther almost exclusively focused on the exercise of the Keys in the Preaching Office. Yet these words, which Luther spoke in 1535, show that the mature Luther recognized that individual Christians as members of the Royal Priesthood exercise the Keys in their daily life, that is, in the context of their daily vocation. As a church, we would do well to re-emphasize the importance and nature of vocation, so that the people of God more fully understand the relationship between what goes on in public worship and what goes on in their lives during the week. A recognition of the distinction and relationship between the public Divine Service and the Christian life would go far to help the understanding of the distinction and relationship between the Priesthood and the Public Ministry, so that both those who occupy the Public Ministry and those who are members of the Priesthood of all Believers carry out their tasks faithfully and joyfully.

As President Hartwig pointed out, Lutherans are not alone in seeing the challenges of maintaining the proper tension between doctrine and the Christian life. He has cited Os Guinness and his work on the subject, particularly regarding his insights on the dangers of flirting with modernity in his book *Dining with the Devil*. So also two major works by David Wells have been published in the 1990s from an Evangelical perspective that bemoan attempts to grow churches without reference to a body of doctrine: *No Place*

for the Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology, published by Eerdmans in 1993, and *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*, published by Eerdmans in 1994. One could also add Mark Noll's work, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, that has accused Evangelicals of abandoning Reformed theology's intellectual roots. We might say (and, I believe, rightly) that even though these writers come from traditions that downplay the Means of Grace and miss some implications of Gospel proclamation, they very ably show the dangers of giving in to temptation to preach a Jesus that answers all of our problems except the one that really matters—all our felt needs, but not our real need.

The fact that the members of the Priesthood at times do not seem to be doing all they could or should in carrying out the mission of the church has led some to seek ways outside of Law-Gospel proclamation to "get people moving." Accusations of complacency abound, some saying that the problem is that we preach too much justification and not enough sanctification, and others saying that we preach too many rules and do not really preach justification at all! As the church works through these issues, it is important for us to remember that the church in mission may or may not grow, and that much of the growth of the church is hidden behind the cross, like leaven in a lump of dough. Accusations are made that people who are in church for the Divine Service and nothing else during the week are somehow "dead wood" that needs to be revitalized, The church is ill-served as well by attempts to make a distinction between being a Christian and being a disciple, as though the two were somehow different and as though disciples were created in some way other than the means by which Christians are created, namely, the Gospel. We need to be very careful about leveling ill-founded accusations against the people of God, because we may not always see how faithfully they carry out the tasks of their voca-

tion, which is the hallmark of the sanctified life. While many programs that the church offers are important in carrying out the mission of the church—education and evangelism, just to name two—it does not necessarily follow that anyone who is not "with the program" is dead wood. What we do know is that when the Gospel is preached faith is created, people are brought to life, and thereby ardently desire to serve. Thus, there most certainly is a place for programs that give the people of God opportunity to articulate their faith in a sometimes hostile environment. But in doing so we can alleviate much fear and trepidation by noting what is really going on: Christ is acting. Not us. Thus evangelism can be taught as bringing Christ to people (that is, confession of faith) rather than as bringing people to Christ (that is, salesmanship and persuasion).

We need to recognize that it is the Gospel itself, and not guilt, that impels people out into the world with the Good News. Perhaps an illustration of how this is sometimes done and how it might be done a bit better would be appropriate. You might have heard the story of the conversation in heaven between the angels and Christ, after Christ returns to heaven at the Ascension. Christ is praised and glorified for His victory over sin, death, and hell, and then is asked how the Good News of this victory will be spread throughout the world. Christ declares that He has sent His disciples into the world with the message, and that they would spread the news. But, the angels ask, what if that plan doesn't work? What other, back-up plan is there? Christ says, "There is no other plan." Now, frankly, this illustration, I think, leaves something to be desired, since it seems to try to motivate with the Gospel, but really uses guilt. How much better to pick up where the words left off and tell "the rest of the story," to use Paul Harvey's term. Jesus, after all, would go on to say, "There is no other plan because one is not needed, for I have armed my disciples with the Gospel and I

am with them. Wherever that message is spoken, my Spirit is at work, and through their proclamation, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

Now the message may itself at times create tension between the minister and the Priesthood, because the message that calls to repentance will be by its very nature an uncomfortable message. Yet, he loves them as he does it and he does it because he loves them. The power of the Gospel itself, the message of forgiveness, is the very message that creates the love that is able to overcome the conflicts that might arise, and is the means of reconciliation. Love does indeed cover a multitude of sins, both of the Priesthood and of the minister.

Even though the focus of this paper and the response has been on the Priesthood of all Believers, much time has been spent on the Office of the Public Ministry here as well, since the two are intertwined and both are necessary to the mission of bringing the Gospel to the world. In fact, only when both are exalted as creations of God and when both faithfully exercise their tasks, are both properly honored. Thank you, President Hartwig, for giving us much food for thought about this important issue.

Response to Presentation IV

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President Hartwig's comparison of the Ministry to marriage is a powerful and provocative one—a comparison that says as much about what the relationship between pastor and people should be as it does about why that relationship too often fails.

On the one hand, to describe a pastor and people as husband and wife underscores the divine origins of the relationship. So, we confess that God has established the Office of the Public Ministry and that He continues to fill that Office with men of His choosing, just as we contend that God both created and still sanctifies marriage and that He providentially brings couples together.

On the other hand, our practice can certainly obscure our theology. This is abundantly clear in contemporary America regarding marriage. Unfortunately, it is increasingly clear regarding the Ministry as well. And in both instances, some of the same forces are at work that encourage us to shape our practice at the expense of God's truth.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is the practice regarding marriage known as "no-fault" divorce, the granting of a divorce simply because one partner wants out of the marriage. There is no obligation to prove that either partner has done anything to break

his or her vows, nor can one spouse stop the divorce from taking place even if he or she wants ever so desperately to keep the marriage together. No, marriage is simply a business deal—fairly easy to enter into and even easier to get out of for any reason at all; indeed, for no reason at all.

