

THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WELS DOCTRINE OF MINISTRY

Edward C. Fredrich II

[WELS Ministry Symposium, Northwestern College, December 29-30, 1992]

All gathered here will at some time or other and in some form or other encounter the historical and sociological proposition that what one generation wants to bequeath to the next will have to be relearned or re-earned by the latter, if the bequest is not to be lost in the transfer.¹ That truism has many areas of application, but none so applicable as the transmission of doctrine in the church from one generation to the next. The truism bears remembering in a discussion of "The Scriptural Basis and Historical Development of WELS Doctrine of Ministry."

The time from the founding of our synod in 1850 to the end of this year covers five generations of twenty-eight years each. What role did each play in handing on the doctrine of ministry in our church today?

The first generation, 1850-1878, was so busy planting and gathering that it had only limited time and energy for high-level doctrinal concerns. What doctrinal concerns there were, revolved around fellowship disputes along the lines of "Old Lutheran" and "New Lutheran." Discussions with the Iowa men in the late 1860's and then with Missourians a few years later barely touched the subject under discussion, since immediate attention had to be given to such matters as Millennialism, open questions, subscription to the Confessions, and the like.

The second generation, 1879-1907, began to be confronted by the ministry issue, not especially because of theoretical concerns, but rather because of practical developments in the day-to-day workings of the church body. For one thing, the growth in the number of teachers in the church body and in the sister Missouri Synod--both strongly committed to the cause of parish elementary education--led automatically to questions about the call and the status of such teachers. Then came the Cincinnati affair that began, to be sure, as a practical synodical membership question, but that was soon raising a larger question, primarily about church but also ministry.

Even before that Cincinnati case was finally settled in 1911, the third generation was already on the scene. This era, spanning the years from 1908-1936, saw the church body's position on ministry being clarified and generally accepted, not without a great deal of storm and stress both on the synodical and the intersynodical level.

To the fourth generation of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, 1937-1965, fell the task of defending the position on ministry as this subject surfaced on the agenda of Synodical Conference committees, especially the so-called "Interim Committee." The ministry question also received attention in discussions with European Lutherans that were prompted by the shifting ecclesiastical and political scenes of that era.

And now it's our turn. The years of the fifth generation reach from 1966 to 1994. The question is: Have we, like the previous generations, actually made the doctrine of ministry, bequeathed by the fathers, our own personal possession? In our time, challenges to the ministry position have up to now been conspicuous more by their absence than their presence. Before this generation's years have run their course, a serious study of the position is certainly in place. Fortunately, new practical questions have arisen that prompt this late and large ministry study, the goal of which is much less a quest for change and novelty than for broader understanding and deeper appreciation.

This part of the proceedings is to review the biblical basis and the historical development of our doctrine of ministry. It will be done by briefly reviewing the Present Position (I) and its scriptural foundation, viewed against the backdrop of earlier positions advanced in Europe and America in the second half of the Nineteenth Century (II). Then the development of the position in our circles will be set down in sections on Koehler's Pioneering (III) and Quarterly Writings (IV). The defense of the ministry position in Missouri Debate (V) will then be described. Finally, brief attention will be given to the relation of this historical development of our ministry position to the current theme of Ordination Enlargement (VI).

I. Present Position

A useful and easy way for us to review briefly our present position on ministry will be to reread the *This We Believe* section on the subject. This is "a statement of belief of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod," set down in clear and simple words to confess what Scripture teaches.² What is to be quoted may well be the *terminus ad quem* of a long historical development but it is placed first to make that development all the more understandable and meaningful. In its seventh section, "The Church and its Ministry" *This We Believe*, says in paragraphs 8-9:

8. We believe that every Christian is a priest and king before God (1 Peter 2:9). All believers have direct and equal access to the throne of Grace through Christ, our Mediator (Eph. 2:17-18). To all believers God has given the means of grace to use. All Christians are to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Pet. 2:9). In this sense all Christians are ministers of the gospel.

9. We believe that it is the will of God that the church in accordance with good order (1 Cor. 14:40) call qualified men (1 Tim. 3) into the public ministry. They are to preach the Word and administer the sacraments publicly, that is, not merely as individuals who possess the universal priesthood, but by order and in the name of fellow Christians. These men are the called servants of Christ, ministers of the gospel, and not lords over God's heritage, his believers (1 Pet. 5:3). Through its call the church in Christian liberty designates the place, form and scope of service. We believe that when the church calls men into this public ministry, it is the Lord himself acting through the church (Acts 20:28).

The Bible passages addressed in the above paragraphs and the points they make will now be listed.

