

# The Meaning of *Predigtamt* in Augsburg Confession V

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## Introduction

Christ instituted one office in his church, the ministry of the gospel. In other words, Christ assigned one task to his church: the office of preaching the gospel, that is, the task, the office, or the ministry of preaching the word and administering the sacraments.

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This ministry of the gospel, which in theological language has sometimes been called "ministry in the abstract," is described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3 and 5.

2 Corinthians 3:7,8,9 Now if the *ministry that brought death*, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will, not *the ministry of the Spirit* be even more glorious? If the *ministry that condemns* men is glorious, how much more glorious is *the ministry that brings righteousness!*

2 Corinthians 5:18,19 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the *ministry of reconciliation*: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the *message of reconciliation*.

It is clear that in this context "the ministry" does not refer directly to the pastoral office or to those who hold it but to the message of law and gospel which they preach. In the first passage, the gospel is called the ministry of the Spirit and the ministry that brings righteousness. In the second it is called the ministry of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation is the message that "God was reconciling the world unto himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." The Lutheran Confessions echo this language of Scripture when they sometimes use the term "the ministry" in the abstract to refer to the means of grace. The most important example of this usage is found in Augsburg Confession V.

## The Text of AC V

Augsburg Confession, V, 1,2 So 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, namely, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to man without the external Word, through their own preparation and works.

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<sup>1</sup> The historical portion of this article is based on an essay by Pastor Michael Herbst prepared for the Pastoral Conference of the Ev.-Luth. Freikirche, Dresden, Germany, June 1999. Information about this essay is found in the bibliography.

## V. Vom Predigtamt

Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakrament geben, dadurch er als durch Mittel den heiligen Geist gibt, welcher den Glauben, wo und wenn [=wann] er will, in denen, so das Evangelium hören, wirkt, welches da lehret, dass wir durch Christus Verdienst, ein gnädigen Gott haben, so wir solches glauben.

Und werden verdammt die Wiedertauffer und andere, so lehren, das wir ohn das leiblich Wort des Evangelii den Heiligen Geist durch eigene Bereitung, Gedanken und Werk erlangen.

## V. De ministerio ecclesiastico

Ut hanc fidem consequamur, institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta. Nam per verbum et sacramenta tamquam per instrumenta donatur spiritus sanctus, qui fidem efficit, ubi et quando visum est Deo, in his, qui audiunt evangelium, scilicet quod Deus non propter nostra merita, sed propter Christum iustificet hos, qui credunt se propter Christum in gratiam recipi.

Damnant Anabaptistas et alios, qui sentiunt spiritum sanctum contingere hominibus sine verbo externo per ipsorum praeparationes et opera.

### The German Terms

Gott hat das Predigtamt eingesetzt Evangelium und Sakrament geben

The German version identifies the institution of the *Predigtamt* with the giving of gospel and sacraments: "God has instituted the preaching office, giving the gospel and sacraments." According to the context, therefore, *Predigtamt* in AC V seems to be synonymous with gospel and sacraments. Does this understanding, however, agree with the meaning of the word and its usage elsewhere in the confessions?

### *Amt and Predigtamt*

The word *Amt* is not limited to an office or position held by an incumbent. It often refers to a task or action, or, if you will, a function. For example, in his "Deutsche Messe" of 1526, Luther calls the execution of the Lord's Supper—the consecration—an "*Amt*".<sup>2</sup> In the Smalkald Articles, echoing 2 Corinthians 3, Luther contrasts the *Amt des Gesetzes* (*officium legis*), which is to expose sin, with the *Amt des Evangelii* which is to preach forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> In the AC, the German word *Amt* is not used only in one way. It stands both for the office as well as for the functions or actions. Once it is parallel to *celebrasse missam*, which calls to mind the usage of *Amt* in the *Deutsche Messe*.<sup>4</sup>

AC XXVIII 9 says: This power [of forgiving sins] is exercised only by teaching and preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments, according to their calling either to many or to individuals. For thereby are granted not bodily but eternal things, as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These things cannot come except by the ministry of the Word and sacraments, as Paul says, Rom. 1:16, "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Triglotta, p 84).