Now, perhaps we have not quite reached this same point regarding the relationship between pastor and people in which either side can terminate the relationship for "no fault." I fear, however, that we may be getting there. In his paper, President Hartwig gives us a couple of instances in which congregations not only tolerated but respected and loved pastors whose shortcomings and faults were manifest to all, including and especially to their own members. And there are numerous examples of faithful shepherds continuing to feed their flocks in difficult congregations.

But we also know that not only President Hartwig, but also every other church official here today could have offered many, many counter-examples of pastors and congregations, each attempting to terminate the relationship for less than biblical reasons, looking for the ecclesiastical equivalent of a no-fault divorce. Pastors demand to be put on call lists, and cry and complain until they get a call out. Or, they simply resign, go CRM, and then expect the Synod to supply another position. At the same time, congregations too look for ways to get rid of an unsatisfactory pastor. So, like marriage, our actions—if not always our words—are challenging the Ministry: Is it a divine institution or simply a business deal?

There has always been a temptation to treat the Ministry as a business deal—a contract and not a call. After all, money, property, and status are exchanged for work like preaching, teaching, and evangelism calls. So even in his day, C.F.W. Walther admonished every pastor "never [to] seek to get away [from his call] on his own, least of all to secure a higher salary or a more pleasant or easier

position." Indeed, according to Walther, "he should never leave [even] because of the wicked in his congregation who make his life bitter." Opportunities for service and the needs of the church should be of paramount importance when considering a call. But I suspect that Walther said these things because they needed to be said in his day. Pastors were making decisions about calls for personal and monetary reasons.[1]

But if that was true in Walther's day, how much more so today? In our money-mad age, how many pastors can escape viewing their calling as a job, and so assessing their position in terms of salary, benefits, and paid vacations? Clearly, these things are important, just as finances in a marriage are important. But neither relationship—husband and wife, pastor and people—ought to be based on money. Nor should it terminate if the financial package is inadequate.

But money is only one of the problems. There are also questions of status and authority, efficiency and competence. Like money, these questions are not at the heart of the institution, but they often have a great deal to do with problems that develop in the relationship.

And problems there will be. Of course, every couple in love and considering marriage thinks that theirs will be different and that all will be sweetness and light with them. But it is not true, and one of our common devices for disabusing such dreamers is something we call "premarital counseling"—counseling that includes straight talk on the basis of the Bible about the nature of marriage, its joys and its challenges. Our hope and expectation, of course, is that such counseling will lead to better understanding and therefore to stronger marriages.

Whether such counseling does or does not work is another question for another time. Our concern here is pastor and people; but regarding that relationship too, we have a form of premarital

counseling. We call it "the seminary." Clearly, our analogy weakens at this point, since not only does seminary education last a lot longer than a typical premarital counseling session but also it is entirely one-sided. Only one partner is being trained for the relationship, not both, and that leads to problems.

President Hartwig recognizes this in his paper when he comments on the different expectations that pastors and their people often have about the relationship between them. "On the one hand we have . . . confessionally trained clergy who are well instructed regarding Bible-based doctrine and practice upon leaving our seminaries. They wholeheartedly believe in and are ready to staunchly defend and actively promote the proper doctrine and practice of their Synod."

But what happens to these men? President Hartwig answers, "[They] receive calls from congregations throughout the church from a variety of congregations, often to congregations whose pastoral expectations and interest in pure doctrine and practice have been colored to varying degrees by the culture." But this, in turn, suggests that somehow we need to bring the congregations also into the counseling process, if we want the relationship to get off to a good start.

Now, I recognize that this actually does take place in most, if not all, of our districts. When a congregation becomes vacant, the district president initiates a process to help that congregation call a new pastor. This process is more than simply soliciting names for a call list. It is one that includes a great deal of congregational self-analysis and opportunities for the Synod to remind the congregation of what the call entails and what the nature of the Office of the Ministry is.

Thus, both sides of this prospective marriage—candidate and congregation—do, after all, receive a form of counseling, but not from the same counselor. One of the clear implications of Presi-

dent Hartwig's paper about the varying expectations of pastor and people is that those responsible for preparing pastor and people, namely, seminary and Synod, must work together so closely that both candidates and congregations hear the same message about the Ministry, whether it comes from a church official or a church teacher.

But this will demand work. For one thing, we probably need to make some new institutional arrangements. For example, perhaps we need to involve synodical officials, such as a committee of district presidents, in assessing the vicarage experiences of our students. Maybe vicarage needs to be lengthened, placed after the completion of all academic work, or placed under the supervision of the church apart from the seminaries. These are possibilities.

But before we go racing off to implement what may turn out to be very bad ideas, we probably also need to assess the institutional changes already undertaken. A few years ago, the Synod began to deploy an adviser on personal growth at each seminary and in each of the districts to establish both pre-seminary screening committees and post-ordination workshops and retreats for new pastors. In some places, we now have an entirely different model of pastoral preparation, the DELTO program (Distance Education Leading To Ordination). So, how are all these changes working? Are those who have gone through these new institutional arrangements better able to meet the expectations of their congregations? Do we know the answers to these questions? If not, we need to find out. When we make changes, we need to follow up and see whether or not they are working.

However, President Hartwig has also suggested, that the problem may not simply be one of better screening and then preparation of pastors. There may also be some underlying cultural forces at work that are making it difficult for good, faithful pastors to succeed in some ministries. But if those forces are at work in our

congregations, I suggest they may also be at work among us, shaping, or rather reshaping, our expectations of pastors in ways that are different from or even contrary to the Scriptures. Furthermore, if we need to look at the culture critically, we cannot for that reason embrace the counter-culture uncritically. Though it pains me enormously as a dyed-in-the-wool conservative to say it, not every change is for the worst. In other words, if we want pastors and people to hear the same message from us about the Ministry, we need to make sure that we are speaking the same message at the seminary and in the church, and that the basis for our message is the Scriptures and the Confessions, not current cultural conventions or simply our traditions—not even our very own, very comfortable LCMS traditions.

