

The Pastor as the Representative of Christ

By, John F. Brug¹

The pastor acts as a representative of Christ. Serving in the office of the holy ministry, he acts in the stead of Christ. As an ambassador of Christ, he speaks for Christ. The message he delivers is the good news of Christ. The words of absolution he speaks are Christ's Words. As a steward of the mysteries of God he is the administrator of the sacraments. The baptisms he performs are Christ's baptisms. The supper he celebrates is the Lord's Supper that Christ instituted for his church.

How does it come about that the pastor receives such great power, such great responsibility, such a privilege? To answer this question we must begin at the beginning, with the institution of the ministry of the gospel.

Christ instituted one office in his church, the ministry of the gospel. Or to say the same thing in another way, Christ assigned one task to his church: the office of preaching the gospel. Or to spell out the key forms of the gospel more precisely, the task Christ gave the church is 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.¹⁹ 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,²⁰ 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,⁸ will not *the ministry of the Spirit* be even more glorious? ⁹If *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*:¹⁹ 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 immediately to the pastoral office nor to those who hold it but to the message of law and gospel which they preach. The ministry of reconciliation is the message that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The Lutheran Confessions echo this language of Scripture when they refer to the means of grace as "the ministry" in the abstract.

Augsburg Confession, V, 1,2 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.

Ut hanc fidem consequamur, *institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta*. Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott *das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakramente gegeben*.

The German version equates the institution of the *Predigtamt* with the giving of gospel and sacraments. Other passages of the Confessions reflect the same abstract use of the term "ministry."

¹ Edited edition of an essay presented at the Southeastern Michigan pastors conference in Westland, Michigan, October 3, 2005.

Apology XXIV, p 404, 59-60: Because the priesthood of the New Testament is the ministry of the Spirit (*ministerium Spiritus*) 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.

Formula of Concord, T.D. XII, 30 II: the ministry of the Church, the Word preached and heard...

All the leading theologians of the Synodical Conference agreed that the establishment of the ministry of the gospel and sacraments in AC V refers to the giving of the means of grace, not directly to the public or pastoral ministry.

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).

Franz Pieper: Our article 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).

C. F. W. Walther: In this passage of the Apology, it was remarked in passing, 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 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).

This office, which is basically the same as the office or 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, that is, to the congregation of believers. 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.

Matthew 18:17-20 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

Luther: Since the church owes its birth to the Word and 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; *SL* X, 1592-1593).

Luther: We maintain firmly that there is no other Word of God than that alone which all Christians are told to proclaim; that there is no other Baptism than that which all Christians may administer; that there is no other observance of the Lord's Supper than that which belongs to every Christian and was

instituted by Christ to be kept; also that there is no other kind of sin than that which every Christian may bind or loose, etc. . . . These are, however, always the priestly and the royal offices (“To The People At Prague,” *SL X*, p 1589f.).

Luther: *The first office, that of the ministry of the Word, therefore, is common to all Christians.*

²This 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?³ Is it not all Christians? And Peter not only gives them the right, but the command, to declare the wonderful deeds of God, which certainly is nothing else than to preach the Word of God. But some imagine a two-fold priesthood, one spiritual and common to all, the other external and limited, and say that Peter here speaks of the spiritual one. But what is the function of this limited and external office? Is it not to declare the wonderful deeds of God? But this Peter enjoins on the spiritual and universal priesthood. 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).

Comment: Luther clearly says that, in the wide sense of the term, the ministry of the Word is a right and duty entrusted to all Christians. This includes the right to proclaim the Word, to use the sacraments, and to judge teaching. He repeatedly makes it clear that when he refers to the ministry of the Word as the one office in the church, he is not referring to the pastoral office (as some today falsely claim) but to the means of grace entrusted to the whole church. In the following statement he clearly says, this one highest office is entrusted to all Christians.

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).

Luther: If the office of teaching be entrusted to anyone, then *everything accomplished by the Word in the church is entrusted*, that is, the office of baptizing, consecrating, binding, loosing, praying, and judging doctrine. Inasmuch as the office of preaching the gospel is the greatest of all and certainly is apostolic, it becomes the foundation for all other functions, which are built upon it, such as the offices of teachers, prophets, governing [the church], speaking with tongues, the gifts of healing and helping, as Paul directs in I Cor. 12 :28. Even Christ chiefly proclaimed the gospel, as the highest function of his office and did not baptize (John 4:2). Paul, too, gloried in the fact that he was sent not to baptize (I Cor. 1:17), as to a secondary office, but to the primary office of preaching the gospel (*LW 40*, p 36).

Comment: Here again, it is clear that for Luther the highest office of the church from which all others flow is not the office of parish pastor but the ministry of the Word which is entrusted to the church. Walther agrees with Luther’s view:

C. F. W. Walther: 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?

² In general, italics in the longer quotations are added to highlight key points.

³ This is a reference to the Catholic priests ordained by the bishops.

What good is the name without the deed? (Sermon: "Bringing Souls to Christ," 1842; English in *Missio Apostolica* 6, 1998, p 10, 15).

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).

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 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

- 2) The qualifications for the ministry are established in Scripture.

1 Timothy 3:1-12 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. ⁸ Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. ¹² A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

- 3) Called ministers are special gifts of God to his church

Ephesians 4:11-13 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be

evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ 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.

- 4) This public ministry is designated by various special names.

For example, the office of a "bishop" or overseer in 1 Timothy 3:1: Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

- 5) The ministry is a means of livelihood for full-time servants of the Word.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Quenstedt summarizes the Lutheran position:

God is the author of the New Testament ministry:

- I. by promising teachers to the church (Jr 3:15; 23:4; Jl 2:23);
 - II. by giving what he promised (1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 5:18);
 - III. by preserving the ministry to the end of the world (Eph 4:11);
 - IV. by functioning in the office of teaching himself (He 1:1);
 - V. by equipping the teachers of the church with the necessary gifts (2 Cor 3:5)
- (*TDP*, Pt IV, chap. XII, sect. I, thesis III, note, p 394).

It is, therefore, an error to trace the origin of the public ministry to mere expediency as Hoefling did (and as WELS is sometimes falsely accused of doing). Like some WELS theologians, Franz Pieper had some sympathy for Hoefling because he understood how Hoefling had been provoked into an overreaction by the Romanizing Lutherans, and he realized that Walther too had been accused of being a Hoeflingite by the Romanizing Lutherans (see *Lehre. und Wehre*, 1858, p 354). The two Pieper brothers, Franz and August, were one in rejecting the view of Hoefling, but both were more sympathetic with Hoefling than with the Romanizing Lutherans.

