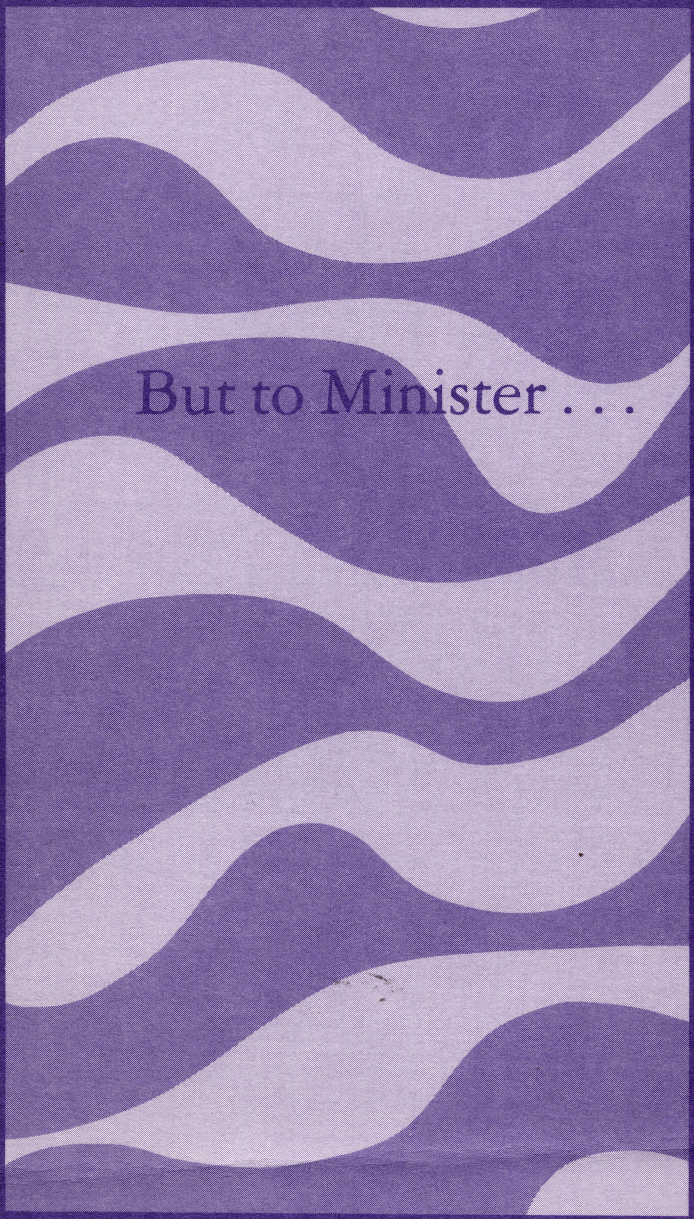
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Contents

But to Minister... 2
Ralph W. Klein

Ministry in the New Testament: "In the Beginning..." 6
Wilhelm C. Linss

Mission and Ministry in the Early Church: Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons, but... 15
Paul Rorem

The Doctrine of the Ministry: The Reformation Heritage 23
Kurt K. Hendel

Lutheran Ministry in America 34
Robert H. Fischer

Ministry in World Mission Perspective 45
James A. Scherer

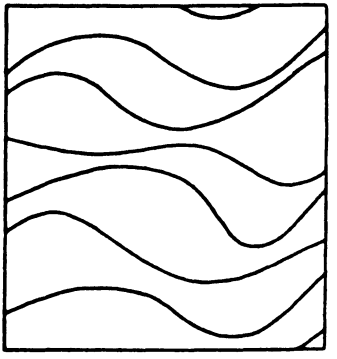
Ordering of Ministries of All the Baptized People of God 57
William E. Lesher

Ministry in a Multi-Cultural Church 66
Albert Pero

Postscript 69
Nancy Hess

Book Reviews 74

Drawings by Barbara Wegener



Preaching Helps 82
Series A
The Resurrection of Our Lord—Seventh Sunday of Easter

But to Minister...

Let the words of Jesus in the KJV set the theme: "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister."

But all the modern versions, understandably, say: "will be your servant."

Still, there has been a loss in this modernization. When we talk about ministry in the church, the issue is often power; what Christ sought to create was service. Ministerial service is the road to greatness.

The articles in this issue are written by members of the LSTC faculty in order to help people understand what are the historical backgrounds, the issues, and the options in the ELCA's study of the ministry. They represent a variety of perspectives, refined and polished in lively faculty colloquies, that could lead to a variety of conclusions, any of which could be understood as faithful to the Lutheran/Christian heritage. These articles possess a directness and simplicity which make them ideal for sharing with an adult forum. (While they last, additional copies are available for $1.50.)

Wilhelm C. Linss notes the variety of views about ministry in the New Testament and how the entire community there was held responsible for the life of the community. There he finds the roots of the priesthood of all believers, but also early forms of various offices in the church. The early Christians developed offices appropriate to getting the good news out; they would understand that our needs and therefore the shape of our offices might be different. They had church-wide and local

officers, women and men gifted with the Spirit and/or chosen by the community. As the church grew older and was threatened by heresy, it became necessary to establish order.

Paul Rorem picks up the historical baton and guides us through the early church. Ministry was tied to mission—then and now—and stable, growing communities required resident leadership. At first, the elders as a group formed a supervisory council: they in a sense were the bishops. From another perspective the local head pastor of a congregation was a bishop, and the elders, or presbyters, were advisors who functioned when the bishop was absent. Such bishops gradually became regional supervisors until by the year 400 most congregations did not have their own bishop. Church growth and the changes in the office of bishop led to the evolution of hierarchy in the church. First there were traveling evangelists, then local leaders to tend growth, then head pastors who protected the faith and who became regional supervisors, and finally an expanding system of accountability and authority—as the church triumphed in the early centuries, its sheer size changed its forms of ministry.

Kurt K. Hendel shows that the medieval priesthood was defined by status and sacrificial responsibilities, but that Luther advocated instead a universal priesthood, sacramental theology, and Christian vocation. While Luther held to a baptismal egalitarianism that eliminated all distinctions among people of faith, he also believed that ordained ministry was necessary. There is one ministry, that of the word and the sacraments, which belongs both to the universal priests and to ordained pastors. Ordained ministry is mediated through the universal priesthood, but it is also at the same time divinely instituted. Pastors have no privileged status; rather, they are people called by God to exercise the functions of ministry publicly. The call is the constituting element of ordained ministry, but that ministry is defined best by its functions of preaching the word and administering the sacraments.

Robert H. Fischer follows this Lutheran heritage to the New World where the 18th and 19th centuries determined which questions would be debated in our own time. Grabau thought ministers could demand obedience of church members in all matters not contrary to the word of

God; Walther located authority in the congregation, that could transfer these God-given powers to the ordained minister. The Haugeans made wide use of prayer meetings led by lay people, while the Norwegians patterned themselves on the clergy-dominated state church. In the 20th century church unions have necessitated various ministerial compromises, and the church's ever-changing mission in and for the world has led to various breakthroughs. It was an evangelical mentality, after all, which concluded that that the ordination of women makes good sense, biblically speaking.

James A. Scherer outlines ministry in the two-thirds world where there has been a chronic shortage of well-trained pastors and an army of evangelistic workers. A consensus developed about fifty years ago that a full-time, well-trained ordained ministry was necessary everywhere. But others questioned this on theological and practical grounds. In the marginal economies of the two-thirds world, a salaried professional clergy is an anomaly. Theological education means wrestling with God's world in order to discover the meaning of the present moment, and it means wrestling with God's word so that the power of the incarnation can enable us to contextualize. With the death of colonialism and the collapse of Christendom, there is a desperate need for effective integration of the ministry of the whole people of God, of non-ordained diaconal ministers, and of those trained for special ministries.

William E. Lesher asks how we can relate the Lutheran core understanding of the general ministry of all the baptized and the special ministry of the ordained to the conditions of our particular time and place. Our time has experienced a new consciousness of the ministry of all the baptized and has struggled with how to classify those called to positions of service other than ordained ministry. He asks whether we should follow the Lima document (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*) and establish a three-fold office of bishop, pastor, and deacon. The office of deacon has good historical precedents, it might help the church support programs that promote the common good, and it might make better use of the varieties of the Spirit's gifts. Would a doctrine of ministry reflecting the ecumenical consensus, including the apostolic succession, express better the unity of the church?

Albert Pero reminds us that theology and ministry are contextual by definition, and that ministry must embody the many cultures which the people of God are. Christians cannot afford to ignore real cultural divisions or the unity we have in Christ. The universal thrust of the gospel prevents ministry from becoming only indigenous; the indigenous character of the gospel prevents ministry from becoming merely theoretical or transcultural. We are given differences to celebrate and to risk losing so that we might become the family of God.

Nancy Hess, who assisted powerfully with the editing of this issue, notes that the understanding of ministry throughout history has been shaped by the context in which ministry is done. Talk about the ministry often slights the ministry of the whole people of God or overlooks the malaise felt by many in ordained ministry today. We want an understanding of ministry that facilitates ministry now, and that inspires us for ministry in the future.

Whosoever will be great—also among you—shall be a minister. Christ gives us the power, the permission, and the authority to serve.

Whosoever will be of good cheer in the macerated ministry of today—also among you—shall be a minister. Christ set the example, Christ gave the commission, Christ gives the crown of life which cannot be taken away.

Even the Son of Humanity did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. As with the head, so with all the members.

Here's to the heritage! Here's to the context!

Your editorial minister,

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Ministry in the New Testament: "In the Beginning..."

Wilhelm C. Linss
Professor of New Testament
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

In dealing with the New Testament view of ministry, one must always be aware that the New Testament writers did not ask our modern questions and that we must not expect direct answers from the New Testament to the modern issues of ministry. For instance, we might find that the New Testament does not decide for us the ELCA question of whether our associates in ministry are a special class of ministers or whether they ought to be ordained.

The New Testament was written in a unique time, and the circumstances of the first century cannot simply be transposed into the twentieth. The mission situation of the Gentile churches in the New Testament is a far cry from the established churches of Europe or the denominational variety of North America. It is necessary to interpret the New Testament under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to apply it to our own time. Although there was no denominationalism in New Testament times, there were differences about polity and theology, and we must take these differences into account when we investigate the New Testament. The early Christian church had to break completely new ground. Although there is continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament and between Jewish worship and Christian worship, the main worship place of Judaism before and until Jesus was the temple, and the main officiants were the priests. With the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. and the elimination of sacrifices, the priestly system was abolished and did not exercise any further influence on the Christian church. At most, some elements of the synagogue worship and administration survived in the Christian church. The early church had to find its own way in establishing official leaders to guide worship and other activities of congregations.

In the same way, practically no elements of Greco-Roman religion, temples, and priesthood are found in the Christian church. The first century church was experimenting as it established its own identity; it felt free to adopt worship practices and forms of leadership from many different sources. This is reflected in the fact that the writings of the New Testament show various developments and designations. This variety is also due to the "multi-culturality" of the early church, the necessity to unite Palestinian Jews, Diaspora Jews, Greeks, Romans, and other Gentiles of various backgrounds.

Even though the New Testament has been used by advocates of various views on ministry, and even though we Lutherans consider the New Testament the norm by which the church is to live and minister, we must be open to the possibility that there is not one view on ministry in the Bible and that many different interpretations can rightfully claim an ancestry in the New Testament.

Even Lutheran scholars of the New Testament have reached different interpretations of the New Testament evidence. Roy Harrisville recognizes the *variety* of ministries: "Decisive was the link between Spirit and the word, the 'tradition,' the witness to what God had begun in Jesus... what held the church together was its witness to the Christ. The New Testament thus yields no evidence of what scholars for years have labeled 'early Catholicism.'"[1] The latter term refers to the formation of a hierarchical system of church offices already in New Testament times. On the other hand, Karl Donfried comes to the belief "that the office of bishop, according to our own tradition, is not quite as [insignificant] as we have often been led to believe."[2] In other words, he recommends that Lutherans consider establishing again the historic episcopacy in apostolic succession on the basis of the New Testament, i.e., bishops, priests, and deacons, succeeding in an unbroken chain through the ordination by earlier bishops.

Jesus as minister

The English word "minister" is derived from the Latin *ministrare*, meaning "to serve." Remembering this, we will state at the outset that Jesus himself is the first minister. One of the important statements about his "ministry" is written in Mark 10:45: "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve." The Greek word is *diakonein*, from which our words "diaconate" and "deacon" are derived and which means "service, serving" (serving at table, taking care of something or someone). Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that we speak of the "ministry" of Jesus in looking at his activity in Galilee and Judea. The Gospels show the large diversity of activities which Jesus as minister carried out: healer, teacher, wisdom speaker, prophet.

Most likely this "service" embraced the whole ministry of Jesus, including his death and resurrection. Jesus ministered not only to the people who encountered him personally during his short lifetime on earth but also to all future believers. His death was the supreme ministry for all of us. When we call ourselves ministers, we first have to remember that we are the ones who

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[1]Roy A. Harrisville, *Ministry in Crisis. Changing Perspectives on Ordination and the Priesthood of All Believers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 32.

[2]Karl P. Donfried, "A New Testament Scholar Looks at the Issue of Ministry," *Dialog* 27:1 (Winter 1988), 15.

receive ministry in the sacrifice of Jesus himself. Anything we want to say about ministry must be derived from this primary insight. Jesus' authority is also based on his ministry. Because he ministered, because he was obedient to the will of God, we acknowledge his authority over us.

Luke reports a saying which is quite instructive: "For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves" (22:27). Jesus did not consider himself the greatest, although he was recognized for his greatness; he accepted the menial service of serving at table, of being a waiter. The narrative of the washing of the feet (Jn 13:2-11) is an illustration for such ministry, although the term "minister" is not used in this story. Our concern is often with the authority and power of the ministry, not recognizing the true meaning of ministering: service.

Jesus was neither a priest nor a bishop, but a deacon, a minister. Only once in the New Testament is Jesus called a bishop: "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian (Greek: *episkopos*, bishop, overseer) of your souls" (1 Pet 2:25). It is obvious that this is not meant in any technical sense of the bishop's office. The title "priest" in the Old Testament sense is used of Jesus only in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and that in regard to his priestly sacrifice of himself on the cross.

The twelve apostles

The early church was concerned about preserving Jesus' words and transmitting them to other people, with the hope of winning other people for faith in Jesus the Christ. According to all four Gospels, Jesus chose certain people for this task. It is interesting that at first no special title was used for these messengers. Mark says, "He called to him the twelve, and began to send them out" (6:7). No name is given, just the number twelve. However, when they return a little later, Mark says, "The apostles returned to Jesus" (6:30).

The title "apostle" is here substituted for the "twelve." The number twelve is very likely a claim to Israel as a whole which was composed of twelve tribes. These twelve were originally simply the followers of Jesus, the disciples, although the exact list is less important than the number twelve.

Only because they were sent out were they called "apostles," literally, "those who have been sent." No women are included in the lists of the twelve, but there are several references to women who followed Jesus (the same word indicates this following as is used in the following of the male disciples) and ministered to him (Mk 14:41 and parallels; Lk 8:2). The designation "apostle" can be used in a very general way, as, e.g., in John 13:16, "Nor is he who is sent [Greek: *apostolos*] greater than he who sent him." However, later it definitely became a title for a person who is "sent." Paul repeatedly has to assert his apostleship and defend it against attacks, perhaps mainly because he had not taken part in the original ministry of Jesus and was not an eyewitness. However, Paul's claim to the title indicates that being a witness of the *resurrection* was a prerequisite for being an apostle: "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1). The same argument is made in 1 Corinthians 15.

The authority of an apostle is derived from and dependent on the one who does the sending. An apostle never acts on his own but only on the authority of the sender. This also is important for every ministry. Whatever authority a minister will have, it is not inherent in the person but dependent on the sender.

However, because the apostles' authority was based on seeing the risen Lord, there cannot be any succession to the apostles. Theirs was a unique office, unrepeatable. No apostles are appointed later as successors to Paul or to the twelve. There are only few references to other people called apostles: James, the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19), and Andronicus and Junias, Junia, or Julia (Rom 16:7). If the correct reading is Junias, then it is a man, but if it is Junia or Julia, then a woman is called an apostle. The oldest available manuscript of Romans has the reading "Julia."

When Matthew 10:2 and Revelation 21:14 speak of the twelve apostles, this strongly suggests that the number is closed, that no other people deserve to be called apostles. In the Acts of the Apostles, despite the high esteem in which Paul is held, he is called an apostle only twice (14:4,14), which may be due to a source used by Luke and not reflecting Luke's own opinion. From the New Testament it is clear that the name "apostle" is limited to the first witnesses. "Apostolic succession," in the sense that there were successors to the apostles, cannot be demonstrated.

The ministry of all believers

Many of the teachings of Jesus about ministry reported in the Gospels have to be extended to all believers. This is most obvious in the Gospel of Matthew. In the Great Commission Jesus says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:19-20). The name which was used for the twelve (disciples) is extended to all who are to believe. In fact, all nations are to be taught all that Jesus taught his own disciples during his lifetime. In the Gospel of Matthew no special titles

> Our concern is often with the authority and power of the ministry, not recognizing the true meaning of ministering: service.

are to be used for leaders of the community (if there are any leaders at all): "You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ" (23:8-10).

The entire community is responsible for the life of the community; it is an egalitarian community. When a matter of discipline is to be decided, the "church"—meaning the gathering or congregation—is the final authority: "If he refuses to listen to them [the one or two others], tell it to the church" (18:17). It is also in this context that the authority originally given to Peter (16:19) is conferred on the entire community: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (18:18).

When Ephesians speaks about various offices, the main purpose of these offices is the preparation of all believers for their ministry: "To equip God's people for work in his service, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). The so-called priesthood of all believers has its basis in the New Testament. "Like living stones be



yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5). Furthermore, it is obvious that these communities included both men and women. It is clear that the ministry of all believers is, at least in these writings, predominant over other ministries. From this insight, one might very well conclude that special ministries were delegated by the total community to selected individuals.

Special ministries

General considerations.

Many special ministries are mentioned in the New Testament. There is an abundance of terms, and it is not easy to distinguish between the various offices. Perhaps 'offices' is even too strong a term because everything is still in flux. The Latin word *officium* has the meaning of "service, favor, duty, function, obligation" and does not necessarily designate authority or status.

The oldest listing of offices or functions is given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28. Although they seem to be arranged hierarchically, in order of importance, because Paul mentions "first, second, third," he does not continue in this way. And the point of the listing is exactly that all are one body of Christ and belong together. Furthermore, the offices he mentions are combined with the various gifts of the Spirit. This leads to an ambivalent view of offices. On the one hand, offices are due to an appointment or institution by God, to a gift of the Spirit. On the other hand, officers are also chosen from within the congregation, as for instance in Acts 6:3: "Pick out from among you seven people of good repute." The view of 'ministry from above' is balanced by a view of 'ministry from below.' Is it possible to combine the two?