This convocation is a great contribution because it permits a variety of voices to participate in the conversation, the presumption being that as confessional Lutherans, we will actually communicate and not just make noise. And so far, clearly, that has been the case. Perhaps also, as a consequence of this meeting, more conversation will be necessary in order to follow up on some of the issues now being brought to the table. We need to remember that the purpose of theology is always practice. We want to speak with one voice about Church and Ministry so that both people and pastors know from the Scriptures their respective responsibilities and duties. Then we need to move from conversation to commitment, from dialogue to confession.

In the 19th century, most notably regarding predestination, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod finally confessed what the Scriptures taught concerning divine election. Just about 25 years ago our church was in the process of doing the very same thing regarding an even more controverted issue among us, the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. We talked for a long time, but finally we spoke: "We believe, teach, and confess."

I do not mean to suggest that this issue of Church and Ministry has yet risen in our Synod to the level of those issues, either predestination or the Scriptures. But I do mean to say that if we are serious about helping pastors and congregations not only during the courtship but also after the marriage, the entire church—including professors and officials—needs to be saying essentially the same thing about that relationship. This means also how you get into it and how you get out. As professors prepare students and presidents prepare congregations, the message needs to be the same: This is what a pastor is, this is how God provides one, this is what a pastor does, this is what a pastor does not do, and so forth. Unanimity on these points in the church can go far toward helping our churches either to avoid or to overcome troubled relationships between pastor and people.

"Can this marriage be saved?" was the name of a regular column in a magazine years ago. I can remember neither the column nor the magazine very well, but the question is an appropriate one with which to conclude these reflections on President Hartwig's presentation. "Can this marriage be saved?" Of course, it can. For when God has brought together pastor and people, when God has given His Word for pastors to preach and for people to find salvation, when God Himself is present among them all in His precious Means of Grace, we have every confidence that God both does and ever will bless both Church and Ministry, sometimes in spite of us but also through us.

Notes

1. C.F.W. Walther, *Walther's Pastorale, that is, American Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. and abridged by John M. Drickamer, from the 5th edition, 1906 (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, 1995), 274.

Commentators' Responses to the Convocation

Right Reverend Paul Kofi Fynn

President, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
Ghana, West Africa

I want to thank Dr. Barry, first of all, for the opportunity given to me to be one of the commentators at this convocation. It is really an honor for me as a representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, and of the confessional Lutheran churches in Africa, to be chosen to comment on the presentations and discussions that have taken place.

This problem of Church and Ministry, or the relationship between the laity and the clergy, is not peculiar to the United States. It is present also in Africa, and for that matter throughout the whole world. Where the Word of God is taught and preached in its truth and purity, there Satan always tries hard to stage a *coup d'état*.

It has been beautifully stated in all the papers presented and in the responses given to them that God has instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry and the church, the Priesthood of all Believers. The Office of the Public Ministry has been created by God and, as Dr. Johnson has stated, "all Christians, whether ordained or not, have the same Baptism, the same Gospel and the same faith. There are no spiritual distinctions among the people of God. Conse-

quently, they share a common priesthood and are called upon to exercise priestly responsibilities." That is, Christians are called upon to carry out the same task of preaching and teaching the Gospel.

The essayists used images such as cars, golf, and marriage to explain this beautiful relationship. I would like to sum up with a similar picture. It is something that everyone has in his or her home. It is simple and yet we don't take note of it: a pair of scissors. The blades of a scissors face opposite directions and yet they work together to achieve one purpose. They are used to cut materials for sewing, and in hospitals, homes, schools, and offices to cut paper. The two halves of a scissors are always together, performing their duties or functions together. In the same way, the Holy Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers are interdependent, yet dependent—depending on each other to proclaim the Gospel. What holds them together at the center is Christ. Without Christ, they will fall apart. Christ unites them and makes them move.

Problem Areas

The beautiful relationship between the Holy Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers has often been abused, resulting in problems, tension, conflicts and controversy, as described by the presenters. These problems do not come from the Scriptures and our well-thought-out Lutheran Confessions themselves. But customs and traditions in America and other countries have invaded our beloved Lutheran Church and imposed their own secular, pagan ideas and expectations on the Pastoral Office. Our own selfish interest also creates problems. These are factors that contribute to the challenges we face. The problem begins right here at the conference. We are discussing the clergy and the laity. But how many laymen are here with us?

Another way this relationship has been abused has to do with how the pastors are regarded. For instance, in Ghana, priests are

regarded as chiefs and this certainly goes to their heads. In fact, the pastor becomes a boss and a village chief. He is the banker, the cashier, the school teacher, the judge, the preacher, the mechanic, the driver(s), the builder—you name it. The "chief" mentality creates problems.

Similar thinking can be found here in the United States. The pastor is often seen as a boss who does everything in the congregation. He decides where the altar should be. He is the liturgist. He leads the worship. He reads the lessons. He practically does everything. There is one thing he does not do in the congregation, and that is take the offering. Maybe the congregation does not trust him with the money.

It is as if the whole congregation is in a boat. The pastor alone paddles the boat while the members sit in it, smoking a pipe and drinking coffee. If anything happens to the pastor while on the sea, the whole boat will sink and the people will perish. The pastor teaches them to be lazy and to sit. They then become comfortable Christians.

I do not blame them. The fault lies in our ordination vow. It reads: "Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have heard the confession and solemn promise of (name) called to serve in the congregation. I ask you now, in the presence of God: Will you receive him, show him fitting love and honor, and support him by your gifts and fervent prayer? If so, answer: We will with the help of God." Once they love him, give him gifts and pay him, they then feel they have performed their Christian responsibilities. So, they sit.