Franz Pieper: One is inclined to judge Hoefling less severely because his opponents (Muenchmeyer, Loehe, Kliefoth, etc.) taught a strongly Romanizing doctrine of the ministry, namely, 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. Some also spoke as if the means of grace exerted their full power and efficacy only when they were administered by men of this "order." Against this caricature of the public ministry Hoefling correctly argues that it makes the officiant a "means of grace" alongside Word and Sacrament: "The believers might see themselves with their spiritual needs referred not so much to Word and Sacrament as rather to the organ (the minister) divinely privileged to administer and distribute them. The full efficacy of the means of grace appears dependent on an external legal institution; the Holy Ghost now operates not so much in and through the means of grace as rather through the nomistic organs of their administration."⁴...In short, Hoefling did not succeed in keeping his balance in opposing a coarse Romanizing error. Thoroughly to refute the immediate divine establishment of the public ministry as Loehe and others taught it, he thought it necessary to deny that the mediate establishment of this office through the congregation is God's ordinance or has divine command (*Christian Dogmatics*, III, p 447-448).⁵

⁴ Make careful note of the points which Pieper lists as characteristics of the Romanizing Lutherans of the 19th century. The similarity to the views of 20th (or 21st) century Romanizing Lutherans within the LCMS will be very striking.

⁵ There is a sad irony in the reversal of the situation from the days of Pieper and today. Pieper tried to be understanding of good men like Hoefling, who ended up in the ditch on the left side of the road because he was trying to avoid the Romanizing ditch on the right.

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).

Carl Lawrenz: In contrast to Hoefling we hold on the basis of Scripture, that it is not the church but our divine Lord himself, who before the New Testament church was ever called into existence, took note of its future need, prophesying in advance that he would take care of it through the gift of the public ministry, that he has set forth the qualifications for this public ministry for us in his New Testament word and continues to give to his church men with all the needed talents required to carry out all the tasks of the public ministry (*WLQ*, 1982, p 132).

This We Believe, VII 8: We believe that God has also established the public ministry of the Word (Ephesians 4:11), and it is the will of God that the church, in accordance with good order (1 Corinthians 14:40), call qualified individuals into this public ministry (1 Timothy 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 9:14). Such individuals minister publicly, that is, not because as individuals they possess the universal priesthood but because they are asked to do this in the name of fellow Christians (Romans 10:15). These individuals are the called servants of Christ and ministers of the gospel. They are not to be lords over God’s church (1 Peter 5:3). We believe that when the church calls individuals into this public ministry, the Lord himself is acting through the church (Acts 20:28).

We see then that the ministry of the word comes to the pastor from Christ through the call of the church, to echo Walther’s classic way of putting it.

In other words, Luther’s teaching is that the public ministry is a special God-ordained way of practicing this one ministry of the gospel in the name of a group of Christians.

Luther: This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching or the ministry and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred on someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests (*LW* 13, p 332).

Luther: All Christians are priests in equal degree. For such passages as, “You are a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2 :9) and “You have made them a kingdom and priests” (Rev. 5 :10), I have sufficiently treated in other books. Mostly the functions of a priest are these: to teach, to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to baptize, to consecrate or administer the Eucharist, to bind and loose sins, to pray for others, to sacrifice, and to judge of all doctrine and spirits. Certainly these are splendid and royal duties. *But the first and foremost of all on which everything else depends, is the teaching of the Word of God.* For we teach with the Word, we consecrate with the Word, we bind and absolve sins by the Word, we baptize with the Word, we sacrifice with the Word, we judge all things by the Word. Therefore when we grant the Word to anyone, we cannot deny anything to him pertaining to the exercise of his priesthood. *This Word is the same for all*, as Isaiah says, “All your sons shall be taught by the Lord” (Isa. 54:131). They

Today we have to try to understand how some good men who are afraid of the Church Growth ditch on the left are ending in the Romanizing ditch on the right.

are taught by the Lord, who hear and learn from the Father, as Christ explains in John 6:45. And hearing is through the Word of Christ (Rom. 10:17) in order that the praise of Ps. 149:9 may be realized: “This is glory for all his faithful ones.” For whom? “Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to wreak vengeance on the nations and chastisement on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written” (Ps. 149:6f.).

The Christological View of the Ministry

In contrast to the biblical, confessional view of the ministry we find a Romanizing view,⁶ which is sometimes called the Christological or the embodiment or incarnational view.⁷ This view is called Christological because its interpretation of the ministry is heavily based on analogy to Christ rather than strictly on the *sedes*.

Though St. Paul’s prohibitions about women preachers settle the matter, they are not the starting point, Christ is. We start with the fatherhood of God, who gave up his Son, the sonship of Christ, and the husband and wife relationship of Christ the bridegroom and his bride the Church, the gender of Christ, and Christ’s choice of an all male apostolate. Once that is done, then the Pauline prohibitions will not be arbitrary but will make sense.⁸

Perhaps, this statement is ontologically true (the Trinity existed before marriage or the ministry), but it is not a valid rule for hermeneutics. This approach adopts the hermeneutical method rejected by the Lutheran confessors in their controversy with the Reformed concerning the Lord’s Supper. When the Reformed accused the Lutherans of basing their doctrine of the real presence of Christ’s body and blood on Christology, the Lutherans rejected this assertion and responded that they based their doctrine of the Lord’s Supper on the *sedes* for the Lord’s Supper, the accounts of the institution of the Holy Supper. In the same way, they based their Christology on the *sedes* for Christology. Since Scripture does not contradict itself, the resulting doctrines, not surprisingly, were found to support each other.⁹ In establishing every doctrine our starting point is the *sedes* for that doctrine, not analogy from other parts of Scripture. The analogical approach advocated by adherents of a so-called Christological ministry is similar to the *Schriftganze* approach which was followed by Walther’s opponents in the Election Controversy. It reflects a lack of confidence in the *sedes* as a basis for doctrine.¹⁰

⁶ “Romanizing” in the strict sense does not refer to a preference for liturgical forms which are retained or restored from the practice of the Roman, that is, the Western church. “Romanizing” here refers to a partial return to the *doctrine* of the Roman church. Romanizing in the loose sense (return to Roman forms) can, of course, be tied to Romanizing in the strict sense (return to Roman doctrine) as it was at the time of the Interims when accepting Roman vestments was a step toward apostasy. A fuller definition of the term Romanizing is provided in Appendix 2.

⁷ It is not wise to use the term “incarnational” in reference to the pastorate because “incarnation” is a technical term used in reference to the personal union of God and man in Christ. Only in Christ is God incarnate. To apply this term to any other man flirts with blasphemy. Further confusion is caused by the fact that the term “incarnational ministry” has already been adapted for the Church Growth concept that missionaries should become “incarnate” by adapting themselves to the life style of their target audience. Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. and Mayers, Marvin K., *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986. . See Hill, Harriet, “Incarnational Ministry: A Critical Examination,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 2, April, 1990, pp. 196-201.

⁸ *Motley Magpie*, March 2003 p 3.