There is also fluidity in the terms used for various offices. Christ himself can be called a bishop (1 Pet 2:25), a deacon (Rom 15:8), and a minister (see above). The Pastoral Epistles have three offices, but the author does not clarify the exact relationship among them. Bishops and deacons are certainly distinguished in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and 3:8-10. In Titus 1:5 we read of the appointment of *elders*, but then the *bishop's* qualifications are mentioned (1:7-9) as if these titles were interchangeable. Although 1 Timothy does not speak of qualifications of elders, only of bishops, the elders suddenly are mentioned (5:17, 19). They are also the ones who, as a group (presbytery), laid their hands upon Timothy (4:14). But it is necessary to be a little more exact in examining these terms. We will do this first in the order in which they are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28. Then we will examine the list in Ephesians 4:11.

a. Apostle.

Nothing further needs to be added to the discussion above. One feature which definitely applies to the apostles (and to some other offices, as we shall see) is the circumstance that they were not limited to one congregation but were called to, and served, the whole church.

b. Prophet.

Although it was believed in Judaism that prophecy had ceased with Ezra, the early church had a rich experience of prophecy. Paul discusses this phenomenon in 1 Corinthians. It is characterized by inspiration which comes to an individual from the Holy Spirit; it is not an office which the congregation has established or over which it has control. Some prophets were localized; others were not bound to one locality but exercised their gift anywhere. This is indicated by the wandering prophets in "The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles," a document written late in the first or early in the second century.[3]

c. Teacher.

This term was primarily applied to Jesus himself (41 times in the Gospels); he is the teacher *par excellence*. This activity is based on the function of the scribes in the Jewish community. Teaching becomes more important after the establishing of a group of believers. It applies especially to the instruction of those who have become Christians, and its purpose is to impart knowledge about Christian beliefs and about ethical behavior in agreement with the Christian faith. Most likely this activity was carried out within a local congregation. The title is not always necessary; teaching was carried out also informally, by both men and women. In Acts 18:26, Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, instruct Apollos about the Christian faith.

d. Workers of miracles, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.

These can hardly be called offices. These terms describe certain "functions that are more of a technical kind."[4] These might be exercised by any person, perhaps for a certain time. They serve a specific need, are usually limited to a certain time and place, and some of them deal with ordinary, mundane matters. What is remarkable, however, is the belief that all these actions are considered as gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus they also demonstrate the rich variety of functions in the early church.

e. Evangelist.

This is a designation from Ephesians 4:11, where it is mentioned after apostles and prophets. It also occurs in Acts 21:8 (Philip) and 2 Timothy 4:5 (Timothy). As the term itself indicates, the evangelist is the proclaimer of the "*evangel*," the gospel. It is a general term which applies to anyone who preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, and thus the term describes more a function than an office. Evangelists continued the work of the apostles and were subordinate to them.

f. Pastors and Teachers.

These two designations seem to refer to the same people or designate a group. The term translated "pastors" is the Greek word for "shepherds." The main characteristic of shepherds is not their authority but the fact that they provide nourishment, pasture for the flock. This is a local office which is to be exemplary for the congregation (1 Pet 5:3).

It is highly significant that neither list (1 Cor 12:28 or Eph 4:11) includes the traditional offices of bishop, elder, or deacon. But since they have become important in

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[3]For further discussion of prophecy see *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, by David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

[4]Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 215.

the history of the church, it is necessary to consider the usage of these terms in the New Testament.

g. Bishop.

The word *episkopos*, from which our word "bishop" is derived, was originally a secular office, meaning "overseer" or "guardian," having to do with financial or technical obligations. However, it can also be used in Greek religion for divine overseers of places and people. The word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for various officials, such as governors or military officers. It occurs only five times in the New Testament. Once it is used of Christ (1 Pet 2:25; see above), where it is combined with shepherd. This association of shepherding and overseeing is used also in reference to human leaders, as in Acts 20:28, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord," and in 1 Peter 5:2, "Tend the flock of God that is your charge." It is important to realize that the designation *bishop* always refers to local positions, not to the apostles or missionaries who go from place to place. In Philippians 1:1, "bishops" refer to certain individuals who exercise a leading function in the congregation: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Notice also that there is not *one* bishop but a group of them in Philippi. In the Pastoral Epistles there is also the designation of an office for which one may strive, 1 Timothy 3:1: "If any one aspires to the office of bishop," and then a reference to the qualifications of that person (3:2): "Now a bishop must be...." The qualifications are described mostly in personal terms, not in matters which would have to do with the exercise of the office itself, except that he must be "an apt teacher."

h. Elder.

As mentioned above, in Titus we find that the terms "bishop" and "elder" could be used interchangeably. While the word "bishop" comes from the Greek background, the word "elder" has a Hebrew ancestry, although it was used similarly in Greek. It is sometimes difficult to know whether the age of a leader or a specific office is meant. According to Acts there were elders in the first church in Jerusalem (11:30). They were the leaders of the local congregation, but, together with the apostles, they also determined the teaching and practice of the whole church. The Greek word is *presbys* or *presbyteros*. This term is the origin of our terms "presbyter" and "priest." It is important to realize that "priest" is the translation of "elder" and has nothing to do with the priests of the temple of Jerusalem for whom a completely different Greek word is used. Also noteworthy is that no subordination of the elders under the bishops or bishop is indicated.

i. Deacon.

The meaning of this term, "servant," has already been discussed. It occurs frequently in the usual sense, without having a technical meaning of an office. How did it become an official term? Take a look at 1 Corinthians 3:5. After describing the ministry of Apollos and Paul, Paul says they are "servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each." Whose servants they are is indicated in the clause, "as the Lord assigned to each." They are servants of God or of Christ. Is it not possible that this introduced the term *diakonos* as the term for a function? A similar transitional statement is found in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "[God] has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant." Or take 2 Corinthians 11:23, where Paul compares himself with other apostles: "Are they servants of Christ? I am

The office was determined by the need to proclaim the good news in the most effective way.

a better one." Once more, in Ephesians 3:7, we see this particular use of *diakonos*: "Of this gospel I was made a minister." Later it became a more definite designation of an office. Ephesians 6:21 speaks of Tychicus as "the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." This development into an office is seen most clearly in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, where the deacon's office is discussed after that of the bishop. The qualifications of the deacon are quite similar to those of the bishop, but the tasks or functions of the office are not mentioned. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is introduced as a *diakonos* of the church of Cenchreae. It is difficult to say whether the translation should be "deacon" or "deaconess" or just "minister."

Conclusion and final comments

We have seen that there is a wide variety of offices and that the church of the New Testament developed those functions and offices that were needed under any given circumstances. The office was determined by the need to proclaim the good news in the most effective way. There was no belief that only one office or one system of administration alone is adequate or mandated by the Holy Spirit. (This gives us the freedom to choose the kinds of offices which we need in our own situation and which will help believers to be the church today.)

Some of these activities were church-wide (apostles, perhaps prophets), others were limited to a certain locality (pastors). Some of these functions were carried out by people who had been blessed with special gifts of the Holy Spirit, others by people chosen by the community. In some situations both conditions were true.

There is no generally identifiable way in which a person was installed in a certain office or function. 1 Timothy 4:14 indicates the laying on of hands as the beginning of Timothy's activity, but even there the main fact is the "gift which was given you by prophetic utterance."

The further the church moved away from the time of the apostles, the more necessary it became to establish a certain order. An on-going community must be administered in some way. Another reason for the development of church order and offices was the guarding against false teachings and heresy.

Women exercised important functions. It is possible that Junia or Julia (Rom 16:7) was designated as an apostle. Phoebe (Rom 16:1) was a deacon or deaconess; Prisca (Rom 16:3 etc.) is called a fellow worker of Paul, along with other women whom Paul mentions in Romans 16 and Philippians 4.

Questions for review

1. Which offices in the church of the New Testament continued the Jewish practice, and which originated from the Greek environment?
2. To what extent can we speak of offices? Do the various designations apply to functions, or to status, or both?
3. Were women called/appointed to the same offices as men?

Questions for reflection

1. To what extent is the New Testament normative for our church administration?
2. If there is this wide variety of offices, what should be normative for us?
3. Why are certain offices no longer used?
4. Does the New Testament authorize the creation of new offices?
5. Can we (and should we?) experiment in our own time as the earliest Christians did? What areas, if any, do you think are ripe for such experimentation?
6. Do you think Jesus meant for all people to imitate his serving style?
7. If it could be determined that one of the apostles was female, would it change your view of the ordained ministry in any way? Do you think it would have significantly affected the practices of the Lutheran church?

Mission and Ministry in the Early Church:

Bishop, Presbyters and Deacons, but...

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Many of the New Testament issues and ambiguities regarding ministry continued to concern the "Early Church," that is, the first five hundred years of Christianity. Throughout this period, ministry was tied to *mission* above all else. The general ministry of all believers was to share the gospel, to spread the news that Jesus was the Messiah and Lord. The average believers pursued this mission and ministry at home, at work, on the street, and even when on trial for their faith. To enable the general ministry of the gospel, some particular men and women took on specific tasks and roles of ministering to the others. Theirs was the specific, ordained ministry. Ministry changed considerably when the overall situation of the church changed from a small informal underground to the dominant religious system in the Roman Empire. Then, when the faith was spread and the church became enormous, the urgency of the general ministry faded, and certain aspects of the ordained ministry changed dramatically.

It is tempting to use the early church as some sort of perfect, timeless model for our own imitation. But its situations and solutions were so varied and variable, and so different from our own, that this would be a mistake. We know that very early Christian leadership was often supplied by traveling missionaries, like St. Paul himself. The spread of the gospel required this mobility, with brief stays in many locations. The second century had traveling teachers and prophets, and also an emerging structure of resident leaders. From *The Didache* (about 100 C.E.):

> Now, you should welcome anyone who comes your way and teaches you all we have been saying. But if the teacher proves himself a renegade and by teaching otherwise contradicts all this, pay no attention to him.... You must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are a credit to the Lord, men who are gentle, generous, faithful, and well tried. For their ministry to you is identical with that of the prophets and teachers.



> You must not, therefore, despise them, for along with the prophets and teachers they enjoy a place of honor among you.[1]

We see here a concern to guard against false teachers, and to encourage the congregation to value its local leaders. Another text of the time (*First Clement*) presents this transition to resident or local leadership as intentional:

> So as [the apostles] preached from country to country and from city to city, they appointed their first converts, after testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of the future believers.[2]

The transition from mobile preachers to local officers was prompted by the practical mission needs of these early congregations. Stable, growing communities of faith and outreach needed committed, resident leadership. Once the faith was planted it required tending. Practical concerns dictated that many of these people first served as part-time volunteers, retaining their jobs as merchants or tent-makers. Since it may have seemed easier to honor the traveling prophet than the neighborhood tailor who stood up to preach, *The Didache* urged respect for the resident leaders. The Early Church thus organized its ministry according to the mission needs of that time and place. For many generations there was flexibility and local variety, with both traveling missionaries and resident leadership, so that the whole community of faith might spread the gospel most effectively.

The congregation's supervisor, elders, and servants

Amid the variety of forms and names for the leadership of the Early Church, a pattern emerged rather clearly in the second century. The personal leadership of apostles, prophets, and teachers gave way to another more formal trio. As quoted above, *The Didache* said that the community should elect for itself "bishops" and "deacons." Other texts like *First Clement* add the term "elders" or "presbyters." As we have seen, these are New Testament terms, and yet their meanings are unclear. There *were* bishops, presbyters, and deacons, *but* these words have complex histories, for they have changed in meaning and in form over the centuries and in the translations from Greek to Latin to English.

The Old English of the Middle Ages shortened "*episkopos*" (meaning overseer or supervisor) to "*piskop*" which was pronounced "bishop." The Greek term "presbyter" means "elder" or "senior" and was used to designate the older men of Jewish synagogues and some Christian congregations. Here, too, medieval Old English

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[1]Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., editor, *Ministry* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984). *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, 8, 34f.

[2]Lienhard, 24.

shortened the word "presbyter" to "prester" and then "priest," even though the "priests" of the Old Testament found little or no continuity in the ministry of the New Testament. Only when the Lord's Supper was gradually reinterpreted as a sacrifice was the Old Testament language of priesthood applied to Christian clergy, starting with the bishop. Finally, the Greek word "*diakonos*" means "servant" or "minister" and has evolved into "deacon" and "deaconess" (and "dean").

It may be that the Jewish-Christian communities retained their terminology of "elder," while the Gentile groups were the ones who promoted the terms "bishop/supervisor" and "deacon." In any case, these titles were soon combined to refer to the various leaders of an individual congregation, and here the plot thickens.

First of all, as in the New Testament, the Christian congregation's elders *were* the supervisors or overseers, and served as a special group or council. *First Clement*, quoted above, speaks about bishops and then calls them presbyters.[3] The term *bishop* refers to the function of oversight or supervision, while the term *presbyter* refers to the traditional qualification of age for an elder. In other words, in the earliest Christian congregations the elders were the supervisors, which is another way of saying that the presbyters (or priests) were the bishops. This may sound odd to us, but only because we are accustomed to the later contrast between priest (presbyter) and bishop.

After apparently only a generation or two of supervisory (episcopal) leadership by the whole council of elders, certain congregations early in the second century gave to *one* of these supervisor-elders some unique responsibilities, especially in chairing their meetings and in presiding at the Lord's Supper. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred around 110 C.E.) wrote some very important letters documenting this development.

> For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup for union with his blood, one sanctuary, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons.[4]

At this point, the titles for church leaders start to change. Only one person was here called the supervisor or bishop, while the others were still called elders or presbyters as a group or council (the presbytery). Ignatius was concerned for the unity of the congregation, as expressed in the one cup and the one supervisor who presides.

> Be eager to do everything in God's harmony, with the bishop presiding in the place of God and the presbytery in the place of the council of the apostles and the deacons, most sweet to me, entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ.[5]

The bishop mirrors the one God; the elders mirror the council of apostles; the deacons mirror the service (diaconate) of Christ. The appointment of one of the elders to special functions and with the exclusive name of supervisor or bishop was standard by the late second century. Justin Martyr, an important witness to church practices around 150 C.E., still calls this person the "president of the brethren" instead of bishop, but he confirms the liturgical and supervisory aspects of the position. This "president" preaches, leads in the prayers, and supervises the distribution of help to the needy. In the third and fourth century we still find this connection between the presbyters as a group and the one who is selected

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[3]Lienhard, 25.
[4]Lienhard, 31.
[5]Lienhard, 29, 30-32.

as supervisor. Using the biblical language of shepherd or pastor, the third-century *Didascalia* refers to "the pastor who is appointed bishop and head among the presbytery in the church in every congregation."[6]

Thus a late second-century congregation would elect a supervisor (episkopos/bishop), a council of elders or presbyters, and a supporting staff of servants or deacons. This became the usual pattern for clerical offices and titles in Christian congregations throughout the Early Church. The bishop was the head pastor who preached, presided at the Lord's Supper, taught, and supervised the congregation as a whole. The presbyters were collegial advisors who shared in the liturgy and presided on occasion in the bishop's absence. The deacons also assisted in the liturgy, especially in reading the lessons and monitoring attendance, and distributed communion and the offerings of the church to the sick and the needy.

From head pastor to regional bishop

For the first two hundred years after Christ, a bishop supervised only one congregation. It was analogous to the modern office of senior pastor of a large church with a staff of clergy. This pattern changed during the third century. In the *Didascalia* (early third century), we read that every congregation had a supervising cleric or bishop, even if a small church would have to elect one of its young men who was not literally an elder.[7] Cyprian, the prominent Bishop of Carthage in the mid-third century, said that "whichever bishops of the same province are nearest, gather with *that congregation* for which a bishop is to be ordained."[8] But other sources indicate that certain congregations had no bishop, only presbyters and deacons who answered to a nearby congregation's bishop.[9] The consolidation of authority in the office of bishop as regional supervisor was a major part of the church's struggle against those who claimed a private, special knowledge about God. Against this subjectivity, the church emphasized the apostles' writings (by defining which books constitute the New Testament), the apostles' beliefs (by adopting official creeds), and the apostles' successors, the bishops of congregations which claimed to be founded by an original apostle.

This gradual change from every congregation having a head pastor called a bishop to the later pattern of a bishop supervising an area with many congregations had several long-range implications for the church's ministry. In the early generations of Christianity, only the major cities had a Christian community, and it was organized as one congregation. In the later third century and early fourth century, Christianity grew very rapidly. It usually spread out into a province from the original congregation in the center of the capital city. The history of the early church and its expansion is largely "urban church history." New congregations would descend from the original "downtown" church, and would honor that parentage. The area's "mother church" and its staff naturally had some special ties to the daughter congregations in the "suburbs" and in the outlying villages.

At first, these mission congregations had their own supervisor or bishop as head pastor. They still honored the bishop of the original urban congregation, eventually by

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[6]Lienhard, 44.
[7]Lienhard, 44.
[8]Lienhard, 139; emphasis added.
[9]Lienhard, 19.

The consolidation of authority was a major part of the church's struggle against those who claimed a private, special knowledge about God.

the name "city supervisor" (metropolitan bishop) in the East and "archbishop" in the West. But the rapid geographical spread of Christian communities, some of them quite small, led to a prohibition against the ordination of bishops for little villages. Bishops meeting in Ancyra (315 C.E.) insisted that smaller churches be assigned only presbyters, who therefore became the pastors and liturgical presiders for those congregations. This recognized the need for the growing number of churches to have a network of supervision, and enabled new congregations to honor the missionary centers which founded them.

Alternately, when a single congregation grew too large for Sunday worship in one building, as in Rome, other buildings were used throughout the same city. In those churches, presbyters were assigned by the bishop to preside, with deacons assisting, so that all would have a place to worship. The mission needs of these congregations, small or large, shaped the forms of ministry which were adopted. The church still found its identity in mission as everyone spread the news, and some emerged as leaders who ministered to the faithful in their work of evangelism.

Around this time, the Roman Emperor Constantine found it beneficial to legalize Christianity and to favor it with donations of cash and imperial buildings (basilicas). Although bishops had previously been part-time ministers chosen by the local congregation, the emperor's fortunes and tax breaks made the office a full-time and often well-paid profession sought by many and sometimes filled by imperial appointment. The official borders of the Roman provinces became the ecclesiastical boundaries for the jurisdictions or dioceses of the metropolitan supervisor or bishop in that area's capital city. This system of diocesan jurisdictions helped the emperors and governors enforce the religious uniformity needed for a peaceful empire. In certain respects, the bishops became civil servants empowered to adjudicate some legal matters (much as our own government empowers clergy to conduct a legal wedding). Gradually, bishops adopted some of the ceremony and the vestments of the Roman governors. This alliance of church leadership with imperial power resulted in some helpful points of common teaching like the Nicene Creed and also in some political compromises which suppressed local expressions of the faith. Many independent believers fled the bishop's power over the cities and found refuge in the spiritual warfare and harsh life of the desert. These ascetics retained a personal authority by their apparent holiness, and were often consulted by the faithful, who sometimes talked one of them into returning to the city as their bishop!

