

WHAT IS MINISTRY???

by Bruce A. Bitter

Manitowoc Pastoral Conference
Monday, September 20, 1993
First German Ev. Lutheran Church
Manitowoc, Wisconsin

Introduction

In the mid '80s a conference involving pastors and teachers from the Missouri Synod and the Wisconsin Synod met in the Manitowoc-Sheboygan area. The subject of the conference was the doctrines of church and ministry. At this conference a Wisconsin Synod pastor read a paper on the question of the teacher's call and on the basis of the current doctrine of the ministry espoused the following viewpoint:

There is only one office of the ministry in the church, that of the pastor or preacher; in this office all the gifts, powers, and functions of the Gospel are embodied, and it alone is of divine ordinance; the office of the teacher stems from the parents on whom God has enjoined the training of their children; they assign a part of this obligation to the teacher, by virtue of their Christian liberty, and so this office is not directly of divine ordinance; it is a commendable conception of their office when the teachers look upon it as divine, and that view of it no doubt will make for faithfulness on their part, but their calling belongs to the same category as that of the Christian cobbler or tailor. (The History of the Wisconsin Synod, Koehler, pg. 231)

In case you haven't already guessed, this conference was held not in the middle of the 1980s but in the middle of the 1880s. The pastor was Reinholdt Pieper, the brother of Franz Pieper, who was at that time serving at First German Ev. Lutheran Church in Manitowoc. The viewpoint presented in his essay was challenged by some in the conference. According to Koehler "it may be said that the Manitowoc discussion signaled the beginning of a real exegetical and historical analysis of such questions (i.e. questions concerning the doctrines of church and ministry) in Wisconsin, and beyond, that was destined to have its repercussions."

Those repercussions are still being felt more than a century later. Last December a symposium was presented at Northwestern College in Watertown to discuss the doctrine of church and ministry. Four papers were read, much discussion followed, and future symposiums were proposed. About a month ago a free conference was held at an LCMS church in Wauwatosa, which focused on the doctrines of church and ministry. Presentations were made by Professor John Brug from our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon and Professor Kurt Marquart from the LCMS Seminary in Fort Wayne, much discussion followed, and future free conferences were proposed. And today, ironically, in the city of Manitowoc, one of the pastors of First German Ev. Lutheran Church is presenting a paper having to do with the doctrines of church and ministry. What the writer hopes to accomplish in this paper is to answer the question "What is Ministry?" The outline will be the presentation of nine theses on ministry, each followed by pertinent comments, explanations, references, and Scripture texts. Without further introduction we will proceed to our first thesis.

Thesis 1 - The doctrine of the public ministry of the church is derived not from Biblical examples but from from a specific mandate of Christ which extends until the end of time.

In discussing the doctrine of the public ministry of the church, we are dealing with an aspect of God's revealed will for his New Testament Church. In order to establish this it is necessary to have a divine mandate (prescription) as opposed to a Biblical example (description). It is true, of course, that the church has the mandate to follow the example of Christ and that of the apostles. The apostle Paul puts the two together when he says, "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) However if we regard every example provided by Jesus and his apostles as something to be emulated by every Christian today, we run into a host of difficulties. The apostle Peter was married while the apostle Paul was not. If we are to follow the example laid down by the apostles with regard to marriage we are at a loss to know whose example to follow, Peter's or Paul's, since they contradict one another. Jesus did miracles throughout his ministry. If every Christian is to follow his example, it would mean that every Christian ought to be performing miracles. And yet we have the clear statement of the Bible that not all have this gift. (1 Corinthians 12:28-29) Therefore in order to be able to say, "This is the Lord's revealed will" one must be able to find a specific statement of the Lord to substantiate it.

Secondly, even if we have a clear Biblical mandate, we must pay careful attention to the identity of those who received the mandate and the length of time the mandate is to be in effect. When Jesus told his disciples, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden," (Luke 19:30) it is manifest that He is not telling 20th century Christians to drive over to the nearest town to get a donkey for him. This mandate applied only to the disciples to whom it was given and in no way applies any longer to us. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet in the upper room on the night he was betrayed, he told them, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (John 13:14) There is nothing in the text that indicates that this is a practice that is to be continued after the death of the apostles. It is even doubtful whether Jesus is here referring to the outward act of washing feet. He may simply be telling his disciples that they ought to serve one another in love. In either case, there is nothing in the text to indicate that these specific words are to extend to us.

What is necessary with regard to the public ministry, then, is a Biblical mandate which clearly extends to the present time and establishes it as the Lord's revealed will for the church of all times. In C.F.W. Walther's famous theses on Church and Ministry, the second thesis on ministry reads as follows: "The ministry of the Word...is not a human institution, but an office which God Himself has established." Reacting to this, there appeared an article in the October issue of Lehre und Wehre,

1861, in which the unnamed author declared that he did not know of any Scriptural statement saying in direct words that this office is instituted by God. Walther and the editors of Lehre und Wehre, in a footnote, took issue with this assertion, stating that "it is an error to say that the express command from God is lacking. It is given," they continued, "in the command which the apostles received and in their call to go out to preach, as recorded in Matthew 10, and of the Seventy, as reported in Luke 10. The office of the Public Ministry is only a continuation of the ministerial office of the Apostles." (The Abiding Word, Vol. 2, pg. 483)

What Walther and the editors of Lehre und Wehre said in that footnote has clear Scriptural support. This becomes plainly evident when one does a careful study of the great commission. It is recorded for us in Matthew and Mark. In both cases it is not the sum total of all believers who are present with the Lord Jesus when he gives the commission, it is rather the eleven apostles. The first Evangelist says, "Then the **eleven disciples** went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go." (Matthew 28:16) Following this come the familiar words of the great commission, namely, "Go and make disciples...baptizing them...and teaching them." (Matthew 28:19-20) [It should be noted that this commission was not given to the apostles on the Mount of Olives just prior to Jesus' ascension into heaven as is often assumed. It was rather given on a mountain in Galilee.] The second Evangelist says, "Later Jesus appeared to **the Eleven** as they were eating." (Mark 16:14) In the next verse He is quoted as saying, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation etc." (Mark 16:15) It is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty when this statement was made by Jesus. It may be that it is Mark's version of what Jesus said on the mountain in Galilee. It may be that he said it to them while they were eating. It may be that he said it to them just prior to his ascension, which took place later on the Mount of Olives. It may also be that it took place at some other time entirely. In any case, it is always **the eleven** who are mentioned in connection with this commission. (Matthew 28:16, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:1-11)

What makes this commission a mandate which extends beyond the lifetime of the apostles to whom it was given are the words which follow immediately: "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) The implication is obviously that after the death of the apostles, to whom the mandate was given, there would be others to take their place, to be sure not in the strict sense of the inspired apostolate, but in the sense of the public gospel ministry of the church, which carries on the work of making disciples through Word and Sacrament. The office of the public ministry is only a continuation of the gospel ministry of the apostles, which is to remain to the end of the world. Keeping this clearly in mind, it becomes obvious why the apostle Paul instructed his fellow pastor, Timothy, in his second letter, saying, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Timothy 2:2)

Paul was about to be "poured out like a drink offering" because "the time had come for his departure." Nevertheless his apostolic doctrine, given to him by the Lord Jesus himself, was to be passed on not only to the church but also to qualified men who would preach it and teach it publicly in his absence.