⁹ Leonhard Hutter: It must be kept in mind that in this controversy about the Lord’s Supper not one but two different questions are being debated. One of these deals with the will and intention of Christ. Does he really in the Supper want to offer His body to be eaten and his blood to be drunk and thus want to be really present with his body and blood by means of the eucharistic bread and wine? Luther maintains, and we maintain with him, that the answer to this question is certainly to be sought nowhere else than in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper alone. The second question has to do with the power of Christ. Can he really be present with his body and blood in all the places where this sacrament is distributed? Where indeed will there be a stupid fellow who would maintain that the answer to these questions must be sought anywhere else than in the doctrine of the person of Christ (*Loci*, p 716).

¹⁰ See David Scaer, *LOGIA*, Reformation 1999, p 38. “Allowing only specific biblical prohibitions against women ministers to determine our position is a type of un-Lutheran biblicism that leaves us at the mercy of the interpreters.” How does this differ from

Another danger of this hermeneutical method is that it easily and almost inevitably leads to allegorizing which, for example, sees the sacraments in many passages in which the context gives no indication that they are the subject of discussion.

The so-called Christological hermeneutic reverses the biblical Lutheran hermeneutic. The Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper is based on the *sedes*, but it agrees with Christology. The Lutheran doctrine of the ministry is based on the *sedes* for ministry, and it agrees with Christology and theology. The Christological hermeneutic as expressed above reverses the proper order and places the *sedes* in a secondary position.

The so-called Christological view of the ministry draws a parallelism between Christ and the pastor which goes beyond Scripture.

The pastor stands "in the stead of Christ" in an iconic relationship to the Great Servant. He speaks Christ's word, not his own. He speaks Christ's absolution, not his own. He distributes Christ's body and blood, not his own. He gives Life to the Bride, because Christ permits life to flow through his lowly minister, and flow it does. Just as the heavenly Bridegroom gives life, so his stand-in gives Life [sic 2x].¹¹

It is true that the pastor speaks Christ's word not his own. He speaks Christ's absolution, not his own. He distributes Christ's body and blood, not his own. But there is no scriptural basis for the claim that he serves as an icon of Christ in a way that ordinary Christians do not. On the contrary, according to Scripture every Christian bears the image (*eikon*) of Christ.

Colossians 3:10 [You] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

1 Corinthians 15:49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

2 Peter 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

In scriptural terminology every Christian is becoming an "icon" of Christ. Every Christian is a partaker of the divine nature. There is no biblical basis for asserting that the pastor is an icon or even a type of Christ in a way different from every other Christian. In the Old Testament the priest had to serve as a physical type of the one great High Priest (Lv 21:17-21), as did the worshippers to a lesser extent (Dt 23:1). There are no requirements for such typology in the New Testament. The pastor does not need to represent Christ's body. The Body (embodiment) of Christ is the whole church, not just the pastor. To give the pastor the special functions of the Old Testament priest is a Romanizing trait.

It is true that the sufferings of the apostles were a continuation of the suffering of Christ, but the same is true of the suffering of every Christian.

Philippians 1:20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Galatians 6:17: Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

Acts 9:4 Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

the Roman arguments against the clarity of Scripture and the *sola scriptura*? One of the chief (and most objectionable) traits of Romanizing is the tendency to rely on statements of the teachers of the church rather than on Scripture.

¹¹ Motley Magpie, *ibid*.

Matthew 25:40 I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

There is no biblical basis for the proposed iconic relationship. In theological language “icon” refers to an image that not only pictures but is revered as the visual presentation of the one to be worshipped. A dictionary definition of “icon” is “a person or thing that is uncritically adored, revered or admired, or is regarded as a symbol of a particular culture or sphere, etc; an idol.” Why would a Lutheran pastor want to use such a term of himself?

It is also difficult to understand how the statement, “*Just as the heavenly Bridegroom gives life, so his stand-in gives Life*” can be understood in a way that is not blasphemous. “It is a horrible saying to assign as much importance to the work of a priest as to Christ’s death” (Ap XXIV (XII) 89). Jesus said, “He that hears you, hears me.” The words that the pastor speaks are indeed “spirit and life.” But it is from the means of grace that Life and life flow. But even the Romanists in their wildest fancies do not say that Mary gives life or Life just as Christ does. Why would a Lutheran pastor want to say that a pastor gives life (or Life) just as Christ does? Why go beyond Scripture in such a dangerous way? I don’t understand this.¹²

As an example of the terrible consequences of this view when it is applied in a consistent way and carried to its logical conclusion, I will contrast the views of Douglas Fusselman, an advocate of a Christological embodiment view, with the views of Luther.¹³ Compare Fusselman’s views also with Pieper’s definition of Romanizing which we have considered above.

The Office

Fusselman’s view is summarized by a supporter of this view of the ministry:

Because of the Lutheran christological understanding of the Office of the Public Ministry and because this office specifically involves the preaching of the Word and the administering of the Sacraments, other areas of service in the Church cannot be seen as additional “forms” along with the pastoral office. This necessary divinely-instituted office is specifically the pastoral office, because the pastor functions “in the stead and by the command” of Christ. To those He sent out to teach the Gospel, Christ said, “He that heareth you heareth me...” (Luke 10:16). Thus, the pastor represents *Christ, who is in, with, and under the Office of the Public Ministry*. Because of this christological view of the pastoral office, this office is not only the highest office but also the *one* divinely instituted public office in contrast to other offices in the Church. There is a distinction between a layman performing a churchly act and a clergyman performing the act of his office. *The pastor is an instrument of Christ’s presence* when he performs the functions of Christ’s Office according to Christ’s commands. *Apart from the Office, Christ is not acting in the Ministering Office.*¹⁴

Comment: The words “in, with, and under” are well understood as technical terms for the real, bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament. Is this what “christological” “embodied” pastors are claiming for themselves? Are they means of grace like the Lord’s Supper? Is the body of Christ present in them as it is in the elements of the Sacrament? How sharply this contrasts with the view of Luther.

¹² Appendix 4 discusses a related issue, the fondness for such titles as Reverend Father.

¹³ Douglas Fusselman, “Only Playing Church?” Internet, <http://members.aol.com/SemperRef/playing.html>. This essay was presented at the Second Annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) in May 1992. It was also published in the Epiphany/January 1994 issue of LOGIA. There are minor differences between the versions. Page references are to the LOGIA version. See also the Epiphany 97 issue of LOGIA, p 28-32. Fusselman is a 1982 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Naturally, not all pastors who are attracted to some aspects of the so-called Christological view would agree with all of Fusselman’s views.

¹⁴ “Scriptural Doctrine of the Ministry vs WELS Doctrine of the Ministry: The History of a Heresy,” posted by Immanuel Congregation in Steeden, Germany.