1 Peter 2:9--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.

Note--"royal priesthood"; "you are...that you may."

Ephesians 2:17,18--He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those that were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Note--"we both have access to the Father."

1 Corinthians 14:40--But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

1 Timothy 3--The chapter provides sixteen verses of qualifications for overseers (KJV: bishops and deacons).

Key points on both lists are: "good reputation," "not given to much wine," "husband of but one wife," "not a lover of money," "tested," "manage his own family well."

1 Peter 5:3--Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Note--the service aspect of the ministry.

A more elaborate and systematic exposition of our ministry position is found in *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*.³ In the "Theses on the Church and Ministry" section, Part II on the ministry has this exposition:

A. Christ instituted one office in His Church, the ministry of the Gospel.

It is the task of proclaiming the Gospel, in Word and Sacrament. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 22:19,20. This office or service, the ministry of the keys, has been given to the

Church, i.e., to the believers individually and collectively. Matt. 16:19; Matt. 10:32; Matt. 18:18; 1 Pet. 2:9.

A.C. (p.44): "That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel..."

F.C.--S.D., XII, 30 "That the ministry of the Church, the Word preached and heard..."

- B. The purpose of this ministry is the edification of the Church, by winning ever further sinners for Christ, and by building up those who are already members in Christian faith and life. Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Cor. 12:7.
- C. From the beginning of the Church there were men especially appointed to discharge publicly (in behalf of a group of Christians) the duties of this one ministry. Acts 13:1-3; Acts 6:1-6.
- D. This public ministry is not generically different from that of the common priesthood of all Christians. It constitutes a special God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel.
1. All Christians are equal before God, neither superior nor inferior to one another, and all are equally entrusted with the same ministry of the Gospel. 1 Pet. 2:9. Hence no one may assume the functions of the public ministry except through a legitimate call. Art. Smalc. *De Potest et Iurisdict*, 67-69: The authority to call (*ius vocandi*) is implied in the authority to administer the Gospel (*ius ministrandi evangelii*) given to the Church. Hence it is proper to speak of the derived right of local congregations to call.
 2. God is a God of order; He wants us to conduct all of our affairs orderly. 1 Cor. 14:33,40, and in the spirit of love, 1 Cor. 16:14.
 3. Christians are not all equally qualified to perform publicly the functions of the ministry. The Lord sets forth the needed qualifications of those who are to perform publicly the functions of the ministry. 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11. God gives to the Church men qualified for the various forms of the work required. Eph. 4:7-16; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28-31.
 4. These gifts should be gratefully received and developed. 1 Cor. 12:31; 1 Thess. 5:19,20; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6-9.
 5. Thus these public ministers are appointed by God. Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28. It would be wrong to trace the origin of this public ministry to mere expediency. (Hoefling)
 6. There is, however, no direct word of institution for any particular form of the public ministry. The one public ministry of the Gospel may assume various forms, as circumstances demand. Acts 6:1-6. The specific forms in which Christians establish the

public ministry have not been prescribed by the Lord to His New Testament Church. It is the Holy Spirit who through the gift of their common faith leads the believers to establish the adequate and wholesome forms which fit every circumstance, situation, and need. Various functions are mentioned in Scripture; 1 Tim. 4:13; Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:6-8; 2 Tim. 2:2; John 21:15-17 (feeding); Acts 20:28 (watching); 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11; 6:2 (teaching); 1 Tim. 3:5, 5:17 (ruling).

In spite of the great diversity in the external form of the ministerial work, the minister is essentially one. The various offices for the public preaching of the Gospel, not only those enumerated above, e.g., in Eph. 4:11 and 1 Cor. 12:28, but also those developed in our day, are all gifts of the exalted Christ to His Church which the Church receives gratefully and with due regard for love and order employs under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the spiritual body of Christ; and all of them are comprehended under the general commission to preach the Gospel given to all believers.

Antithesis: We hold it to be untenable to say that the pastorate of the local congregation (Pfarramt) as a specific form of the public ministry is specifically instituted by the Lord in contrast to other forms of the public ministry.

A few points of the presentation deserve special emphasis:

1. Needs of the congregation call forth new ministry forms. Acts 6:16.
2. The various ministry forms are gifts of the Lord to the church. Eph. 4:7-16; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11,28-31.
3. There are qualifications for ministers. 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11. It should be noted, however, that these qualifications are all part of God's moral law for all and do not introduce a double standard of morality.
4. While there is a great variety in forms and functions of the ministry, they are all to be carried out in orderly fashion and in the spirit of love. 1 Cor. 14:33,40; 16:14; Eph. 4:16.