It is clear that here the ministry of the Word, which is the power of God unto salvation, is the gospel, not the preacher.

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<sup>2</sup> LW 53, p 80. *Amt and Dermung*

<sup>3</sup> Triglotta, p 478, 480, 490.

<sup>4</sup> In AC XXIV 37, Triglotta, p 68.

Apology VII 20: [The marks of the church are]  
das Predigtamt oder Evangelium und die Sacramente  
Puram doctrinam evangelii et sacramenta  
(Triglotta, p 232).

Here again it is obvious that the *Predigtamt* is the gospel. The marks of the church are the means of grace, not the pastoral ministry. Compare also Apology XIII.

Apology XIII 7-13: The adversaries do not understand the sacrament of orders and priesthood as the ministry of the Word (*Predigtamt*) or the office (*Amt*) of administering the sacraments for others, but they understand it of priests who are ordained to offer sacrifices....If ordination is understood as carrying out the ministry of the Word [as a sacrament of the preaching office and gospel], we are willing to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and has glorious promises, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation." If one understands the Sacrament of Orders in this way, we would be willing to call the laying on of hands a sacrament, since the church has the command to appoint ministers (*Prediger und Diakonos bestellen*), which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in this ministry. [How very comforting it is to know that God wishes to preach and work through men and those chosen by men]. It is good that one should highly praise and honor such a decision, particularly in opposition to the diabolical Anabaptists, who despise and blaspheme God's decision to use the preaching office and external word (*Predigtamt* and *leiblichen Wort*) (Triglotta, p 310, Concordia, p 211, Kolb, p 220).

This passage of the Apology deserves an article of its own, based on a careful study and comparison of the Latin and German texts (which often vary significantly in wording in this section). It is clear that in par. 7 the *Predigtamt* is not the pastoral ministry, but the task of preaching the gospel. There is no good reason not to see the same meaning in par. 11. Here too "ministry" does not refer directly to the pastors but to the task they carry out. This is clear from the Bible passages that follow, which refer to the power of the means not to the messengers. The ministers and their ministry are differentiated. In the last part of the passage the emphasis remains on God's activity. (Another interesting question raised by this passage: if it permits the ordaining of deacons, what about male teachers?)

Apology XXIV, p 404, 59-60: Because the priesthood of the New Testament is the ministry of the Spirit or an office (*Amt*) through which the Spirit works, as Paul teaches (2 Cor 3:6), it accordingly has but the one sacrifice of Christ, which is satisfactory and applied for the sins of others....The ministry of the Spirit is that through which the Holy Spirit is efficacious in hearts.

The Holy Spirit is efficacious through the gospel. It is a Romanizing trait to make the pastor a means of grace.

### **The Latin Terms**

#### *Ministerium institutum est*

The Latin text of AC V states: *institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta*. We cannot simply equate *ministerium* here with the public ministers. Like *Amt*, *ministerium* often refers to the means for carrying out the ministry.

Formula of Concord, Epitome XII 22 defines the ministry of the church (ministry of the Word)

as *praedicatum et auditu perceptum verbum*, the preached and heard Word (Triglotta, p 840).

In Solid Declaration XII 30 the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* (*Kirchendienst* in the German) is defined: *hoc est verb um Dei praedicatum et auditum* (this is the preached and heard word of God).

The meaning depends on the context in which *ministerium* occurs. There is no need to introduce here passages showing that "ministry" can sometimes refer to the ministers and to the pastors in particular. No one questions that. Nor do any among us question that the pastoral ministry is instituted by God. That issue, however, is addressed in AC XIV, not here.

### ***Einsetzen and Instituire***

In AC V's description of the establishment and functioning of the ministry of the Word, both of the main verbs, *institutum est* and *donatur* are passive. The *Predigtamt* was instituted or set up by God so that we might obtain faith. God is the subject not only in this initial section of the article about institution of ministry, but also in the important statements about application of the ministry which follow: that through the means God gives the "Holy Spirit, who works faith when and where he will in those who hear the gospel." Also here in the Latin text the verb is passive, *donatur*. The gifts of Spirit and faith are given by God. We cannot come to saving faith without the *Predigtamt* and the Spirit who works through it. There is no mention of a certain indispensable order of human agents through whom the means must be delivered. The word must, of course, be preached and the sacraments administered. This implies human agents, but they are not directly referred to here. The focus is on God's activity, not on whether the human agent is a grandmother telling her grandson the story of Jesus or a missionary preaching to heathen who do not know Christ.