Luther: Here we take our stand: There is no other Word of God than that which is given all Christians to proclaim. There is no other baptism than the one which any Christian can bestow. There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which any Christian can observe and which Christ has instituted. There is no other kind of sin than that which any Christian can bind or loose. There is no other sacrifice than of the body of every Christian. No one but a Christian can pray. No one but a Christian may judge of doctrine. These make the priestly and royal office (*LW* 40, p 34-35).

Fusselman: This Divine/human ecclesiastical presence is identifiable—for Christ has chosen to approach His people in a transrational way, under earthly elements. One such place in which Christ is present is in the Sacrament of the Altar. In *Apology XIII* Melancthon identified the Office of the Ministry as another place in which Christ's presence is encountered: "The Church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it." Christ's presence in the Church is not ethereal but real. Congregations are obliged to give concrete embodiment to this presence by appointing ministers. *The minister then functions as the means and instrument through which Christ Himself personally does His work in His Church.* The Pastor does not function in the place of a Christ who is far removed from His people; on the contrary, Christ is personally present in the local congregation in, with, and under the person of the appointed minister....It is precisely this mystical union of Christ's Office and Christ's Divine/human presence that is described in *Apology VII & VIII* (p 44).

Fusselmann: The Minister does not act as a private individual but, "because of the church's call," functions as the earthly element through which Christ Himself is speaking to and working among His own people. The congregation does not simply hear Jesus' words coming out of the Pastor's mouth like one person reading a speech written by another. The congregation hears Jesus! He is present as speaker and actor. The Minister is only the means or instrument through which Jesus personally does His work in His Church (p 45).

Fusselmann: The layperson might correctly perform churchly acts, but in such actions *he/she alone is the actor.* When the Cleric performs these same acts in the Office, *Christ Himself is the actor.* This important distinction can influence the efficacy of the divinely instituted actions (p 45).

Comment: Coming from Lutheran lips, these statements are so shocking that no comment is needed. They speak for themselves. They condemn themselves.

Application to Absolution

Fusselman: The lay/Clergy distinction is nowhere more commonly understood than in the concept of absolution. The Minister, by virtue of the Office, is able to deliver "indicative-operative absolution" in the first person singular: "I forgive you all your sins..." Christ is here personally addressing the penitent through the instrument of the Pastor—the penitent truly encounters Christ. *If a member of the laity should speak in this manner, the offered forgiveness would be considered as coming from the absolving individual rather than from the only begotten Son of the Father.* The laity can deliver *Divine* pardon only in the third person singular: "God forgives you all your sins." While it cannot be demonstrated that one form of absolution is always or necessarily preferable to the other, it can be demonstrated that the two absolutions are not identical. The Office is the difference (p 45).

Comment: *horrible dictu*

Luther: But *this office of the keys belongs to all of us who are Christians,* as I have so often proved and shown in my books against the pope. For the word of Christ in Matt. 18:15 is addressed not only to the Apostles, but, certainly, to all the brethren: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault ... if he listens to you, you have gained your brother." And, further on, "If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 18:17, 18).

We need *pay no attention* to the bogey man of these masqueraders *when they distinguish between the power of the keys and the use of the keys*, a distinction based on no Scripture but on their own recklessness alone. As usual they beg the question. For when it is incumbent on them to show that they have a power different from that given the whole church, they rush on as if this were already demonstrated, and then go on to this fictitious distinction that the power of the keys belongs to the church, their use, however, to the bishops. This is trifling, and the argument has nothing to support it. *Christ gives both the power and the use of the keys to each Christian*, when he says, “Let him be to you as a Gentile” (Matt. 18:17) (LW 40, p 26).

Luther: So the lies of men are of no avail. The keys belong to the church and to each of its members, both as regards their authority and their various uses. Otherwise we do violence to the words of Christ, in which he speaks to all without qualification or limitation (LW 40, p 27).

Luther: Here we take our stand. . . . There is no other kind of sin than that which any Christian can bind or loose (LW 40, p 34-35).

Comment: Luther very clearly says lay Christians have the right to use the keys with authority given to them by Christ. It is shocking to hear some Lutherans say that pastors absolve by the authority of Christ but laypeople only by their own authority.

The Lutheran position on the keys is further illustrated by this statement, which first appeared in the Large Catechism in 1529. It does not appear in the 1580 Book of Concord.

To begin with, I have said that, in addition to the confession that we are discussing here [presumably confession to the pastor, though it is never explicitly stated], there are two other kinds, which have an even greater right to be called the common confession of Christians. I refer to the practice of confessing to God alone or to our neighbor alone, asking for forgiveness. These two kinds are included in the Lord’s Prayer when we say, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,’ etc. Indeed, the entire Lord’s Prayer is nothing else than such a confession. For what is our prayer but a confession that we neither have nor do what we ought and a plea for grace and a joyful conscience? This kind of confession should and must take place continuously as long as we live. For this is the essence of a genuinely Christian life, to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace.

Similarly the second confession, which all Christians make toward their neighbor, is also included in the Lord’s Prayer. We are to confess our guilt before one another and forgive one another before we come to God and ask for forgiveness. Now, all of us are debtors to one another, therefore we should and we may confess publicly in everyone’s presence, no one being afraid of anyone else. For it is true, as the proverb says, “If one person is upright, so are they all”, no one behaves toward God or the neighbor as he or she ought. However, besides the sum total of our sin, there are also individual ones, when a person has provoked someone else to anger and needs to ask for pardon. Thus we have in the Lord’s Prayer a twofold absolution: both our sins against God and against our neighbors are forgiven when we forgive our neighbors and become reconciled with them.

Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession that takes place privately before a single brother or sister. This comes into play when some particular issue weighs on us or attacks us, eating away at us until we can have no peace nor find ourselves sufficiently strong in faith. Then we may at any time and as often as we wish lay our troubles before a brother or sister, seeking advice, comfort, and strength. This type of confession is not included in the commandment like the other two but is left to all to use whenever they need it. *Thus by divine ordinance Christ himself has placed absolution in the mouths of his Christian community and commanded us to absolve one another from sins [Matthew 18:15-19].* So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires comfort, it has here a sure refuge where it finds and hears God’s Word because through a human being God looses and absolves from sin (The Large Catechism, Kolb-Wengert edition of the BOC, p 477-78).

Application to the Word

Fusselman: It is not suggested here that the written Word is without effect. The point is that *the Word proclaimed by the Pastor is MORE effective than that read by the laity*. How could Luther (with Walther's blessing) make such a contention?¹⁵ This statement is difficult—if not impossible—to explain unless reading words *about* Jesus is somehow different from hearing words *from* Jesus. In that case, the Office is once again the difference (p 46).

Luther: Here we take our stand: There is no other Word of God than that which is given all Christians to proclaim (*LW* 40, p 34).

Luther: Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian has the right and the duty to teach, instruct, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever it is necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other. Certainly one Christian may instruct and admonish another ignorant or weak Christian concerning the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. And *he who receives such instruction is also under obligation to accept it as God's Word* and publicly to confess it (*LW* 13, p 333).