In light of the frequency with which the great commission is used in our circles today, it is interesting to note that our Lutheran confessions refer to Matthew 28:19 only five times. Four of them are proof passages for the divine institution of holy baptism. One has reference to the subject at hand. (1) In all three volumes of Luther's Works on the topic of church and ministry Matthew 28:19 is referred to only three times. Twice it has reference to infant baptism and once to the public ministry. (2) In these same three volumes Mark 16:15 is used only twice. One reference has to do with baptism and the other uses this passage to prove the public ministry of the gospel. (3)

The Biblical warrant for establishing the public ministry, then, is found in the call and commission of the apostles. Since the Lutheran church has always been the church of the Bible and since to be truly Lutheran is to be Biblical, our church has often confessed this truth. In his oft-used hymn on the ministry Christopher Wordsworth draws this same clear connection between the call of the apostles and the call of Christian pastors. The first verse reads as follows:

Thou who the night in prayer didst spend
And then didst Thine apostles send
And bidd'st us pray the harvest's Lord
To send forth sowers of Thy Word,
Hear and Thy chosen servants bless
With sev'nfold gifts of holiness.

(TLH, pg. 493)

Likewise our Lutheran Confessions, which we all confess to be true not "in so far as" but "because" they are a faithful reflection of the Holy Scriptures, clearly identify the public gospel ministry as a divine institution, rooted and grounded in the call of the apostles. In the Power and Primacy of the Pope Melanchthon says, "The office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles." (Triglotta, pg. 507, par. 10) It should be noted that in addition to this plain statement, there are many other statements which indicate that the confessions take it for granted that the ministry is a divine institution.

And so we in the Wisconsin synod also confess this truth. Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, one of the fathers of the Wisconsin synod says, "The normal preaching office is the continuation of the special apostolic office, which God himself wants. It is of divine institution in and with the apostolic office." (Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, Vol. 4, pg. 68-5) (4) In keeping with this true Lutheran and Biblical view, Dr. Sigbert Becker says in his commentary on the letter to Ephesus in the book of Revelation:

The letter is sent to the "angel" of the church of Ephesus. The angels, the messengers, the pastors of the churches receive their messages from the apostles, and the apostles in turn receive the message from Jesus. This command to write reflects one of the basic themes of the New Testament, namely that Jesus instructed his chosen apostles personally and then sent them out to preach the gospel until the end of time. To this day the application of the words of Jesus, "He that heareth you, heareth me," can be made only to those pastors who proclaim the apostolic message. This is the true and biblical "apostolic succession." (Revelation, a Distant Triumph Song, pg. 45)

The doctrine of the public ministry of the church, then, is derived not from biblical examples but from a specific mandate of Christ, given first to his apostles and which from there extends until the end of time. This truth leads us directly to our next thesis...

Thesis 2 - There is a difference between a divine institution, which is governed by a specific mandate of Christ, and Christian liberty, which is governed by need.

The divine institution of the public ministry is (in Luther's terminology) a **MUST** as opposed to a **FREE**. While the church is duty bound to establish the public ministry of the gospel, it is also free to do any number of things in order to advance the cause of the gospel, none of which are specifically commanded by Christ and which are therefore developed as an exercise of Christian liberty. In such matters the church of the New Testament is not bound by specific regulations like those given to the people of the Old Testament but is allowed a great deal of flexibility.

The most concrete example of this is found in the sixth chapter of the Book of Acts. The apostles were being hindered in carrying out their gospel ministry because they were busy handling the daily distribution of food to widows who were in need. When a problem arose, they discussed it with the congregation and came up with a plan whereby seven men would be appointed to handle the bread distribution so that the Apostles could devote themselves to "prayer and the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:4) While the ministry of the Word had divine sanction and a divine mandate, this auxiliary office to the ministry of the Word came about as an exercise of Christian liberty. It obviously wasn't wrong. In fact, it was most pleasing to the Lord. But it was temporary and was established because of the circumstances of the time while the ministry of the Word is permanent and is established by divine mandate.

It has been argued that the ministry of the Word also finds a basis in need. In many of his writings Luther goes to great lengths to show that every Christian as an individual as well as Christians collectively are the primary possessors of the keys of the kingdom of God. This is a part of our function as members of the universal priesthood (more on this in the next thesis). Since we all possess the same power

and rights, it would be wrong for any one of the group to take upon himself the responsibility of administering the keys to the rest. Therefore it is necessary (there is a need) for the entire group to entrust the public (representative) use of the keys to one of their number, who would then administer them in their behalf. In addition to this, all of us as Christians are in desperate need of the Means of Grace, which are the only means by which God preserves and strengthens faith in Christ (more on this also in a later thesis). There is a need then that one or some of our number be entrusted with the public administration of these precious means. Of absolutely vital importance however is the fact that the public ministry does not exist only on the basis of need nor even primarily so. It exists especially because of divine mandate. For this reason, an individual entrusted with the public ministry receives a divine call from God and not just a human call from the congregation. The principle force behind the ministry is not the congregation but rather God. In the final analysis, the ministry is entrusted to an individual by God through the congregation.

In his treatise entitled "On the Councils and the Church" Luther sums up the matter very nicely. He says, "There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things (i.e. the Word, Baptism, Lord's Supper, Keys) in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4:8, "He received gifts among men...--his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc." (Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 41, pg. 154) Thus the public ministry has been mandated by God precisely because there is a great need for it.

Nevertheless every Christian has the gospel as his or her rightful possession. The use of the gospel by every Christian is often referred to as the exercise of the universal priesthood. This statement deserves fuller elaboration, which will find expression in our next thesis...

Thesis 3 - The public ministry is a divine institution of Christ Jesus contrapuntal to the universal priesthood of all believers.

When we speak of the Biblical doctrine of the universal priesthood, we are referring to nothing other than Christian living. The primary function of the Old Testament priests was to offer sacrifices. Christ was the fulfillment of these sacrifices when he sacrificed himself once for all. (Heb. 7:27) The only sacrifice left for us to offer in the New Testament is a thank offering, which is made when we offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. (Rom. 12:1) A careful study of the entire context surrounding 1 Peter 2:9 (the passage frequently quoted as the *sedes* for the universal priesthood) corroborates this fact. In verse 5 of that chapter Peter says, "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." The spiritual sacrifices of the universal priesthood include everything a Christian does in his life of sanctification. Just as the people of Israel were a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) so also the holy Christian church is a royal priesthood. This was also Luther's understanding. He says, "As Christ himself was a priest and sacrifice, so all of us too as Christians are truly a holy priesthood and the sacrifice itself, as Paul elucidates in Romans 12:1, where he teaches that we should sacrifice our bodies as a priestly sacrifice." (Luther's Works...)

One of our functions as spiritual priests is to "declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) or to put it in the words of the writer to the Hebrews, to "continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name." (Hebrews 13:15) From a catechetical standpoint this witnessing function of our priesthood falls under the heading of the second commandment. The positive side of "not taking the name of the Lord our God in vain" is proclaiming the name of the Lord our God or praise. What needs to be kept clearly in mind however is that this is only a part of our function as members of the spiritual priesthood. Its entire function is found in obedience to all of the commandments out of love for Him who loved us first as the apostle John says. (1 John 5:3) And so it is no surprise to find the same Peter who says, "You are a royal priesthood...that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light," also saying just two verses later, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:11) A husband and father who exercises his responsibilities faithfully, an employee who works honestly at his job, a housewife who cares for her husband and children are all exercising their function as members of the universal priesthood.

It is a mistake then to limit the functions of the universal priesthood to that of witnessing. What may lead us in this erroneous direction are some statements of Luther in this regard. In his treatise entitled "Concerning the Ministry" he speaks almost exclusively of the witnessing aspect of the universal priesthood. However there are two things that we need to remember. The first is that he was writing to people who were members of the Roman Catholic church, which claimed that the priesthood was a special class with special functions, off limits to lay people. Hence only the tonsured priests were allowed to proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments. Luther goes to great lengths to show that all of the functions of the "Roman priesthood" were functions which have according to the Scriptures also been given to Christians in general. Hence there was not an exclusive priesthood made up only of shorn and tonsured priests but there was a universal priesthood made up of baptized Christians, all of whom, individually and collectively, possess the rights claimed by the Roman priesthood as its exclusive right. Since the Bible used the

term priest in this way, he preferred to use it in this way also and preferred to use the term minister for those who served in the public ministry.