By 400 C.E., the phenomenal growth of the church (now the only legal religion) meant that most congregations did not have their own bishop. That title was reserved for the main congregation in the regional

capital. Still, the ecclesiastical and liturgical differences between bishops and elders were very few, as St. Jerome and John Chrysostom pointed out:

> As I said, in former times the presbyters were called bishops and deacons of Christ, and the bishops were called presbyters. For this reason, many bishops even now address their letters to a "fellow presbyter" and "fellow deacon."[10]

Although liturgical differences between bishop and presbyter were now fewer (since presbyters had become presiders of their own congregations), they were still crucial. A baptism in water was considered sealed or confirmed by a final anointing. In one sense, it was not thought complete until this confirmation, and that was reserved for the bishop on his trips to each congregation. More importantly for church discipline, the entry into ordained service was supervised by the bishop, who alone could physically ordain a deacon or an elder by the laying on of hands and prayer. Earlier, there had been flexibility in recognizing someone's personal gifts and experience as a call and ordination by God, without need of a ceremony. If believers were imprisoned for the faith, stood fast, and were then released for whatever reason, they could enter the ranks of deacon or presbyter (but not bishop) with no liturgical ceremony, since their experience of steadfast faith was considered their ordination.[11] This may also have applied to some women "confessors," as they were called.

Candidates for ordained ministry could be chosen by the congregation, by the supervising bishop, or sometimes by the imperial authorities. But ordination itself was valid only if performed by the bishop, and only bishops acting together could ordain a new bishop.

The evolution of hierarchy

The actual word "hierarchy" did not exist until the fifth or sixth century. Coined by someone claiming to be St. Paul's disciple, Dionysius, it was adapted from its original usage in describing a local community to a wider application and eventually to the universal claims of authority under the Bishop of Rome as the Pope. Many theologians, like "Dionysius," embraced the Platonic idea that all revelation and all authority trickles down from the divine source through layers of intermediaries to those below, who must obey and honor their superiors. From this viewpoint, every church office or lay station in life should find its proper place in this great pyramid of power. Although the Early Church did not understand itself this way, its explosive growth and the resulting change from head pastors to regional supervisors led to a hierarchical pattern. When the church triumphed, its sheer size changed its forms of ministry, in two specific ways.

First of all, when every local congregation had its own bishop, that person supervised both the presbyters and the deacons directly. The deacons did not answer to the priests, but to the bishop. The head deacon, in fact, often became a bishop. Even later, in those congregations which did have a bishop (the cathedral churches), the deacons' authority over finance meant they were not completely subject to the priests. But when the spread of the church required that only the main congregations have a bishop, the lines of authority were consolidated vertically: a bishop supervised the

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[10]Lienhard, 106.
[11]Lienhard, 41.

parish presbyters, who in turn were the local supervisors for the deacons.

The local congregation's ordained ministers were now organized hierarchically, and the office of deacon was often temporary before promotion to the priesthood. "Below" the deacon came other offices called the "minor orders" of subdeacon, lector, and acolyte. For example, in Rome's large network of congregations around the year 250, there were

> one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers.[12]

Although Cyprian also reports ordaining a reader or lector,[13] eventually only those who served as deacons and "above" were considered ordained clergy. This included deaconesses, when that office flourished from the fourth to sixth centuries around Constantinople and in Syria (but not in Rome). In that ministry, which consisted especially in the baptismal anointing of women and visiting of women who were ill, a deaconess was not lay but ordained, just like a deacon.

Secondly, the change in the office of bishop from local head pastor to regional supervisor intensified the complicated question of how these bishops related to one another. Some cities and their bishops became more important and more influential than others, sometimes to the point of arranging the appointments of other bishops. Almost all bishops, even some big-city or metropolitan bishops, were answerable to other authorities, namely, the patriarchal bishops in the five major centers: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and (originally) Ephesus. When Constantinople was founded in 330 C.E. as the new capital of the empire, it too became a patriarchate. On the strength of the imperial headquarters, it gradually commanded increased authority over the others, rivalling Rome itself, even though it had only the flimsiest claim to apostolic foundations.

When the church triumphed, its sheer size changed its forms of ministry.

After Islam dominated North Africa and the Near East, only Constantinople and Rome were left as Christian partners and ecclesiastical rivals. There were clear lines of authority above a bishop, although the Latin idea that all lines lead to Rome's bishop as the successor of St. Peter was not shared by the more collegial Greeks and the Eastern empire.

In time, the idea of a hierarchy influenced most of the thinking about ministry. The local congregation had a pyramid of authority and considered itself part of a larger, vertical system headed by the local bishop and the bishop of Rome, who was eventually called not only successor of Peter but also Vicar of Christ. There were other forms of service and of authority, such as the abbots of monasteries and the professors at universities, and as seen in the late medieval attempt to renew the power of the

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[12]Lienhard, 16

[13]Lienhard, 133.

whole council of bishops. But all ordinations, and therefore all ordained clergy, were part of that vertical network and succession. After centuries of such theory and application, to conceive of ministry any other way was extremely difficult (but not impossible, as things turned out).

Summary

In the early church, mission and ministry were mutually determinative and inseparable. All the baptized shared in the ministry of spreading the gospel. When a new community of faith was born, local leaders emerged to tend its growth. To protect the faith, increased authority fell on the "downtown" head pastor, who became the regional supervisor or bishop. When Christianity dominated the entire Roman Empire, the general ministry of evangelism faded, and the enormous size of the church generated an expanding hierarchical system of accountability and authority. At every turn, the need for spreading the gospel (and the mass conversions which resulted) dominated the way the church organized its ordained ministry.

Review questions:

1. What was the general ministry of all believers in the early church?
2. What did the word "bishop" mean originally?
3. How are the words "elder" and "priest" related to each other?
4. How did the legalization and enforcement of Christianity by the Roman government change its general and specific ministry?

Discussion questions:

1. How has the shape of ministry been affected by the mission of the gospel and the growth of the church?
2. How has the overall mission of your community influenced its forms of ministry? How should it?
3. What were and are the benefits and dangers of hierarchy?
4. What do you think of the idea of the pastor as the local bishop and the bishop as the regional pastor?

For further reading:

Joseph T. Lienhard, S.J., editor, *Ministry* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier,1984). *Message of the Fathers of the Church*, 8.

Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, scheduled for January of 1990).

The Doctrine of the Ministry: The Reformation Heritage

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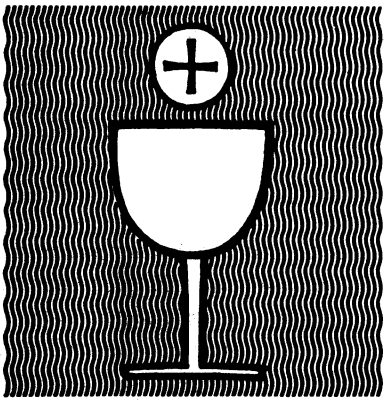
The vast institution called the medieval church was ultimately constructed on two chief pillars, the priestly and the sacramental systems. These systems were intimately related, and together they shaped the church's theological and practical priorities. It is not surprising that the reformers addressed these essential features of the church's life as they articulated their theology and evaluated the church's teachings and practice on the basis of their evangelical perspectives.

The basic issue regarding the ministry discussed during the sixteenth century was the issue of *identity*. In the church of Luther's time, the clergy claimed to be a special spiritual class because ordination had given them an "indelible character," a peculiar and permanent nature which differentiated them from the laity. As ordained priests they enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the means of grace and controlled the office of the keys whereby they could open and close the kingdom of heaven. Their chief responsibility, however, was to offer sacrifices, specifically the sacrifice of the mass. The people of God were dependent on the priests for their spiritual nurture and eternal destiny, and the priests served as mediators between God and their parishioners. By 1520 Luther rejected such perceptions of the clergy as he formulated his doctrine of the universal priesthood, his sacramental theology, and his understanding of the Christian's vocation. Soon thereafter, however, he repudiated the tendency of more radical reformers who emphasized the direct revelation and working of the Spirit and who questioned or even rejected the necessity of the ordained, public ministry.

The evangelical reformers' doctrine of the ministry was not simply reactionary, nor did Luther and his followers perceive themselves solely as critics of the church and its priesthood. As constructive theologians they also sought to articulate a positive understanding of the ministry and to give it an evangelical identity.

The ministry's identity

Although he does not describe the office of the ministry in institutional or clerical terms in Article V of the *Augsburg Confession*, Philip Melanchthon intimately relates that office to the gospel, the sacraments, and the work of the Holy Spirit.[1] That connection is retained when the ordained ministry is specifically discussed in the Lutheran Confessions.



Luther expresses similar ideas. In his most important ecclesiological work, *On the Councils and the Church*, written in 1539, he explains that the holy catholic church is present wherever the Word of God is preached, "for God's word cannot be without God's people, and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's word."[2] Luther bases this assertion on God's promise that the Word shall not return empty (Isa 55:11). The Holy Spirit produces faith through the Word and thereby creates and nourishes the people of God. However, the Word must be proclaimed if this life-giving and nurturing work of the Spirit is to be accomplished. Thus pastors must be appointed who preach the Word and administer the sacraments. Unlike the identity of the medieval priesthood which was defined by its status and its sacrificial responsibilities, the identity of the evangelical ministry is determined by the Word, faith, the church, and the doctrine of justification. Luther viewed pastors as instruments of the Word and of the Holy Spirit and, hence, as instruments of salvation. He had a profound respect for the priestly office, even as he challenged the privileged status of the clergy in his contemporary church and society.

The universal priesthood

That challenge was presented particularly through the articulation of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which remains a precious treasure of the Reformation heritage. Luther explains this doctrine and thereby seriously damages the two chief pillars of the medieval church in two of his most important works, *To the Christian Nobility* and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, both written in 1520. He proposes a baptismal egalitarianism that eliminates all spiritual distinctions among people of faith. All Christians, whether ordained or not, have the same baptism, the same gospel, and the same faith which make them spiritual people.[3] Thus they share a common priesthood and are called to exercise priestly responsibilities. "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this," proclaims Luther, "that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the

[1]Theodore Tappert, ed., *Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), p. 31, 1-2.

[2]*Luther's Works* 41:150.

[3]*Luther's Works* 44:127.

Word and the sacraments."[4] These claims and the convictions which informed them challenged the institutional church and its hierarchy at the core but were welcomed by many of Luther's contemporaries. They had radical implications for the doctrines of the church and the ministry, for the church's sacramentology, and for the practical exercise of power and responsibility within the church.

The ordained, public ministry: its necessity

If all Christians are priests with the power and responsibility of proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments, is the public, ordained ministry necessary? While the heirs of the Reformation have debated this question throughout the centuries, Luther himself answered it in the affirmative. He never rejected his doctrine of the universal priesthood, but he also insisted on the absolute necessity of the ordained ministry and considered it to be of the essence of the church.

Luther argued for the necessity of the priesthood, first of all, because of the necessity of the Word. The reformer worked with the basic presupposition that "the priesthood is properly nothing but the ministry of the Word—the Word, I say; not the law, but the gospel."[5] The creation and sustenance of the church requires the proclamation of this gospel, and that is precisely the pastors' chief function. "It therefore follows logically enough," concludes Luther, that the church "must have teachers and preachers to administer this Word."[6]

But does it follow logically? Luther maintained consistently that all Christians have been gifted with the Word and are called to witness that Word in the normal circumstances of life. He also expected them to proclaim the Word publicly if the gospel is opposed, if error is preached, or if no other Christians are present to confess the faith and to make an evangelistic witness. Necessity and the baptismal call require Christians to exercise their priestly responsibilities in such circumstances.

While he ardently contended that "all Christians are priests, and all priests are Christians,"[7] Luther asserted that normally the *public* exercise of the priestly office must be in the hands of individuals who have been chosen to fulfill this special responsibility, that is, ordained pastors. Thus the reformer's ardent concern for order also led him to defend the necessity of the public ministry. Except in emergencies, no individual may usurp the rights of the universal priesthood or exercise them publicly, namely, as an official representative of the community, without the community's consent. "Otherwise, there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order, as the Apostle teaches [1 Cor. 14:40]."[8]

One ministry— two expressions

The relational issues raised by Luther's affirmation of the universal priesthood and the ordained ministry were complex and have never been fully resolved by his theological and ecclesiastical heirs. If the universal and the ordained priests coexist within the church, how are they related? How are they differentiated? Are there at least two

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[4]*Luther's Works* 36:116.
[5]*Luther's Works* 36:116.
[6]*Luther's Works* 39:309.
[7]*Luther's Works* 40:19.
[8]*Luther's Works* 40:34.

Luther asserts that clergy and laity do not differ in status or spiritual nature, only in their office.

ministries within the church or only one? The intimate relationship between the universal priesthood and the ordained ministry in Luther's thought cannot be denied. All of the ordained persons are, first of all, universal priests, for they, like all believers, have been consecrated to this Christian priesthood in their baptism. Thus "one is born to be a priest," proclaims Luther, "one becomes a minister."[9] Some of the baptized priests are chosen to fill specific offices within the community of faith and become pastors. The reformer insists, however, that there is only one ministry within the church, that of the Word and the sacraments, which belongs both to the universal priests and the ordained pastors:

> 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.[10]

Pastors differ from the laity because they exercise the priestly functions publicly.[11] Luther makes two crucial points as he clarifies the distinction between the ordained and the universal priesthood. He asserts, first of all, that clergy and laity do not differ in status or spiritual nature, only in their office. Secondly, he defines the ordained ministry essentially in terms of an office or of work, that is, in functional terms. While the laity are priests by virtue of their baptism and have the authority and obligation to exercise the priestly functions, they must also pursue a variety of vocations or jobs during their lifetimes. The specific vocation or work of the clergy, on the other hand, is to exercise the priestly functions publicly. Those functions are preaching and teaching the Word; baptizing; celebrating the Lord's Supper; binding and loosing sins; offering the sacrifices of praise, of thanksgiving, of ourselves; praying for others; and judging doctrines.[12] These are, of course, the priestly functions which are the common right of all Christians, but only persons chosen by the Christian community can exercise them publicly. It should be noted that while the functional view is predominant, the Confessions and even Luther also refer to the ordained ministry in terms of an order, though without particular hierarchical implications.[13]

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[9] *Luther's Works* 40:18.

[10] *Luther's Works* 40:34-35.

[11] "It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do." *Luther's Works* 44:129.

[12] *Luther's Works* 40:22-34.

[13] Tappert, p. 238, 13; p. 314, 1.

The mediated nature of the ordained ministry

Luther supported the notion that the ordained ministry is mediated through or even derived from the universal priesthood. Since there is only one ministry in the church, which belongs to the whole community, pastors are chosen by the people of faith and function on their behalf.[14] Individuals can become pastors and exercise their office only with the community's assent. Unlike Luther, the Lutheran Confessions have little to say about the doctrine of the universal priesthood. However, Melanchthon does affirm that priesthood in the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* and at least leaves open the possibility of a mediated understanding of the ordained ministry.[15]

The divine institution of the ordained ministry

Both the Lutheran Confessions and Luther also affirmed that the public ministry was divinely instituted. In the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, Melanchthon quotes from Ephesians 4 and maintains that pastors are a gift of Christ to the church.[16] On the basis of the same passage Luther describes the ordained ministry as an institution of Christ and as an essential identifying mark of the church.[17] Furthermore, in his *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* he lists the ministry, together with marriage and civil government, as one of the created orders instituted by God for the benefit of humanity:

> But the holy orders and true religious institutions established by God are these three: the office of priest, the estate of marriage, the civil government. All who are engaged in the clerical office or ministry of the Word are in a holy, proper, good, and God-pleasing order and estate, such as those who preach, administer sacraments, 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.[18]

The Reformation heritage supports both the notion that the ordained ministry is mediated through, even derived from, the universal priesthood and the belief that it is divinely instituted. Lutherans have chafed under this dual emphasis. They have tended to support one of these perceptions while ignoring or seeking to explain away the other. Absolute unanimity concerning the origins of the ministry has not been achieved, and this issue remains a thorny one within contemporary Lutheranism.

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[14] *Luther's Works* 44:128; *LW* 36:116; *LW* 41:154)

[15] "So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. It is like the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen), and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former. Here the words of Christ apply which testify that the keys were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20). Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, 'You are a royal priesthood' (1 Pet 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers." Tappert, p. 331, 67-9.

[16] Tappert, p. 331, 67.

[17] *Luther's Works* 41:154.

[18] *Luther's Works* 37:364. Note the rather broad view of the ministry of the Word expressed in this passage. Not only pastors, but deacons, sextons, and even assistants to these officials are included. Luther's view may have implications for the ELCA's understanding of associates in ministry.

Luther did not consider the dual constituting nature of the public ministry to be contradictory or problematic. He did emphasize the universal priesthood and the mediated nature of the ministry more in the early years of the Reformation, and the independence and authority of the public ministry in later years. There is, however, a basic continuity in Luther's thought, for he never rejected either of these notions but continued to maintain both throughout his career. The reformer was, after all, a dialectical thinker who tended to appreciate the both/and rather than the either/or character of reality. He also maintained that God typically works through means. Hence, the fact that the ordained ministry is divinely instituted and at the same time intimately related to the universal priesthood was not a contradictory but a complementary reality. Luther viewed pastors as representatives both of Christ and of the people of God. Hence they are also servants of both, though their primary loyalty, as that of every believer, belongs to Christ.

Luther did not consider the dual constituting nature of the public ministry to be contradictory or problematic.

The call

Whether the ordained ministry was viewed as divinely instituted, as derived from the universal priesthood, or both, within the Lutheran context it has been practically constituted and ordered through the call. This process may, in fact, imply a mediated understanding of the ministry, whether or not that understanding is conscious. Good order, the rights of the community, and a properly constituted ministerium were primary issues addressed through the advocacy of the call process. In Article XIV of the *Augsburg Confession*, entitled "Order in the Church," Melanchthon states: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call."[19] In Article XIV of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Melanchthon discusses the issue of ecclesiastical order more fully and addresses the following related matter. He notes that the Lutherans are willing to retain the church's polity and the "various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy,"[20] although these are human creations.

Two important conclusions may be drawn from these confessional materials. The first is that the Lutherans were not radicals and were very much concerned about order within the church, also when it came to constituting a ministerium. Secondly, while they were willing to accept the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Lutherans argued that its various ranks were historical developments and created by human authority. The hierarchy is affirmed if it fosters the gospel, but it can be challenged and changed if abuses occur and the gospel is compromised. The ordained ministry is a divine creation and, hence, essential. Organizational and polity concerns, however, are issues of tradition and good order.

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[19]Tappert, p. 36.
[20]Tappert, p. 214, 1.

Thus the Christian community has the freedom to make its own decisions concerning such matters. How the public ministry is ordered is determined by the needs of the gospel and of the church. These basic confessional principles provide guidance and freedom to the contemporary church just as they did to the sixteenth-century evangelical community.

Luther viewed the call as the essential constituting element of the public ministry. Good order is the paramount concern. While all Christians share the same power of the Word and of the sacraments, "no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior."[21] He emphasized the necessity of a public call for the sake of good order and also for the sake of the pastors who are thereby confirmed in their vocation.