Application to the Lord's Supper

Fusselman: Christ's body and blood would be present under the elements even though administered by the devil himself if two basic requirements were satisfied: if the Sacrament was celebrated in accordance with the Divine command; *and* if the devil held the Office of the Ministry through which Christ personally functions. The Office—and not the person who fills it—is a most important consideration in determining sacramental efficacy (p 47).

Luther: The third function is to consecrate or to administer the sacred bread and wine. Here those in the order of the shorn [Catholic priests] vaunt themselves and set themselves up as rulers of a power given neither to angels nor the virgin mother. Unmoved by their senselessness *we hold that this function, too, like the priesthood, belongs to all*, and this we assert, not on our own authority, but that of Christ who at the Last Supper said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). This is the word by means of which the shorn papists claim they can make priests and give them the authority to consecrate. But Christ spoke this word to all those then present and to those who in the future would be at the table, to eat this bread and drink this cup. So it follows that what is given here is given to all. Those who oppose this have no foundation on which to stand, except the fathers, the councils, tradition, and that strongest article of their faith, namely, "We are many and thus we hold: therefore it is true." A further witness is the word of Paul in I Cor. 11 :23, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," etc. Here *Paul addresses all the Corinthians, making each of them, as he himself was, consecrators* (*LW* 40, p 24).

Luther: A woman can baptize and administer the Word of life by which sin is taken away, eternal death abolished, the prince of the world cast out, heaven bestowed; in short by which the divine majesty pours itself forth through all the soul. Meanwhile this miracle-working priest changes the nature of the bread, but by no other or greater word or power, and it has no other effect than that it increases his awe and

¹⁵ In *Kirche und Amt*, C.F.W. Walther quoted Luther on this issue. "Indeed, many blurt out and say: 'Why do we need more pastors and ministers, since we can read [the Bible] ourselves at home?'" So they go their way in carnal security, and do not read it at home. Or even if they do read it at home, it is neither as fruitful nor as effective as the Word is efficacious when it is publicly proclaimed by the mouth of the pastor whom God has called and appointed to preach and teach it to you." Here the issue is a scornful attitude toward public preaching.

admiration before his own dignity and power. Is not this to make an elephant out of a fly? What wonder workers! *In despising the power of the Word they make marvelous their own power* (LW 40, p 25).

Luther: Here we take our stand: ... There is no other baptism than the one which any Christian can bestow. There is no other remembrance of the Lord's Supper than that which any Christian can observe and which Christ has instituted. There is no other kind of sin than that which any Christian can bind or loose. There is no other sacrifice than of the body of every Christian. No one but a Christian can pray. No one but a Christian may judge of doctrine. These make the priestly and royal office (LW 40, p 34-35).

Comment: Luther clearly says the Lord's Supper belongs to the whole church. He makes the bold statement that all are consecrators. He did not believe that laypeople should officiate at the Lord's Supper since they had no call to do so. He, however, strongly warns pastors against the popish notion that the privilege of consecrating the Lord's Supper is a right and power given through ordination that sets them above or apart from God's people.¹⁶ If Lutheran pastors say that the Word and sacraments have greater power when administered by them than by a common layman, what is this, if not "despising the power of the Word and making marvelous their own power."

Ordination and the Office

As demonstrated by Fusselman, those with Romanizing views raise questions about the relationship of ordination to the conferring of the public office.

Ordination" (that is, laying on of hands) is frequently referred to in Scripture. This laying on of hands is not limited to pastors.¹⁷ There is no specific command in the New Testament concerning either the nature or the necessity of a rite of ordination for all pastors. There is no record of where or how the apostles were ordained or even if they were ordained.

Smalcald Articles, Tractate, 70, p 524: And this also *a most common custom of the church* testifies. For formerly the people elected pastors and bishops. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring one, who confirmed the one elected by the laying on of hands, and ordination was nothing else than such a ratification.

Chemnitz: Therefore, although ordination does not make the call, yet, if someone has been legitimately called, then that ceremony is a *declaration and public confirmation that the call which preceded it is legitimate* (*Loci*, Pt III, Ch IV, Sect I, p 137; Preus translation, II, p 705).

Apology XIII, p 310, 11-12 But if ordination be understood as applying to the ministry of the Word, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises (Ro 1:16, Is 55:11)¹⁸....¹²¹ If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For the church has the command to appoint ministers, which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in the ministry [German: God will preach and work through men and those chosen by men].

Chemnitz: This reminder must, however, be added, that the *rite of ordination must be distinguished from the ceremony of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for ordination is not a sacrament in the same way as Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. The difference is plain. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are means or instruments through which God applies and seals the promise of reconciliation or forgiveness.... There is therefore a difference between the promises which are added to ordination and those which are added to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Besides, there is also a difference in the ceremony or external rite. For in Baptism and the Lord's Supper the Son of God Himself prescribed and commanded a certain external element, a certain ceremony or rite. In ordination, however, such as we now understand it, Christ Himself

¹⁶ See Appendix 2 for another version of the Romanizing view of the ministry.

¹⁷ See *WLQ* Fall 1995, p 267-269.

¹⁸ Note that the ministry of the Word here is not the pastoral office but the gospel as the cited Bible passages clearly indicate.

applied an external sign just once, when on the day of his resurrection He breathed on his disciples (John 20:22). He did not, however, add a command that the church should imitate that rite of breathing upon the ministers at their ordination. Now the ministry of the Word and the sacraments has divine promises, and the prayer at ordination rests on these, but *these promises are not to be tied to the rite of the imposition of hands*, about which there is neither a command of Christ nor such a promise as there is about Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This reminder must be added, because the papalists contend that ordination is truly and properly a sacrament of the New Testament, just as are Baptism and the Lord's Supper (*Examination*, II, Ninth Topic, Section III, Kramer translation p 694-695).

Some Lutherans have fallen into a Romanizing view of ordination.

Grabau and the Buffalo Synod: Ordination is a part of the divine ordinance by which a person is legitimately taken into the ministry ("3rd Synodical Report, p 7).

David Scaer (LCMS): I personally find it very difficult to designate as a human rite or adiaphoron any ceremony in which God is the Giver and the Holy Spirit is the recipient [sic], which can only be administered under certain stringent conditions, which carries with it a threat, which makes the acting participant in the rite responsible for the activities of the recipient of the rite, and which gives the recipient a gift which remains (*Ordination: Divine Rite or Human Ordinance*, p 12).

SELK: In ordination, the ordinand receives the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands to equip him for ministry. This petitioned gift is effectively given, not simply prayed for (*LOGIA X 3*, p 23).