### **The Antecedents of AC V**

Our interpretation of the Confessions must be based primarily on a careful study of the texts of the Confessions themselves in their final form as found in the Book of Concord, but the preliminary documents leading up to the Confessions can sometimes be helpful in illuminating the intention of the confessors. The understanding of the use of *Predigtamt* in AC V that is advocated above is confirmed by earlier versions of the article as found in the predecessor documents of the AC. The following works form the background of AC V.

- 1) Luther's *Grosses Bekenntnis* of March 1528<sup>5</sup>;
- 2) The Schwabach Articles from July 1529, especially Schwabach 7;
- 3) The Marburg Articles from October 1529, especially Marburg 8.

Most important is Schwabach 7. Melancthon used this document as he was preparing the AC.

Swabach 7: To obtain such faith or to give it to us, God has instituted the preaching office or the spoken word (that is, the gospel) through which he has this faith proclaimed, along with its power, benefits, and fruits. God also bestows faith through this Word, as through an instrument, with his Holy Spirit, when and where he wills. Apart from it there is no other instrument or way, passage or path, to obtain faith.<sup>6</sup>

That this is a prototype of AC V is obvious. That the subject is the means of grace, not the pastor, is also obvious. Marburg 8 deals with a similar topic.

Marburg 8, On the external word we believe that the Holy Spirit, properly speaking, gives this

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<sup>5</sup> Luther's *Bekenntnis vom Abendmahl Christi*, in St. L 20, 894-1105; esp. 20, 1098ff. English, LW 37, p 364-365.

<sup>6</sup> Kolb, *Sources*, p 85. In the Schwabach Articles the sacraments, have their own article, Schwabach 8.

faith or his gift to no one apart from preceding preaching, or the spoken word, or the gospel of Christ. Rather, the Holy Spirit works faith through and with this word when and in whom he wills.<sup>7</sup>

Here again it is clear that the Word is the subject. The same can be said about this article in the preliminary drafts of the AC itself, which preceded the final edition.

A secondary, incidental confirmation of this interpretation of AC V is provided by the *Pontifical Confutation*, in which the enemies of the AC treat Article V entirely as an article on the means of grace.<sup>8</sup> They do not introduce their rejection of the Lutheran view of ministry until their rebuttal of AC XIV.

### **The Position of AC V Within the Augsburg Confession**

Does the setting and sequence of AC V within the AC give any indication about the subject being discussed? AC V is sandwiched between the article Of Justification (AC IV) and the article Of New Obedience (AC VI). This means that the article on the *Predigtamt* is in the same class as articles that deal with justification, not articles concerning church order. The line of thought is:

AC IV teaches that we become right with God through faith.

AC V shows that this happens through the Spirit who works through Word and sacrament.

AC VI goes on to speak of the fruits of faith. It would be out of place for AC V to digress from the concern with faith and its fruits to concern about the men by whom Word and sacraments are handled or administered.<sup>9</sup>

AC VII deals with the *una sancta ecclesia*—the one, holy, invisible, Christian church. According to AC VII, the *notae* (marks) of this church are solely the Word of God and the sacraments. Of course, it is necessary that God's Word must be preached purely and the sacraments must be administered in accordance with their institution; but nothing is said here concerning the persons who have the responsibility before God to administer them. The background of the AC confirms that VII characterizes the church, as the gathering of believers around the gospel proclamation and the administration of the sacraments. It is not characterized, that is, given its marks by the public ministry.

AC VIII states that both the Word and the sacraments are effective because of the institution and the mandate of Christ, even when they are performed by the impious. Though evil ministers are mentioned, they are mentioned to show that the power is in the ministry of the Word not in the ministers. The topic is still the efficacy of the means of grace.

AC IX and X deal with the sacraments. Though sacraments must be administered, no mention is made of the ministers. The emphasis is on the recipients.

AC XI refers to private absolution, which again assumes the presence of ministers, but without direct reference. This is another form of the means of grace, another form of gospel preaching.