A second thing to remember in this regard is that "Concerning the Ministry" was written in 1523, relatively early in the Lutheran reformation and at a time when the major opponent was the established papacy and priesthood. The emphasis of Luther's view shifted somewhat when opponents arose on the other side in the form of the Anabaptists, who had the habit of cropping up out of nowhere and preaching without any call into the ministry. In 1532 he wrote a letter entitled "Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers" in which he emphasized the necessity of a divine call and the obligation of Christian people to be on the lookout for infiltrating preachers. The general direction of Luther's development may be seen from his comments on the first chapter of his Galatians commentary:

Therefore we who are in the ministry of the Word have this comfort, that we have a heavenly and holy office; being legitimately called to this, we prevail over all the gates of hell...thus you see how necessary it is to boast and glory in our ministry in this way. In the past, when I was only a young theologian and doctor, I thought it was imprudent of Paul in his epistle to boast of his call so often. But I did not understand his purpose, for I did not know that the ministry of the Word of God was so weighty a matter...When we boast this way, we are not looking for prestige in the world or praise from men or money, or for pleasure or the good will of the world. The reason for our proud boasting is that we are in a divine calling and in God's own work, and that the people need to be assured of our calling, in order that they may know that our word is in fact the Word of God. This, then, is not a vain pride; it is a most holy pride against the devil and the world. And it is a true humility in the sight of God.

This leads us right back to the office of the public ministry, which is distinct and different from the universal priesthood. The essence of the public ministry is captured not so much by the word "representative" (which is used so often today in our circles) as by the term "official." What is being described by the term is not "any representative ministry" (i.e. Christian service) but gospel ministry carried out by official emissaries of the Lord Jesus himself. Already in the Old Testament the Lord promised to send such "shepherds" for his people. Through Jeremiah he said, "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15)" and later, "'I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,' declares the Lord." Clearly there are two distinct groups of people. On the one hand there are the shepherds and on the other hand there are the sheep.

As was indicated in the discussion of the first thesis, the first concrete realization of these promises came in the form of the apostles. There were thousands of disciples but only a few apostles. Jesus called them directly into their office

and said, "As the Father has sent (apostello) me so I am sending (apostello) you." (John 20:21) Jesus the great apostle (Heb. 3:1) sends out his apostles. While it is true that all Christians are to be witnesses and that Christians in general "preached the word wherever they went," there was nevertheless contrapuntal to this function of the universal priesthood the calling of men who were to serve as official witnesses of the Lord's resurrection.

An example of the official character of this office can be seen in the activity of the early church in the replacement of Judas, who had been one of the twelve apostles. Peter describes Judas as "one of our number who shared in this ministry." (By ministry he clearly means not the ministry of a believer (service) but the specialized ministry of an apostle). Then he quotes Psalm 109:8 which says, "May another take his place of leadership (lit. bishopric or place of oversight)." Then they cast lots and choose Matthias to replace Judas. What is being described is an official position as witness for the Lord Jesus Christ contrapuntal to the universal priesthood. Prior to this Matthias was certainly a witness to the Lord's resurrection and surely carried out that function as a member of the universal priesthood of believers. But now he is given the task of proclaiming the gospel in an official capacity as a representative of the entire church and of the Lord Jesus himself.

Not only an apostolic ministry but a public ministry contrapuntal to the universal priesthood of believers is established in the New Testament. The essential function of the apostolic ministry is expanded to other men and is to continue until the end of time. An indication of this is found in the events surrounding the council at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15. Some men had come down to Antioch from Jerusalem and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1) Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. The answer of the apostles and elders is most revealing:

The apostles and elders, your brothers, to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. (Acts 15:9)

The false teachers are described by the apostles and elders as people who "went out from us without our authorization." Another way to describe that would be that they had been teaching in Antioch without an official call. The congregation at Jerusalem hadn't called them to do this. The congregation at Antioch certainly hadn't called them. They had gone out to preach publicly without ever having been sent. Also of great importance is the fact that in this section the apostles are coupled with the elders and together they arrive at their decision. There can be no question that the apostles per se had a unique, once only, position in the church, which is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief

cornerstone." (Eph. 2:20) Nevertheless their official position as ministers of the Word had already at this time expanded to elders in the mother church at Jerusalem.

(5)

The specific point is that here there is portrayed official and unofficial ministers of the word, a true and Scriptural public ministry and a false and heterodox (heretical?) public ministry. An appeal on the part of the false teachers to their rights as members of the universal priesthood of believers would not have been considered valid by the church. (6)

A final indication of the contrapuntal relationship between the universal priesthood and the public ministry is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There Paul contrasts his work and the work of his fellow ministers with that of the congregation as a whole. He says, "We (that is, we in the public ministry, namely, Apollos, Peter, Paul, etc.) are God's fellow workers: you are God's field, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9) It is not difficult to see to contrast. On the one hand there is "we" (public ministers) and on the other hand there is "you" (Christians). On the one hand there are "God's fellow workers" (public ministers) and on the other hand there is "God's field, God's building" (Christians). On the one hand you have the builders (public ministers) and on the other hand you have the building (Christians). Those who want to continually point to 1 Corinthians 12 to determine their doctrine of ministry ought to examine what the same apostle says here in chapter 3 of the same epistle (more on this in a later thesis).

It is clearly the teaching of the Bible, then, that the public ministry is a divine institution of Christ Jesus contrapuntal to the universal priesthood of all believers. The universal priesthood consists in a Christian's entire life of sanctification, only a fraction of which involves sharing the gospel. The public ministry has to do entirely with the sharing of the gospel and has been designed exclusively to carry out this function in an official capacity. This clear distinction leads us to our next thesis...

Thesis 4 - The public ministry is has been instituted because the Means of Grace are the only means by which God the Holy Ghost creates, preserves, and strengthens faith in Christ. They are therefore the very lifeblood of Christ's church, without which the church cannot survive.

In his treatise entitled "On the Councils and the Church" Luther lists as marks of the true church the following seven things: the Word of God, the sacrament of Baptism, the sacrament of the altar, the office of the keys exercised publicly, the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, the possession of the sacred cross, and finally prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God. After giving this list and explanations of each, Luther goes on to say, "In addition to these seven principal parts there are other outward signs that identify the Christian church, namely, those signs whereby the Holy Spirit sanctifies us according to the second table of

Moses...However, these signs cannot be regarded as being as reliable as those noted before since some heathen too practice these works and indeed at times appear holier than Christians; yet their actions do not issue from the heart purely and simply, for the sake of God, but they search for some other end because they lack a real faith in and a true knowledge of God." (Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol 41, pg. 166)

We have the same situation today. While it is true that Christians ought to pray and ought to live their lives in obedience to the commandments and ought to serve one another in love, these are things that can be emulated by any number of false religions in our world. Some of the finest families in America today are found among those of the Mormon faith. Some of the most zealous mission work carried out today is found among members of the Jehovah's Witnesses. And yet we know that these people are heathens who are going to spend eternity in hell. The one thing that separates us from the unbelieving world and makes us truly Christian is the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Our entire Christian life, if it is to be truly a "Christian" life, must be motivated by the gospel of God's grace in Christ. The goodness of our works is not to be found in the work itself but in the motivation behind the work. It would be entirely possible for an atheist and a Christian to carry out exactly the same work. That of the atheist would be an abomination to the true God. That of the Christian would be most pleasing for Jesus sake. The reason is obvious. Even our good works need to be cleansed in the blood of Jesus. Isaiah says, "We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64:6) Peter tells us that as members of the spiritual priesthood we offer sacrifices that are acceptable to God only **through** Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5) The church father Augustine once said that even our bitterest tears of contrition need to be washed in the blood of Jesus. And of course the forgiveness of sins, purchased for us by Jesus' blood, has become ours by faith. And faith (the true and Biblical variety) is not something that can be conjured up by human beings on their own.