Adolf Hoenecke responds: Many Lutherans walk in the footsteps of the papacy when they take away from the church the right to call and have the preacher become a preacher through ordination as a sacrament, not through the call. That is what they do when...to a greater or lesser degree, they ascribe to ordination decisive importance and efficacy, so only through ordination does anyone become a pastor. Their reason is that the office actually rest with the incumbents of the office, and thus they are the ones who confer it on the called person. In this connection several go so far as to attribute to ordination sacramental value and the effect of impressing on the recipient a permanent mark (*ELD*, IV, p 204).

Franz Pieper: Astounding things are taught about ordination within visible Christendom. Rome asserts there is no other way of becoming a "priest" than through ordination received from a bishop created by the Pope. ...The Episcopalians, needless to say, omit the Pope. ... Also Romanizing Lutherans, who refuse to concede that the call extended by a congregation makes a man a minister, but conceive of the ministry as a 'distinct Christian order' which perpetuates itself by conferring the office on new members at their initiation, naturally declare ordination to be a divine ordinance (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p 454-456).

Conclusion

How then should the pastor regard himself? How should he be regarded by members of the congregation?

2 Corinthians 4:5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

1 Corinthians 4:1,6 So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. ⁶ Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.

1 Corinthians 3:5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

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.

2 Corinthians 1:24 Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1 Corinthians 3:20-21 All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

Notice how different the line of representation/delegation is in the last passage (God to Christ to congregation to pastor) from the so-called Christological order (God to Christ to pastor). The pastor belongs to the congregation, not the congregation to the pastor. When Paul wants to urge Christians to honor their pastors, he says to hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. He does not say to revere them as the embodiment of Christ.

It is unnecessary and futile to try to build respect for the ministers of the gospel and for the means of grace by creating an iconic pastor without support of Scripture. We cannot raise esteem for the pastoral office by seeking more honorific titles or more exalted liturgical forms or more elaborate clerical garb. When we set forth the biblical doctrines of the means of grace and of the stewardship of the means of grace entrusted to pastors, that is all that is needed to promote both proper self-esteem for pastors and proper esteem from the congregation toward the pastor.

We need to drive down the middle of the road between two ditches, or putting it more prosaically, we need to keep a balance between two proper emphases. On the one hand, we do not want to over-exalt the priesthood of believers to the detriment of respect for the pastoral ministry. But we need to remember that disrespect for the public ministry is not a result of a proper emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. It is the result of the misunderstanding and misuse of the doctrine of the priesthood of believers. On the other hand, we do not want to undercut or deny the role and the rights of the church in the calling of pastors as a result of a misguided effort to brace up the ministry with Romanizing props. Pastors come from Christ through the church. To have a balanced view of the ministry we must emphasize both the from Christ and the through the church.

Luther never confused the private exercise of the ministry of the Word which belonged to all believers with the public exercise of the ministry of the Word by the called and ordained ministers of the Word. He strongly emphasized that no one should take up any public ministry of the Word without the proper qualifications and call. A writing of Luther that strongly emphasizes this point is “Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers” (*LW* 40, p 383ff). This work should be read along with “Concerning the Ministry” for a balanced presentation of Luther’s whole teaching on this subject.¹⁹

Luther always maintained the essential oneness of the ministry. “For a difference in public or in private use of the kind of fruits does not prove that it is a different function or priesthood, but means only another function and

¹⁹ Romanizing Lutherans often try to hide their departure from Luther’s view with the claim that his anti-romanizing comments were from early writings and that his later writings against the enthusiasts show his true views.

another use of the same priesthood” (*LW* 40, p 34). The WELS statement on ministry simply echos this statement of Luther when it says, “The public ministry is not generically different from that of the common priesthood of all Christians.” According to both Scripture and Luther, the priesthood of believers and the public ministry belong to the same genus, namely, “ministry of the Word.” The same means of grace and spiritual privileges belong to both. It has sometimes been claimed that WELS writers such as August Pieper and J. P. Koehler devised a new doctrine of the ministry, which was a departure from the previous views of the Lutheran church. A reading of Luther’s writing on the subject makes it clear that if there is a valid criticism which can be made against Pieper and Koehler, it is that they too exactly copied Luther’s teaching as expressed in “Concerning the Ministry” and his other works. Those who reject the WELS position on the ministry should honestly acknowledge that it is the position of Luther (and Walther) which they are rejecting.²⁰

A Pastor’s Joy and Confidence

It is certainly a great thing to be able to give new life to a dead baby with water and words. It is certainly a marvel that after you speak a few words Christ’s body and blood are present in the Sacrament. What awesome power to be able to forgive sins. When the first pastors²¹ returned from their first mission, they were amazed and joyful that their power was so great that even the demons of hell submitted to them in Jesus’ name. Jesus, however, sobered them with these words, “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10: 20). “Your names are written in heaven.” When Lutheran pastors need joy and confidence to sustain them and give them courage for their work, these words are enough: “Your names are written in heaven.” Not “you can absolve,” “you can baptize,” “you can consecrate,” but “your names are written in heaven.”

²⁰ On the rejection of Walther by Missourians who hold a different view of the ministry see Appendix 5.

²¹ The Lutheran Confessions sometimes connect the establishing of the pastoral ministry with the sending of the Seventy[-two] rather than with the calling, sending, or permanent commissioning of the apostles.

Appendix 1: Statements of Luther concerning Women and the Ministry

Luther makes some rather striking statements about the ministry and ministerial acts of women.

Luther: The second function, to baptize, they themselves [the Roman Catholics] have by usage allowed in cases of necessity even to ordinary women, so that it is hardly regarded any more as a sacramental function. Whether they wish or not, we deduce from their own logic that all Christians, and they alone, even women, are priests, without tonsure and episcopal “character.” For in baptizing we proffer the life-giving Word of God, which renews souls and redeems from death and sins. To baptize is incomparably greater than to consecrate bread and wine, for it is the greatest office in the church—the proclamation of the Word of God. So when women baptize, they exercise the function of priesthood legitimately, and do it not as a private act, but as a part of the public ministry of the church which belongs only to the priesthood (*LW* 40, p 23).

Luther: A woman can baptize and administer the Word of life by which sin is taken away, eternal death abolished, the prince of the world cast out, heaven bestowed; in short by which the divine majesty pours itself forth through all the soul. Meanwhile this miracle-working priest changes the nature of the bread, but by no other or greater word or power, and it has no other effect than that it increases his awe and admiration before his own dignity and power. Is not this to make an elephant out of a fly? What wonder workers! In despising the power of the Word *they make marvelous their own power.* (*LW* 40, p 25)

Comment: Luther clearly says “ministry of the Word” is done by women. Luther’s point is that the Romanists despised baptism and made a false distinction when they said anyone can baptize, while at the same time reserving the rule of the Lord’s Supper to their ordained priests. We would not call baptisms performed by women “public ministry” as Luther did, since we use the term “public ministry” only in reference to people who have received a distinct public call. Luther’s point in calling such a baptism “a public ministry” seems to be that the child has entered the church through the baptism performed by the woman. The church accepts this baptism performed by a woman as its own and does not rebaptize the child as it would have to do if there were something missing from the baptism performed by a woman.