A third problem is this: The relationship between clergy and laity is abused because of a misunderstanding of servanthood. We are called upon to serve. As pointed out by all the papers, the disciples were thankful to be "slaves" of Jesus. Surprisingly, however, when it comes to service, pastors in the United States often become masters. The Ministry is viewed as a profession. There seems to be

much worry about benefits and salaries. It looks like we think of the Ministry in the world's terms. In Ghana, I am afraid our pastors are nearly slaves. They receive little or no support or benefits from the congregations. Our situation in Ghana certainly presents many problems. But we do easily understand that ministry means service to God. We are not mistaken that our pastors have a profession with benefits. Our pastors, evangelists and the laymen walk several miles on foot to share God's message with the dying and with unbelievers.

Qualifications for the Holy Ministry

Another area of concern is this: The presenters mentioned that the priests in the Old Testament were put into office by God, while in the New Testament, our Lord put the apostles into office and they, according to His will, placed others into office. But unfortunately, the presenters did not explain to us how the priests and the apostles received their training. What kind of training did they have? What kind of qualifications did they have? What kind of degree, diploma, certificate (if any) did they obtain?

In addition, the presenters did not share with us how pastors are called. As we talk about the involvement of the laity, we should not overlook the training and qualifications of a pastor (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

For instance, in Cote d'Ivoire, a missionary met an Ivoirian and within two months the missionary ordained him, because the person spoke good French. This gentleman turned the whole church upside down. On another occasion, a layman preached in my church and condemned all women. When asked why he preached like that, he said that on the way to church that morning, he had fought with his wife.

If laymen are to hold key positions in the church and we are to avoid turning our beloved church into a pentecostal church, then

laymen must be trained, have qualifications and thoroughly understand the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The laymen should be well-equipped before they are asked to carry out teaching and preaching in the church. Due to materialism and the rush for gold, fewer and fewer people are now entering into the Holy Ministry. Instead of entering into the Holy Ministry, laypeople are looking for and seeking big cars, big houses, big money, big husband, big wives—everything big. Therefore, the position of the laity and what we expect of them should be carefully looked into, since the churches will soon be using more and more laymen to carry out the Ministry of the church.

Recommendations

Let me conclude by making the following recommendations:

1. That studies on the issue of Church and Ministry, as well as the qualifications, training, duties and the expectations of the laity, be organized by the CTCR for the lay and clergy in Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations;

2. That there be a team ministry between district presidents and seminary faculty to help arrest the situation;

3. That pastors be encouraged to include the issue of Church and Ministry in their teachings, both in their confirmation and in their adult Bible classes; and

4. That the whole idea of call, commissioning, ordination, and the ordination vows be revisited.

Once again I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Al Barry and the organizers of this important conference. God bless you all.

Dr. J.A.O. Preus, III

Professor, Concordia Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri

First of all, I want to thank all the speakers and reactors. This has been a great convocation! But, what can I offer you, at the end of two-and-a-half jam-packed days of theological reflection on the Church and the Ministry, that would be of any value to you? What can I possibly say that has not already been said? In twenty minutes, I cannot really add much to this discussion. Nor can I hope to offer an adequate summary of everything that has been said here. So, I will not try to do that.

Rather I will address my brief remarks primarily to the task of helping us look ahead a bit, to what follows from this convocation. I will discuss how we can take what has happened here out into the church and the world. Specifically, I will ask you to reflect with me on the important matter of theological discourse by asking the question, "If we have learned better in this convocation what to say about Church and Ministry, then, how should we go about saying it?" How can we carry on clear and persuasive theological conversation about this question (or any other theological question, for that matter), particularly with those with whom we disagree? This is the question I would like to address with you this morning.

The church today, including The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, lives and works in an increasingly pluralistic world. Unlike the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century when we found

ourselves dealing almost exclusively with other Christian traditions (first, Protestants and later, Roman Catholics), we now function in the midst of a mind-numbing array of religious options. These range from other-world religions (such as Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) to New Age religiosity and sectarian spirituality. In the midst of this cacophony of competing voices, Christians are becoming increasingly eclectic in their religious faith and piety. At the same time, they are identifying less and less with the theological position of any particular tradition or denomination. This "post-denominational" spirit results further in a de-emphasis upon any particular and specific truth claim. People are increasingly cutting themselves off from their history, from what has theologically defined them. To put it bluntly, people today, even in our own churches, don't know and don't care about their theological tradition. They will simply believe what they want to.

So, a pluralistic culture brings to the forefront the question of the identity of a particular tradition. And, contrary to what many people today think, the matter of identity, namely, "who are we?" is an important one because more than anything else, a church's identity shapes, not only its present, but its future as well. If we do not know who we are, we do not know where we are going, what we are all about, what we stand for. Consider for a moment how we would tend to regard a person who suffers from amnesia or someone who is afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Such a person cannot remember who he is. Why? Because he cannot remember his past. And because he cannot remember his past, he cannot discover his purpose for the present, and he cuts himself off from his rightful future.

Well, what is our Lutheran identity? Historically, it has been defined by ecumenical creeds and ecumenical confessions as deposited in the Book of Concord. These constitute our confessional heritage. They shape our mission. They provide the norm

and touchstone for our faith (what we believe) and our life (the shape of our worship and piety). The Book of Concord sets forth our theological position as well as our theological agenda by making the Gospel the alpha and omega for all that we say and do. We may be rightly proud of the doctrine of the Confessions, most of all because at the center of it all stands the doctrine of the Gospel. We may be certain that, as true expositions of Scripture, they give all glory to Christ and full comfort to sinners. We may proclaim them in a loving and kind way, inviting others to join us in confessing these beautiful articles of faith.

A distinctively Lutheran, confessional approach to the theological task, of course, finds its definitive expression in the Formula of Concord. What does such an approach look like? Well, Luther's goal was to call the church back to the one, biblical-creedal faith, not to be distinctively "Luther-ian." Likewise, Walther's goal was to be orthodox, just plain orthodox, not distinctively "Walther-ian." To be distinctively "Luther-ian" or "Walther-ian" over and above historic orthodox Christianity is to be sectarian. So, to be distinctively Lutheran and confessional is to be no less and no more than "historic Christianity." This was the goal of the Formula of Concord.