These statements from *This We Believe* and from *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* are offered as a presentation of the present position of our church body on ministry. To trace the development of that position we look back to the preceding century and its sharp conflicts over the issue.

II. Nineteenth Century

The same 1848 Revolution in Prussia that brought Watertown her outstanding townsman, Carl Schurz, also engendered a wholesale rethinking about the ministry.⁴ This was not at all surprising given the state-church system that prevailed in Europe at the time.

Wilhelm Loehe touched off the ministry debate with his 1849 book, *Aphorismen ueber die neutestamentlichen Aemter und ihr Verhaeltnis zur Gemeinde*. Loehe, whose views would be fostered in our country by the Iowa Synod, opposed the idea that there really was no specially ordained ministry for the early church. In discussing the Ephesians 4 list of offices he states that the third, pastors, and fourth, teachers, are practically identical. He calls the diaconate "the ministry of Christian love for the brethren."

The here-and-now matter for Loehe in 1849 was the role of the prince in the state church. He declared that the pastor-teacher should be the one who should not only feed but also rule the flock. His book set in motion a debate about two basic questions: How did the ministry originate? and What is its authority?

Challenges to Loehe's *Aphorismen* were not long in coming. From Erlangen Johann von Hofmann challenged the number of offices that Loehe found in the New Testament church but agreed that the office of pastor was divinely instituted, although later limiting this divine institution to the original holders of the office. Quite

correctly he dissents from Loehe's idea that ordination is an absolute and indispensable ingredient of a continuing office of the ministry.

An even sharper critic of Loehe was another Erlangener, Johann Hoefling, the extremist on the "low church" side. From that vantage point he comes out correctly in giving lay people a share in the church's regimen and in assigning ordination its proper place. Positions like these influenced J. P. Koehler to speak of Hoefling as being "entirely free and correct according to Scripture."⁵ It is a different matter when Hoefling treats the origin of the ministry. There he denies a special, God-ordained ministry.

The Loehe and Hoefling themes were carried on by two conflicting parties, although often with some strange-sounding variations. In the *Evangelischen Kirchenzeitung* one can find both praise for Hoefling's *Grundsätzen evangelisch-lutherischer Kirchenverfassung* and blame, with the editor, Wilhelm Hengstenberg, standing for a divinely ordained ministry. Julius Mueller maintained that no existing form of the ministry could be traced directly back to Christ's ordination. A reply came in Wucherer's book, the title of which, speaks for itself, *Ausführlicher Nachweis aus Schrift und Symbolen dass das evangelisch-lutherische Pfarramt das apostolische Hirten- und Lehramt und darum göttliche Stiftung sei*.

Conflict with Grabau and his Buffalo Synod, who held an extreme "high church" view, forced C. F. W. Walther to enter the fray. He traveled to Neuendettelsau with President Wyneken to discuss the issues with Loehe and then put out his book, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche and Amt* in 1852. Walther laid stress on the divine institution of the ministry, a ministry not to be identified with the universal priesthood, but one whose gospel ministry came to it from God through the congregation. At the same time that universal priesthood of all believers was in full possession of the keys.

The result was a cooling of Loehe's zeal for the Saxons in Missouri. His loyal Franconians in Michigan trekked to Iowa and the big Missouri-Iowa conflict was born. Some disciples went over to Walther's camp for conscience' sake, notable among them Loehe's own Timothy, Gottlieb Schaller, then a Detroit pastor, later to teach with Walther Concordia students, J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller.

This is the nineteenth-century background against which a ministry debate in our circles was played out.

III. Koehler's Pioneering

A fairly complete account of that debate has been set down for us in two places by J. P. Koehler, himself a spirited participant. One of his accounts is found in the section of his synodical history with the title, "Amtslehre" and in the two that follow it.⁶ The other is a *Faith-Life* article, *Die Amtslehre*, a part of a combination writing in the October 1932 issue headed *Die Lehre von Kirch and Amt*.⁷

These accounts take us back to the late 1870's. It was then that meetings of Synodical Conference parochial teachers in the Watertown, Oshkosh, Manitowoc, and Sheboygan areas began to discuss their calling and call. This became necessary because the view prevailed that the pastorate was the one divinely instituted form of the ministry. This raised the question: Where do the teachers fit in such an arrangement? Two viewpoints began to assert themselves.

One view held that the calling of the teacher should be derived from the call of the pastor, who was divinely appointed to serve the congregation. If he needed a teacher's help, he would simply delegate to him some of his divinely instituted ministry. Without benefit of clergy, there could be no office of parochial teacher.