Luther: You must not say, “This is a man or a woman....” They are all priests. All may proclaim God’s Word, except that, as Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 14:34, women should not speak in the congregation. They should let the men preach, because God commands them to be obedient to their husbands. God does not interfere with the arrangement. But he makes no distinction in the matter of authority. If, however, only women were present and no men, as in nunneries, then one of the women might be authorized to preach (*LW* 30:55).

Luther: Therefore order, discipline, and respect demand that women keep silent when men speak; but if no man were to preach, then it would be necessary for the women to preach. For this reason we are firmly convinced on the basis of Holy Scriptures that there is not more than one office of preaching God’s Word, and that this office is common to all Christians (*LW* 36:152).

Walther: Women as well as men, young as well as old—all Christians are spiritual priests and teachers of the word (Sermon: “Bringing Souls to Christ,” 1842; English in *Missio Apostolica* 6, 1998, p 13).

Appendix 2: A Question About Romanizing Lutherans

Recently we have been hearing about Romanizing Lutherans and a revival of their views within the Lutheran Church today. What are these views and where are they showing up? Is there any scriptural basis for this position and if not, where did this doctrine originate?

The Romanist view of the ministry claims that a man can become a priest only through ordination conferred by a bishop who is under the leadership of the pope. The pope and the bishops have received their “character” through a continuous line of ordinations back to the apostles. This idea of apostolic succession is followed by the Orthodox Churches and the Episcopal Church (Church of England) but without the pope. The ELCA has agreed to re-establish apostolic succession with the help of the Episcopal Church and the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

This tendency to rely on hierarchical bishops began already in the second century of the church’s history, but there is no support for it in Scripture. The “bishops” or “overseers” (*episkopoi*) in the New Testament are pastors or overseers of congregations not territorial bishops exercising authority over other pastors. Christ has given the right to call pastors to the church (that is, to the congregations), not to a hierarchy. One becomes a pastor through the call of the church, not through the laying on of hands by a bishop. It is our tradition that our pastors are ordained by other pastors, but there is no need for a succession of bishops. Real “apostolic succession” is to follow the doctrine of the apostles.

How then does the view of Romanizing Lutherans derive from, yet differ from the Romanist view? As noted above, the Roman Catholic church maintains that the ministry (priesthood) depends on apostolic succession passed on through the pope and bishops and given through ordination. Romanizing Lutherans base the ministry on a succession of pastors back to the apostles (without the pope and usually without bishops, and often without much concern to demonstrate an unbroken line of transmission), and they see ordination as a means of conferring the ministry rather than as a rite confirming that the ministry has been given through the call of the church.

The term “Romanizing Lutherans” came to prominence as a label for Walther’s opponents in the controversies over the doctrine of the ministry during the 19th century. The term “Romanizing Lutherans” is explained by both Adolf Hoenecke and Franz Pieper in their dogmatics. Both of them supported Walther in his dispute with the Romanizing Lutherans (especially Grabau and Loehe). See Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, IV, p 204-207, 214-215, and Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, III, p 447-448, 454-459. Excerpts are quoted above in the body of the essay.

The traits of Romanizing Lutherans which they list include the following:

- 1) 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.
- 2) taking away from the church the right to call and having the preacher become a preacher through ordination as a sacrament,
- 3) 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),
- 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,
- 6) believers might see themselves with their spiritual needs referred not so much to Word and Sacrament as rather to the minister divinely privileged to administer and distribute them.

Frequent corollaries of the Romanizing view are the tendency to rely on church authorities rather than on the clear words of Scripture. There is a tendency toward an allegorizing approach to Scripture. Romanizing Lutherans also tend to exalt the Lord’s Supper above the other means of grace as the center of worship and Christian life. Romanizing views of the ministry and the Sacrament usually go together. There is a tendency to insist on or to strongly encourage certain liturgical forms from the “catholic tradition.”

When people begin to look to the ministry or the minister as a means of preserving orthodoxy more than to the Word, which is the source of strength for the ministry, it is not too shocking to see the sad spectacle of some Lutheran pastors making the dreary pilgrimage back to Rome, Constantinople, or Canterbury, the very churches in which the ministry has so shamefully betrayed the Word. The most extreme result of the Romanizing view of the ministry occurs when Romanizers become Romanists, as has happened in several high profile cases in recent years.

Though this Romanizing view is a rejection of the view Walther contended for, it is appearing in some elements of the Missouri Synod and her sister churches with increasing frequency. See the statements in the section concerning ordination above in the body of the essay and Appendix 5 below.

The Apostles and Other Pastors

The apostles are distinguished from all other ministers of the gospel by being given the special title of Apostle by Jesus, by having a unique role as a foundation of the church, by being assigned a special role as leaders of Israel, and by being specially designated witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. They are distinguished from subsequent ministers of the gospel by a direct call from Christ, by the special gifts of healing and power over demons, and by the gift of inspiration. These gifts were, however, shared with contemporaries of the apostles, who were in direct contact with Christ or the apostles. With the possible exception of Ananias, only the apostles were able to give these gifts to others. The apostles had a special calling as world missionaries. We have a detailed account of how that calling was fulfilled for only one apostle, Paul. We do not know if the other apostles were missionaries-at-large or whether they had territorial assignments from Christ, from the church, or by mutual agreement (*WLQ* Summer 1995, p 176).

Appendix 3: A second example of a Romanizing view of the Ministry from the SELK, the LCMS's sister church in Germany.

"Office of the Church: An Orientation" by the theological commission of SELK (1995), *LOGIA*, Holy Trinity 2001, X 3, p 17-30.

[Christ] himself calls into this office even today through his church by the rite of ordination (20).

He irreversibly takes the office-holder with his whole life for this charge (20).

The apostles transferred their apostolic commission to specific select members of the congregations. Thus the office of the church is an extension of the apostolic ministry.... (20).

Next to and apart from this commanded continuation of the apostolic commission, other and different gifts (*charismata*), services (*diakonia*), and activities (*energeia*), appeared in the congregations from the beginning (20).

This excludes any derivation of this ministry from the congregation and her own particular services, gifts, and activities (20).

The gospel and the sacraments do not come from the congregation. The congregation gathers around goods that are "alien" to her (21).

The office of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments comes from the ambassadorial commissioning of the Lord Christ (21).

In ordination, the ordinand receives the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands to equip him for ministry. This petitioned gift is effectively given, not simply prayed for (23).

I suggest you read this document in its entirety as evidence of the danger of the Christological view.

Appendix 4: A Young Man's Question About Titles in the Church

I have heard that some congregation leaders are calling themselves "Reverend Father" I am curious as to why they would be doing this? I realize this question's answer is an opinion and am not strictly looking for the truth. However, that would be the ultimate goal. I am, however, as a youth of this synod, looking for another more experienced perhaps more educated opinion. A reply would be wonderfully and prayerfully appreciated.