AC XII concerns the nature of true repentance.

AC XIII focuses on the use of the sacraments as true means of grace (an echo of AC V). In none of these articles is a clerical class of administrators mentioned as a mark of the church or as necessary to the power of the means. AC XIII is referred to again in Article XXIV [*Von der Messe/de missa*].

AC XIV, at last, mentions that public ministers of the church must be rightly called. Even here the mention of ministers is indirect, with more emphasis on rejecting self-appointed ministers than on the right procedures for calling.

Subsequent articles of the AC deal in more detail with specific doctrinal problems and abuses in the Catholic church, many of which had already been alluded to in previous articles. AC XXVIII, Of Ecclesiastical

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<sup>7</sup> Kolb, *Sources*, p 90.

<sup>8</sup> Kolb, *Sources*, p 109.

<sup>9</sup> Coincidentally, or perhaps not, the order of the WLS Senior Dogmatics notes is faith, means of grace, sanctification, the church, then ministry.

Power, deals most directly with the office of the ministers.

Though our topic is AC V not AC XIV, perhaps a few side comments are needed concerning the relationship of AC V and AC XIV.

"Ecclesiastical order" is not spoken about until AC XIV. But why did the AC eventually include this article? One answer that has been suggested is that AC XIV goes back to Luther's *Great Confession* of 1528. Luther speaks in his *Confession* about the three *holy orders* that God instituted: the priesthood, marriage, and worldly authorities.

521. All who are engaged in the *clerical office or ministry of the Word (Pfarramt oder Dienst des Worts)* are in a holy, proper, good, and God-pleasing order and estate, such as those who preach, administer sacraments, and supervise the common chest, sextons and messengers or servants who serve such persons. These are engaged in works which are altogether holy in God's sight.

522. Again, all fathers and mothers who regulate their household wisely and bring up their children to the service of God are engaged in pure holiness, in a holy work and *a holy order*.

523. Moreover, princes and lords, judges, civil officers, state officials, notaries, male and female servants and all who serve such persons, and further, all their obedient subjects—all are engaged in pure holiness and leading a holy life before God. For these three *institutions or orders (Stifte oder Orden)* are found in God's Word and commandment.<sup>10</sup>

Galley comments:

Two points about Luther's statement are worthy of comment. One is that "all who are engaged in the clerical office or ministry of the Word...such as those who preach, administer sacraments, supervise the common chest, sextons and messengers or servants" are counted as part of "the holy, proper, good, and God-pleasing order and estate," just as also in the government also the chancellor, clerk, servants, lasses, and everyone that serves in such a manner are also included, similarly also in the state of marriage. Luther makes no attempt to distinguish a higher or lower state. The term *ordo*, furthermore, includes not only the ordained pastor but also all those who serve the church. Further, the similarities of the three orders, as they are also found in AC XXVII 13, demonstrates that distinction between spiritual and worldly estates is not based on whether or not they have *ordo* but alone on the distinctive power or authority [*potestas, Herrschaft, Macht*] of each and on their office [*officium, Dienst, Pflicht, service, duty*].<sup>11</sup>

In AC XIV Luther's view of orders is applied to the public ministry.

AC XIV refers to the assignment "to teach publicly in the church." For the term "public" the German text uses *öffentlich*, the Latin uses *publice*. Galley comments on this *publice* in AC XIV: "It is related to the community, the *res publica*, by whose authority and direction; according to whose organization and expense; and most importantly, on whose behalf (namely, all who belong to the community) a function is performed."<sup>12</sup> In a footnote he offers as evidence for the meaning of "public" the example from AC 28, 29, where the Latin illustrates the meaning of *publice* in the phrase *retinendae publicae pacis causa* [by which the public peace is preserved]. In AC XIV the particular "public" served by the public ministry is the church, that is, the communion of saints. However, nothing specific is said about the persons who perform the public service. Melancthon gives an explanation in his *Tractatus*:

Now the *Predigtamt* [ministry of the New Testament] is not bound to any place or person, as the Levitical office was bound in the Law, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world and is

<sup>10</sup> St. L., XX, 1098f. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 37, p 364-365.