> Therefore we who are in the ministry of the Word have this comfort, that we have a heavenly and holy office; being legitimately called to this, we prevail over all the gates of hell (Matt. 16:18). On the other hand, it is dreadful when the conscience says: 'You have done this without a call!' Here a man without a call is shaken by such terror that he wishes he had never heard the Word he preaches. For by his disobedience he sullies all his works, regardless of how good they are, so that even his greatest works and deeds become his greatest sins.[22]

The call must, however, be a "regular" call, which the reformers understood to be a call issued by a specific community of faith, usually a local congregation, or by an official representative of the community. Much attention has been focused on the Lutheran assertion that the congregation has the right and the authority to call its own pastors.[23] On the basis of his ecclesiology and his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers Luther did, in fact, assert this right. Since the Word must be preached and the sacraments must be celebrated, the congregation, that is, the community of universal priests in a particular place or region, has the obligation to choose individuals who will carry out these functions publicly. While Luther defended this congregational right, he did not seek to eliminate the episcopacy or to initiate a new, congregational polity. He defended the congregation as the primary calling agent because it was a matter of the gospel and because of the circumstances of the time. It was a matter of the gospel since the people of God cannot exist without that gospel and, therefore, have the right to call and appoint pastors who will preach God's Word. Luther was also motivated by a practical reality. In the German areas which accepted the Reformation, none of the bishops joined the Reformation movement, and thus they refused to supply evangelical congregations with Lutheran pastors. It was because of this emergency situation that Luther promoted his understanding of the call process. Both Luther and the Lutheran Confessions were willing to accept the bishops' role in that process, as long as they fostered the gospel and provided suitable candidates. Luther asserted, however, that bishops cannot appoint pastors without the choice, consent, and call of the community. Furthermore, if a bishop refuses to affirm the congregation's choice, the call is valid even without episcopal approval.[24]

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[21] *Luther's Works* 36:116.

[22] *Luther's Works* 26:20. Luther repeatedly justified his own work as a reformer of the church on the basis of his call to become a Doctor of Theology and a preacher and teacher of the Word.

[23] Cf. "The Right and Power of a Christian Church or Community...," *Luther's Works* 39:301-14.

[24] *Luther's Works* 39:312.

Ordination

During the sixteenth century the debate over the nature and significance of ordination was a vociferous one, especially between Luther and his Roman opponents. The medieval church considered ordination to be a sacrament which bestows a distinctive nature, the so-called indelible character, and makes the ordinand a member of the priesthood. The sacrament could not be repeated, and its effects lasted throughout the recipient's life.

Both the sacramental nature of ordination and its efficacy were debated during the Reformation era. In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* the continued practice of ordination is not only presupposed, but it is also suggested that ordination may be called a sacrament since it is connected to the ministry of the Word.[25] While the precise meaning of Melanchthon's statement continues to be debated, it is clear that the sacramental nature of ordination is not inherent in the rite itself but comes from its relationship to the promises of the Word.

Luther did not speak of ordination in sacramental terms.[26] He consciously and correctly related what he considered to be a faulty view of the status and nature of the priesthood within the church to what he perceived to be an erroneous understanding of ordination. For Luther, the call was the crucial element in constituting the ministry, and he viewed ordination as a rite of the church which affirmed the call.

Because of his sacramental theology, his doctrine of the ministry, and his doctrine of the universal priesthood, Luther denied that ordination imparts a special nature, an indelible character, which distinguishes the clergy from the laity.[27] An implication which the church had drawn from its sacramental theology—and particularly its notion of the indelible character—was the life-long character of the priesthood, that is, "once a priest, always a priest." Luther rejected this claim not only because he denied the reality of an indelible character but, more importantly, because of his functional view of the ordained ministry. Pastors are not people who have a privileged status but people who are called to the office of Word and sacraments. When individuals cease to function in that office, they are no longer pastors. Pastors can, therefore, resign from their calling, or they can be removed from the pastoral office. Of course, any claims that ordination and an indelible character elevate the clergy above the laity are not tolerated by Luther, nor is the notion or reality of clerical privileges.

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[25]"If ordination is interpreted in relation to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. The ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises: 'The Gospel is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith' (Rom. 1:16), again, 'My word that goes forth from my mouth shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it' (Isa. 55:11). If ordination is interpreted this way, we shall not object either to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament." Tappert, p. 212, 11-12.

[26]"Of this sacrament the church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the church of the pope. Not only is there nowhere any promise of grace attached to it, but there is not a single word said about it in the whole New Testament. Now it is ridiculous to put forth as a sacrament of God something that cannot be proved to have been instituted by God. I do not hold that this rite, which has been observed for so many centuries, should be condemned; but in sacred things I am opposed to the invention of human fictions." *Luther's Works* 36:106-7.

[27]*Luther's Works* 36:117.

In the medieval church ordination was the exclusive right of the bishops. Both the Confessions and Luther recognize this episcopal right, but they do not consider it to be exclusive. Indeed, they insist that ordination is ultimately the church's divine authority since the Word, the sacraments, and the priesthood are the church's. When they ordain, bishops function as representatives of the church and are not exercising a personal, peculiar power within the church. Thus, if bishops foster heresy or refuse to ordain, the churches must exercise their right to ordain pastors.[28]

Bishops

The office of bishop has been widely, though not universally, accepted within the global Lutheran family. The precise nature and function of the episcopate, however, remain topics of discussion. Neither the Confessions nor Luther sought to abolish the episcopacy.[29] They did, however, seek to reform it and to reinterpret its role within the church.

In one sense, the reformers actually elevated the power of the episcopacy within the church. They rejected papal claims of absolute power and the reality of papal monarchy within the church and argued for the equality of all bishops. Citing several scriptural references, particularly Christ's command that no lordship be exercised among his disciples (Lk 22:24-27), Melanchthon rejects the assertion that the bishop of Rome has authority over bishops and pastors by divine right. He adds that the historical evidence also supports the equality of bishops and indicates that whatever supervisory authority was given to the bishop of Rome resulted from specific historical developments. It is, therefore, a human right.[30] Melanchthon also provides an evangelical perspective on episcopal authority by taking the equality argument one step further and asserting that there is ultimately no distinction between bishops and other clergy, for they all share the same authority, namely, the authority of the gospel. The distinctions which exist within the clerical hierarchy are not divinely ordained but created by humans.[31]

Since the episcopacy, like the priesthood, is viewed as a public ministry, its identity and authority are related to the Word and the sacraments. The episcopacy is, therefore, also seen in functional terms, and its functions are precisely those of the pastors, namely, to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, exercise the keys, judge doctrine, and reject all teachings contrary to the gospel. These functions constitute the power or authority of the bishops which is given them by divine right.[32] In addition, bishops may make human regulations which facilitate order in the church. Such human regulations cannot contradict the gospel, however, and their obedience dare not be demanded as a means of obtaining God's grace or used to bind people's consciences.[33]

The reformers affirmed the episcopal office and its divinely instituted authority, but they challenged and even rejected the Roman episcopacy in specific circumstances. Thus the question of obedience and disobedience of bishops had to be addressed. A clear and consistent guideline is articulated. People and pastors are to

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[28]Tappert, p. 341, 1; pp. 331, 63-332, 72.

[29]Tappert, pp. 214, 1-215, 5; *Luther's Works* 39:311, 312.

[30]Tappert, pp. 320, 7–323, 21.

[31]Tappert, pp. 330, 61–331, 65.

[32]Tappert, p. 84, 21; p. 330, 60-61.

[33]Tappert, pp. 86, 34-90, 56.

obey the bishops if they faithfully exercise their office and foster the gospel, but bishops are to be disobeyed if they become tyrants and opponents of the gospel.[34] Even bishops, who have their authority from God and from the gospel, stand under the authority of that gospel. And so do the people of faith whose ultimate loyalty belongs to God and to the Word.

Deacons

Luther affirmed the diaconate, but not as a liturgical office. He argued that deacons should no longer read the Gospel or Epistle, as was customary in his contemporary church, but that they should model the diaconate of apostolic times. Specifically, they were to care for the poor so that pastors could be relieved of this responsibility and focus their attention on prayer and the preaching of the Word.[35] The reformer's suggestion was widely implemented in Lutheran cities and territories during the sixteenth century. Deacons were appointed to be administrators of the common and the poor chests. As such, they were responsible to pay the salaries of the ecclesiastical personnel, to maintain church buildings, and to care for the poor. Because poor relief, in particular, was a cooperative effort of the church and the government, the diaconate was in fact both an ecclesiastical and a communal institution, and the deacons were required to give a regular account of their work both to the clergy and to the secular authorities. Deacons were expected to be exemplary members of the community, but they were not ordained.

The Lutheran Reformation's understanding of the diaconate was quite precise and obviously informed by the New Testament heritage. The Lutheran community today will have to evaluate this understanding as it considers contemporary ecumenical proposals regarding the threefold office of bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

Conclusion

Although the contextual nature of the Reformation materials must always be recognized, the message of the Reformation is not obsolete simply because it was articulated centuries ago. It continues to be a potential resource for the Lutheran family and for the whole Christian community. The reformers' faithful witness to the gospel, in particular, is a precious heritage which challenges the contemporary church to examine and clarify its own priorities. It was on the basis of that gospel that Luther and his colleagues sought to reform the church, including the church's view of the clergy. By promoting the revolutionary doctrine of the universal priesthood, proposing an intimate relationship between that priesthood and the ordained ministry, affirming the divine institution of the public ministry, questioning the sacramental nature of ordination, emphasizing the call as a practical constituting element of the ordained ministry, and viewing the latter in terms of an office and of specific ministerial functions, the reformers proposed a radically new understanding of the church's ministry and specifically of its ministerium. Surely, by asserting that the ministry of the church, also the ordained ministry, is ultimately the ministry of the Word of God and particularly of the gospel, Luther and his colleagues gave it an identity which transcends the centuries.

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[34]Tappert, pp. 84, 21–85, 28; p. 284, 21; p. 333, 79.

[35]*Luther's Works* 36:116.

Discussion questions

1. What determines the identity of the evangelical ministry?
2. How are the universal priesthood and the ordained ministry related and distinguished?
3. Why does Luther view the ordained ministry as an office, not as a status? What are the implications of this point of view?
4. What are the functions of the ministry?
5. Does the church have only one ministry, or are there a number of ministries?
6. Which offices within the church could be viewed as ministerial offices?
7. How must the church constitute its ministry, and how must that ministry be ordered?
8. What is an appropriate Lutheran polity?
9. What are the functions of bishops?
10. What is the basis of all authority within the church? Who exercises authority? How is that authority to be exercised?

For further study

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Treatises by Luther from *Luther's Works*:

To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate, *LW* 44:115-217

The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, *LW* 36:3-126

The Right and Power of a Christian Church or Community to Judge all Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proved from the Scriptures, *LW* 39:301-314

Concerning the Ministry, *LW* 40:3-44

On the Councils and the Church, *LW* 41:3-178

Wilhelm Brunotte, *Das geistliche Amt bei Luther* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1959)

Robert H. Fischer, "Another Look at Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry," *Lutheran Quarterly* 18 (1966), 260-71

Brian Gerrish, "Priesthood and Ministry in the Theology of Luther," *Church History* 34 (1965), 402-22

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Lutheran Ministry in America

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By the mid-1600s, a century after Luther's death, the great upheavals of the Reformation age had apparently settled. The dominant political unit in western and central Europe was the principality, whose sovereign ruled by divine right. Choosing whether Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, or Calvinism alone should be legal in his realm, each ruler controlled organized religion in the form of a state-church. This pattern held generally true also in the rising commercial free cities; there the elected town council controlled an established church. In both the territorial state and the city, then, the clergy were a part of the ruling caste.

Also by this time, however, fundamental challenges to every aspect of this European society were beginning to take shape. In the next century and a half, European colonial expansionism would reshape the world map; the American and French revolutions would shatter entrenched political patterns; and a restless enterprising spirit, challenging all sorts of outward and inward authoritarianism, would bring to birth our modern western world with its scientific and industrial revolutions.

During just this period the American nation was born, and Christians groped to establish a proper role for the church within the new society.

The Eighteenth Century

In the Atlantic seaboard colonies Germans, with over 200,000 immigrants, formed the largest non-English-speaking bloc. By 1790 the great majority of Christians among them were from Lutheran and Reformed background; of both these groups the great majority settled in Pennsylvania and the adjacent states.

However, the colonial "American wilderness" was also a religious wilderness. The majority of the settlers, wrote an early pastor, are adherents of "the Pennsylvania religion, that is, no religion at all." A small minority hungered for the church and its means of grace, but for them there was always a woeful shortage of ministers.

Lutheran (and Reformed) people got their ministers in several ways:

1) Some settlers were drafted by their neighbors to perform ministerial services; many of these were schoolteachers. Some simply set themselves up as ministers and wandered about accepting employment as opportunity appeared. To many of them the epithet "vagabond preacher" was applied.

2) A number were ordained ministers who came to the colonies on their own, without a call. Some of these served well; others were scamps who had been deposed in Europe for incompetence or immorality. Men from these first two categories might eventually apply for membership in a ministerium, or might not. The ministerium might admit them, or might not.

3) A handful of university-educated, ordained men were sent by some European authority in response to formal calls from congregations. Not surprisingly, these proved to be the most influential of the colonial pastors. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and his Halle-trained associates formed the nucleus of the first American Lutheran synod.

4) Increasingly the pastors encouraged young men to train here for ordination by means of an apprenticeship. Those approved by the synod were given a year's license and assigned, under supervision, to a location for preaching (administering sacraments only in an emergency). In the first written constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium (1781) they were described as non-voting members of the synod; to use today's terminology, they were somewhat like interns or vicars. When they advanced sufficiently in their preparation, they were ordained. The great traveling preacher in the Appalachian mountains, Paul Henkel, who eventually helped to form the North Carolina, then the Ohio, then the Tennessee synods, was a licensed candidate for nine years before he was ordained.

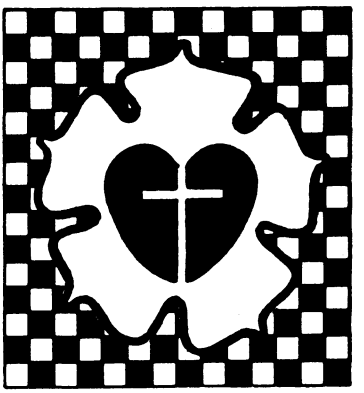
Generally, Lutherans (and Reformed) regarded ordination as the prerogative of a regular church body, and frowned on ordinations bestowed by individual preachers. In the colonial situation, however, some flexibility seemed necessary. When a minister with a questionable ordination (like Casper Stoever, who had already served parishes for over 30 years) was admitted to the synod, he was not given a new ordination but simply "received." The issue was whether mutual trust and accountability had been established between the applicant and the synodical ministers. Muhlenberg regarded ordination as a church body's act of conferring upon a qualified candidate, on receipt of a valid parish call, the authority to preach and administer the sacraments. He had no use for the Anglican claim that a special rank of ministers conferred special powers in ordination.

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, deservedly called "the patriarch of American Lutheranism," recorded his experience of 45 years in America (1742-87) in extensive reports to Europe and in his faithfully kept journals. These afford us an intimate glimpse of the colonial Lutheran ministry—its activities, its character, its range of problems. We focus upon him here in order to show that most of today's basic questions about the Lutheran ministry appear, in one form or another, in his story.

Amid the bewildering options of religion and irreligion in "this extravagantly free climate," Muhlenberg wanted his ministry to have a firm Lutheran identity (as he understood it); the congregations for which he composed constitutions were all pledged to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. As a churchly pietist Muhlen-

berg also insisted that right doctrine must lead to godly living (as he saw it); he had no respect for persons who "cling to the unaltered *Augsburg Confession* with an unaltered heart."

Preaching and catechization, home visitation and personal pastoral care, worship public and private, all were integrally related aspects of the minister's duty. Muhlenberg would "first lay a foundation of true Christianity in the hearts of the people, and then build from the inside to the outside."



Pietism began, a couple of generations before Muhlenberg entered the ministry, as a renewal movement within the Protestant churches which some persons thought had become too formal and intellectualized. It advocated "heart religion," not just "head religion." It emphasized the need of all persons to *experience* God's grace, and indeed, to experience conversion from their sinfulness to a new life in Christ. Pietism proliferated into many forms, some (like Muhlenberg's) faithfully churchly and respectful of the Lutheran doctrinal tradition, some separatistic, such as the Moravians and other "sects" much more antagonistic to Lutheranism. The greatest oddity about the term is that not only did American ministers from the orthodox tradition cast up the disparaging epithet "pietist" to Muhlenberg, but Moravians did, too!

In his relations with lay members and congregational officials, relations with fellow clergy, and relations with other Christian churches, Muhlenberg again helped to lay a stable foundation for American Lutherans. In Germany the only Lutheran laymen who had anything to say about the administration of the church were the government officials and, in some places, the local patron (nobleman or squire). The state supported the church by levying taxes, backed the church administration of ministers and lay officials, and even punished disrespect for ministers. Not so in Pennsylvania. Muhlenberg realized quickly that "in religious affairs one has not the slightest support from the civil authorities, but every person has the greatest freedom." "Everything depends on majority vote. A preacher must fight his way through with the sword of the Spirit alone and depend upon faith in the living God and his promises." Laypeople might say "if we come too close home to their consciences, 'What right has the parson over me? If his preaching does not please my taste, I'll go to another church where I can get it for nothing.'" In many congregations laymen (only male members at this time were allowed to vote) hired their preacher by the year, like an indentured servant, and dismissed him at will.

Facing this situation, Muhlenberg determined that he would force himself on nobody, but if a congregation voted to call and accept him, "as long as I was their pastor, I was going to have *order* as far as the circumstances allowed." This meant that an ordained minister's call must involve tenure, and that in the administration of a parish orderly provision must be made

for accountability on the part of both pastor and lay officials. As he gained experience he opposed such practices as a church council created simply by pastoral appointment, elders holding life tenure and handling property and money matters without giving account to the congregation, and a pastor excommunicating church members simply on his own authority. Conscientious, clear-headed and even-tempered, patient and realistic, he could be firm and usually fair without domineering. To crown these qualities, he had a vision of the wholeness of the Lutheran church in America and a vision of its promising future. Muhlenberg's reputation as a judicious trouble-shooter grew so great that he was called on occasion to go to New York, New Jersey, and Georgia to help resolve deep-seated dissensions.

Problems between congregations or between ministers, and sometimes quarrels between a congregation and its minister, called for a larger forum, however. In 1746 Muhlenberg and five associates, along with lay delegates from ten congregations, formed the first Lutheran synod in America. "A twisted cord of many threads will not easily break," said Muhlenberg; "there must be unity among us." The 1748 meeting ordained its first candidate, one of two men sent from Europe three years earlier as assistants; the ordinand signed a pledge acknowledging the authority of the synod.

The organization, operating at first without formal rules or officers and "without the least imperiousness," quickly proved its worth for settling disputes, placing ministers, dealing with recruitment and with expansion of its influence, reaching a common mind on a multitude of problems, and cultivating good relations with the patrons in Europe. A "superintendent or president" (with no decisive powers) was elected first in 1750. Oversight was indeed a major responsibility of the synod, but at first it was exercised collegially. Of course, the synod continued to evolve as it grew much larger and its tasks of unity and effective service became more complex.

For a generation only ministers voted (hence the name "Ministerium"); lay delegates were present only to answer, for example, how they were getting along with their pastor, how the parish school was doing, and whether they were satisfied with the liturgy Muhlenberg had devised. (In 1748, they were basically satisfied, but suggested that "the public service lasts too long, especially in the winter." 45-minute sermons were common then, and some ministers preached for two hours.) Not until 1792 did the Pennsylvania Ministerium (following the lead of the younger New York Ministerium) give lay delegates voice and vote. Even then it was the separate "ministerial meeting" which voted on doctrinal and disciplinary questions, including approval of candidates for ordination.

The Nineteenth Century

In the 19th century the new nation expanded enormously, especially through a tidal wave of immigration from Europe. The leading edge of the wave headed into the Midwest, with Germans and Scandinavians as a major part.