The other view also made the teaching office dependent, but this time the parents were the ones on whom it depended. Since the Bible commanded parents to instruct their children in godliness, then those who aided in the instruction were simply acting on behalf of the parents. In this scheme of things there was little, if any, room for a divinely instituted calling. No meeting of minds was achieved in this series of meetings.

Then in the mid 1880's the question of the office and call of the teacher was the main agenda item at a Manitowoc conference, doubly mixed in that both pastors and teachers of both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods attended. Reinhold Pieper, the local pastor, presented the theses. As Koehler reports, the line of thought ran from the "one divinely instituted office" position to one that derived the teacher's calling from

parental responsibilities. In attendance at this Manitowoc meeting was the Two Rivers pastor, J.P. Koehler. He raised several objections to the essayist's theses in the interest of giving the teacher's calling a divinely instituted character in its own right. Questioned were the matter-of-fact identification of terms in the Ephesians 4:11 listing to specific offices developed in the church much later and the application of "Suffer the Little Children" and "Feed my lambs" exclusively to the pastor's office.

No fixed conclusions were established at Manitowoc but there was general agreement that the teacher's work with and under the Word merits being considered a divinely instituted work. The discussion was not pursued because calls soon took many conference members, Koehler among them, to other fields of labor. The account is concluded in this way: "It may be said that the Manitowoc discussion signaled the beginning of a real exegetical and historical analysis of such questions in Wisconsin, and beyond, that was destined to have its repercussions."⁸

In 1892 two Wisconsin Synod meetings picked up the discussion. At the first Pastor Edward Hoyer of West Bend presented theses that were challenged from the floor.⁹ The second was a general pastoral conference in 1892 held in Milwaukee to discuss the teacher's call. The accounts make it evident that it was Koehler who at both meetings sought to channel the thinking into new directions.

At the first meeting the essayist's presentation dealt with the time-honored demands made on the pastor (e.g. die in harness) as though they really were not inherent in the calling but had been attached to it because of its divine nature. The opposing view held that these directions were implicitly derived from the calling itself and were not simply to be employed mechanically. Professor Hoenecke, who had evidently been trying to help out a beleaguered essayist, reacted by withholding final judgement but suggesting that the novel approaches merited further study.

At the 1892 Milwaukee meeting of pastors the specific topic was the teacher's call. Professor Ernst, president of the new Federation, requested the topic as a follow-up to the previous treatment of the pastor's call. Director Hoenecke was the essayist. He followed the usual line of thought that attached the teacher's call to the pastor, who publicly administers Word and sacraments for the congregation. The teacher also works publicly with the Word, but he is not specifically mentioned in the Scriptures, and therefore his office will have to be derived from the pastor's. The teacher should be called by the congregation for his public office but should be supervised by the pastor. In this sense his call is divine.

From the floor came the challenging question: Why can't the teacher's divine-call stand on its own feet? The point was made that he is called by the congregation to teach the Word and that he therefore can apply to himself what Paul said to the elders in Acts 20:28. The essayist deemed the novel thinking worthy of more study.

Another clarification that Koehler provided on that occasion was to define what *Augustana XIV* meant by *oeffentlich* or *publice*. It was explained that this should not be thought of a matter of quantity but as a repudiation of the enthusiasts and as an insistence on good order. The congregation by the call should indicate who was to preach the Word and administer the sacraments in its midst and on its behalf and by the same token that congregation could in an orderly way set up different arrangements for the use of the means in its midst.

Seventeen years passed and the seminary had a new director by the time the issue was again formally raised. One can hope that during the interval some of the study that had been urged was taking place. In any event, in 1909 a Wisconsin Synod mixed conference at Milwaukee once again took up the unresolved issue.¹⁰ The new seminary director, John Schaller, in his essay made the pastorate the one divinely ordained office in the church. All others, it was asserted were auxiliary, derived from the pastorate in Christian liberty. Acts 6 was the main scriptural basis for the position presented.

Once more this position was opposed by J. P. Koehler, by now a seminary colleague. He pointed out that a dogmatical statement was really being assumed at the outset and that Scripture passages were taken out of context and made to say what had been assumed. In his exegetical explanations Koehler insisted that the 1 Corinthians 12:28 listing of offices is not the Matthew 28:19 institution of the ministry of Word and sacraments. Acts 20:28 insures that God works in the perpetuation of Gospel preaching, however and wherever that takes place. It should be realized that we have only meager information about the development and articulation of the various offices in the early church and should not assume too much.