Jesus summarizes the attitude we should have toward titles in the church in Matthew 23:7-12.

“[The Pharisees] love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers.⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.¹⁰ Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant.¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

Jesus warns against a love for honorary titles in the church, in which all Christians are brothers and sisters. In their letters the apostles often refer to their office (Paul often introduces himself as “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus”), but they do not refer to themselves by honorary titles, though such titles were common in their society.

It is not titles in themselves that are a problem, but the attitude that underlies them. Paul can call himself a father to those who came to faith through his preaching. When he speaks this way, he is expressing the bond of love between Paul and the Corinthians and the zeal with which he cared for them. He does not say that all pastors are a father to them in the same way that he was, since he was the man whom the Lord used to bring them to faith.

1 Corinthians 4:15: Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

Paul had a father's love and concern for the Corinthians. Paul could refer to his apostolic authority when it was appropriate to do so, but his emphasis was on being a faithful servant of Christ who declared to them the whole will of God. He was concerned that his hearers would submit to God's authority not to his. Paul told the Thessalonians:

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you,⁷ but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children....¹¹ For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children,¹² encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (1 Thessalonians 2:6-12).

If “father” is a title lovingly and thankfully offered and humbly received, it could be good. If it is expected or demanded as evidence of rank or superiority, it would be bad. Many Lutherans feel uncomfortable with the title “Father” because of its use in hierarchical churches like the Roman Catholic church. It can easily reflect the attitude which Jesus warns us against in Matthew 23, “Do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.” When the pope is called the Holy Father, this has connotations of his hierarchical rule over the church.

Similar concerns can also be raised about the title “Reverend” which we often use in formal address. According to the dictionary on my desk “reverend” means “worthy of or entitled to reverence, honor, respect, veneration, or adoration.” Certainly the pastoral office and those who hold it should receive honor and respect, but the words “revere” and “reverend” often have connotations that go beyond that.

You asked for an opinion, so I will offer you mine. I have never cared for the titles “Reverend” or “Father” for the reasons outlined above, but I do not make a big point of telling someone not to call me that. Occasionally at the door of the church someone will call me “Father” and I don't jump in and correct him, but if there is a suitable occasion, I tell them I prefer pastor. I also have worked in a church body in our fellowship in which the people do not customarily address their pastors by any title, but only by their names. I have not noticed that they have any less respect for the ministry than

members do where some title is customary. So what is important is not so much the title in and of itself but the attitude which lies behind it.

All that being said, if a title is going to be used, many or, I believe, most of our pastors prefer “pastor” which simply means “shepherd.” It has scriptural precedent and reminds the pastor of the attitude he should have—he is a servant under Christ the chief Shepherd. He is to care for the flock even if it means sacrificing himself for the flock. He is not there to be served, but to serve. If he understands that and puts it into practice, he will have the respect of God’s faithful people. The specific title he has will not be that important.

When Paul faced the problem of disrespectful members in the congregation at Corinth, he addressed the problem by reminding them of the calling he had from God and that their disrespect for him and his message was disrespect for God. This is the best way for us to address this problem when it occurs in our churches today.

Appendix 5: Walther and Romanizing Lutherans

“Romanizing Lutherans” was the name given to Walther’s opponents in the church and ministry controversies of the 19th century. It is somewhat surprising then that the Romanizing Lutheran movement in the USA has found such a foothold in the Missouri Synod (that ELCA has a similar party is less surprising). Some years ago it was considered far-fetched when WELS writers claimed that their view on church and ministry was the same as that of Walther and that it was the LCMS that had departed from Walther’s view. Now LCMS defenders of a Romanizing view of ministry have begun to distance themselves from Walther. Since Walther’s writings are now much more available in English, it is becoming clearer to more people in the LCMS that their view is not the view of Walther, but rather the view of Walther’s adversaries, Grabau and Loehe.

Not all of the following theologians are necessarily defenders of a Romanizing view like the one we are discussing here. They are simply cited as examples of the growing tendency of LCMS theologians to disavow Walther on the issue of church and ministry.

In an article in the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Norman Nagel, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, criticized Walther’s position on ordination, stating that in a couple of instances Walther falls short of confessing all that is given on ordination in the Lutheran Confessions.²² Adherents of this view often try to minimize their departure from Walther by claiming that Walther’s errors are only “slight missteps” which were magnified by later writers such as John H.C. Fritz, who in his *Pastoral Theology* makes ordination nothing more than a pastor’s first installation into a field of ministry.

Daniel Johnson goes much further and implies a kinship between Walther’s view and the views of Schleiermacher. He claims that Walther’s view was a political compromise with a rabid faction of the congregation.²³ He acknowledges that Walther’s view would permit the recognition of the school teacher’s office as part of the ministry of the Word. He admits, “When Walther’s Ministry Thesis VII is pushed to its logical conclusion...then everyone is seen as a minister.” Johnson also appears to endorse the views of Fusselman which are summarized above, in the body of the essay. Johnson sees both Walther and Löhe as partly right and partly wrong, but it is clear in whose direction Johnson is moving.

Very similar views were expressed by Lowell Green in an earlier issue of LOGIA.²⁴ Green moves from Walther toward Grabau. Again there is an insinuation of concerning influence of Schleiermacher on Walther’s view. Franz Pieper is also given a share of the blame for the deterioration of Missouri’s doctrine for being too accepting of Walther’s notion that the administration of the means of grace is delegated to the pastor by the congregation.

²² Norman E. Nagel. “The Divine Call in *Die Rechte Gestalt* of C.F.W. Walther” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 59 (1995) no. 3:161-190.

²³ “The Ministry and the Schoolmaster,” LOGIA, Holy Trinity 1997, p 13-22 including the notes, esp. 1,3, 17. See the defense of Walther in *WLQ*, Fall 1998, p 290.

²⁴ LOGIA, Eastertide, 1996, p 25-40. See the evaluation in the *WLQ*, Spring, 1997, p 128-130.

It needs to be stated clearly that the incarnational view of ministry that appears in the LCMS is not the official view of the LCMS, but of some individuals in the LCMS. In the same issue of LOGIA that contained Johnson's article, Paul McCain, who at that time was an assistant to LCMS president Al Barry, warned against the dangers of the terminology of advocates of the incarnational view such as Douglas Fusselman. He deals with them quite gently, because he understands that they have been provoked by advocates of the Church Growth Movement and by rampant disrespect for the ministry, but he warns very clearly against the danger of their view. He says that for Luther the Christian's confidence that Christ is at work in the office of the holy ministry is not placed in a theory of the Son of God's embodiment in the pastor, but in the sure and certain Word the pastor is given to proclaim (p 47-49).