Brought here by some of these newcomers were two movements which profoundly reshaped Lutheranism in America. One was the "confessional awakening," a minority movement in Germany but militantly devoted to renewing the church by a return to the Lutheran confessions (i.e., the entire Book of Concord, as interpreted by 17th century orthodoxy). The second was the "evangelical awakening" in Germany and Scandinavia, a 19th century pietism

(cousin to English and American Methodism and, more remotely, to puritanism), earnestly devoted to renewing the church by recovering true spirituality from the current dominance not only of worldliness, but also of forms and formalism in the church. The two movements were not necessarily antithetical, but they often clashed.

In this chapter we can only identify some points at which important developments in the view of the Lutheran ministry took place.

1. Two groups of recently arrived confessional conservatives from Germany battled over ministerial authority. In the 1840s, J. A. Grabau, leader of a group of Prussian immigrants, declared that the Lutheran church is the only true visible church of Christ, because only its confession is completely true; ordination is a divine institution through which God confers the ministry upon humans; thus only the ministerial acts of clergy ordained by pastors of the true church are valid; ministers may demand obedience of church members in all matters *not contrary* to the Word of God.

Not so, said C. F. W. Walther, leader of the Saxon confessionalists in Missouri: a local congregation is fully endowed with the power which God gives his true church, the spiritual priesthood of believers; to this priesthood God has given the office of the ministry, namely, the authority and responsibility to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments; the congregation calls qualified persons to *exercise* this office *publicly in behalf of all;* this ministry is no superior order, no "lordship," but "an office of service"; the congregations' rite of ordination is "merely a public and solemn confirmation of the call"; a larger church body has no superior authority over the congregation, only advisory powers.

Both groups were wrestling with the basic problem which had made them leave their homeland: how can the church become free to fulfill its God-given mission to share the true gospel with the world? In Germany even church authorities, backed by state force, interfered with their efforts to recover the pure church; moreover, in myriad ways human reason presumed to judge what God has willed, even in his Word. In America both theologians claimed the freedom of the church by declaring unreserved allegiance to the Word of God and the Lutheran confessions. But the next problem, of course, was: how do we *order* the church so that the gospel will be truly sovereign among us? This is where the controversy arose.

2. Grabau's domineering and "episcopal" pretensions even splintered his tiny Buffalo Synod. Walther's "congregationalism," meanwhile, aroused a further dispute when he explained *how* God gives authority to the church: he gives it directly to the congregation, the spiritual priesthood; for the sake of order this priesthood then "transfers" (conveys, delegates) these powers to the ordained minister.

Does this imply a "democratic" principle, that the ministry is the creature of the congregation, which by its vote makes and unmakes the ministry? Not according to Walther. Does it imply that only a group of true believers—a designation known, really, only to God—is the guarantor and conveyor of ministerial authority? Against any such inference, the German Iowa Synod insisted that the ministerial office is given to the church in its totality (even the smallest congregation), not to the aggregate of spiritual priests; i.e., the church possesses the office in and with the means of grace. Though Missouri said clearly that "the office of the ministry is instituted by God

How do we *order* the church so that the gospel will be truly sovereign among us?

himself," this Missouri-Iowa conflict often (but wrongly) came to be regarded as one variant of a widespread and enduring (but misguided) dispute, whether the ordained ministry is instituted "from below" or "from above."

Missouri declared that the synod has only advisory powers over the congregation; moreover, that the congregation (as the spiritual priesthood) has the power to "judge doctrine." Judge its minister's preaching? Exactly. This judging, meanwhile, must be done according to the Word and the Lutheran Confessions, so that normally it was the clergy, the theological experts, who would expound to the (male) lay voters' assembly what were the pertinent passages of Scripture by which they should vote.

3. The confessional revival gained great influence in America, since it appeared to point the way to church renewal by clarifying what true Lutheranism is. An individual Lutheran is a combination saint-and-sinner, but according to the confessionalists, a *Lutheran church* is "pure" or orthodox if its objective norms of doctrine and discipline are pure and without error. The Lutheran Confessions are such norms; hence, it is the duty of a Lutheran to belong to such a pure church and to avoid heterodox churches. This is the basis for many of the forms and degrees of exclusivism practiced in the Lutheran church.

In the 19th century this outlook came to be discussed most widely in terms of "pulpit and altar fellowship." In 1875 the General Council, a large body composed of confessionalist Eastern and Midwestern synods including the Augustana (Swedes), adopted the "Galesburg Rule": "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only—Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only."[1]

The other conservative Midwestern synods applauded the Rule and adopted the succinct formula; meanwhile, each faulted the General Council and each other for not living up to the rule, either by failure in discipline or by doctrinal errors or both. The sobering fact is that as the 20th century dawned, out of the five largest Midwestern Lutheran bodies—Missouri, Norwegian Synod, Augustana, Joint Ohio, and Iowa—all of which declared allegiance totally and exclusively to the Scriptures and the entire body of Lutheran confessions, no one body was in pulpit and altar fellowship with any of the other four.

4. Questions of a very different kind about the ministry arose out of the "evangelical awakening." Especially in 19th century Norway and Sweden, Finland and

[1]Actually, the Galesburg Rule, designed to be used "educationally" not "legislatively" in order to bring the General Council from a laxer to a sounder discipline, also contained a special provision: a pastor, by conscientious judgment in consonance with the stated principles, might make exceptions as cases arose. A great but indecisive scuffle then arose in the General Council whether, by the logic of the case, *any* exceptions could be legitimate.

There was a price to pay for the gratifying growth of the churches.

Denmark, revivals led by lay preachers powerfully deepened the spiritual consciousness of the simple folk, but also of many educated persons. In the main, these people had no desire to separate from the national church. As "America fever" brought waves of Scandinavians to America, however, these "awakened" Lutherans determined to build their cherished brands of piety into their church bodies. The best example is Hauge's Synod, named after the great Norwegian revivalist. The larger Norwegian Synod had patterned itself after the clergy-dominated state church of Norway. In the interest of "living" Christianity, Hauge's Synod preferred simpler worship services and made wide use of layman-led prayer meetings, lay absolution, evangelistic services conducted by visiting pastors or laymen, etc. What then should be the relation between the pastoral ministry and lay ministries? Throughout the 19th century the existence of several rival bodies of Norwegian Lutherans testified that the issue remained far from settled.

The Twentieth Century

Obviously, American Lutheranism in our time is vastly different from what it was in 1900. To understand the change we need to explore how the Lutheran *mentality*, or outlook, has shifted.

The church has two basic analytical tasks which require periodic reexamination. One has to do with our *identity*, the other with our *mission*. First, are we clear about *who we are*: a community of Jesus Christ, placed in this position at this time? Secondly, are we clear *to what* Jesus has called us, at this time, in carrying out our commission to share his gospel with the world? To put the matter most bluntly: how can we be sure to *get the message straight*, and *get the message out?*

These twin facets always fit together, but at some junctures a church may appear more preoccupied with the one than with the other. In this sense, we may say, 19th century American Lutheranism generally focused on its *identity:* on clarifying what is *true* Lutheranism over against all distortions or substitutes. The dominant confessionalism found its mission chiefly in (a) setting its pure doctrine on a lampstand as its witness to the world, and (b) gathering the immigrants into enclaves where they could be nurtured in the pure faith.

In contrast, late 20th century American Lutheranism seems to focus more urgently on rethinking its Christ-assigned *mission*, examining this question in a quite different way, with a quite different outlook from styles of the past. Of course, the church pays attention also to its identity, not only in merger experiences and ecumenical discussions, for instance, but most especially in its worship life. However, Lutheranism today is not so preoccupied with fine-tuning its exposition of its identity as it was a century ago.

Let us look for clues of a large shift of mentality by examining a few examples of 20th century events, keeping an eye out for ways in which they involve views of Lutheran ministry.

Especially in the period between World War I and World War II (and its immediate aftermath), Americans generally knew that their frame of mind in regard to their world was changing. Scientific and industrial progress, with ever accelerating pace, was altering large social patterns and small routines of everyday life. Moreover, as America stepped into a role of sharing world leadership, the horizons of our minds were inevitably broadening.

Against this background, the mentality and the horizons of American Lutherans also were beginning to change. Within two decades after World War I the ethnic synods shifted almost completely to the use of English. Their tribal mentality was being replaced with a pride in being genuinely "American," even when they opposed American secularization.

The phenomenal growth of Lutheranism also affected our mentality. Now the third largest American Protestant family (behind Baptists and Methodists), Lutherans continued—even though immigration was brought to a halt—to outgrow almost all their Protestant neighbors until the 1960s, when the tide turned and for the first time virtually all churches began to decline statistically.

The task of organizing and managing—and ministering in—a larger church body required a different frame of mind. (Amusing now is the memory that in the 1920s the national office of the great Augustana Synod was a pigeonhole desk in the president's living room!) There was a price to pay, meanwhile, for the gratifying growth of the churches. Not only was organizational expense vastly higher and centralization greater, with corresponding loss of the old familiar intimacy of the fellowship. There also emerged a fateful tendency to let the Lutheran pastoral role become basically that of executive director of a religious corporation or foreman of a religious factory; spiritual aspects of the pastoral task then had to be fitted into whatever slots might be allotted in the managerial scheme.

Against this background, we shall look into four realms of church life for clues to the shifts in 20th century Lutheran mentality.

1. *Church unions.* Particularly the Norwegian Lutheran Church merger of 1917 and the United Lutheran Church formation in 1918 are significant for early breakthroughs over against the 19th century's rigid confessionalist mentality. Efforts to merge the Norwegian Synod, United Lutheran Church, and Hauge's Synod faced two sticking points: the long and drearily controverted doctrine of election, and the tension over different styles of worship. The new church resolved the election problem by acknowledging that both common formulas,[2] properly guarded, have a rightful claim to be regarded as Lutheran. Here the concept of legitimate diversity in doctrine made a breakthrough. The theses on Lay Ministries in the Church resolved the question over worship styles which had kept the Norwegian Synod and Hauge's Synod at odds for half a century. Here the solution was that the congregation, which commits the office of the ministry to the pastor whom it calls, shall also regulate the use in the congregation of the "special gifts" which God bestows on certain lay members. The theses declare that the congregation should use such gifts and that it suffers harm if it does not. Here the negotiators accomplished a remarkable breakthrough in balancing "spirit" and "order." Implications of this agreement for the further diversifying of the

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[2]See Richard C. Wolf, editor, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 232-33.

concept of "ministry" and of lay responsibility in the church were enormous.

The United Lutheran Church merger of 1918 resolved the rivalry between the General Council (and United Synod South) and General Synod by a breakthrough in theological method: understanding the Lutheran symbols historically as confession of the reformers' faith and the Bible not as an arsenal of proof texts but as the witness to God's redeeming activity. Traditional conservatives denounced this approach as unconfessional. ULCA retorted: No, it is evangelical confessionalism.

These achievements in church union opened up possibilities which led to succeeding breakthroughs in the 1960s and in the 1988 ELCA merger.

2. *Church action in the world.* The old assumption was that (a) not churches as such, but Christian individuals affect the world, and (b) a pure church does not cooperate in practical matters with impure churches.

The National Lutheran Council (1918) constituted a breakthrough in cooperative action. Eight bodies formed this agency for service to military personnel and wartime communities, and subsequently for postwar relief in Europe and aid to orphaned mission fields. Nervous church leaders, fearful of the charge of "sinful unionism," insisted that cooperation would be carefully restricted to "external matters." Financial support and skillful administration of postwar relief produced a record which surprised even the church leaders. The success led to further cooperative ventures. "Time and again," wrote a veteran leader, "we rewrote the regulations to safeguard this line, 'only cooperation in externals,' but the Lord pushed us across the line every time." More breakthroughs occurred. Postwar relief in the '20s had been channeled to "good Lutherans"; Lutheran World Action ("Love's Working Arm") in the 1940s and the still-ongoing Lutheran World Relief directed their aid where they found critical *human need*, and compiled a magnificent record of "love and help" which astonished our Christian neighbors, ourselves, and the public at large. Meanwhile, it was the Council which provided the cutting edge of the churches' newly realistic social studies, military and chaplaincy and welfare programs, refugee resettlement, bilateral ecumenical dialogues, and other work. In short, churches not formally in "church fellowship" were now doing some of their most significant tasks together. Judicious planning even made it possible for the Missouri Synod to join in forming a successor cooperative agency, the Lutheran Council in the USA (1966).

3. *World mission and ecumenism.* At the beginning of this century virtually all western Christians practiced *foreign* missions paternalistically. We all have come a long way if we now think in terms of "partner churches" (instead of the condescending "younger churches"), and if we offer to supply our help when and as it is asked for—and if we welcome the help they can give us.

Old conservatives regarded "ecumenical Lutheranism" as a contradiction in terms: interchurch relations were "sinful unionism." Positive participation by Lutherans in modern ecumenism has developed from the breakthrough first achieved by the United Lutheran Church with its "evangelical confessional" approach. The "Washington Declaration" (1920), interpreting "the catholic spirit in the church," led to the further clarification of guidelines for responsible Lutheran ecumenism (the so-called "representative principle" and "evangelical principle"), which both the American Lutheran

Church (ALC) and the evangelical wing in Missouri welcomed. With such guidelines American Lutherans embarked heartily on both "Faith and Order" participation and a number of bilateral dialogues. Both enterprises have proved immensely fruitful for clarifying our own identity, but also, more importantly, for enabling better relations with our fellow Christians. The next step, by all three bodies subsequently merged in the ELCA, was to restate ecumenical principles not just in terms of boundaries (with whom *may we not* explore closer church relations?) but in terms of the positive impulse (with whom *should we* do so?).

> Churches not formally in "church fellowship" were doing some of their most significant tasks together.

4. *"Ministry and ministries."* Particularly after mid-century there has arisen a strong impulse to experiment with "alternative forms of ministry," i.e., alternate to the ordained minster's role. The basic drives are two: (a) Lutherans have realized they have not been notably effective ministering in many expanding areas of human need, e.g., poverty; meanwhile, (b) laypeople have skills, energies, and initiative for Christ's service. "Experimental ministries" proliferated, with both clerical and lay initiative, engaging many laypeople full time.

Meanwhile, Lutheran deaconesses and lay missionaries traditionally have been consecrated but not ordained. Also, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) brought with it the Missouri tradition wherein a male parochial school teacher is *called* as a "minister of Christian education" and is an advisory member of Synod, but an appointed female teacher, while also "a participant in the public ministry of the "Word," is not an advisory member of Synod.

The problem has become acute: how can the church encourage lay activities and lay initiatives, and at the same time devise ways to give them proper *recognition*? After all, recognition involves not only appreciation but also inevitably some kind of regulation—especially in view of selective service and internal revenue requirements for standards.

Concepts of the "ministry of the whole people of God" and of the pastor as "enabler" now occupy major attention in the church; pastoral ministers are being made aware that they must become more sensitive *listeners* than they ever were in the past. The whole problem, far from settled as yet, will in any case be addressed by the whole people of God, not settled by clerical decisions deduced out of a doctrinal system. It was the evangelical Lutheran *mentality* which concluded that the ordination of women (first, among Lutherans, in 1970) makes good sense *biblically speaking*. In dealing with the whole question of "ministry and ministries" the church will apply the same evangelical approach, recognizing that God does give "special gifts of grace" outside the church's institutionalized procedures, but meanwhile also attempting faithfully to balance "spirit" and "order."

Finally, the church now faces a new problem related to the nature of ministry: What is a bishop, and would acceptance of the so-called "historic episcopate" benefit

our own churchly identity and our contribution to the larger unity of Christ's church? For American Lutherans this question has emerged only recently, out of ecumenical dialogue.

Here it must suffice to say:

(a) American Lutherans throughout their history have known that the church needs *episcopé*, oversight; they have normally provided it in a collegial fashion. Meanwhile, down to the present generation, the American Lutheran tradition has been almost totally opposed to Catholic and Anglican notions of a "historic episcopate." Even the "episcopal" pretensions of Martin Stephan (the Saxon immigrants' soon discredited leader) and of J. A. Grabau were quickly rejected by their own followers. In the 1920s the Augustana Synod declined to accept the "apostolic succession" from a Swedish Lutheran bishop. American Lutherans have consistently objected to the notions that a bishop is superior to pastors *by divine right*, and is by Christ's institution *necessary* both for the ruling of the church and for its continuity.

(b) The church will need to handle this new discussion with the same faithfully evangelical mentality that we have identified above.

Discussion questions

1. In the historical sketch, do you discern significant roots of the present problems which concern you? How far back? What makes the present form of those questions different?
2. Can a large institutional church still be a truly *spiritual* community?
3. Is *doctrine* about the church and its ministry less clear now, and of less importance, than it was in our predecessor bodies? What is the proper function of doctrine in the church?
4. How have American Lutherans handled church discipline?
5. Do you discern situations in which they have handled problems about the ministry —legitimately?
   —legitimately but unwisely?
   —illegitimately?
6. How would you interpret "evangelical confessionalism"? Can "evangelical confessionalism" become just an evasion of the sovereignty of the Word of God, or an excuse for churchly indecision?
7. Of the "breakthroughs" cited in this article, can it be said that one breakthrough is the historical source of another? Do you agree, or disagree, that all the alleged "breakthroughs" deserve that title?
8. Do you think of other areas concerning the church's ministry which could be fruitfully explored by the method of looking for "breakthroughs"?

Ministry in World Mission Perspective

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The church in its missionary practice has almost always availed itself of the freedom under God's Spirit to structure its ministry in a variety of ways suited to the task of making the gospel known to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. At the same time, there has been a steady effort to regularize and upgrade the ministries of those who are publicly called to the ongoing service of the gospel and sacraments in many thousands of local cultural contexts.

In the context of Christian ministry in the two-thirds world, the emergence of a local ordained ministry has been a slow and recent development when compared to the common practice in the western world. One of the most reliable observers of the phenomenon, Stephen Neill, has written:

> All the sending churches have from the beginning recognized that sooner or later the younger churches would have to have ministries of their own; but the steps taken to provide for these have been haphazard and in many cases duly delayed.[1]

Local churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, many of them newly established and seeking to work out their own patterns of church autonomy, self-reliance, and contextuality after centuries of western colonial and missionary dominance, continue to raise questions about norms for ministry and locally adapted forms of theological education. The ministry situation in much of the two-thirds world—e.g. in China, India, Africa—continues to be plagued by chronic shortages of well-trained ordained pastors. As a consequence local churches have had to rely heavily on an army of paid or voluntary evangelistic workers for their ministry functions.

With the collapse of "Christendom" in the west, moreover, serious questions about

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[1]Stephen C. Neill, "Ministry in Younger Churches," *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission*, ed. S. C. Neill, G. H. Anderson & S. Goodwin (London: Lutterworth & Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 386.

inherited and traditional patterns of ministry have arisen. A global and ecumenical dialogue about what ministry is, whose it is, and how best to equip and prepare Christians for it, is challenging the church in all six continents. Social, cultural, economic, political, educational, and other contextual factors are playing a large role in this rethinking. While the need for an ordained ministry in some form appears to be taken for granted, its precise status and function in relation to the ministry of the whole people of God is undergoing scrutiny in the light of many factors: discrepancies between traditional church teaching and practice, a variety of ministry patterns in the world today, the rise of specialized ministries, the relation of ordained ministers to lay ministers and to other professional or voluntary diaconal ministries, experiments in team ministries, the existence of "tent-making" ministers, and the shortage of ministerial candidates.[2] A brief sketch of the background will help to clarify some of the complex factors at work in the missionary situation.