Two more meetings treated the issues in the following years. The first was in Milwaukee and the other in Manitowoc where it had all begun a quarter century earlier. Not much more light was provided but the heat intensified enough so that opponents called the seminary men squanderers of the Reformation heritage.

By this time the Cincinnati conflict had lowered theoretical discussions to very practical issues when it pitted synodical suspensions against congregational excommunication. It forced the Wauwatosa teachers into a long study of the church-ministry subject. By 1912 "the three Seminary men stood shoulder to shoulder" in defending the views that Koehler had been propounding.¹¹

There can be little doubt that J. P. Koehler in this matter did the exegetical pioneering that would eventually give us what we hold today. He gave Director Hoenecke something to think about at both 1892 discussions. He soon-weaned John Schaller from the approach he took at the 1909 Milwaukee meeting previously described. After the 1911 Manitowoc conference, the essayist, August Pieper, was told by Koehler, "Unless you adopt my exegesis more fully you will lose out."¹²

If Koehler took the lead in the exegetical study of the church-ministry issue, he relinquished that place to his colleagues, especially Pieper, when it came to writing the articles that defended and defined the position. That is the sense in which Koehler could accept Pieper's classroom assertion, *Meine Amtslehre*. Schaller supplied some writing in a catalog article but Pieper wrote more frequently.¹³ It is to these writings to which we now turn attention.

IV. Quarterly Writings

If *Menschenherrschaft* had been an August Pieper sermon, his text would have been Matthew 23:8: "You have only one master and you are all brothers." More than once the passage is cited in the writing to warn ministers not to want or try to lord it over fellow ministers, who are not subjects but brothers. Instead, the old proverb applies: *'s ist kein Pfaefflein so klein, 's steckt ein Paepstleindrein*. If ever the service aspect of ministry was emphasized, it is in this writing of August Pieper, even though the article applies its theme to many other areas of church life and to suspension in particular.

When questions were raised about the treatment of suspension in the second installment of *Menschenherrschaft*, August Pieper wrote an article to reply and clarify and at the same time to supply a promised third installment of *Menschenherrschaft*. This writing has the title, *Die Suspension noch einmal* and appeared in the 1911 July *Quartalschrift*.

A pertinent section has a striking description of the freedom the church has in establishing and regulating ministries. We quote (p. 14.2)

It should not be left unnoted that a congregation, not only in regard to its own government and to its congregational offices, but also in regard to association with other congregations, has uncommonly great freedom. It is especially remarkable how little the Lord prescribed even the matter of church organization and how much he left to the church's own wisdom. He gave it the gospel and the sacraments and the command to proclaim the first purely and richly and to administer the others according to his institution. He has set up the office of congregational preaching for the public administration of his mysteries, has commanded those in the office to be faithful, and for the rest has left it to Christian freedom to regulate everything in faith and love. The individual congregation can be small or large, consist of 10 or 100 or 1000 or 10,000 members; it can have one or 200 pastors, can designate out of the 200 one or more as head pastors, or can be regulated by all of them as a college. It can divide the various functions of the offices to various persons, can designate some to preach, others to head the liturgical part of the church service, one part to baptize, another to administer the Lord's Supper, another to conduct the confessional service, another to marry, another to bury, another to care for souls, et cetera, et cetera, as circumstances require, provided that all is done uprightly and orderly, the gospel is preached purely and richly, each soul is given its due and brotherly love is not harmed. It can according to need supply to the preaching ministry auxiliary ministries:

distributors of alms, elders, administrators, et cetera.

For the January 1912 *Quartalschrift*, Professor Pieper wrote a review essay of Walther's *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche and Amt*, reissued as a fifth edition of the occasion of the centennial of the author's birth in 1811. The review was quite naturally an excellent opportunity to propound the Wauwatosa view of church and ministry without getting too personal.

What Walther was especially concerned about in the writing were extravagant church-ministry views of the Buffalo Synod and its leader, John Grabau. Already a decade earlier the Saxon *Gutachten* of Grabau's *Hirtenbrief* had complained about the latter's tendency to ascribe more to the ministerial office than was its due and thereby had diminished the spiritual priesthood. Positively Walther and Pieper stood for the view that through the call into the ministerial office certain Christians bestow on the called person the right to administer publicly the spiritual treasures the Lord has given them. The ministry is to be honored and obeyed but only according to the Word. The Christian should continue to exercise privately the gifts the Lord has given him.

In the conclusion of the review (p. 38) Pieper supplies this encouragement: "The third generation of pastors since Walther are now in the ministry. To us applies the proverb, 'What you have inherited from the fathers, acquire anew in order to possess it... We need to appropriate the doctrines of church and ministry once again with a fresh start through personal and thorough study."