<sup>11</sup> Galley, p 9. Herbst, p 130.

<sup>12</sup> Galley, p 10. Herbst, p 131.

bound to the place, where God gives his gifts of apostles, prophets, shepherds, teachers, etc. And the person does not add anything to the Word and office commanded by Christ [neither does this ministry work on account of the authority of any person but because of the Word handed down by Christ]; it matters not who preaches and teaches it if there are hearts who believe it and hold themselves to it, to whom it is done as they hear and believe.<sup>13</sup>

Here again Word and ministry is kept distinct from the person, and the person is not bound to a certain order.

It seems clear to me as I read AC V that the ministry in AC V is the ministry of the Word entrusted to the church. The public ministry is explicitly dealt with for the first time in AC XIV. Even there, there is no evidence for limiting the public ministry to the pastoral ministry alone.

But is this a new interpretation? Is it outside the mainstream of Lutheran interpretation? To answer this question we will focus on the viewpoint of the leading theologians of the Synodical Conference of North America with a few references to earlier dogmaticians.

### **The Understanding of *Predigtamt* in AC V in the Synodical Conference**

During the 1850s C. F. W. Walther promoted a series of free conferences to establish unity among all the Lutherans of North America who subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. Naturally, the AC itself was a chief topic of discussion. The results of these discussions were reported in the Missouri Synod's *Der Lutheraner*. AC V was discussed at a conference held in Columbus, Ohio in October 1856. The *Lutheraner's* report includes the following comments. In the beginning, some participants in the conference maintained that *Predigtamt* in AC V meant *Presbyteriat* or *Pfarramt* as it does in AC XIV. The other side argued that "the purpose of this 5th article is to specify the means through which we receive justifying faith, which was the topic of the previous article."<sup>14</sup> In the course of this discussion, the following conclusion was attained: "The purpose of the 5th article is not to designate any special administrators, but rather actually speaks only of the administration itself."<sup>15</sup> The list of arguments in support of this conclusion included the following:

- 2) These means, as the Latin text demonstrates more clearly, are solely and exclusively the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments, which have their power in and of themselves, not in the people who administer them.
- 3) Because these means require an administrator, God made provision and commanded that they be administered and distributed.
- 4) The current article 5, however, concerns only the divine directive that they should generally be administered.<sup>16</sup>

After further deliberation, the conference decided to wait until they had completed their discussion of AC XIV at a future meeting for a more exact determination of the relationship of the *Pfarramt* to the *Predigtamt* as it is treated in AC V. Nevertheless, they were able to come to a preliminary agreement, which was summarized in the *Lutheraner*: "It was expressed in the general gathering that the conference understands by *Predigtamt* the work of the church [*Kirchendienst*], that is, the administration of the means of grace, and therefore the consensus attests to understanding the 5th article in the usual manner."<sup>17</sup>

At the session of the free conference held in the year 1859 (July 14-20, 1859 in Fort Wayne, Indiana), Article XIV of the AC was finally discussed. In that connection, the participants reaffirmed the interpretation of AC V as resolved three years earlier. They cited Schwabach 7, quoted above, as evidence for this view and

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<sup>13</sup> Tract. 26f., Triglotta, p 510. Translation composite.

<sup>14</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1856. Year 13, Nr. 7, p 50-51.

<sup>15</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1856. Year 13, Nr. 7, p 51.

<sup>16</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1856. Year 13, Nr. 7, p 51. Herbst, p 122.

<sup>17</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1859. Year 16, Nr. 7, p 10.

offered this observation, "Who by *Predigtamt* here can understand the *Pfarramt*?"<sup>18</sup> The necessary conclusion is: "From all this evidence it follows without contradiction that the 5th article is speaking not of the *Predigtamt in concreto*, that is, of the *Pfarramt*, but rather of the *Predigtamt in abstracto*, that is, of the administration of the Means of Grace in the church, apart from the one who administers them."<sup>19</sup> Finally, the 5th and the 14th articles were compared to each other, and as a result of this comparison, the conference agreed on the following statement:

From a comparison between the titles of articles 14 and 5, in the German and Latin texts, the Conference determines that the 5th article deals with the administration of the means of grace in general (certainly the *Predigtamt* in the narrower sense is at the same time included [or implied] along with the appointment of the gospel as spoken word); that however the 14th article speaks about the *Predigtamt* in the narrow sense, or the *Pfarramt*.<sup>20</sup>

### C. F. W. Walther

The conclusions of the conference as cited above are undoubtedly those of C. F. W. Walther, who helped steer the participants to the proper conclusion. The reason that we can be confident of this is that Walther explicitly expresses the same view in his own writings. In *Church and Ministry* he states that *Predigtamt* in AC V is not concerned with ministry in the concrete or the *Pfarramt*, but rather that in AC V the topic is the *Amt in abstracto* through which God gives the Holy Spirit.<sup>21</sup> To further support this view he points to Ludwig Hartmann as one of the older teachers who had correctly recognized this interpretation. He cites at this place the quotation from Hartmann concerning this point which was included in the Baier/Walther *Compendium*, which he used as his dogmatics textbook. We must expect that this was the interpretation which he taught to his students, among whom were some of the later Wauwatosa theologians. After presenting further citations from the confessions, Walther concludes as follows:

This is an important matter, because of those who make the *Pfarramt* into a means of grace and equate it with the Word and sacraments, and who assert that this office would be absolutely essential to each person for salvation, so that a person without the service of an ordained *Pfarrer* can neither come to faith, nor can receive absolution for his sins. But our church teaches this necessity only in regard to the spoken or physical (*mundlich and leiblich*) Word in opposition to a supposed inner Word and to every type of enthusiasm. Nevertheless, our *Grundbekenntnis* in the 5th article gives testimony for the divine institution of the *Pfarramt*, even if only indirectly, as all of the commentaries of our orthodox theologians concerning this article clearly show.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly enough, Walther presents this evidence against taking AC V as direct evidence for the institution of the public ministry in his presentation of his Thesis II, the very thesis in which he demonstrates that the *Predigtamt* or *Pfarramt* is no human ordinance but an office instituted by God.

Walther recognizes this abstract use of *Predigtamt* in other passages of the confessions as well.

In this passage of the Apology it was remarked in passing that one can also recognize very clearly what those of old frequently understood by *office of the ministry (Predigtamt)*, namely, that they often took "office of the ministry" as entirely synonymous with "gospel." The Apology

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<sup>18</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1859. Year 16, Nr. 7, p 10.

<sup>19</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1859. Year 16, Nr. 7, p 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Lutheraner*, 1859. Year 16, Nr. 7, p 11.

<sup>21</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche and Amt (4. Aufl.)*, Erlangen 1862, p 198. Page numbers will be different in different printings, for example in the 1911 Zwickau edition, p 194.

<sup>22</sup> Walther, p 199. Zwickau p 195.



does not have Grabau's understanding according to which the office of the ministry (*Predigtamt*) is always equivalent to the office of pastor (*Pfarramt*).... No, when our old teachers ascribe such great things to the office of the ministry, they thereby mean nothing else than the service of the Word (*den Dienst des Wortes*) in whatever way (*Weise*) it may come to us ("The True Visible Church," in *Essays for the Church*, I, p 102).

How is it possible that the views of Walther could have been so misunderstood and misrepresented? Very likely, a part of the answer is the inadequacy of the widely used English abridgements of Walther's works on church and ministry. The abridged version of "Church and Ministry" in *Walther and the Church* omits Walther's comments about AC V (p 71-72). This same problem of too much abridgment exists in English versions of other works of Walther, such as his *Pastorale*.

All the leading theologians of the Synodical Conference agreed that in AC V the establishment of the ministry of the gospel and sacraments referred primarily to the giving of the means of grace.

Francis Pieper: Our article [AC V] tells how a person comes to faith. It is through the *Predigtamt*, which means, through the Means of Grace established by God, the gospel and the sacraments (*Das Grundbekenntniss der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, p 17).

Adolf Hoenecke: We can speak of the ministry of the Word, *Predigtamt* (preaching office), abstractly, understanding the expression to refer to the means of grace. Scripture itself does that, for example, in 2 Corinthians 3:4-8, where the apostle Paul designates the law as the ministry of the letter and the gospel as the ministry of the Spirit. Article V of the Augsburg Confession also speaks of the ministry of the Word in this abstract sense (*ELD*, IV, p 187).