In his letter to the Romans the apostle Paul says, "Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) In his letter to Titus he describes baptism as a "washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5) Thus the Word and baptism are the means used by God to create faith. But God's work is necessary not only in creating faith but also in strengthening it. In his first epistle Peter first says, "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God," (1 Peter 1:23) and then goes on to say just four verses later, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." (1 Peter 2:2) Thus the gospel, which has created our faith is also the means by which it is strengthened. Furthermore Peter informs us that through faith we Christians are "shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5) And along the same lines the apostle Paul

writes a doxology at the end of his letter to the Romans in which he describes God as the one who is "able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ." (Romans 16:25) Thus the gospel, through which the Holy Ghost creates and strengthens faith, is also the means by which he preserves it. And the promise of forgiveness, which is proclaimed in the gospel and conveyed through the sacrament of baptism, is also attached to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The words of institution say, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28) Thus the Means of Grace are the means through which God creates, preserves, and strengthens faith in Christ.

It is undoubtedly for this reason that the Word and Sacraments, together with the ministry which administers them publicly, are divine institutions, which are to continue until the end of time. The great commission is not only a commission to proclaim the gospel but also a commission to baptize and Jesus, to whom all authority has been given in heaven and on earth, says with regard to both, "Surely I will be with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19) When the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's supper he said, "Do this as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me." (Matthew 26:29) The celebration of the sacrament was to be repeated by the apostles. And the apostle Paul, after repeating the words of institution, goes on to say, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26) Thus both the word and the sacraments, are divine institutions to be administered until the end of time.

The last part of this thesis says, "They (Word and Sacrament) are therefore the very lifeblood of Christ's church without which the church cannot survive." Since true and genuine faith is created, preserved, and strengthened only through the Means of Grace, it is axiomatic that the church cannot survive without them. There are a host of things which our churches could get along without and still survive as churches. In fact, even if a congregation were to lose everything external, including the church building and the property on which it is built, but still possessed the Means of Grace, it would still have absolutely everything it needs to survive. On the other hand, if a congregation has everything else but doesn't have the Means of Grace, it really doesn't have anything at all. In spite of external appearances, it is as good as dead.

For the creation and preservation of his church, then, the Lord has established as divine institutions, the Means of Grace and the ministry which administers them publicly. This leads us to the consideration of our next thesis...

Thesis 5 - The public ministry of the church may take on different forms and still remain the one gospel ministry instituted by Christ.

Just as the one gospel comes to us in different forms (i.e. word and sacrament) so also the public ministry of the church takes on different forms. When Paul describes the public ministry in Ephesians 4 he says, "It was he (Christ) who gave some to be

apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11) What is being described is different forms of the one gospel ministry. The vital difference between the forms in which the gospel comes to us and the different forms of the ministry is that the forms of Word and Sacrament are themselves divine institutions, while the forms of the ministry have not been prescribed by God. Today the one gospel ministry may come in the form of a pastor, college instructor, seminary professor, visitation pastor, associate or assistant pastor, district president, catechist, etc. The one essential feature in all of these forms is that the gospel must be used in it.

This is what was at the heart of the debate on church and ministry around the turn of the century between the WELS and the LCMS (or, more accurately, between the seminary at Wauwatosa and the seminary at St. Louis). The men from St. Louis, led primarily by Dr. Franz Pieper, maintained that it was "a divine regulation that Christians who live at one place fellowship with one another, form a congregation, and appoint men equipped with the necessary teaching ability to preach God's Word in the name of the congregation both publicly (in the public assembly) and privately (to individual Christians)." (Christian Dogmatics, vol. 3, pg. 443) They also maintained that the "elders" and "bishops" mentioned in the Scriptures designate pastors and that therefore only the local pastorate of a local congregation was a divine institution. The men from Wauwatosa, led primarily by Dr. August Pieper, the brother of Franz, maintained that there was no divinely ordained form of the public ministry, but that only the ministry itself was divinely ordained, the forms of it being determined as an exercise of Christian liberty. To prove their contention they pointed to the passage referred to in the previous paragraph, where Paul says, "It was he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11)

The debate was brought to the fore in what has come to be known as "the Cincinnati case." A layman of a Missouri synod congregation was excommunicated on questionable grounds. The layman appealed his case to the district and then to the synod. Suddenly questions arose. "Does the district and synod have the right to overrule the actions of a pastor and his congregation? Is the synod really church? Does the synod have the power of the keys? Do the men who serve in synodical offices have a divine call? Are they also members of the public ministry of the church?" To complicate matters, the congregation in question withdrew from the Missouri Synod and applied for membership in the Wisconsin synod. The doctrine of church and ministry had been placed squarely in the lap of the Wisconsin synod in general and its theologians in particular. What follows is Professor E.C. Friedrich's account of the result:

Setting aside traditional thinking and dogmatical formulations for the time being, the three men (J.P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller) took a fresh look at what the Scriptures say about church and ministry. They

found that there was not as much said about local congregations and the pastoral office as was frequently assumed. What was said in the Scriptures, they found, was that the Lord had indeed instituted and commanded a gathering of believers and an office of the gospel ministry but that he had never specified a single form or type of either, above all other forms or types. (The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, pg. 110)

What is important for us to remember in this connection is to steer the Biblical ship of church and ministry between the Scylla of exclusivism (local pastorate the only divinely instituted office) and the Charybdis of expansionism (expanding the public ministry beyond the Biblical limits of the means of grace). While the local congregation is still the primary grouping of Christians and the local pastorate is still the primary form of the public ministry, other groupings are also valid even as other forms of the ministry are also a part of the divinely instituted public ministry of the church. The keys of the kingdom have been given to the district and synod and those who serve in district and synodical offices as well as to the local congregation and its pastor(s).

The necessity of steering this straight and narrow course is illustrated by our next thesis...

Thesis 6 - The meaning of the greek word "diakonia" is determined by its context and is NOT per se a synonym for the public ministry.

The meaning of the greek word "diakonia" in greek literature generally is simply "service." Also in the Scriptures it is used not just for gospel ministry (service with the gospel) but for any kind of service. It was the normal word that was used of the service of waiting on tables. Luke tells us that when Jesus was in the house of Mary and Martha, Martha was distracted with much "diakonian." (Luke 10:40a) Then she complains to Jesus saying, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left only me to 'diakonein.'" (Luke 10:40c) The basic and most general meaning of this word is general service. When we see it in the Scriptures we should not immediately jump to the conclusion that it is talking about the public ministry.

A passage that is often pointed to in order to prove that forms of the public ministry not directly involved with the means of grace were established by the church is Acts 6:1-7. Upon closer examination, this passage proves just the opposite: that the public ministry was so important to the apostles that they considered it sinful to let anything hinder them from carrying it out. Permit a literal translation for the sake of close examination:

In those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, there was a complaint from the Greeks against the Hebrews, that their widows were being neglected in the daily (food) service. After they had called together the congregation of disciples, the twelve said, "It is not right for us to abandon the Word of God to serve tables. Brothers, pick out seven men from

among you, attested to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint for this need. And we will devote ourselves to prayer and the service of the Word. And the word was pleasing before the whole congregation, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip and Prochoros and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they placed before the apostles, and after praying they laid hands on them.

What is commonly pointed to as proof that these seven men were called into the public ministry is the fact that the same greek root (diakon) is used in the phrase "ministry (service) of the Word" and the phrase "to wait on" (minister to, serve) tables. But as was mentioned earlier, the verb diakoneo ("minister") and the noun diakonia ("ministry") are words which have to do with service in general. Luke is using a play on words which was easily understood by anybody who read his "Acts" at the time it was first written. I suppose a somewhat equivalent expression today would read as follows: "It would not be right for us to neglect the worship service in order to serve easter breakfast." No one who hears those words will draw any connection between a service of worship and serving breakfast. It is simply a play on the words "serve" and "service."