In many ways, it is not only a Formula *of* Concord, it is also a Formula *for* Concord. That is, it provides an excellent model for dealing with theological controversies as well as for going about the task of doing theology and carrying out theological discourse and dialog in our day and age, just as it did in the 16th century. I would like to discuss five ways in which the Formula of Concord can help us, not only to say what we say right, but also to say it well; that is, not only to let it guide us in the content of our conversation, but also in the course of our discourse.

First, the formulators of the Formula focus on issues and not on personalities. They insist upon dealing with others on the basis

of the *status controversiae* rather than superficial labels or personal or political issues. In focusing on the issues, they do not adopt a simplistic or reductionistic approach. Rather, they recognize the complexities and nuances of a problem that requires disciplined and deep theological thinking. They do not caricature positions; they present a fair-minded description of the opponent's position.

Fair-mindedness involves a *sic et non* (yes and no) approach to theological dialog. It means saying "yes" to what there is in the other person's position that is good and right and wholesome and in accordance with Scripture. But, it also means saying "no" to what there is in the other's position that is bad or wrong or unwholesome or not in accordance with Scripture. Both yes *and* no, not yes *or* no. The Formula of Concord shows us a way to carry on theological dialog and debate that is critically discerning or appraisingly critical; seeking the truth wherever it may be found (even among those who are otherwise wrong) and exposing error wherever it may be found (even among those who are otherwise right).

Second, the Formula of Concord highlights the importance of the issue at hand. It consciously avoids dealing with logomachies or with arguing for the sake of arguing. It avoids useless or inappropriate contention. It avoids bickering about matters that are not at issue or only marginally related. Instead, when dealing with a given issue, the Formula shows how it affects the core of the church's proclamation; how it impacts the preaching and hearing, the administering and receiving of the Gospel.

Third, the Formula sets forth the biblical truth and, in so doing, avoids extreme positions on both sides of an issue. In particular, it rejects the approach that counters an error merely by stating the opposite position (Article IV). Saying the opposite of an error can still be (and often is) error. This has been a particularly disturbing aspect of the debate about Church and Ministry in our

circles. Dr. Johnson's essay did a good job of pointing out the necessity of maintaining the tension between Church and Ministry, while avoiding the errors. Unfortunately, many of us have fallen into the trap of countering a position we find wanting (whether it be too much or too little emphasis on Church or Ministry) by putting forward a position that is the opposite. However, the Formula shows us that there never is and never will be a substitute for that difficult, narrow way of letting the Scriptures decide issues for us and, on that basis, formulating positions that stand against the extremes that tempt on both sides.

Fourth, the Formula engages in biblical exegesis. The Formula's approach begins with a discussion of the biblical evidence and then proceeds to examine the tradition of the church. This is one of the things that has been most unhelpful about much of the debate over Church and Ministry. I think we have come a long way during this convocation, and I wish to commend Presidents Barry and Johnson—and especially Wenthe—for their excellent work in this regard. But, we need to go further. This is particularly true for the international confessional churches, who share our devotion to Scripture, but perhaps are not as familiar with the particular Missourian history as formulated in the Walther/Löhe dichotomy. It would help us all, both in Missouri and those outside of it, if we would follow the Formula's pattern of always beginning our discussion with the biblical evidence, followed by an examination of the early church fathers, before proceeding to an examination of the various, local traditions of our churches.

Fifth, and finally, the Formula affirms the catholicity of the confessional Lutheran Church by self-consciously placing itself within the tradition of the wider, historic Christian theology. The Apology especially seeks to show how its doctrine stands in continuity with the theology of the early church. The confessors were throughout intent on refuting the charge of "sectarian." The Cata-

log of Testimonies was appended to the Formula in order to show that its Christology stands in continuity with the historic Christian faith. This commitment tells us that it is neither prudent nor appropriate to engage in theological discourse, whether about Church and Ministry or about any other theological issue, without taking into account what the church has always, everywhere confessed.

Among other things, this strongly implies that these conversations must take place, not only within earshot of the international Lutheran confessional churches, but also and especially, with the strong and significant input of the wider church, including particularly our partner churches from around the world. This means we must avoid isolationism and parochialism just as much as we must avoid unionism and liberalism. We must say "no" to both extremes. This convocation was blessed with excellent participation from our partners around the world.

If we in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod ever act as if we have a corner on the truth, or as if we are the teachers to whom the rest of the international Lutheran confessional churches must simply listen, we will be acting in a way that is less than wise and less than respectful. That is why I am so pleased that there is such significant representation from the international Lutheran churches who call themselves confessional. And that is why, in addition to whatever else may or must be done when this conference is over, we must also take care to allow this discussion between church leaders and theologians to continue. There are few things that we could do better to ensure the future vitality of this confessional witness and way than to invest in the kinds of lively discourse this convocation has fostered. I hope it will not be 150 years before we do something like this again!

I would like to make one, final comment on what has happened here. It has become clear to me that the key to leading us

beyond the impasse in the Church and Ministry debate is to understand both offices, that of the Priesthood of all Believers and that of the Public Ministry, as offices of the Gospel. Understanding them both in this light, the one as the Gospel Office, the other as the Office from the Gospel, enables us to exalt both to the high position that the Lord who instituted them both has given them.

Since they are both offices of and from the Gospel and both are Christ's gracious institutions, it is inconceivable that we should treat them as if they were at odds with one another, or in competition with each other. Because they are both "Gospel doctrines," any one-up-one-down handling of them is not only unseemly, and not only bound to produce further friction in our church, but it is a heresy that, at all costs, must be avoided as we value our salvation.

For too long, people have divided themselves into camps: Church vs. Ministry. If one good thing were to come out of this convocation, it would be that we all recognize that both Church and Ministry are Christ's Gospel gifts and seek ways to exalt them both, in our speaking and in our acting, and to lift both of them to the lofty and blessed place given to them by the Lord of the church and the Ministry.