U. V. Koren: There is no reference in this article to the work of the public ministry, by which the office of the word is to be performed in the congregation by certain persons who have been called to it. That is discussed later in the 14th Article. Here the reference is to the essence, power, and effectual working of the means of grace (*Faith of Our Fathers*, p 118).

Why did the theologians of the Synodical Conference agree that the ministry of the Word referred, first of all, to the giving of the means of grace to the whole church? One reason, of course, is that they were scriptural theologians, and this is the usage of Scripture. A second reason is that they were students of the Confessions and recognized the confessional use of the term that has been summarized above. A third reason is that they were students of Luther, and this is clearly the view of Luther. This office, which is basically the same as the ministry of the keys, has been given to the church, that is, to every individual Christian as such; not in theory only, but to be put into practice. Christ gave the keys to the church. When Luther refers to the *Predigtamt* as the one office given to the church or as the highest office given to the church, he is referring to this office, not to the pastoral ministry alone.

Luther: Since the church owes its birth to the Word, is nourished and strengthened by it, it is obvious that it cannot be without the Word. If it is without the Word, it ceases to be a church. A Christian, thus, is born to the ministry of the Word in baptism (*zu dem Amt des Wortes geboren ist*) ("Concerning the Ministry," LW 40, p 37; St L X, 1592-1593).

Luther: *The first office, that of the ministry of the Word, therefore, is common to all Christians.* This is clear, from what I have already said, and from I Pet. 2:9, "You are a royal priesthood that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." I ask, who are these who are called out of darkness into marvelous light? Is it only the shorn and anointed masks [Catholic priests]? Is it not all Christians?...In truth these blasphemers

have another, external, ministry in which they declare, not the wonderful deeds of God, but their own and the pope's impious deeds. So, as *there is no other proclamation in the ministry of the Word than that which is common to all*, that of the wonderful deed of God, so there is no other priesthood than that which is spiritual and universal, as Peter here defines it. (LW 40, p 21-22).

Luther: These passages very strongly and clearly corroborate that *the ministry of the Word is the highest office in the church, that it is unique and belongs to all who are Christians*, not only by right but by command. Indeed it is not a priesthood if it is not unique and common to all. Nothing can prevail against these divine thunderings, be it numberless fathers, innumerable councils, the custom of ages, or a majority of the world (LW 40, p 23).

Walther agrees with Luther's view:

Through holy baptism every Christian has been consecrated, ordained, and installed into the ministry (*geweiht, ordinirt, eingestetzt in das Amt*)....What good is it my friends if we highly extol the spiritual priesthood as a great privilege, but do not fulfill the obligations. What good is it to be called spiritual priests if when we come together we do not exercise the office, but rather abandon it? What good is the name without the deed? (Sermon: "Bringing Souls to Christ," 1842; English in *Missio Apostolica* 6, 1998, p 10, 15).

Compared to these bold assertions that the ministry of the Word belongs to all Christians, the following more recent statement is rather restrained.

This We Believe VII 7. We believe that every Christian is a priest before God (1 Peter 2:9). All believers have direct and equal access to the throne of grace through Christ, the mediator (Ephesians 2:17,18). God has given the means of grace to all believers. All Christians are to declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). In this sense all Christians are ministers, or servants, of the gospel. God wants all Christians to share the message of salvation with other people (Matthew 28:19,20; 10:32).

### **The Pastoral Ministry A Divine Institution**

Luther, Walther, and Walther's students agree that from the beginning of the New Testament church, there were men specially appointed to discharge the duties of this one ministry publicly, as the representatives of the church (ministry *in concreto*). This public ministry is of divine origin. It is a divine institution. Public ministers are appointed by God.