The meaning of a word is determined by its context. In the sentence, "Today the church in Corinth had church in its church and elected a churchman," the word church has four entirely different meanings. In the sentence, "Bea and Harold, who was a beekeeper, went to the spelling bee and since after A must come B, they were to be married after the quilting bee," the sound "be" has six different meanings. Just because the word "ministry" is at times or even often used to describe the public ministry (ministry of the Word), it doesn't mean that every time that word is used it refers to the public ministry of the church, instituted by Christ himself. The meaning of the word ministry (diakonia), like the meaning of any word in the Bible, must be determined by the context in which it is used. The context of Acts 6 does not in any way determine that this service to tables was a part of the public ministry.

A second passage which is often pointed to in this connection is Ephesians 4:11-13, which says:

It was He (Christ) 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 (diakonia), so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

In the first place, note that all of the "offices" mentioned as Christ's gifts to his church have to do with the means of grace. The purpose of these offices (the public ministry) is to "prepare God's people for works of service." The word translated

"prepare" ("katartismos") is a hapax legomenon. According to my research it is used by Herodotus of a general who equips his troops by motivating them for combat. The idea here in Ephesians is that through proclamation of law and gospel the public ministers motivate believers for "diakonia."

Here again we run right into that same word, "diakonia," which is not a synonym for the public ministry, but is often regarded as such. Many people, Don Abdon for one, find in Acts 6 a public ministry apart from the means of grace. Then they run over to Ephesians 4 and show that the purpose of the public ministry is to make everyone a minister so that every single member of every Christian congregation has a ministry to perform as a part of the local congregation. Then they encourage you to rewrite your constitution and bylaws to reflect this theological position, as they write a manual entitled "Equipping the Saints" with accompanying video presentations, featuring Pastor Abdon himself. But remember! This is "diakonia." This is the word that was used to describe Martha's service at the table in her own home. In its most general sense it simply describes any kind of service whatsoever. This may include some service as a part of the church organization but generally refers to service carried out in the whole of one's life. We should remember that in the early church there were some 5000 plus members, 12 pastors, and only 7 deacons.

What Paul means to say in this section of Ephesians is that the purpose of the public ministry is to equip people to live truly Christian lives. This is done first when they clearly understand the proper distinction between the law and the gospel and are firmly grounded in Christian doctrine. In the words following the section we are discussing Paul goes on to show that the body of Christ grows toward unity in the faith through the function of the public ministry. In other words, as the Word is preached and taught, members become more and more firmly grounded in Christian doctrine so that they "will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:14-15) And people are equipped secondly when they learn to live their lives according to the will of God out of love for him who loved them first.

The whole letter to the Ephesians is a glorious object lesson which shows the purpose of the public ministry. In the first three chapters Paul, as a member of the public ministry himself, talks about doctrine, including election, justification, conversion, fellowship, etc. In the chapters following he talks about the Christian life, including service in general, the relation of husbands and wives, the relation of children and parents, the relation of slaves and masters. He ends the book by encouraging the Ephesians to put on the whole armor of God, (to be fully equipped?) concluding with the admonition: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) Equipping the saints for works of service means preaching and teaching the Word of God, always maintaining the proper

distinction between the law and the gospel. In this way, Christians are motivated to serve their Lord Jesus in the way that is pleasing to him. And since they sin even in their good works, they are daily covered through faith with the precious blood of Christ, which alone makes their works **Christian** works and their service truly **Christian** service.

There is much more that could be said about this passage from Ephesians. Perhaps a future conference paper giving an exegesis of it and another giving an exegesis of Acts 6:1-7 would be in order. At any rate, our thesis has been proven, namely, that the meaning of the greek word "diakonia" must be determined by its context and is not per se a synonym for the public ministry. Keeping this in mind, then, we are ready to consider our next thesis.

Thesis 6 - The English word ministry should be reserved for the divinely established public ministry of the church while other "ministry" should be described as Christian service.

Consider the following statement: "The church has been given only one ministry." The meaning of that statement will differ depending on the definition of the term "ministry." If the term ministry means service, particularly service with the Word of God, then the statement says that individual members of the church as well as the church as a whole has the responsibility to preach the gospel. This is ministry as a function carried out by the church. However if the term ministry refers to an office, namely the office of the public ministry, then the statement says that God graciously provides the church with official gospel ministers and we might paraphrase by saying, "The church has been given only one public ministry." Bible passages could be sighted for both viewpoints. One who thinks of ministry as a function of the church has in mind the statement of Peter, "You are a royal priesthood...that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9) One who thinks of ministry as an office of the church has in mind the statement of Paul, "It was He (Christ) who have some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers..." (Ephesians 4:11)

Those who want to use the term ministry to refer to a function will often defend their usage of that term on the basis of the greek word "diakonia." In that case there is no problem at all in saying that "everyone is a minister." What that means is that every Christian has the privilege and responsibility of preaching the gospel as a member of the universal priesthood. The problem is that such usage of the term ministry blurs the Biblical distinction between the universal priesthood and the public ministry. The situation is compounded when the term ministry is understood not exclusively as gospel ministry but as any ministry or service carried out by Christians. Kurt Marquart, professor at the LCMS seminary at Fort Wayne, put it this way:

All are priests, not all are ministers. There is a priesthood and there is a ministry. They are not the same, yet both are God-given, and there exists between them a contrapuntal relationship. This organic equilibrium is wrecked by the levelling slogan: "Everyone a minister." In that case the distinction between priesthood and ministry vanishes, and the difference between the ministry of "everyone" and that of "some" becomes, by implication, one of degree, not of kind. (The Church: Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance)

Historically the term "minister" and "ministry" have been reserved for the special, God-ordained, public ministry of the church. In the past when one has referred to the minister he had in mind the person who had the responsibility of using the Means of Grace publicly. The call into the ministry was understood by everyone to mean a call into the public gospel ministry. Even today the normal meaning of the word "minister" has nothing to do with general service. My dictionary has the following three meanings: 1) a clergyman, pastor; 2) a diplomatic envoy; 3) a high state official. And we are all familiar with this usage. To this day when an individual comes into a church and says, "I'd like to talk to the minister," we don't normally respond by saying, "Oh, didn't you know? Everyone here is a minister. What is it that you wanted. Maybe I can help you." We immediately direct this person to the pastor. The following lengthy quote from Kurt Marquart covers the situation very nicely:

A simple linguistic quirk may well account for much of the confusion among English-speaking Lutherans. So long as the concise term *Predigamt* (literally: preaching office], used in the German AC V, was common coin, its meaning was reasonably self-evident and therefore stable. Since English, however, does not readily string nouns together into compounds, and since the Latin of AC V ("the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments") is far too long for standard reference, a "shorthand" term had to be found, and that term was of course "the ministry." This usage, entrenched in English since at least 1571 (English edition of the Thirty-Nine Articles), governed phrases like "holy ministry," "sacred ministry," and "public ministry." The standard Latin dogmatic locus, among Lutherans, was "*De Ministerio Ecclesiastico*" (Of the Ecclesiastical Ministry, or the Ministry of the Church].