Dr. Lance G. Steicke

President, Lutheran Church of Australia
North Adelaide, South Australia

Like the two previous speakers, I am very grateful to President Barry and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for this convocation. My sincere thanks for everything that has gone on here—to the presenters of the papers and the discussions. I am going to take that as a given and not elaborate on it anymore. I am very thankful for everything that has been presented here.

My task and the task of the responders this morning is to "reflect on what we saw and heard." I am going to add one additional term of reference to that and indicate what I did not hear.

First of all, I affirm what has been presented here so strongly and clearly. The Office of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers are gifts of God; they are givens. They are not the creation of human beings, but they are gifts of God. Theology is for proclamation, someone said during the course of this symposium. It is not an academic exercise. We are not here purely and simply to discuss theology for theology's sake. It is for the sake of the Gospel. It is for the sake of the mission of the church. And I appreciated very much, toward the end of President Barry's presentation, the emphasis on the Gospel. I also appreciated my vice-president and seminary lecturer's emphasis on mission and the purpose presented yesterday afternoon. Why is the Office of the Public Ministry given to the church? It is given for the sake of the Gospel.

It is given so that the Gospel might be taught, preached, proclaimed to the members of the church and to the world. It is given for purposes of Gospel and mission. Why does the Priesthood of Believers exist? Why does the church exist? They are there to live their life of vocation, a salt and leaven, and witness to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of this world. Focal and central to everything in the Office of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers is Jesus Christ. He is both the motive and the purpose "of and from the Gospel," to quote my predecessor here in these presentations.

On to a few comments on what I didn't hear or didn't hear enough of. Now I know it has been said a number of times that everything has been exhausted. I'm not quite sure that it has. I recall only one passing reference to saints and sinners—most unusual for a Lutheran theological gathering. There was no emphasis on that traditional classic emphasis, saints and sinners. I ask myself the question (and I made this statement at the International Lutheran Council meeting last week), "Do we have difficulty as theologians, as church leaders, in dealing with our people as saints?" We can deal with them fairly easily as sinners, but perhaps the saint side of that equation comes fairly hard to us. I think of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians, where right at the beginning he writes "to the saints of God who are in Corinth." He exalts that and then for the rest of the letter he deals with them, of course, as sinners and very much so. But he deals with those people in their sinfulness as the saints of God. Do we deal with people only as sinners? With respect to our problem pastors, or problem congregations or people, do we deal with them as saints who now have a particular problem or a particular sin? And so I leave that question and that thought hang in the air. To church presidents, to church leaders and to district presidents, I ask the question as I ask myself the question, "Do we need to hear confession, confession of sins, and pronounce the

Absolution much more than we do—and perhaps a lot more than we exercise episcope and church discipline?"

Moving from that, as a transition to the next point, to what I didn't hear enough of or very little of, there were very few specific references to the role of presidents. The role of presidents is crucial when we are dealing with the Office of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of Believers. Pastors feel (and this is certainly the case in my church and I gather in yours, according to feedback that I have heard these days) that often presidents—presidents who have hands-on responsibility—are unfair in their dealings in problem situations. Either they side with the pastor or they side with the congregation. The perception is that very rarely do they come in (I am not talking about reality) even-handedly trying to deal with the situation in a fair, impartial way. But they are perceived to be taking sides. I ask presidents and church leaders, do we support pastors who take a stand, who are faithful in their ministry even though that stand on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions may upset people? So, rather than have an upset congregation or members of the congregation, we feel we need to take the pastor to task for taking a firm stand. Pastors need an advocate, someone said here at this symposium. Do we see to it that pastors do have an advocate (not necessarily ourselves); that pastors are provided with a pastor during their difficult days?

In connection with the role of a president, I also ask the question: Do we function as bishops in the sense of our teaching roles? I won't go into nomenclature. I happen to prefer the title "bishop," but that's an aside and not significant. The traditional role and the role in many churches, not necessarily Lutheran churches, is that of the bishop as a teacher and therefore as a unifying factor in the church. We, in the Lutheran Church of Australia, have recently moved to a situation where our Commission on Theology will refer many of their statements to the presidents of the church or the

Council of Presidents for implementation. The statement will not be released to the church at all. It is given to the presidents. If the presidents do not take it up and run with it, it goes into the filing basket. I think that is a good model for theology and church life, theology and the episcopate. The theologians, together with church leaders, prepare the theological statement. The bishops or presidents are responsible for teaching—teaching the pastors, teaching the people of God, putting it into practice. And that, I submit, is a good relationship between theology and practice, between theologians and church presidents.

I did not hear too much, or very little, at this workshop so far as references to women are concerned. And yet it is a major agenda item in churches around the world, also Lutheran churches. I refer not only to the question of ordination of women, although that is one issue, it seems to me. I side with one speaker at this meeting, I think, that when we look at the Office of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of all Believers, there should at least be more than a passing reference to the vexed question of the ordination of women. I asked myself as I sat here in this meeting, what would have happened if I would have brought a woman theologian from the Lutheran Church of Australia? We have two women on our Commission on Theology. We have one woman lecturer at Luther campus, responsible primarily for the teacher-training part of that program.

I also missed references at this assembly to the role of a pastor's wife. Now I know we are dealing with the Office of the Public Ministry and with the Office of the Pastor and not the pastor's wife. But I'm not quite certain that the role of the wife can be eliminated entirely from that discussion. Elvin Janetzki, who is referred to here, did a survey a number of years ago amongst our clergy and one of the questions was, "To whom do you go, first of all, when you have a difficulty or problem?" The vast majority of pastors said,

their wife. Long before the district president, a member of the congregation, a specialist, counselor, or whatever, they go to their wife. What do we do as a church (we do very little in Australia) so far as equipping those wives to be good responders to the pastor in that particular situation?