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which *the Holy Spirit has made you overseers*. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

1 Corinthians 12:28 In the church *God has appointed* (ἔθετο) 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.

Ephesians 4:11 It was *he who gave* (ἔδωκεν) some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

1 Corinthians 9:14 In the same way, *the Lord has commanded* (διέταξεν) that those who preach

the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

That the public ministry is a special, God-ordained way of exercising the New Testament ministry of the Word is further evident from the following points:

- 1) Scripture speaks of the need for a call. Romans 10:15
- 2) The qualifications for the ministry are established in Scripture. 1 Timothy 3:1-12
- 3) Called ministers are special gifts of God to his church. Ephesians 4:11-13
- 4) This public ministry is designated by various special names. For example, the office of a "bishop" or overseer in 1 Timothy 3:1.
- 5) The ministry is a means of livelihood for full-time servants of the Word. 1 Corinthians 9:13-14

The Wauwatosa men, who were students of Walther, state this truth explicitly.

August Pieper: It does not follow from the spiritual priesthood of all believers that all Christians are *eo ipso* preachers for the congregation. That which all have in common, no one may take to himself ahead of the others. "No one should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments without an orderly call." Through the call to the office of preaching in the congregation the public administration of the priestly powers which are common to all are handed over to one or more individuals by a specific group of Christians. In this way the office of congregational preaching or the pastoral office comes into being. This is not to be regarded as a human, political arrangement, but as a divine ordinance. The pastoral office is mentioned in the Scriptures themselves along with the apostolate and office of evangelist as instituted (*eingerichtete*) species of the general office of preaching won and commanded by Christ. To this arrangement (*Aufrichtung*) the Christian church of all time is ordinarily bound. Whoever despises this despises Christ (*WLQ*, 1912, p 34).

The Wauwatosa men affirmed the divine institution of the pastoral ministry without disagreeing with Luther's statements that the office of pastor is not the only form of ministry of the Word which shares in the office instituted by Christ.

### Conclusion

We began our investigation with the question: "What is to be understood by the term *"Predigtamt"* in Article V of the Augsburg Confession. This article has presented the evidence that in AC V *Predigtamt* is not used in the sense of *Pfarramt*. Rather, AC V teaches us that God chooses to give faith through the Holy Spirit who works through the gospel and the sacraments. Therefore, the gospel and the sacraments must be diligently used and administered. AC V does not determine who it is through whom this is done. No, it leaves open the question of who should administer the sacrament and proclaim the gospel. That this is to be done publicly (that is, as representatives of the church) only by those rightly called is first made explicit in AC XIV.

Why does the debate about the meaning of AC V make a difference? That was alluded to already in the Walther quotation above which alluded to those who make the pastor into a means of grace. It is important to Romanizing Lutherans to find a specific institution of the pastoral ministry as the one office of Word and sacraments in AC V, because if this institution is not there in AC V, it is not found anywhere in the Augsburg Confession. This claim that there is one indispensable form of ministry of Word and sacraments is not supported by AC XIV, which, as we have seen, refers directly only to the invalidity of public ministers without a call, without specifying the forms that the public ministry of the Word must or may take. So if this institution is not in AC V, it is not present in AC at all. This is why Romanizing Lutherans must battle to inject the

institution of the pastoral ministry into AC V, just as they often battle to inject it into Matthew 28.

Both Adolf Hoenecke and Franz Pieper warn against the dangers of this Romanizing view of the ministry pressed by such opponents of Walther as Loehe and Grabau.

The traits of Romanizing Lutherans which they list include:

- 1) interpreting Augsburg Confession V as a reference to the public ministry rather than to the means of grace (not everyone who holds this view is a Romanizer, but most Romanizers hold this view),
- 2) teaching that the office of the public ministry is not conferred by the call of the congregation as the original possessor of all spiritual power, but is a divine institution in the sense that it was transmitted immediately from the apostles to their pupils, considered as a separate 'ministerial order' or caste, and that this order perpetuates itself by means of the ordination,
- 3) taking away from the church the right to call and having the preacher become a preacher through ordination as a sacrament,
- 4) speaking as if the means of grace exerted their full power and efficacy only when they were administered by men of this 'order,'
- 5) making the officiant a 'means of grace' alongside Word and Sacrament.<sup>23</sup>

When Article V or other articles of the confessions are not understood correctly in their context, the door is left open to imaginative interpretation of the confessions which introduce into them doctrines which were not present in the intent of the confessors.

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<sup>23</sup> See Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, IV, p 204-207,214-215; Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, p 447-448,454-459.