This was well and good so long as it was taken for granted that the term "the ministry" here did not stand generically for all sorts of "service," but functioned quite specifically as place-holder for the precise sense of the ministry of preaching or teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments (AC V). Then along came the modern Bible translations, and rendered Ephesians 4:12: "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry..." That "repunctuation" of the text became the rallying cry of

the populist/activist program to make "everyone a minister." Since then discourse about "the ministry" in many Lutheran quarters has fallen into a confusion of tongues, in which "pastoral," "lay," "ordained," "commissioned" and other such "ministries" swirl about each other without much theological rhyme or reason. Any semblance of order must then be supplied bureaucratically, that is, arbitrarily. The rise of that utterly osymoronic locution, "lay-pastor," signals the loss of all categories. (The Church: Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance)

Actually, reserving the term "ministry" for the divinely established public ministry of the church is just as fair a reflection (if not more so) of Biblical usage as is the use of the term to describe any kind of Christian service ("everyone a minister"). While it is true that the term diakonia can and is used to describe a variety of different services (including even the service carried out in waiting on tables), by far the most common usage of that term is greek shorthand for the public ministry. To quote once more from Marquart:

St Paul repeatedly uses simply "minister" and "ministry" (Acts 20:24, cr. 21:19; Rom. 11:13; 1 Cor. 3:5, II Cor. 4:1; 6:3-4; 11:23; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 17; 1 Thess. 3:2; 1 Tim. 1:12; 4:6; 22 Tim. 4:5, 11) for what is elsewhere described more fully as the ministry or ministers of "the Word" (Acts 6:4), "the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:8), "righteousness" (22 Cor. 3:9), "reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18), "the New Testament" (II Cor. 3:6), "the Gospel" (Eph. 3:7, Col 1:23), and "the church" (Col. 1:25). (The Church: Her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance)

It is therefore an extremely unwise practice to suddenly now, at the end of the twentieth century, after over four centuries of limiting the English term "ministry" to the public ministry, suddenly change our terminology without a compelling reason to do so. An emphasis on the universal priesthood of believers and "a more Biblical approach to the term" are by no means compelling reasons by any stretch of the imagination.

Saying that the term "ministry" should be reserved for the divinely established public ministry of the church while describing other "ministry" as Christian service does not however imply that Christian service, done as a fruit of faith out of love for the Savior is somehow second rate or sub par or "merely human" as opposed to "divine." This leads us to consider our next thesis...

Thesis 7 - Christian service carried out in Christian liberty is not just a "mere human arrangement" but activity which is lead and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The fact is that, in as much as Christians are truly Christians, everything a Christian does is led and guided by the Holy Ghost. The Bible says, "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:13b) It says, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which

God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10) As long as we live as Christians in this world the Holy Spirit is continually testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and is continually leading us to call God our heavenly Father. (Romans 8:15-16)

Often in the literature concerning church and ministry a contrast is presented between a "divine institution" and a "mere human arrangement." This is a poor way of stating the case. The contrast is really between a "divine institution" (permanent) and "Christian liberty," (flexible and bendable depending on needs). The work of the Holy Spirit is present and active in both and so both can well be described as divine activities. An illustration of this would be a statement made by Pastor Bill Burnhardt in the September (1993) edition of the WELS connection. He said, "The delegates (to the synod convention) have the comfort of knowing that they were guided by the Holy Spirit in the decisions they made." This doesn't mean that God has clearly revealed to us that specific synodical decisions are in accord with His will. It simply means that God permits his church, which is entirely led and guided by the Holy Ghost through the gospel, to exercise its liberty in matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God. The exercise of such liberty is led and guided by the Holy Ghost and is therefore just as much a divine activity as is the carrying out of the work of the public ministry.

Closely related to this is the fact that the church is sometimes pictured as a body with many members, each having a different function, and is at other times pictured as a body which is fed, nourished, and motivated by the gospel through the function of the public ministry of the church. This then will serve as the subject of our next thesis...

Thesis 8 - The gifts of Christ to his church listed in Ephesians 4 are not parallel to those gifts listed in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. (7)

It is easy to see why these three sections of the Holy Scriptures are often drawn up as parallels. All three sections refer to the church as a body. All three refer to different members of the church making up different members of the body of Christ. All three talk about gifts which are given to the church. But upon closer examination it becomes clear that Ephesians 4 is painting a different picture than is 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12. In 1 Corinthians and Romans Paul is picturing the entire church as a body, each member of which has a distinct function. In this picture the public gospel ministry is not distinguished in any way from other functions of the body of Christ. The picture might be expressed with the following description of a human body. The brain thinks, the eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, the mouth speaks, the lungs breathe, the heart beats, the arms lift, the hands touch and grasp, the legs walk, etc. The body of Christ is being viewed from a functional perspective and the function of every member of the church is described as a gift of God. In Ephesians however Paul is picturing the relationship between the

public gospel ministry and the church. The picture might be expressed with this description of the human body. It is because of the function of the brain that the eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, the mouth speaks, the lungs breathe, the heart beats, the arms lift, the hands touch and grasp, the legs walk, etc. The function of the brain of the human body is pictured in relationship to the other members of the body. Similarly, in Ephesians 4 the body of Christ is being viewed from a relational perspective and the public ministry alone is described as God's gift to the church.

This thesis together with the previous one, which states the divine character of all the functions of the church, clears up the difficulty often expressed in connection with the divine institution of the public ministry. The fact that the Bible describes all the gifts of Christ to his church as coming about by divine appointment (1 Corinthians 12:28) doesn't mean that every one of these gifts is a part of the divinely instituted public ministry of the gospel. That these are indeed gifts from God and that their exercise is a God-pleasing activity is beyond question, even as modern day offices developed in Christian liberty are God-pleasing. But to say that they are all part of the divinely instituted public ministry of the gospel is out of the question.

Any discussion of the will of God leads us beyond the bounds of the church and the gospel. According to the Bible, God's will is carried out not only within the church but in the world as well. This fact leads us to our final thesis...

Thesis 9 - There is a clear Biblical distinction between the two kingdoms and the spheres which are governed by each.

In his essay on the Kingdom of God (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Summer, 1992) John Schaller objects vehemently to the "common procedure...to bring all statements pertaining to the exalted Christ's rule into three groups, referring accordingly to a threefold kingdom of Christ." (i.e. kingdom of grace, kingdom of power, and kingdom of glory) His point is that there is only one Christ who carries out only one rule, which he does either through the gospel, on behalf of the gospel, or as a result of the gospel. The fact that Christ carries out one rule is, of course, undeniable. But objection to referring to a threefold kingdom of Christ does not necessarily follow for several reasons. First, it fails to take into consideration the highly concrete institutions of the public ministry and earthly government. While it is true that the same Lord Jesus is creating, preserving, and strengthening faith through the Means of grace on the one hand and directing the governments of the world in such a way as to advance the cause of the gospel on the other, it is also true that these two realms must be kept distinct from one another. And while it is true that in eternity it is the same Lord Jesus who is doing the ruling and that this rule has come about as the result of the gospel, his rule there will be of a different

kind than the one carried out in this world through the government on the one hand and through the church on the other.

There is simply nothing wrong with referring to a threefold kingdom of Christ even though this is, in words of Schaller, "a division which the Bible does not make." What he seems to mean by this is that there is no Bible passage which says in so many words, "Christ has a threefold kingdom." Nevertheless it is manifest that there are three distinct and different ways in which Christ carries out his rule: through grace, through power, and in glory. Using the logic presented in Schaller's essay, one would have to object to the use of the term Trinity, since this is a term that the Bible does not use. Yet there is no question that Schaller would agree that the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the Bible. For our present discussion, the kingdom of glory does not come into consideration at all. Further comments will be restricted to the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of power and the Biblical distinction between the two.

For the Lutheran Confessions, this distinction was of monumental importance. Christians had been living for centuries in an environment where the church had taken on many of the functions of the state. The result was that the Word of God, and particularly the gospel of God, was all but non-existent amid the labyrinth of secular positions and tasks. In the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Melancthon challenges three claims of the Roman Papacy, the second of which reads, "[The Roman Pontiff claims] that by divine right he has both swords, i.e., the authority also of bestowing and transferring kingdoms [enthroning and deposing kings, regulating secular dominions, etc.]. Reacting to this claim Melancthon says the following:

Christ gave to the apostles only spiritual power, i.e., the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily force [by the Word], and that He did not give the power of the sword, or the right to establish, occupy or confer kingdoms of the world [to set up or depose kings]. For Christ says, Matthew 28:19-20: Go ye, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; also John 20:21: As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.