Historical background

Roman Catholic missionary practice varied widely with regard to the development of national priests. In the Jesuit *reductions* (settlements) of Paraguay and Argentina, the standards for native priesthood were set so high that for over 150 years no local candidates were put forward. At the Viceroy of Goa, by contrast, large numbers of Indians were ordained to the Catholic secular priesthood.[3] In 1622 the *Propaganda Fidei* office in Rome called for a rapid development of indigenous clergy in all parts of the world, and in 1663 the Paris Society for Foreign Missions initiated a program for establishing local clergy and hierarchies.[4] Even so, the large number of Europeans serving in Catholic religious orders acted as a deterrent to the rapid development of a local Catholic priesthood.

On the Protestant side, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg of the Danish-Halle Mission at Tranquebar—the pioneer Lutheran overseas mission—as early as 1709 (within three years of his arrival in the Danish colony) requested that the Royal Mission Collegium in Copenhagen grant one of the Lutheran missionaries the power to ordain Indian nationals so that the organization of an Indian church would not be delayed. The first ordination of an Indian pastor took place in 1733 when Aaron, a Hindu convert who had previously served for fifteen years as a catechist, was ordained according to Danish regulations.[5] In 1849 Anglican missions in South India began ordaining groups of men trained in advanced catechetical schools for village ministries, and this experiment was widely copied.[6] In general, however, Protestants were slow and reluctant to ordain nationals to a full ministry of word and sacraments.

The experience of Lutherans in China is instructive. American Lutherans related to the ELCA began missionary work in China in 1890. After a period of pioneer missionary preaching they began as early as 1907 to plan for the establishment of a

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[2]Steven G. Mackie, *Patterns of Ministry: Theological Education in a Changing World* (London: Collins, 1969), 151.

[3]Neill, "Ministry in Younger Churches," 386.

[4]Stephen C. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin, 1964), 179-80.

[5]Neill, *A History of Christian Missions,* 230-31.

[6]Neill, "Ministry in Younger Churches," 386.

In general, Protestants were slow and reluctant to ordain nationals to a full ministry of word and sacraments.

union Lutheran seminary to serve the needs of the emerging missionary synods and of overseas Lutheran mission organizations. The new seminary, established in Central China in 1913, was described as "the heart and center of a living organism pumping life blood into all the members and constituting the unifying principle in a great diversity of fields and missions."[7] Between 1916 and 1958 the Lutheran Theological Seminary graduated 287 workers, of whom 131 were pastors, 109 evangelists, 12 teachers, 9 literary workers, and others whose work was unclassified. Many from the ranks of the evangelists later went on to be ordained as pastors. Through the united seminary, with both four- and two-year curricula, the cooperating Lutheran synods were able to meet a wide range of needs centered in but not limited to parish ministry. Not until 1949 was it possible to enroll a majority of candidates with a senior middle school (12th grade) education; prior to that a typical entering student had only a 9th grade education. During a peak period before "liberation" (1949), 180 Chinese pastors were working alongside 600 Lutheran overseas missionaries and an additional 1000 Chinese workers to meet the needs of 727 congregations and 529 preaching places (an average of seven places of worship per Chinese pastor), serving 83,000 baptized Lutheran believers and nearly 20,000 catechumens.[8] Ordained evangelistic missionaries provided the role models for Chinese pastors who especially after 1920 were called to step into the shoes of missionaries, becoming "little bishops," traveling evangelists, church administrators, and dispensers of the sacraments.[9]

In many areas of the two-thirds world, and particularly in Africa, the emergence of a native ordained ministry was slower than the Chinese example indicates, and the reasons are not difficult to find. Western missionaries could generally find and employ ample numbers of native catechists and evangelists to serve in rural out-stations, while the foreign missionaries themselves resided in larger district towns and devoted themselves to administration or institutional work. While it is true that after 1860 most foreign mission organizations subscribed to the "three-self" principles of self-government, self-support, and self-propagation as put forward by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, the impact of colonial policy and a paternalistic mentality persisted in many places up to World War II. It tended to suggest that western missionaries were a permanent and indispensable fixture, like their colonial counterparts. Heavy financial dependence of two-thirds world churches on western missions fostered a "donor-receiver" type of relationship which worked to the detriment of self-reliance and

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[7]Gustav Carlberg, *The Changing China Scene* (Hong Kong: Lutheran Literature Society, 1958), 7.

[8]Carlberg, *The Changing China Scene,* 248-9.

[9]David L. Vikner, letter to J. Scherer, November 8, 1989.

Due to their infrequent availability, the sacraments easily come to be viewed as magical rites.

local church independence. It was all too easy for western racial, cultural, and educational biases to reinforce existing paternalistic relationships.

The slow pace of ministry development, along with a minimal number of ordinations and a chronic shortage of national pastors, combined to create a curious phenomenon among many churches in the missionary situation: an ecclesiastical system known as the central *pastorate* or *parish.* According to this system a single ordained missionary or native pastor, presiding like a "little bishop" over a minidiocese, supervised a cluster of ten to twenty local preaching points or rural congregations from a central station, while all the time serving the pastoral needs of a larger town church in the geographic center of the pastorate. Local congregations or preaching points were served on a day-to-day basis by rural catechists, evangelists, or preacher-teachers, who could preach, teach, catechize, gather the faithful in prayer, and bury the dead, but might not administer the sacraments or perform marriages.

The system exists to this day in many places in the two-thirds world, despite efforts to eliminate it. Under this system, only the central congregation has a full regular ministry of word and sacraments, while outstations are denied a full ministry except on those occasions when an ordained pastor comes to visit—usually less than once per quarter—much like a traveling dispenser of the sacraments. Due to their infrequent availability, the sacraments easily come to be viewed as magical rites.

This system of ministry imposed from the top down—in reality a stop-gap solution to the chronic shortage of ordained ministers—gives rise to the continuing anomaly of local congregations that are not fully the "church" in the sense of Article 7 of the *Augsburg Confession.* The shortage of ordained ministers thus fosters a reductionist ecclesiology according to which groups of baptized believers receive the sacraments as an exceptional privilege rather than as a regular entitlement.

The African ministry situation

Most of sub-Saharan Africa was not evangelized until late in the nineteenth century. Even when local churches arose, the formation of an ordained African ministry was a relatively late development. Western paternalism and European colonial dominance in their British, French, Belgian, German, Italian, or Portuguese varieties had the effect of slowing movements toward independence in both church and state. In 1864 Church Missionary Society Mission Director Henry Venn made a bold attempt to consecrate an African Christian priest, Samuel Adjai Crowther, as Anglican bishop for West Africa, and to lay the groundwork for an African national church under African bishops and clergy. Venn anticipated the removal of western missionaries to the "regions beyond." This experiment proved to be a disappointing failure,

and mission agencies generally drew the lesson that Africans were "insufficiently mature" for church leadership, and followed an increasingly cautious policy.[10]

While the "three-self" formula for local church independence was paid lip service, slow and gradual devolution of authority became the rule. A disastrous dichotomy between "mission" (western) and "church" (African) meant, in practice, that new converts were joined to western missions while the regular organization of African churches was postponed. Around the turn of the twentieth century, African Black separatist movements and African independent churches arose under the leadership of frustrated or disaffected African mission agents. These movements arose as a protest against white missionary paternalism, but unfortunately they reinforced the western view that African Christians needed to continue for some generations to come under the tutelage of Europeans.

In the case of German Lutherans of the Leipzig Mission in East Africa (Tanganyika), theological and anthropological misgivings played a part in the decision to delay the ordaining of Africans. On the one hand, the Germans were hesitant about ordaining candidates without a thorough theological training—something that did not at that time exist in East Africa. Moreover, the famous Leipzig missionary-anthropologist, Bruno Gutmann, believed that a corps of African pastors might possibly form a "dangerous isolationist" element within the Christian community to the detriment of the community's natural organic growth. Gutmann preferred to entrust local church leadership to tribal elders selected by birth or merit, and to postpone the development of what he considered an alien pastoral office.[11] When Tanganyika became an "orphaned mission field" in the 1920s under temporary American Lutheran trusteeship, a plan to commence pastoral training for African pastors was quickly implemented.

As late as 1950, then, unordained catechists and village teachers comprised the overwhelming majority of the African church's evangelistic staff. For every ordained African there were reportedly about 25 unordained African workers engaged in some form of ministry.[12] Paid catechists and village teachers, assisted by voluntary lay workers, bore the brunt of local ministry. Many of the catechists were barely literate, having the equivalent of only two to four years of primary school education. They were poorly paid and were expected to supplement their meager church stipends by farming or carrying on a secular trade.[13] Surveys done in the 1950s on the training of pastors in Africa point to conditions not much better. Reference is made again and again to the paucity of candidates, the poor remuneration offered, the low educational standards for ministers in contrast to rising standards for secular professions, and the isolation and poor staffing of theological schools. In Uganda there was on average only one ordained minister for 5,000 baptized believers, while in Eastern Nigeria the figure was one for 3,000. The typical situation existing at that time was described as follows:

> Most African clergy have started life as village catechists. After a brief course of elementary training they have begun their work as preachers of the Gospel.

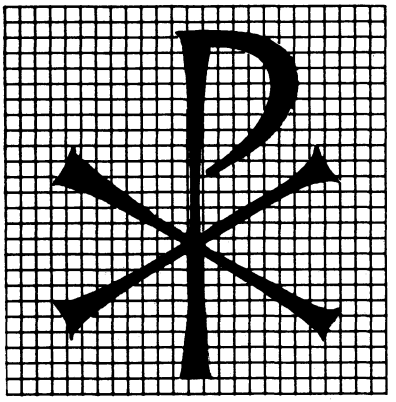
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[10]Bengt Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 44.

[11]Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, 55-56.

[12]Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, 62-64.

[13]York Allen, Jr., *A Seminary Survey* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1960), 84.



> They have then been brought in again for one or two periods of training as catechists; and then finally for a further period of training for the ordained ministry.... The majority of the men currently received as ministers and put in charge of churches are getting in general education a more or less satisfactory four to six years in primary (elementary) school, followed by two or three years of ministerial training.... With the rapid growth of a more educated African population there is pressing need for African ministers whose formal education does not lag behind that of those to whom they will minister.[14]

Sundkler's chapter entitled "The African Pastor—Is He Really Necessary?" underscores the fact that little practical difference of either status or function existed between the small corps of African ordained pastors and the much larger army of African lay workers, both voluntary and paid. The differences were largely a matter of length of training and amount of remuneration.

With decolonization and the coming of African independence, the situation has rapidly changed. Ecumenical efforts by the Theological Education Fund for Africa and the Lutheran World Federation in the past two decades have done much to upgrade theological facilities and to elevate both the status and training of African pastors. These efforts have taken the form of raised entrance requirements, offering of degree programs alongside diploma courses, faculty and library development, text books written by and for Africans, regional coordination of seminaries, and university linkages. In some areas this has led to the establishment of regional magnet theological centers for graduate study, training of African theologians, and research into African history, theology, and religions.

An emerging consensus: priority of a highly trained ministry

Roughly fifty years ago there began to emerge a consensus in world missionary circles, especially in Asia among groups associated with the International Missionary Council, that a well-trained, full-time ordained ministry was essential for the growth and proper development of churches in the two-thirds world. Such a consensus was surely influenced by social and political factors, including the growth of movements for national independence in Asia and progress toward church autonomy in countries such as India, China, and Japan. The new emphasis on fostering a highly trained indigenous leadership in national churches, a welcome change from the "haphazard" and inconsistent policies of the earlier period, was most fully enunciated at the 1938 Tambaram-Madras Missionary Conference:

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[14]Allen, *A Seminary Survey*, 81-82.

> We believe that it is the will of Christ for His Church that there should be within it a regular ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Experience seems to show that Churches rarely flourish or propagate themselves widely without the strength given by a specialized ministry.... From every field has come the conviction that a highly trained ministry is necessary for the well-being of the Church.[15]

The statement went on to decry part-time ministries and ministries by persons of limited education who had little or no theological training. It recognized the difficulties involved in moving quickly from the multilevel ministries of the past to the new concept but insisted that "the ordained minister cannot do all the work to which he is called unless his whole time and strength are devoted to it."[16] The statement on ministry ended with a strong appeal for curricular reform, for the upgrading of institutions for theological education on a cooperative ecumenical basis, and for the amalgamation of many weak local institutions into a few strong centralized ones. This set the stage for the development of a few regional advanced level degree-granting institutions such as the United Theological College (Bangalore, India) and Trinity Theological Seminary (Singapore), and of regional associations for higher level theological education. Even so, the Tambaram statement appeared to reflect a desirable ecumenical goal rather than a realistically achievable result.

A study of arrangements for theological training in India carried out by the National Christian Council of India in 1945 pointed in the same direction.[17] Anticipating the emergence of an Indian national church in an independent India, the Ranson survey characterized the changing environment of the church that demanded a well-trained Indian clergy and upgraded facilities for theological education: rising standards of general education, rapid industrial development, political changes, the intellectual background of secularism, and the need for a "Christian apologetic." The Indian survey dovetails with and supports the earlier International Missionary Council (IMC) Tambaram finding. Similar statements issued by Christian councils in other Asian countries echoed this view. The new goal was clearly the training of indigenous pastors in greater numbers and with sufficient educational background to meet the ministry needs of growing national churches, a flood of new converts, and tens of thousands of new local congregations. But if the ideal goal for local ministry was now viewed as the full-time service of a well-trained pastor in each local congregation, the actual situation remained one of continuing short supply of theological graduates and a continuing reliance on the ministries of volunteers and paid helpers. This situation continues up to the present.

Some dissenting opinions

Despite apparent ecumenical agreement on the goal of a well-trained, full-time ordained ministry for local churches in the two-thirds world, questioning of the goal

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[15] *The World Mission of the Church:* Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, Madras, India, Dec. 12-29, 1938 (London & New York: International Missionary Council, 1939), 66-67.

[16] *The World Mission of the Church:* Findings and Recommendations, 67.

[17] Charles W. Ranson, *The Christian Minister in India: His Vocation and Training* (London: Lutterworth and USCL, 1946 [1st Indian edition, 1945]).

continued on both theological and practical grounds. The above goal was questioned not simply on the basis of its feasibility, or the lack thereof, but also on the basis of serious biblical, contextual, and missiological considerations. Most influential were the views of the British maverick missiologist Roland Allen, who raised strenuous objections on the basis of a careful study of St. Paul's missionary methods, and of the American social and economic researcher, J. Merle Davis; the criticisms of representatives of "TEE" (the theological education by extension movement), who argued that the elitist ministry pattern recommended by Tambaram was actually dysfunctional and out of touch with reality in the context of the two-thirds world; and the findings of recent ecumenical conferences pointing to the problematic character of ministry in all six continents.

Roland Allen's view, initially set forth in his *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*[18] and later expanded and set forth in more detail in other writings, purports to show that on the basis of a study of Pauline missionary methods in Acts and other biblical sources, the modern missionary movement from the west has attempted to impose a non-biblical, western-originated pattern of church ministry on the younger churches. This, he argues, frustrates the intention of the Holy Spirit and amounts to western structural legalism. Allen's focus was clearly on the missionary function of all ministry. He sharply questioned both the assumption that authority for ministry should devolve slowly from missions to young churches after a long period of tutelage, and the tendency to force non-western churches to copy European ecclesiastical institutions, including the use of paid professional mission agents. Not so in Acts, said Allen, who pointed out that real spiritual authority was given immediately and directly by the risen Christ to baptized believers for ministry and mission, and effected through the laying on of hands and the working of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul recognized no lengthy waiting period for local church independence, which came into being the instant believers responded to the gospel. It was secured by appointing local elders and passing on the scriptures, creeds, and sacraments. Paul argued and remonstrated with local churches which he had founded but did not keep them in subjection to himself. Western mission directors were greatly shaken up by Allen's arguments, but generally responded by saying that they could not be applied to the situation of the early twentieth century. In his later writings, Allen focused particularly on "the case for a voluntary clergy."[19]

In a later work, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It*,[20] Allen inveighed against the imposition of a western (Anglican) ecclesiastical system from the "top down" with its fixed traditions, ecclesiastical regulations, and stipendiary ministry. It was this practice which inhibited the normal spiritual growth of the church and deprived local groups of Christians of a full ministry. For according to this system congregations could not be fully independent until they were "self-supporting," which meant that they must be financially capable of supporting a

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[18]Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (London: World Dominion Press, 1956 [4th edition], 1912 [first edition]).

[19]Roland Allen, *The Ministry of the Spirit*: Selected Writings of Roland Allen, ed. David M. Paton (London: World Dominion Press, 1960).

[20]Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (London: World Dominion Press, 1956 [3rd edition], 1927 [1st edition]).

> Real spiritual authority was given immediately and directly by the risen Christ to baptized believers.

full-time, seminary trained, paid professional church leader. All but self-supporting churches were deprived of a full regular weekly ministry of word and sacraments. In effect, said Allen, a prescribed western view of the minister as a salaried and highly trained professional was determining the actual character of a local church's ministry, instead of the local church shaping ministry according to its needs. This, he believed, was frustrating the "spontaneous growth" of the church. Here also, argued Allen, we need to "trust the Holy Spirit."

Allen's argument against the imposition of European traditions and church regulations also received support from economic and social studies on the environment of young churches done by J. Merle Davis in a book entitled *New Buildings on Old Foundations* which bore the significant sub-title, "A Handbook on Stabilizing the Younger Churches in their Environment."[21] Davis' studies reported that the overwhelming majority of the 55,000 Protestant congregations surveyed in the two-thirds world were unable to achieve self-support, concluding that "the younger churches are to a very large extent subsidized churches." He believed that this was seriously crippling the missionary advance of the church, and he attributed it to mistaken expectations and a wrong understanding of the relation between the local church and its social and cultural environment.[22] Davis' research anticipated many contemporary studies dealing with the contextualization of the local church and its ministry, and helped to focus attention on the pattern of a western-style paid professional ministry as a major culprit in the situation. The paid professional ministry pattern, Davis believed, was linked to a long evolution in western capitalism and was closely associated with the rise of a middle class with a salaried mentality. In the marginal economies of the two-thirds world, based on barter rather than cash payments, a salaried professional clergy was an anomaly.

In the middle of the twentieth century the Tambaram doctrine has also been seriously challenged by the educational method known as "theological education by extension" (TEE), originating in Central America and spreading from there to a number of African countries.[23] TEE advocates the substitution of a variety of contextually adapted levels of local ministry for a single omnicompetent pattern of ordained ministry. Alongside programs of residential theological education TEE prefers flexible in-service training modules adapted to local needs and given in extension centers close

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[21]J. Merle Davis, *New Buildings on Old Foundations* (New York & London: International Missionary Council, 1947).

[22]Davis, *New Buildings on Old Foundations*, 75ff.