Still in reference to women, President Barry referred in his paper to standing in laymen's shoes. We need to learn to try to stand in laymen's shoes and see things from that perspective, and I would add specifically in laywomen's shoes. They are over half of the church, over half of the Priesthood of all Believers, and a very vital and important part led pastorally and administratively primarily by men. The challenge to us, I believe, is to learn to be able to minister to them and their special needs in a special way. So we somehow need to stand in their shoes also, and perhaps take special measures to see that pastoral care and counseling is provided for them in certain sensitive areas.

There was no strong reference at this meeting, I felt, to the pastor's ministry of Word and prayer. I am now talking about the pastor's ministry to himself. Let me share with you something that one pastor of our church challenged me with a few years ago. He said, "I believe that our church, the Lutheran Church, ought to be, and ought to be seen to be, a church of Word and prayer." He submitted that we do lip service to that and not much more. He threw out the challenge, "Why shouldn't it be that we virtually decree that two hours per day is spent by the pastor in purely a Ministry of Word and prayer, studying the Word and praying?" He said that this would serve as an excellent role model for the church. And so from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. every morning every member of the Lutheran Church of Australia knows that you do not disturb the pastors at that time; that's their hardest work. Unless there is an absolute life-and-death issue, that is the time when you just do not disturb them. And that would be saying to

the church, we take this matter of word and prayer (Acts 6:4) very, very seriously?" He said, "Why should we, the Lutheran Church of Australia, not have special conventions of pastors and elders and leaders that devote the entire agenda to how you go about a Word and Sacrament Ministry, showing that we take this dimension of our life very seriously." There was no strong reference to that particular aspect at this meeting.

I commend the references to Lutheran dialectics and tensions that were presented here, but I missed any reference to the tension between loyalty and standing firm on the one hand, and flexibility on the other. Loyalty and rigidity have perhaps been seen to go hand-in-hand in confessional Lutheran circles in the past. It need not necessarily be so. There can be standing firm, standing very firm and solid on the Word of God and the Confessions and yet having a flexibility at the same time, a pastoral flexibility. And I believe that that is a challenge that stands before us.

There were not enough references at this meeting, I believe, to the many, many very fine marriages in existence. I am referring to marriages of pastors and people, the Office of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of all Believers. We have some wonderful pastors in our church. In going around the church and reporting to district synods and conventions, I make a point of saying that we should thank God for the wonderful pastors that God has given us. And I know you have them in the States too, and in other countries. But in the States—I've seen them, I've heard them, I've heard your reports—we have some wonderful pastors, some pastors who are committed to the Word and the Confessions, committed to the Gospel, committed to pastoral care, committed to an effective Ministry of the Gospel. We have wonderful relationships between pastor and people. We have some wonderful congregations. The danger is that we let the problem pastors and the problem congregations so monopolize the agenda that we become depressed and

think that that is the total picture. I recall one of our Council of Presidents meetings where we were discussing pastors with problems, and at the end of it, I think when we were all feeling very depressed, somebody asked the question, "Does anybody have any good pastors in his district?" Ninety-seven percent of them are. We have about three percent that are problems. Unfortunately, our focus as church leaders is often on the three percent or whatever your percentage is. So I repeat, we have some wonderful pastors, we have some wonderful congregations, we have some wonderful marriages. Let's thank God for them.

Radical equality and individualism were the two trends that were highlighted by President Barry and some subsequent speakers. There was no reference—apart from, I think, one of my predecessors reporting here this morning—to a third basic trend that impacts Church and Ministry: the breakdown of traditional structures and loyalties, family, parents, home, denominations, the whole question of authority. How do you maintain and promote a confessional Lutheran church when people are not interested in "Lutheran Church" or "Anglican" or whatever else it might be—when people are not interested in confessional Lutheranism? That is going to be the big agenda item before us in the future and the thing that we really have to address. I conclude with a few basic points.

1. Tensions will always exist. Problems there will always be. Sin seems to be a part of our world. But has our focus been too much on the tensions, too much on the people of God and the pastor and the problems connected therewith and not enough on Jesus the Christ, the Lord of the Church?

2. Greater emphasis needs to be given, I believe, to the Christian vocation, the Priesthood of all Believers, and the Christian vocation. A failure to see that causes a blurring of the distinction between the two. And I quote from a recent statement of the

Lutheran Church of Australia's Commission on Theology titled "The Ministry of the People of God and the Public Ministry." We don't hesitate to use those two ministries. The introduction says:

> In order to avoid confusion, church leaders and members need to learn the fine art of drawing distinctions. This is particularly the case in regard to the ministry of the people of God, commonly called the Priesthood of all Believers and the Public Ministry. The one is a vocation that belongs to every Christian. The other is an Office that has been instituted by Christ as a gift to His church. The second spells out the ministry of the people of God on the basis of Scripture: a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a body, a household, a servant, a spiritual house, etc. It goes on to refer to the corporate rather than the individualistic nature of it.

The next point is Baptism and then, still on the Priesthood of all Believers: God's people will exercise a ministry in every area of daily life. No part is excluded.

Then it talks about our vocation, as parents, as citizens, as husbands or wives, as children, as members of the congregation, as neighbors. And then it goes on the Office of the Public Ministry. So I believe we need greater emphasis on Christian vocation.

3. What has contributed to the loss of pastoral identity? What can we do to recapture it?

4. Do everything that we do for the sake of the Gospel.

5. I am one of those who has the privilege of having absolute joy in my forty-one years in the Office of the Public Ministry, sheer joy. I praise and thank God for that. I feel so sorry for those who are burdened down and depressed and do not have that joy. It is so important for all of us to be role models, I think, in that regard, and to show the joy of the Ministry so that it is captured by our pastors and captured also by the members of the Priesthood of all Believers.

Thank you and God bless!

Dr. George F. Wollenburg

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I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN MY RESPONSE with a quotation from Dr. Walther's *Law and Gospel*, in which he discusses pastors' speaking to their congregations and preaching. It is a Latin phrase: *non tantum in rebus, sed etiam in phrasibus.*

It is not enough simply to speak the right substance; one must also speak in the right words. Otherwise, preaching leads to confusion and difficulty. (*Law and Gospel*, p. 277).