The fact is that there are two different swords that the Lord Jesus uses in his government of the world and there are two distinctly different groups of people to whom these swords are given. On the one hand, there is the sword of power, which has been given to earthly government (Romans 13:4), and on the other hand there is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the Means of Grace, which he has given to his church and her public ministry.

Of course, as Christians we live under both kingdoms. When we join together with other citizens in a community service project, we are acting as responsible citizens of our country but when we view this as an exercise of our faith and/or use it as an opportunity to share the gospel of God's grace with others, we are functioning as a

part of Christ's church. In our individual lives as Christians in society, the distinction between the two kingdoms is virtually impossible to maintain. But when it comes to the public exercise of these two kingdoms, the distinction is absolutely vital. When we elect a president, we do not expect him to use the white house as a "bully pulpit" in spite of what Ross Perot would have us believe. We expect him to have as his sole concern our temporal welfare. Of course, if he is a Christian, he is going to make every effort to see to it that the church is able to carry out its function of proclaiming the gospel. As a private citizen he is going to be a witness to the faith which he professes. Nevertheless it is not his official function to usurp the mission which has been given to the church and her ministry. Similarly, when an individual is called into the public ministry, it is not a part of his official function to carry on social service projects. His sole concern is the administration of the Means of Grace. Of course, as a private citizen he may well participate in a community project. Nevertheless it is not his official function to usurp the mission which has been given to the government.

The point where this distinction meets a crossroads is in discussing auxiliary offices within the church. It is simply a fact that the church and her ministry (the apostles) chose seven men to serve as bread distributors in the early church in Jerusalem. This office was plainly not a part of the public ministry per se. It was not established so that these men, as they were distributing bread, could also share their faith in their Savior. Just the opposite! It was established in order that the public ministry of the gospel might be carried out with greater efficiency, so that the apostles could devote themselves to the Word of God and Prayer. The problem presented in Acts 6 is not that the church WASN'T caring for the poor and the needy but rather that it WAS, the result of which was a hindering of the proclamation of the gospel.

The question, then, is where to place such auxiliary offices. And the answer is simply this. So long as auxiliary offices are an expression of the mutual love of Christians, they are perfectly fine. They come about as a fruit of the gospel ministry and in order to support it. But the church, while it has the command to exercise mutual love, does not have the command to improve society. Dr. Marquart again summarizes the matter very nicely:

As for "social ministry," everything depends on how this ambiguous phrase is understood. If it means the church's care for her members suffering bodily distress, then this is a most sacred obligation of love (Mt. 25:31-46; Acts 24:17; 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Gal. 2:10; 1 Tim. 5:16; Jas. 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:17-18). It was for this very purpose, as we saw in an earlier section, that the church established that glorious auxiliary office, the diaconate (Acts 6:1-6; Rom. 12:7-8; 16:1-2; Phil. 1:1). And the church's diaconic love for her own has of course always "spilt over" to help also the needy outside her own ranks, to the best of her ability (Gal. 6:10).

Yet the collection among the Gentile churches was for "the saints" in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1), not for the poor generally in the large population centers of the Roman Empire.

Perhaps the best pattern to follow is the one laid down in the early church. There was first the gospel ministry. Then as a fruit of it and in support of it the auxiliary office was created. The Word came first, then came faith and love. The same is true for us. If we are really interested in spiritual renewal, it must begin with a renewed emphasis on the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. This is finally the real business of the church. Creating all sorts of "social ministries" to care for the needs of people in general so that everyone in our congregations can be a minister and to do this on the chance that some unbelievers might perhaps hear the gospel and join the church is going at the matter backwards and comes very close to an unholy mixture of the two kingdoms.

One final thing to remember is that auxiliary offices ought always to function not separate from, not along side, but auxiliary to the office of the Word. This also is the pattern that is laid down for us in the early church. When the apostles brought up the proposal that seven men be selected from the congregation they said, "We will turn this responsibility over to them." Then after the seven men had been chosen, they were presented to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. Furthermore the seven men who were chosen were to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. Such spiritual qualifications were necessary so that the function of this office would remain a godly auxiliary to the divinely instituted office in the church, the ministry of the Word. And the result was that "the word of God spread." The same thing is true for us. If we are in Christian liberty planning to create new auxiliary offices, we need to be very careful that such offices are designed and function only to support the gospel ministry and to give an avenue for the expression of mutual love among Christians, which comes as a fruit of the gospel. Anything beyond this blurs the distinction between the two kingdoms and inevitably hinders the spread of the gospel.

Conclusion

This paper began with a reference to a free conference, which was held at an LCMS church in Wauwatosa about a month ago, which featured presentations by Dr. Brug of our seminary and Dr. Marquart of the LCMS seminary at Fort Wayne. At the outset of his presentation, Dr. Brug made the comment that he didn't suppose that a three hour conference in a church in Milwaukee would resolve a difference that has been debated for over a century. The best that could be hoped for was a clearer understanding of what is being said by people on each side of the issue. Thus a brief contribution would be made to the continuing discussion concerning the doctrines of church and ministry. The writer's sentiments at the conclusion of this paper parallel those of Dr. Brug. It is doubtful whether this paper will do any more (probably less) than a

three hour free conference in clarifying the doctrine of church and ministry. It is the hope and prayer of the essayist that it will serve as a catalyst for discussion and become another brief contribution to the continuing discussion and debate.

Soli Deo Gloria

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

A Case in Point: "Lay Ministry" in *Affirm*, October, 1989.

Balge, D. *Pietism's Teaching on Church and Ministry in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 82, number 4, 1985.

Caemmerer, R. R. *The Universal Priesthood and the Pastor in the Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume 19, Number 8, August, 1948.

Confessional Lutheranism in Today's World in the Concordia Theological Quarterly.

Dallmann, W. & Dau, W. H. T. *Walther and the Church*. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1938.

Foelber, E.E. *The Office of the Public Ministry in The Abiding Word*. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1947.

Fredrich, E.C. *After Three Centuries - The Legacy of Pietism*, Read to the Southeastern Wisconsin District Pastor - Teacher Conference, June 11, 1985.

Fredrich, E. C. *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992.

Gawrisch, W. *The Doctrine of Church and Ministry in the Life of the Church Today in the Proceedings of the Fifty-first Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991.

Gerrish, B.A. *Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther*, Church History, Volume 34. American Society of Church History, 1965.

Hoenecke, A. *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, Volume 4.

Lawrenz, C. *An Evaluation of Walther's Theses on the Church and Ministry in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 79, Number 2, 1982.

Lawrenz, C. *The Scriptural Truths of the Church and Its Ministry in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 82, Number 3, 1985.

Lawrenz, C. *Theses on the Church and Ministry in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 67, 1970.

- Luther, M. *A Sermon on the Ban*, 1520, translated by Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch in *Luther's Works*, Volume 39, American edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Luther, M. *Concerning the Ministry*, 1523, translated by Conrad Bergendoff in *Luther's Works*, Volume 40, American edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1966.
- Luther, M. *The Freedom of a Christian*, 1520, translated by W. A. Lambert and revised by Harold J. Grimm and found in *Luther's Works: American Edition*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1971.
- Marquart, K.A. *The Church and her Fellowship, Ministry, and Governance*. Fort Wayne, Indiana: The International Foundation for Lutheran Confessional Research, 1990.
- Meyer, J. *Studies in the Augsburg Confession*, photographically reproduced from the *Northwestern Lutheran*, 1940-1946.
- Mueller, J.T. *The Significance of the Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry in the Concordia Theological Monthly*, Volume 11, January, 1940.
- Mueller, W. *A Biblical Perspective of Christian Ministry*, prepared for WELS Board for Parish Services Task Force on Alternate Forms of Public Ministry, February 8, 1988.
- Mueller, W. *One Lord, One Church, One Ministry*, presented to the Western Wisconsin District Convention, June 7, 1988.
- Pieper, A. *Concerning the Doctrine of the Church and of its Ministry, with Special Reference to the Synod and its Discipline in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 59, Number 2, 1962.
- Pieper, A. *Luther's Doctrine of Church and Ministry in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 60, Numbers 1, 2, and 4, 1963.
- Pieper, F. *Christian Dogmatics*. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1953.
- Preus, Robert D. *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1970.
- Preus, Robert D. *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Volume 2. St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1972.