[23]F. Ross Kinsler, *The Extension Movement in Theological Education: A Call to the Renewal of Ministry* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1981 [1st edition 1978]), and Kenneth Mulholland, *Adventures in Training the Ministry: A Honduran Case Study in Theological Education by Extension* (Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1976).

to the residence and places of ministry of the trainees. In general, TEE advocates believe that long-term residential patterns of theological education in urban settings may actually have the effect of alienating candidates from their natural environment, both economically and culturally. In effect, they may *disqualify* rather than prepare candidates for their intended ministries. Kinsler, noting resistance to TEE on the part of advocates of the Tambaram goal and of residential theological education, speaks cautiously of TEE as a "subversive" approach and an "alternative model" based on sound biblical and anthropological premises and with considerable promise for churches in the two-thirds world.[24] This should not cause us to overlook its significance for struggling churches in missionary situations in the U.S.A.—for example, congregations witnessing in the midst of urban poverty and deprived of normal resources.

That the above criticisms are not necessarily one-sided, faddish, or idiosyncratic can be seen from reports on recent ecumenical conferences on ministry and the Theological Education Fund (TEF). The call for rethinking ministry in terms of today's world is best seen, in the western context, against the background of the recovery of the ministry of the *laos*, the whole people of God in the world. In the context of the two-thirds world, the decisive issue has to do with the *contextuality* of the gospel and the *contextualization* of the church in its cultural and religious environment.[25]

Lesslie Newbigin speaks of the recovery of theological depth for the word "layman" as one of the great ecumenical achievements of our time.

> There has been a recovery of the biblical understanding of the whole Church as a royal priesthood, of baptism as a rite of admission into this priesthood, of the layman in his secular vocation as part of the Church's ministry to the world.... It is no longer possible to use the word "vocation" as if it referred exclusively to the work of the professional clergy. Indeed, it is more often suggested today that the really demanding calling to a young Christian is the call to be a layman. Inevitably, therefore, the question arises: what then is "the ministry" in the narrower sense of the term?... What precisely is the specific function and character of the "ministers of the priestly people"?[26]

Newbigin refers to the recovery of the meaning of the laity as a necessary consequence of the church's adjustment to a post-Christendom situation. The new question which arises is: what is the pattern of ministry proper to the nature of the church as God's apostolic community in this world? Newbigin continues:

> This requires us to submit our traditional patterns, however hallowed by custom, to fresh scrutiny in the light of the Word of God, and in the light of a realistic understanding of the situation in which the Church's mission has to be discharged in the present day. When this is done it may well be that, in certain situations, the "non-professional" ministry will be seen to be the *essential*

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[24]Kinsler, *The Extension Movement in Theological Education*, 41, 89.

[25]David M. Paton, *New Forms of Ministry* (London: Edinburgh House Press [published for WCC/CWME], 1965); *Issues in Theological Education 1964-65:* Asia, Africa, Latin America. Report of the Theological Education Fund (New York & London: Theological Education Fund, 1965); and *Ecumenical Responses to Theological Education.* Progress Report on the T.E.F. Third Mandate Programme (London: Theological Education Fund, 1974).

[26]Paton, *New Forms of Ministry*, 7.

> ministry, and that of the full-time professional the "auxiliary" or "supplementary".... What is certain is that the question of the form of the ministry can only be rightly answered on the basis of an understanding of the nature of the church which is in conformity with the biblical doctrine of the *Church as a missionary community*.[27]

In the context of theological education in the two-thirds world, the issue of contextuality of ministry first surfaced as a by-product of the realization that the pattern of theological training bequeathed to the churches by the missionary movement—essentially the one recommended by the Tambaram Conference of 1938—had become financially unviable. This led to deeper probing with regard to "the faithfulness of the seminary itself to God" and a recognition of the need to test earlier assumptions regarding the entire purpose, content, and method of theological education. The TEF's new mandate set forth a new goal of excellence in training for ministry:

> The excellence to be sought should be defined in terms of that kind of theological training which leads to a real encounter between the student and the Gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture, and to a living dialogue between the church and its environment. The aim should be to help teachers and students to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church, so that the church may come to a deeper understanding of itself as a missionary community sent into the world, and to a more effectual encounter with the life of society.[28]

Subsequently this was defined by TEF Director Shoki Coe in terms of a "double wrestle": wrestling with God's *world* in such a way as to discern the meaning of the present historic moment (contextuality), and wrestling with God's *word* in such a way that the power of the incarnation can enable us to follow in Christ's steps to contextualize (contextualization).[29] This in turn opened the door for a serious consideration of theological education by extension and "tent-making ministry" patterns. Recently, the ability to "do theology" and to carry out mission and evangelism in a multifaith context has also been emphasized.[30]

Concluding reflections

Our discussion of the development of ministry in the missionary context has focused on three concepts: missionary purpose, functionality, and contextuality.

1. The development of various patterns of ministry, and of ministries on many levels, has been a natural outgrowth of the basic purpose of ministry in the two-thirds world: to foster mission and the spread of the gospel, and to gather believers into local churches with word and sacraments. The church wherever it exists needs to recover its sense of being a missionary community, and to structure its entire ministry—including its ordained ministry—to serve this purpose.

2. The functional character of ministry has generally taken precedence over its dogmatic character, thus giving rise to what

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[27]Paton, *New Forms of Ministry*, 8-9 (emphasis added).

[28]*Issues in Theological Education 1964-65*, 2.

[29]*Ecumenical Responses to Theological Education*, 17.

[30]Sam Amirtham and S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Ministerial Formation in a Multi-Faith Milieu*: Implications of Interfaith Dialogue for Theological Education (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985).

may appear to be an "haphazard" development without undue regard for historic tradition. If function has prevailed over form, the time has come to bring both into a closer biblical correlation. This should not be taken to mean that the church's missionary ministry is captive to any doctrine of holy orders.

3. The insistent call for faithful contextualization, stemming from the death of colonialism in the two-thirds world, and from the collapse of Christendom in the west, points to the need in all six continents for an effective integration of the ministry of the whole people of God, of non-ordained diaconal ministers, and of those theologically trained for special ministries. The New Testament provides the best example for this kind of integration.

Discussion questions

1. How does the development of ministry in the missionary situation differ from its development in Europe and North America? Why has it been different?
2. Is the existence of ministries on many levels in the missionary situation a strength or a weakness? What does it say about ministry in America?
3. Do the arrangements for ministry in your congregation promote missionary outreach and the growth of the church? Why or why not?
4. Are pastors of local congregations seen as having a missionary responsibility going beyond the life of the congregation? How is it affirmed?

For further study

The following volumes, in addition to materials cited in footnotes throughout this essay, are useful for further reading:

Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964 [reprint of earlier work]).

Bengt Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, abridged paperback edition (London: SCM Press, 1962).

A Report from the Theological Education Fund (New York: Theological Education Fund, 1959).

World Consultation on Theological Education. Minutes of Meetings Held at New Delhi, November 19-26, 1961. Robert I. Tobias, Secretary.

Douglas Webster, *Survey of the Training of the Ministry in the Middle East* (Geneva, London, & New York: International Missionary Council, 1962).

Ordering of Ministries of All the Baptized People of God

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The theme of The Ministry of All Baptized Believers is not original or unique to Lutherans, but it is, without question, a widespread Lutheran emphasis. The Lutheran Church was born in an ecclesiastical context of hierarchical domination. The Reformation broke open a whole range of ways to express God's direct relationship to every believer, God's unconditional love, and God's invitation to every Christian to serve God by serving people in need. Every baptized person was identified as a part of the Christian priesthood in the world. Martin Luther himself taught that Baptism was everyone's ordination to the ministry and mission of Christ.

Lutherans around the world are united in the belief that all the people of God participate in the mission of Christ's church. This is what Lutherans understand by the general ministry of all baptized believers. All are called, all are sent, all are accountable for the whole mission of the whole church in the whole world.

To effect this general ministry of all the baptized, Lutherans hold that God has established a special ministry within the general ministry of all the baptized. This special ministry, too, is founded solely on Jesus Christ. The whole life of Christ—his miraculous birth and incarnation, his embodiment of the Kingdom of God, his penetrating parables and teachings, his confrontation with oppressive religious and social structures, his innocent suffering and death, his glorious resurrection and ascension—reveals the true nature of God and the mystery of life.

Those who first saw, first heard, and first bore witness to all that God revealed in Jesus Christ are called the apostles. Their witness and their faith, captured in the writings of the New Testament and spread by preaching and teaching and through the reenactment of Holy Baptism, the Last Supper, and the regular celebration of the resurrection, is the foundation of the special ministry of the church. Like the apostles,

those who have this special ministry and perform these specific tasks are called out by God through a mysterious process that includes personal attraction to these tasks and the affirmation by those who perceive these gifts at work in them. Ordination is the sign that sets individual believers apart to carry out this special ministry, and it is the event, through prayer and the laying on of hands, in which the Holy Spirit empowers a person for these tasks.

Special ministers exist solely to serve the general ministers of the church. The ordained are said to be "the ministers of the ministers of God." They preach, teach, and practice the apostolic faith, and by so doing, they illuminate, motivate, and enable the general ministry of all the baptized. The title of "pastor" is given to these special ministers and is intended to describe and define their role. They are shepherds, and their guiding role model is Christ, the Good Shepherd. They both lead the sheep and lay down their lives for them.

This classic biblical image of religious leadership is an appropriate way to describe the central focus and servant nature of the special ministry, but it lacks the dynamic intention of this ministry within and upon the general ministry. Pastors have the characteristics of shepherds, but all baptized believers do not necessarily have the passive characteristics of sheep. All the baptized believers are called, equipped, and empowered by the apostolic faith represented by, but not exclusively performed by, special ministers; and when these ministries properly interact, they are intended to release an explosion of ministry through the witness and service of all the baptized believers in the world.

Lutherans around the world are united in this central view of the general ministry of all baptized believers and the special ministry of those set apart by ordination to enable Christ's continued ministry in the world.

Special ministers exist solely to serve the general ministers of the church.

Lutheran ministry, however, does not exist in a vacuum. Historical circumstances and the conditions of local life do much to shape ministry and the relationship between ministries. This means there is a variety of factors to be considered as the ELCA begins to shape its structures for ministry to Lutheran believers in the United States as we look toward the year 2000 and beyond. One factor is the various histories and traditions in ministry that the ELCA brings together. Another is our present situation, the needs of our people, the shape of our society, and our specific tasks in the world. A third factor is the whole Christian church of which Lutherans are a part.

The Task Force on Ministry will need to look into all these areas as it proposes how the ELCA should shape its ministry for our time. The task is vast and complex, and it has critical consequences for every part of the life of our church. Everything from our self image and identity as individual believers, to our understanding of our role in Christ's mission, to our relationship to other Christian believers, will depend on how we define our ministry.

We will not deal with all these issues in this short space, but will focus on one key

area, namely, how we can relate the Lutheran core understanding of the general and special ministries to the conditions of our particular time and place. Specifically, we will explore questions like: How well does the theory about the general and special ministries described above work in practice, and what might be done in our shaping of ministry to improve its apostolic intention? How do we as a church provide for people who have a special call from God to serve the gospel, but do not have a call to the special ministry of the church? And how do we shape our ministry so that we can best witness in our structures to the oneness of the ministry of Jesus Christ?

How well is it working?

The study of ministry in the ELCA will need to make a careful analysis of how well the theological relationship between the general ministry of all the baptized and the special ministry of the ordained is working in our church. Is it happening as the theological description suggests? Is the general ministry of all the baptized being illuminated, motivated, and enabled by the special ministry of the ordained? Are baptized believers identifying themselves as ministers of Christ in the world? Are they being inspired by the Word and the sacraments to witness in their daily lives to the presence of the coming Kingdom? Are they being empowered for the tasks of ministry through growth in knowledge, skills, and spirit?

When such questions are explored, mixed answers will be received. Mostly, people will be tempted to give conditional answers depending on their own experience of the church and their awareness of the general conditions of ministry. It will be most accurate to give a YES/no answer or a NO/yes answer to adequately reflect the contradicting trends at work in the church today. To some extent, it is happening. In some places it is happening more than in others. To a large extent, it is not happening as fully as we would hope. The study of ministry needs to identify the insights and practices, particularly in congregational life, that seem to facilitate a productive relationship between special and general ministers and to find ways to enrich our images and teaching about ministry today from those places where the Spirit is giving life. Here we will signal several major trends that will need to be considered.

A new consciousness

The first is the new consciousness regarding the ministry of all baptized believers. Even to use these words to describe the church's ministry is indicative of the new consciousness growing and developing in our church. This trend is, of course, solidly grounded in the scriptural and confessional concept of the priesthood of all believers. Yet, that concept has taken on new power and meaning for the church, especially since the middle decades of the 20th century.

Many factors could be cited for this development: new insights into Holy Scripture and the Confessions by contemporary scholars and students; the conditions of modern American life, including the influence of higher education, more leisure time, and a growing trend to replace hierarchical forms of organization with more participatory structures; and the influence of the ecumenical movement that has identified and nurtured the ministry of the laity as a major movement within the global church.

Lutheran bodies that have joined in the ELCA have participated in this awakening in various ways. The movement took its

most complete organizational form in the Lutheran Church in America with the formation in the mid 1970s of LAOS in Ministry, an organization sponsored by the LCA that was linked to the Division of Mission in North America. LAOS built on a series of "Faith and Life Institutes" that related the gospel to the practice of various professions. In the American Lutheran Church, an emphasis called Discipleship in Society was begun in the early 1980s and was related to the Division of Life and Mission in the Congregation. Both groups were instrumental in lifting the consciousness of all the baptized to the essential task of ministry in daily life, equipping people for their unique ministries, and providing support groups for spiritual renewal and practical training.

In 1986, representatives of these two lay movements, joined by people from the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, began to design the Ministry in Daily Life Network, which is now a recognized organization within the structures of the ELCA and is related to the church's Division for Ministry.

The Laity Movement or, better, the development of the ministry of all the baptized, has been erratic, exploratory, and relatively unstructured and uncontrolled. It has the character of the Spirit blowing where it wills. In some places and with some people, the concept has taken root and given new meaning to Christian life and witness. This new consciousness has resulted in a variety of ministries in the church that have sprung up out of the faithful witness of baptized believers in their daily lives. The sense is not different from the New Testament communities where we find a variety of ministries flourishing. St. Paul lists them: apostles, teachers, evangelists, miracle workers, pastors, bishops, prophets, elders, deacons, exorcists, healers, those who speak in tongues, administrators, and others.

One key area the Task Force will need to address is how this general ministry can be described theologically and provided for in church structures in such a way as to take full account of the new consciousness of the ministry of all baptized believers. What changes do these developments imply for the relationship between the general and the special ministries? What role do pastors play in this awakening of the ministry of all the baptized, and what role do they play in supporting and maintaining the general ministry of the church? Is the role of the special ministers diminished as the role of the general ministers is enhanced, or is it changed and re-focused? What implications do these changes have for the preparation of both special and general ministers of the gospel? Study and guidance on these matters is needed to restate the relationship between the general and specialized ministry of the church within the ministry of all baptized believers.

Other forms of set apart ministry

A second area that will need the special attention and guidance of the ministry study has to do with baptized believers who are called by God to positions of service within or through the church, other than ordained ministry. Are such people to be considered part of special ministry that should be recognized with ordination or some form of commissioning, or should they be regarded as part of the general ministry of the church that just happens to be performed in or through the church?

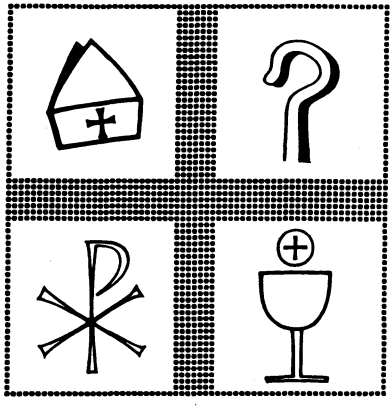
There is a sense in which this question is central to the study of ministry, because it is precisely this question that could not be satisfactorily answered by the Commission for a New Lutheran Church prior to merger

and which, therefore, provoked the idea of a thorough study of ministry in the first years of the ELCA. The difficulties in coming to an acceptable decision on this question are due to two major factors: one is the widely differing practices in the church bodies that have come together in the ELCA, and the other is the general ecumenical discussion on precisely this point that is taking place among the major Christian traditions around the world.

The LCA and the ALC had parallel practices in regard to people in this special category, though with different qualifications and expectations. One could say that such people were regarded in these church bodies as part of the general ministry of the church, serving as all people are called to serve but doing so in or through the church. Such people in the ALC were called Commissioned Church Staff. In the LCA, they were known as Lay Professional Leaders. Both terms and tasks are being continued in the ELCA until the study of ministry is completed and this category of ministry is clarified.

A complication comes when the practice of the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches is added to the mix. The AELC had quite a different practice, based on its Missouri Synod background and its unique history. Parochial school teachers were regarded more like a part of the special ministry of the church. They were not ordained but were regarded as "ministers" and rostered in a special category in the official directories of the church. This meant parochial school teachers in the AELC have some of the same rights and privileges as the ordained, including tax advantages provided by the government for members of the clergy.

It has been hard for some people in the ALC and LCA to square their doctrine of ministry with the special category provided for teachers in the AELC. At the same time, some AELC people have difficulty understanding why only the office of pastor should be set apart and why other forms of special ministry cannot be recognized. An AELC pastor explained that as a young person he



felt a clear call to the ministry, and the only question for him and his family was whether he could serve best as a pastor or as a teacher. Both were considered to be part of the special ministry for the service of the general ministry of the church.

Emotions run high on this issue. Lay professionals have sometimes felt they are second-class ministers in the church, that their roles are unclear, and that the recognition of their call is minimal. Some people have consistently cautioned against the growth of another hierarchy in the general ministry of the church. In the early 1980s, members of LAOS in Ministry were instrumental in blocking a proposal to create a newly structured diaconate in the LCA. At the same time, people in the AELC, who have long recognized the ministry of teachers in a special way, argue for a continuation and expansion of this category of ministry.

The ecumenical discussion

Perhaps in this sticky and sensitive area the ecumenical church can help us refocus our questions. For several decades, the varieties of ministry within the Christian church have been a consistent theme of discussion among churches related to the ecumenical movement. Chiefly, it has been the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches that has strongly encouraged this discussion, and even churches outside the WCC (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church) have participated in this global dialogue.

The results have been amazing even to people who expect the Spirit to lead and direct the affairs of the Body of Christ. In 1982, a fifty-year process of ecumenical discussions culminated in the publication of a document entitled *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM). This text demonstrates "a remarkable degree of agreement," though not complete consensus, on what ecumenical leaders have termed "The Tradition of the Gospel Testified in Scripture, Transmitted in and by the Church through the Power of the Holy Spirit."

Our ELCA study on ministry will shape its proposals in relationship to these historic agreements achieved at Lima, Peru, by Christian churches of the world.

Specifically, the ELCA's proposals on ministry will want to consider the direct appeal of BEM (or "The Lima Document," as it is sometimes called), which asks churches like ours to consider shaping their ministry in the threefold categories of bishops, presbyters (or pastors), and deacons. BEM defines the categories in this way:

> Bishops preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider church, and the universal church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.
>
> Presbyters serve as pastoral ministers of Word and sacraments in a local eucharistic community. They are preachers and teachers of the faith, exercise pastoral care, and bear responsibility for the discipline of the congregation to the end that the world may believe and that the entire membership of the church may be renewed, strengthened and equipped in ministry. Presbyters have particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry.
>
> Deacons represent to the church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the church's life. They exercise responsibility in the worship of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.