A fourth writing of Professor Pieper, as its title indicates, *Die Lehre von der Kirche and ihren Kennzeichen in Anwendung auf die Synode*, limits itself to church and consequently supplies little for these discussions. The fifth, *Abschluss der Diskussion ueber die Lehren von der Kirche etc.*, especially in the *etc.* parts, summarizes and emphasizes previous points made about ministers and ministries.

As to origin, the point is made that the ministry is not to be traced back to the apostolate, but should find its roots in the congregation's royal priests through whom the Lord calls ministers. As to institution, the ministry of the New Testament is not a legal but an evangelical establishment and there is no divine institution for any specific form of ministry to be found in the Scriptures, excluding of course the original apostolic office. As to type, the ministry of the Word and sacraments cannot be limited to one kind of office but will take the form that the congregation develops according to its needs, provided it is acting orderly and lovingly.

The article, *Die Lehre vom heiligen Pridigtamt*, in *Quartalschrift*, July 1912, written by a Missourian, E. R. Kaehler, obviously would not have been granted publication in the *Quartalschrift* of Pieper and Koehler and Schaller if the writing had not been in harmony with what had been agreed upon by the three proponents of the Wauwatosa theology. Consequently we will pass by any content analysis.

John Schaller's "The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry," however, should be given attention. It was published originally in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary catalog of 1911-1912, republished in the 1917-1918 catalog, and then translated for inclusion in the January 1981 *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.

Schaller stressed especially the universal priesthood in his efforts to repudiate the claim that certain special ministry forms have been instituted. He traces the ministry of the gospel back to Paradise Lost and through the ages of patriarchs and prophets down into the New Testament era. While emphasizing the right of all believers to carry out this ministry, Schaller of course also knows that there is a public ministry when believers gather together. He writes (p. 51): "As soon then as a congregation has established any such ministry and has called men for it, God gives it his approval and calls the men whom he bestows on these church gifts and assures them that they have been appointed by the Holy Ghost. For whatever the Christian congregation decides upon to further the preaching of the gospel it does at the instigation and under the guidance of the spirit of Jesus Christ."

This completes the study of the *Quartalschrift* articles written during the early stage of the clarification of our ministry position, the first years of the 1910's. There would be later treatments of the subject. August Pieper, for example, submitted for the October 1929 *Quartalschrift* a conference and district essay, *Zur Lehre von der Kirche und ihrem Amt, mit besonderen Anwendung auf die Synode and ihre Zucht*. Basically the article reviews the earlier discussions and writings and, as the title indicates, does not extensively treat the ministry question.

V. Missouri Debate

Another way to get a grasp on the development of our ministry position is to investigate the conflicts that developed with the sister synod over the issue. The conflicts began early, continued sporadically, and were still being waged in the waning decades of the Synodical Conference's existence.

While the Wauwatosa theologians were struggling to win their synodical brethren over to their viewpoint by articles in periodicals, presentations at conferences, and one-on-one discussions, they also were attacked on the intersynodical front. These attacks from Missouri leaders were launched almost before the ink had dried on the *Quartalschrift* pages that contained the articles just described.

At the time of the 1914 Synodical Conference convention in Milwaukee, three St. Louis faculty men, Franz Pieper, George Metzger, and Ludwig Fuerbringer voiced their disagreement with what the Wauwatosa men were writing in the *Quartalschrift* about church and ministry.¹⁴ Franz Pieper was the main spokesman of his group. Two sessions were held but no agreement could be achieved either in formulating or deriving the doctrine. All agreed that Scripture must be the source of doctrine.

Some years later written protests were sent from St. Louis. The four Wauwatosa men--Herman Meyer had been added to the faculty in 1915--developed their own individual replies but there is no record of the precise manner in which the protest was answered.

Two more unsuccessful attempts at agreement were made. One was a Chicago meeting in the late years of the decade and the second a Milwaukee session early in the 1920's, in which the new Wauwatosa faculty members, William Henkel and John Meyer, participated.

Next came the meetings at the new seminary at Thiensville (now Mequon) in 1932 that produced the Thiensville Theses.¹⁵ The reason for this gathering reaches into the Protestant story and into the old Synodical Conference practice of having synod and district reports reviewed by readers of another synod. Protests were lodged by Missouri men against our Western Wisconsin District's reports of suspensions of Protestants in its 1927 and 1928 *Proceedings*. This led eventually to a top-level meeting of seminary faculty men and synodical presidents at Thiensville.