Roth, R.C. *All Christians are Workers in the Great Commission*, prepared for the District Convention of the Western Wisconsin District, June 9 & 10, 1980.

Sauer, H. A. *I Will Build My Church: A Study of Church and Ministry*, prepared for the Northern Conference of the Michigan District, April 8, 1991.

Schaller, J. *The Kingdom of God*, in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Volume 89, Number 3.

Schurb, K. "Lay Ministry" in Light of History" in *Affirm*, June, 1990.

Teigen, E. T. *The Universal Priesthood in the Lutheran Confessions* in the Confessional Lutheran Research Society Newsletter, Letter No. 25, Advent 1991.

Vogel, H. *The Doctrine of the Church and Ministry* in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Volume 73, 1976.

WELS Parish Services. *WELS Ministry Compendium*. Volumes 1 and 2, 1992.

Wessel, L. *The Office of the Keys -- Absolution* in the *Theological Quarterly*, Volume 22, Number 1, January, 1918.

Wingren, G. *The Christian's Calling: Luther on Vocation* translated by Carl C. Rasmussen. London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958.

ENDNOTES

FOR

"WHAT IS MINISTRY"

ENDNOTES FOR "WHAT IS MINISTRY?"

(1) In his treatise on the power and primacy of the pope Melanchthon makes the following statement:

Christ gave to the apostles only spiritual power, i.e., the command to teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily force [by the Word], and that he did not give them the power of the sword, or the right to establish, occupy, or confer kingdoms of the world (to set up or depose kings). For Christ says, Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; also John 20:21: As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

Melanchthon's main point in this section is to prove what is commonly referred to as the "two kingdoms distinction," which occupies our attention in the last thesis. Of note here is that the contrast is between the duty of civil government and the duty of church government. Matthew 28:19-20 is used in support of the public ministry of the church as opposed to the "public ministry" of the state. As far as Mark 16:15 goes, this passage is used only twice, both times in reference to infant baptism.

(2) It is found in his treatise "Against Hanswurst" and says:

Nobody can deny that we have in fulness and purity the preaching office and the Word of God, that we teach and preach diligently, without adding any new, sectarian, or human doctrine, and in this we do just as Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19-20) and as the apostles and all of Christendom have done.

(3) The first is in a treatise against the Zwickau prophets, who were reformation day versions of the modern day Pentecostals. They were fanatics who denied infant baptism. Luther simply points out that these false prophets, in an effort to defend their false doctrine, even went so far as to teach that Mark "has mistakenly written about baptism in his last chapter (Mark 16:15)." The second is in his treatise "Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil," written just one year before Luther's death. Here he is attacking the pope's claim that when Jesus said to Peter "feed my lambs" he was talking to Peter alone and entrusting His sheep to Peter and his heirs in the papal see. Luther says:

Christ spoke not to St. Peter, but to all the disciples, as Mark 16:15 says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." So Christ's sheep are entrusted not just to St. Peter, indeed, not just to the apostles, but also to the seventy-two disciples.

Of special note here is the fact that Luther is not using this passage to show that this commission was given to all believers. All believers are described as

"Christ's sheep." This commission is given to those to whom Christ's sheep (believers) would be entrusted. Of note also is the fact that Luther sees in this commission also the commission given earlier to the seventy two, whom he had sent out two by two to preach the kingdom of God.

(4) Hoenecke continues with a long section supporting this "true apostolic succession" as follows:

- A. It is certain from Scripture that the ordinary preaching office is essentially the same as the apostolic office:
 - a. According to their position (i.e. servants and stewards)
 - b. According to their task (i.e. pastoring and administering the sacraments)
 - c. According to their authority (i.e. ruling, supervising, discipline)
 - d. According to the purpose (i.e. both have the same purpose: to save)

Included here is just a sketch outline. For fuller treatment the reader is directed to Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics, pg. 68-5-25)

(5) A word should be said in this connection about the elders. It has often been said that there were preaching elders and governing elders, that there were elders whose responsibility it was to administer the Means of Grace and those whose responsibility was something entirely different. When asked where the Scriptural support for this viewpoint is, 1 Timothy 5:17 is often brought up. The NIV translation of this verse reads as follows: "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." For myself I was thoroughly convinced by this passage for many years until I studied it in the original language. The NIV translation is highly interpretive. In the first place, the term elders does not here nor in most places in Scripture describe a special office in the church (It can mean that but the context must determine that this is the case). The most common translation of this word is simply "older man" or "elder" in this sense. Secondly, the phrase "the affairs of the church" is NOT in the original language. A more literal translation would be, "The elders who manage well (are good managers [gr. *proistemi*]) are worthy of double honor, especially those who (lit.) labor in word and doctrine." Of some significance is the fact that the same word (*proistemi*) is used in chapter 3 of this same epistle where Paul lists qualifications for a bishop. He says, "If anyone cannot manage (*prostenai*) his own family, how can he take care of God's church?"

The point is that the object for this management (i.e. that which is being managed) must be supplied because it is not given in the text. The NIV has supplied "the affairs of the church" and come up with two kinds of ecclesiastical elders. But listen to how this passage sounds if you supply "family" in place of "the affairs of the church:" "Older men who are good family managers are worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine." The reason for the double honor is

1) because these are older men who are always to receive honor according to the Scriptures and 2) because they are good family managers. This is especially true then of those older men who are in the public ministry of preaching and teaching. Thus instead of proving that there were two kinds of ecclesiastical elders, this passage can be used to segregate the public ministry from the universal priesthood of believers. I don't know of any other passage where there is any indication that there was an ecclesiastical elder in charge of anything other than the Word and Sacraments.

(6) The relationship between priesthood and ministry in this regard is well illustrated by Paul's statement in Romans 10:15, "And how can they preach unless they are sent." This statement is not some "pragmatic lament over a shortage of manpower." It is a solemn apostolic disavowal of unsent preachers, echoing the lament of God through Jeremiah: "I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied." "The royal priesthood is the unnamed referent in this passage...it is the means by which God calls and sends particular individuals into his ministry, the ministry instituted by him in the apostolate and which is continued today in the apostolic ministry."

That this is the correct interpretation of this passage becomes clear from the context which follows the passage. After quoting the familiar "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" from Isaiah Paul says, "But not all accepted the message." Then he quotes Isaiah again, saying, "Lord, who has believed our message." The problem was not a lack of preachers but a lack of faith on the part of those who heard the message. In his comments on this verse Dr. Becker puts it this way:

People say that the reason some people don't believe in Jesus is that they haven't heard of him. 'The poor heathen in Africa, they haven't had a chance to hear the gospel.' Paul says the problem is that they don't obey the gospel. The Pharisees certainly heard it. Even the unbelievers in America know that the Christian church teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for our sins on the cross. Today there are Christians who talk about their Savior all over the world. People hear the gospel; they just don't believe it.

Thus Romans 10:15 is the basis for extending a divine call through a Christian congregation. It is also therefore the reason that AC XIV says, "Of ecclesiastical order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called."

(7) The NIV references are included on the next page for easy referral:

⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸This is why it^b says:

"When he ascended on high,
he led captives in his train
and gave gifts to men."^c

⁹(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?^d ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^a and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^a ¹¹All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^b? Do all interpret? ³¹But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us: If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his^a faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.