Reflecting on the essays and the responses from the responders, I will give my impression of the entire convocation rather than simply comment on the particular presentations. I have several questions that were raised by the essays and discussion on the first day. These questions have to do with the matter of whether Article V of the Augustana refers to an Office that is conferred upon an individual by ordination, that is, whether the Latin phrase *ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta* or the German *das Predigtamt eingeseszt, Evangelium und Sakrament geben* are to be understood as exclusively applying to the Pastoral Office. I raise this for your consideration. In paragraphs of 26 and 27 of the Treatise, Philip Melanchthon in reference to Ephesians 4:11 writes, ". . . the Ministry of the New Testament . . . exists wherever God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers" (*pastores et doctores*; 26). Likewise, "This right is a gift given exclusively to the church"

(67). Ephesians 4:11 is then cited in support of the fact that this authority is a gift given to the church. Among the gifts given to the church, therefore, are *pastores et doctores*. Dr. Arthur Piepkorn, one of my sainted teachers, remarks in some of his comments that these words describe a single office and that Melanchthon includes himself as among the doctors or teachers of the church who is involved in the *docendi evangelii*. But he is not ordained.

Thus, the chief confessions of the Lutheran Church and the bulk of the Lutheran symbols have as their primary author a man who is unordained. The Augustana and the Apology—both of which clearly and unequivocally teach the Gospel to the church—are authored by a layman who never received holy orders. Melanchthon, according to blessed Dr. Piepkorn, would differentiate between the authority to teach the Gospel (*docendi evangelii*) and the authority to administer the Sacraments. The Augustana, it should be noted, is subscribed in its presentation only by unordained men. The question that I have then for our theologians is, how does this apply to our discussion of the almost absolute necessity of ordination in order to qualify for the *docendi evangelii* of Augustana V?

In listening to the president of the Lutheran Church of Australia, I raise something in connection with this previous point that I had not intended to, although I had given it some thought. What does this have to say to us about the question of female theologians who are not ordained?

I found myself in agreement with Dr. Gibbs' response to Dr. Wenthe's essay, that it is prolegomenon to a discussion of the Holy Priesthood. Although the titles of the paper indicated that we might anticipate some discussion of what is entailed in the Royal Priesthood, almost nothing was said concerning the priestly nation and its place in God's economy. Dr. Wenthe has rendered a service to us in pointing out the nature and character of the priestly nation.

I would call your attention to both Exod. 19:6 and 1 Pet. 2:9. The tense of the verbs in Exod. 19:6 is future. The tense of the verb in 1 Pet. 2:9 is present. That which is promised in Exodus finds its fulfillment in the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people who belong to God alone, that is, the church of the New Testament. It is also significant to note that God's Word to Israel in Exod. 19:6 indicates that Israel exists for the sake of the world. "You shall be to me a special treasure above all peoples, for all the earth is mine." It is through them that God will display His character to the peoples of the world and that also is the thrust of 1 Pet. 2:9, ". . . that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (RSV). The Holy Priesthood exists for the sake of the world. They are a kingdom of priests. Through them God extends His royal sovereign rule over all peoples. That sovereign rule of God, His Kingdom, is extended over all the earth (dominion over all creation) as the Holy Spirit through the Gospel gathers the priestly people as the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth, the new creation. They are born as priests to mediate the presence of God in every realm of human life and endeavor. They are living stones of the priestly house, Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone.

"House" in 1 Pet. 2:5 is to be understood in terms of family, the royal priestly house. What we did not discuss is what this priestly office entails and how the servants of the holy church, her ministers, oversee the Priesthood. We have traditionally given lip service to the Royal Priesthood, primarily as a polemic against Rome, but have never developed a thorough biblical theology of the Royal Priesthood. Therefore, when we discuss the subject of Church and Ministry we get bogged down in the same discussion repeatedly. We defend the ministerial authority over against the multitude or the Priesthood over against a papistic or a hierarchical ministry.

I am suggesting that we need to develop a thorough, a biblical theology of the Royal Priesthood. Neither "everyone a minister," nor the polemical thrust of everyone his or her own priest, is a biblical theology of the Royal Priesthood. I suggest that an outline for such a biblical theology of the Royal Priesthood and of their relationship to their ministers can be developed from the following statement: The ministers or servants of the Royal Priesthood are to discipline the Priesthood, to worship God, to live the holy life for the sake of the world, and to offer themselves in the priestly service of the Gospel in order to bring the unbelieving hordes as an oblation to God, having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. I understand the word "discipline" to mean "to train by instruction and exercise." It would appear to me that merely to repeat the words that ministers are to preach and teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments does not give us an adequate description of what the functions of the priestly nation's ministers are.

Finally, I have heard much about the divine call, holy ordination. However, little has been said in terms of what the fathers discussed concerning this matter. Thus, assurance that the call is from God is to be a remedy against an evil conscience. If he has been a faithful servant, he may confidently say to the Lord, "You called and sent me to this place. I am not responsible for the outcome; that is your responsibility. I will gladly serve you as best I can with the help of your Spirit and grace, but the outcome is not my responsibility." That is the intent of speaking of the divine call. The abuse of the divine call is to speak of tenure, to use it as job security.

Second, the divine call lays upon the one called the burden of obedience. God called you to this place. Here you are to remain, regardless of affliction, until God calls you to another place. To flee the cross by fleeing the place where God called you is to flee Jesus Christ.

I suggest that our seminaries need to be much more involved with the district presidents to discuss what is happening, *e.g.*, the strife that so often destroys both good pastors and God's people in a congregation. On the other hand, district presidents need to defend pastors who with integrity seek patiently, kindly, and lovingly to lead their congregations to be truly Lutheran in doctrine and practice. How this can be accomplished with seminaries and district presidents working together is perhaps one of the most important questions to which we need to find an answer.

Let me again express my deep appreciation for the brothers who presented the essays to this gathering. And I leave you with those thoughts as my comments on our days together.