The effort seems to have been to find maximum agreement and then thresh out later the disagreement that remained. The result was that the hotly contested issue of "divinely instituted" was replaced by "God's Will and order." Consequently, Thesis II, on ministry, did not help to disprove the claim that the pastorate is the one divinely instituted form of the ministry. Thesis II reads: "Again, it is God's will and order, as we learn from the Scriptures, that Christian local congregations have shepherds and teachers to discharge the common task of the office of the Word in their midst."

Before the 1930's ran their course new problems plagued the Synodical Conference and pushed the church-ministry disagreement to a backburner position. When the new fellowship problems intensified, however, and threatened to split the Conference, some were inclined to believe that the basic problem was the old church-ministry dispute. The result was that this dispute once more regained attention.

What happened was that the Twin Cities Mixed Pastoral Conference requested the Synodical Conference to instigate a study of army and navy chaplaincies. The result was the establishment of a special Synodical Conference Interim Committee with the task of investigating this issue and "all other matters relating to the doctrine of the call, the ministry, and the church where there had been disagreement with the aim of achieving complete unity."

Matters got off on the wrong foot when the committee of eight men (three each from the Missouri and Wisconsin synods and one each from the Norwegian and Slovak Synods) was chosen, not by the synods, but by the Synodical Conference convention, in which the Missouri Synod held a huge majority. President Brenner's subsequent protest was not heeded but he and the synod went along with the arrangement, simply in order to do something to get at the issues.

One could have predicted that there would be a 4-4 or 5-3 division when the Interim Committee tried to reach conclusions. Actually there was in its first report in 1948 a 7-1 division. Pastor Harold Eckert had the unenviable task of representing and presenting our church-ministry position alone. After some twenty sessions at six

meetings the Interim Committee was still dividing on the church ministry question in the same familiar way. Harold Eckert said in his one-man minority report:

Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc. branches of this office, without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty. Others see in "ministry" a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.¹⁷

To the next Conference convention in 1950 the Interim Committee could report: "After long and prayerful deliberation your Committee, at its meeting in May, 1950, unanimously adopted a set of specific paragraphs on the Church, which it hopes to present to the convention. A few days later one member of the Committee reversed his position and withdrew his signature on the grounds that he had misunderstood the import of the agreement."¹⁸ I don't have to tell you who it was that withdrew his signature.

The best that the Interim Committee could do for the 1952 St. Paul Synodical Conference convention was to recommend the adoption of the Thiensville Theses by the Synodical Conference convention. Church-ministry questions that still remained should be submitted to the faculty of the theological seminaries within the Synodical Conference, acting jointly.¹⁹ This marked the end of the work of the Interim Committee and also the virtual end of efforts within the Synodical Conference to achieve unity in the church-ministry matter. The difference still remained when the 1963 withdrawals occurred.

When our synod and groups that withdrew from the Missouri Synod discussed doctrine to ascertain whether unity prevailed, it was usually the long-standing church-ministry differences that prevented agreement. The withdrawers viewed themselves as guardians of the Old Missouri position and were not inclined to yield even a little. Discussions with overseas churches formerly in fellowship with the Synodical Conference tended to take a similar turn.

VI. Ordination Enlargement

A matter closely related to ministry is ordination. Especially because of what happened in this regard at the most recent synodical convention, a brief section on ordination is being included. The hope is that this endeavor will not become an instance of "fools rush in."

There have never been any great problems about ordination in our synod. Luther cleansed the Roman rite of its errors and provided a proper form. He was quite busy functioning at ordinations. Even in the last days of his life he performed two ordinations at Eisleben.

Luther made it plain that ordination, while not a sacrament, was a time-honored church ceremony that marked the beginning of the ministry of the person being ordained and was the occasion for prayer and laying on of hands. The rite was not to be viewed as a divine institution, the creation of an "indelible character," nor as an empowerment to public ministry which the call provided.

In the church-ministry debates of the preceding century, described in an earlier section, Wilhelm Loehe injected some "high church" ordination views into the discussions. Among his assertions were that the ministerial office is propagated by those who have it and that no predominating participation of the laity can be ascertained in the examples that Scripture has provided. Some of these views found their way into the Iowa Synod with which our synod had dealings in its early decades.

More recently discussions with church bodies in Germany have frequently demonstrated differences regarding ordination, not as to definition, but as to emphasis. In a church body that gets its pastor supply from its own seminary, ordination will signify less than in church bodies whose candidates may come from the theological departments of universities and need to be examined and certified.

Since ordination is a church rite or custom, not a divine institution or sacrament, it can conceivably be practiced in a variety of ways. Our synod was not acting in an unbiblical way when it resolved at its last convention: "That WELS congregations employ the terminology 'ordination into the teaching ministry' when initially consecrating a male teacher for the teaching

ministry."²⁰

As a matter of judgment one might raise a question of expediency. Given that ordination is a church rite or custom, might one not prefer to remain with the customary, all other things being equal? Our synod used to be known as "the extreme church body that is even against scouting." With scouting on the wane in our day the designation may soon become "the Lutheran church body that ordains teachers."

Sooner or later--probably sooner--questions will be raised about limiting teacher ordination to males. Whereas 10 tries to supply the answer that this would put ordained women teachers in the position of exercising authority over men.²¹ [...]

...Do not read into the previous paragraph, something not there]

No advocacy of the ordination of women teachers is intended. The concern is clarity. Much more important, however, is it that we be clear about the ministry doctrine and retain the position that a historical development, governed by the Lord of the church and employing the faithful fathers, has bequeathed to us.

MINISTRY ENDNOTES

1. A familiar form of the adage is the German “*Was du ererbt von deinen Vaetern hast, erwirb es, um so zu besitzen.*” This is not the form that our planner used when urging acceptance of this essay assignment, but the substance was there.
2. Commission on Inter-Church Relations, *This We Believe* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1980). See especially pp. 19-20--nos. 8-13.
3. Commission on Doctrinal Matters, *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (no publisher mentioned, 1970). See especially the first section, "Theses on Church and Ministry" and its Part II, "The Ministry," pp. 9-11. These "Theses" were printed in *Wisconsin Proceedings*, 1967, pp. 284-290. A commentary by one of the main writers can be found in "The Scriptural Truths of the Church and Ministry" in *WLQ* (82:3 Summer 1985) 180-185.
4. Holston Fagerberg's section on *Die Streitigbert um das Amt*, pp. 101-120, in his thesis, *Bekennntnis, Kirche and Amt in der deutschen konfessionellen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1952) has a good summary of that century's ministry discussions and supplies the background for much of the writing that follows.
5. J. P. Koehler, *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1917) p. 659.
6. J. P. Koehler, *History of the Wisconsin Synod* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Co. for Protestant Conference, 1970) pp. 230-239. Hereafter simply *History*.
7. J. P. Koehler, *Die Amtslehre, Faith-Life*, V (October, 1932), pp. 1,9-16. Hereafter simply *Amtslehre*.
8. Koehler, *History*, p. 231 B.
9. There is a problem in the Koehler accounts. He speaks of a Milwaukee meeting with Ed. Hoyer as essayist (*History*, p. 231) but Hoyer's theses on the call were presented to the 1892 Winona Synod convention. It may be that an April 21 meeting of representatives of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan to discuss federation somehow got into the picture.
10. *History* (p. 232) gives this date. *Amtslehre* (V:10, p.11 A) says 1908.
11. *History*₂ p. 234 B.
12. *History*₂ p. 237 A.
13. John Schaller's most important contribution, "The Origen and Development of the New Testament Ministry," appears in three places: the seminary catalogs of 1911-1912 and 1917-1918 and in translation in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (WLQ) Vol. 78:1 (January, 1981) 30-51.

The early Pieper *Quartalschrift* articles with volume numbers are:

Menschenherrschaft in der Kirche (8).

Suspension noch einmal (8).

A review of Walther's *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche and Amt* (9).
Die Lehre von der Kirche and ihren Kennzeichen in Anwendung auf die Synode (9).
Abschluss der Diskussion ueber die Lehre von der Kirche, etc. (10).

Another article, *Die Lehre vom heiligen Predigtamt*, appears in the *Quartalschrift* (9). The writer calls himself Ed. R. This is not a precocious Edmund Reim, writing for the *Quartalschrift* as a seminary junior. Ed. R. stands for Editor, Rundschau, who was E. R. Kaehler.

14. J. P. Koehler's *History*, p. 238. No minutes of these meetings are available. This is the reference also for the three subsequent meetings.
15. Koehler's *History* reproduces the Theses on page 239. *Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* has them on page 183. A Synodical Conferences translation appears in its *Proceedings*, 1952, p. 143.
16. *Synodical Conference Proceedings*, 1946, p. 61.
17. *Synodical Conference Proceedings*, 1948, p. 141
18. *Synodical Conference Proceedings*, 1950, p. 125.
19. *Synodical Conference Proceedings*, 1952, pp. 142-145
20. *Wisconsin Proceedings*, 1991, p. 51.
21. This is "Whereas 10" on the same page.