The Lima Document makes its appeal on the basis of history, the distribution of gifts, and the need to express the unity of the church. As earlier chapters have made clear, the New Testament does not hand down a blueprint for ministry. Nevertheless, the threefold ministry was a very early development in the life of the church grow-

ing out of apostolic experience. In the earliest references to the threefold ministry in the second and third centuries, the bishop was the leader of a local community, with presbyters and deacons assisting him in his tasks. Soon, however, the tasks changed. Bishops began to exercise *episcope* (oversight) over several local communities at the same time. Originally, apostles had provided this oversight in the wider church and were the focus of the church's unity. Later, Timothy and Titus fulfilled these functions, and later still, these apostolic tasks were carved out in a new way by bishops. A change in the role of bishops caused a change in the assignment for presbyters and deacons. Presbyters became leaders of local communities, and deacons became their helpers. The function of the threefold ministry has been modified in relation to circumstances many times over the centuries, but in some churches the form has remained intact. Other churches have changed the forms but provided for functions in different ways.

For American Lutherans, the office of presbyter or pastor has been the center and, strictly speaking, the sole part of the threefold ministry we have retained. The functions of presbyters in the Lima Document roughly corresponds to our expectation of parish pastors. In the late 1970s the ALC and the LCA gave their organizational presidents the title "bishop," but without adopting the fuller description of the function of bishop provided by BEM. Bishops in the ELCA are not defined as the Lima Document describes the office. Rather, they are defined more like pastors or presbyters, but with extended responsibility over a region related to a number of congregations. One of the decisions the Task Force on Ministry will make is whether the ELCA should consider the full historic function of bishops, as this office is defined in BEM.

The New Testament does not hand down a blueprint for ministry.

Even more closely related to the concern of this chapter for the ministry of all baptized believers is the possible proposal that the ELCA recognize the historic role of deacon as an office of ministry.

Those who favor the establishment of a diaconate present a variety of arguments. First is the long history of the diaconate in the church and its precedent even in our churches and in other Lutheran churches around the world. Lutherans in Germany established both a male and female diaconate in the mid-19th century primarily to carry out a special ministry to the child victims of the Industrial Revolution. Branches of these movements located in the United States and have performed a significant servant ministry in the church.

A second argument often presented is the possibility that this ancient form of service may be a way to vitalize ministry in the contemporary American scene. The accent of the historic diaconate is on loving Christian service in the world. The relationship between the church and the world is a special type of ministry. The church's witness to the structures of society and its participation in public programs that promote the common good often go unattended because no one is specifically assigned to these ministries. Pastors who take on these tasks add them to their primary functions of preaching, teaching, and the spiritual nurture of the congregation. The general min-

isters have their occupations in the world, where they fulfill their Christian vocations and have only volunteer time to give to these vital ministries in the world. A gap exists in the church's ministry, say the proponents of this position, and the diaconate could be an essential bridge.

A third argument for the restoration of the diaconate has to do with the gifts of the Spirit. There are people who are called to full-time ministry in the church but do not have gifts for congregational leadership. Presently, there is no way to express this calling except through the office of presbyter or pastor, even if one's gifts are more directly related to another field of service. The diaconate provides another way to fulfill a special ministry within the church.

Finally, some people concerned about the visible oneness of the church will urge that common orders of ministry would be a gigantic symbol of the growing unity of the church throughout the world. Some years ago a Greek Orthodox theologian proposed (somewhat facetiously) that if all the churches would simply adopt the same names for people serving similar functions, church unity would be achieved in a generation. It is doubtful that his prediction is accurate, but common titles and similar functions would make it easier for Christians in other churches and around the world to recognize, understand, and feel comfortable with one another. It would also be a strong outward sign to the world of Christian unity.

There are cautions and questions to consider, as well, in regard to the historic diaconate. Should the study on ministry recommend the establishment of a diaconate in the ELCA, a number of questions will be raised. Would the office be defined in such a way that the present people rostered as lay workers in the church could become deacons? Would they need to make this change, or would other categories of service continue? Would deacons serve a set term, or would they be deacons for life? What sort of preparation would be required for the diaconate? To whom would they be accountable? How would the office be recognized—by ordination, commissioning, or some other rite by which people called to this office would be set apart? Would deacons be part of the general or special ministry of the church?

A further consideration

BEM urges Lutheran churches to give renewed consideration to the way they provide for the succession of the apostolic tradition. Earlier in this chapter we described how the special ministry of the ordained is founded solely on Jesus Christ and the faith and witness of the apostles. American Lutherans have maintained that the orderly transmission of the apostolic faith is guaranteed by the proper preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments. In earlier centuries, however, in the growing church of that time, the succession of bishops became one of the ways continuity in the apostolic faith was expressed. As the Lima Document puts it, "This succession was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the Apostolic faith." BEM goes on to urge churches that practice the historic succession to recognize that the apostolic faith has been preserved in churches, like the ELCA, which have not retained this historic form of succession. And it encourages churches like ours to appreciate the tradition of apostolic succession as a sign, not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the church. It then calls on Lutherans to be willing to accept the episcopal succession of our bishops as a sign of the apostolic

center of the life of the whole church. Again, the study of ministry will need to wrestle with this appeal made by our global colleagues in the Body of Christ.

Conclusion and proposals for discussion

Ordering the ministries of all the baptized people of God, both the general ministry of the laity in daily life and the special ministries of the clergy and other recognized church occupations, will be one of the most important steps taken by our new church. The duty before the Task Force on Ministry, and finally the ELCA in churchwide assembly, will be to relate the rich traditions of ministry described in these pages to the conditions of our time and place, to the end that the gospel might be faithfully and effectively proclaimed.

The task of this volume is not to prescribe the conclusions that the study on ministry should reach, but rather to sketch the terrain over which the study will need to travel and to state the questions it will need to wrestle with at this point in the development of our ministry in the ELCA. Neither the authors of these chapters nor their colleagues on the faculty at LSTC have come to a consensus on the important issues that will be addressed by this study. Still, I would like to offer several proposals regarding the outcome of the study.

I believe this study should:

1. Strongly affirm the general ministry of all the baptized, describing the developments and possibilities of the general ministry in the light of the experience of the church in the last two decades and encouraging the continued nurture of the general ministry as the primary object of the special ministries of the church.

2. Redefine the pastoral office, building on the description of presbyter in the Lima Document and especially emphasizing the teaching functions of pastoral ministry. A clearer definition, related to the conditions of life in America today and to the role of the special ministry in illuminating, motivating, and equipping the general ministry of all the baptized, is a needed outcome of this study.

3. Adopt the office of deacon as a recognized part of the special ministry of the church; provide for a commissioning rite for this office; make it possible for teachers and other rostered lay workers to become deacons.

4. Redefine the office of bishop to include more of the functions described in BEM, but maintain the Lutheran emphasis on the bishop as an extension of the pastoral ministry of the church.

5. Promote a churchwide discussion on the threefold office of ministry and the tradition of apostolic succession, so that by the year 2000 the ELCA can make a more fully informed decision concerning the appropriation of this historic sign of ministry for the enrichment of our church's life and as a witness to the growing unity of the church.

Ministry in a Multi-cultural Church

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This study contends that the basic principle underlying ministry in a multi-cultural church is *contextuality*. For it is in context that we find the key to the nature of unity in cultural diversity.

Since God in Christ is to be found in the context of culture, Christian theology is contextual by definition. Therefore we shall attempt to explore ministry in this essay within the scope and context of many cultures rather than just one culture.

To ask the question, "What is the context of ministry?" is to raise a host of questions related to our understanding of the nature of God, of humanity, of the Bible, of history, of Jesus Christ, and of the church. How one answers these basic questions under the tutelage of the people in a given context, or more particularly, how one applies the answers in a given cultural context and place in history, has a critical bearing on the methodology of ministry in that time and place.

Each culture is immediate to God, which is to say that we reject the approach of a gospel which stresses universality apart from particularity. The proclamation is always directed toward humankind wrapped in all of its cultural diversity.

Lutheran theology is contextual theology, that is, the law must be related to the context of the people so that the gospel can free them to live God's life in that context. This makes the criticism of Douglas John Hall particularly poignant:

> What has achieved the reputation of theology in North American church and society is not only noncontextual, it is anticontextual. Most Christians do not regard Christian theology as a mode of engaging this historical cultural socio-economic milieu. On the contrary, where they consider the subject at all, laypersons tend to think of theology as a more or less fixed set of beliefs, contained in embryo in the Bible, codified in various historical creeds, confessions and faith

statements, refined in forbidding volumes of doctrine, and relayed to congregations in simplified form through sermon, catechetical instruction, and (for a few) college classes in religious knowledge.

Any attempt to claim the contextuality of theology for our ministry is to engage ourselves in comprehending all of the aspects of culture. All of this is a part of the theological task of ministry. Paradoxically, theology will be contextual even when it is not consciously thought to be so.

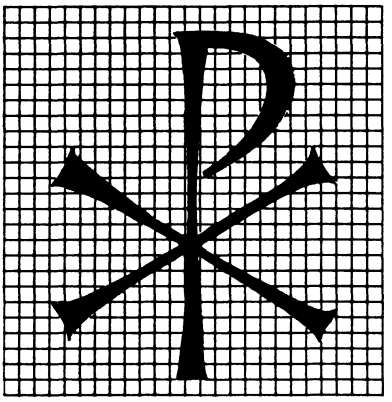
So to participate in the context is the *sine qua non* for the outreach of the congregation and pastor. Most Lutheran pastors are aware of the phrase *Viva Vox Dei* (the living Word of God). They know that this means the proclamation of the gospel to a particular context, in which that gospel is heard with clarity. In this respect the challenge and warning for the pastor is never to substitute human teaching for gospel. This is true for all of us as we minister.

To summarize, one can identify several reasons why theology is contextual:

1. Theology is a human enterprise.
2. Theology attempts to speak of the living God and of God's relation to a dynamic creation.
3. Theology exists for the sake of the church's confession.

Is it not somewhat artificial to divide the world into contexts? Has not the Christian message stressed unity as the basic principle of humankind? Should we not, then, spend all of our efforts in constructing a global theology?

While these questions are very authentic and expressive of our world today given mass communication, jet travel, the global village, etc., these modern improvements have themselves made us aware of our



divided state. We speak about economic and political walls; we speak about many worlds in one world ("First World and Third World"). These worlds are real and different. To paraphrase M. L. King, Jr., we must learn to live together in these worlds or die together as fools. Christians who bring the Christian message cannot afford to ignore these real contextual divisions any more than they can ignore the unity we have in Christ.

The argument of the entire Christian tradition is not with differences (rather, it celebrates difference) but with divisiveness, brokenness, alienation, and segregation brought on by sinful humans. The theology of the cross describes the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, who turns this destructiveness toward good and not evil.

Those who minister must therefore initiate a praxis of justice. They are to embrace the universal understanding of God's reconciling word without losing touch with the indigenous. Love to the neighbor must function in a particularized way, for love is not a principle to be conceptualized but an event in which it is involved.

Conversely, it would be impossible to pursue a theology of culture which did not

lead to thinking of the whole. In correlating the two, the minister is aware that the universal thrust of the gospel prevents theology from becoming only indigenous; and the indigenous character of the gospel prevents theology from becoming merely theoretical or transcultural.

Yet there is one thing which blocks contextualization, namely, our desire to control ourselves and others. However, the power of the gospel breaks into such an oppressed context (even as in Luther's day) and enables people to believe in God's freedom. The gospel helps the victim to overcome the victimizer and therefore liberates the victimizer.

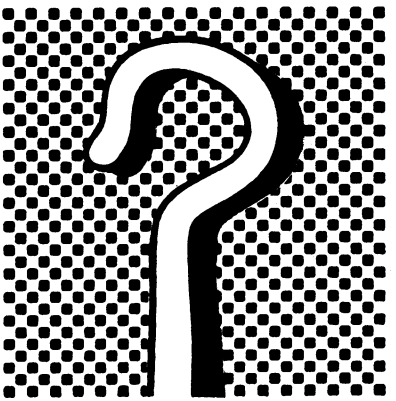
This identity, which comes from God, transcends race, class, and sex, moving us from an indigenous context to a global context. For example, the family or culture which roots itself in blood ties gets broken open in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself is broken open by the Syrophoenician woman's faith. He answers her not a word when she first cries out for mercy. His silence asks the question, "Is there a God for those who are not a part of the culture?" She keeps crying out. Is there a God for those outside the family of a particular ethnic group and religion? She keeps pounding away with cries for mercy, driven by a mother's passion for the well-being of her sick child. She is beside herself in love, beside herself in faith, beside herself in hope. But she still is not let into the family. Once more Jesus asserts the ties of ethnicity and religion. "It is not fit to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs." And with amazing cunning she cracks Jesus open: "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table." "O Woman, great is your faith. Let it be as you desire." No ethnic boundaries based on blood or religion will ever be the same.

As Christians we are no longer family centered nor ethnocentric. We are constantly confronted with the cross and the resurrection as we experience that water is thicker than blood. When we speak of a multi-cultural ministry, it is this fact we must be grasped and shaken by and sifted through if we are to be obedient to God's kingly rule: Water is thicker than blood. Humanness is thicker than gender. In Christ there is neither male nor female. Humanness is thicker than racial differences. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, black nor white, American nor Russian.

God in Jesus Christ has held us all in mercy. No one is excluded here. Knowing that all the images and names we use for ourselves and each other are cracked, we begin to move through a process in which we come to know that every human being is our neighbor, for all are held in God's mercy. God has befriended us all in Jesus Christ. Our family is humankind. To know new birth we must deny the images and names we cling to, and be willing to find life by losing it for the sake of the larger reality. The marvelous truth of our particularity as male or female, young or old, poor or rich, black or white, can only be known under the kingly rule of God. We were not given our differences to cling to as the basis of our salvation, absolutizing them with self consciousness and complacency. We are given differences to celebrate and to risk losing so that we might become the family of God.

Postscript

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What is ministry? At first glance this seems to be a simple, straightforward question. The word we hear from pulpits and in classrooms indicates that ministry is something the people of God do because it is a direct mandate from God as we know God's Word through Scripture. But there is a two thousand year leap from that biblical word to our present hearts and actions. In that space of time between the written and heard word much has happened that affects our understanding of ministry.

The creation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America made it clear that there are varieties of answers to the question, "What is ministry?" within our church. Now that our divergent traditions have come into direct contact with each other in the organization of a new church, we need to explore answers to this question more fully and broadly. We celebrate our common Lutheran confessional heritage, yet we embrace diversity as part of our shared tradition. In our diversity we seek a unified answer to this question.

The Commission for a New Lutheran Church in 1986 called for a Task Force to study ministry. This "Study of Ministry" is to be completed in 1993. In order for the ELCA to carry out its mission—in its own congregations as well as ecumenically, multi-culturally, and globally—clear decisions need to be made regarding the forms Christian ministry in the ELCA will take. The ELCA study has three focal points:

1. It will pay particular attention to the traditions of the Lutheran church.
2. It will explore the possibility of articulating and adopting a Lutheran understanding of the threefold ministerial office. These offices are that of bishop, priest (pastor), and deacon.

3. It will recommend appropriate forms of officially recognized and certified lay ministries for the ELCA.

Within this study careful attention is being paid to biblical and confessional principles. The ministry of all the baptized people of God, the ministry of Word and sacraments, the historical development and understanding of ministry, and the present context of our society are all foundational to this study. The "Study of Ministry" will clarify our understanding of ordained ministry and have an impact upon the way our church provides and certifies ministries to our congregations. The Division for Ministry of the ELCA has encouraged congregations to enter into dialogue with this Task Force by organizing hearings and consultations throughout the country. And they have specifically requested that all of us uphold these proceedings in prayer.

As a response to these requests for participation in the process, the essays in this issue have been written by members of the faculty of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. The purpose of this volume is to provide background information for ELCA congregations which will enable them to receive and critically evaluate the "Study of Ministry" document when it is available. This historical information should help stimulate creative thinking and encourage members of congregations to make connections in their own places of witness and worship. Out of this creative movement a clearer theology of ministry may emerge, and readers may become better equipped to examine and understand the present trends in ministry as well as possible ministry needs for the future.

As one reads these essays, a clear theme emerges: throughout history the understanding of ministry has been shaped by the context in which ministry is done. The answer to the question, "What is ministry?" has been defined by the needs of the day. It has also been shaped by the socio-political context in which ministry has been and is performed.

In the New Testament, ministry was done in a multi-cultural context among rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, men and women, the politically powerful and the powerless. Jesus' model of service was the basis for ministry. Being a follower of Jesus meant being a servant to humanity in obedience to God. Within the Christian community a diversity of gifts for ministry was recognized, and people were called forth to exercise these gifts. They differed in kind, not in priority, and they were understood as being integral to the whole community of believers.

As the church grew in size and number, the context changed—and so did the understanding of ministry. The church now had to contend with scattered congregations and individual interpretations of the gospel message. Concern for authority and power in ministry grew alongside, and at times overshadowed, the original meaning of ministry: service. To guard against heresies and to organize the church, the authority of local church leaders was emphasized. The offices of bishop, priest (pastor), and deacon, with their roots in the New Testament, became more structured.

When Christianity became legalized in the Roman Empire, the context shifted again. The church became a vehicle for political power. This was reflected in the structuring of ministry, with bishops having significant authority and power which trickled down eventually to the individual believers through a hierarchical chain.

The Reformation era protested the monopoly of the ministry in the hands of a few. The reformers challenged the hierarchy and attempted to bring the ministry

back to the people with the doctrine of "vocation." In so doing, the reformers restored the primacy of the Word as that which gives authority to ministry. Ordination was regarded as a spiritual estate which differentiated clergy from the laity but did not negate the ministry of the whole people of God.

Throughout history the understanding of ministry has been shaped by the context in which ministry is done.

When Lutheranism was transported to America, its understanding of ministry was shaped by yet another context. The concern was to preserve a Lutheran identity in a new and different society and to evangelize in that new land as well. Because of the shortage of ministers, new methods of leadership developed. With the influence of other religious traditions, hard doctrinal questions were pressed. The organizing of the Lutheran churches in America reflects how different Lutheran church bodies responded to these ministry concerns.

Another context that has shaped our understanding of ministry is the global one. World mission began with the importing not only of the gospel message but with home church structures as well. As the two-thirds world has become conscientized, it has challenged the hierarchy and paternalism that has accompanied mission and ministry. This is causing first world churches to re-examine traditional concepts of mission and ministry for their appropriateness in social and political climates different from their own.

Returning to the local context, with the merging of three Lutheran churchbodies with different traditions to form the ELCA, the context for ministry has broadened. Distinct traditions bring varied answers to the question, "What is ministry?" Each tradition responds to this question with answers formulated out of its own historical and cultural context.

One significant area of diversity today is the issue of non-ordained offices in the church. Questions regarding the relationship between lay professionals and deacons are being raised. The need for recognition of public ministries within the church demands attention as well. This raises the question of how special ministries relate to the overall understanding of ministry and mission, particularly as the church seeks to articulate a shared understanding of the threefold office of ministry. This opens up further dialogue. What is ordained ministry? Who should be ordained?

Another significant contextual change is the ELCA's self-definition as an inclusive church. Its mission and ministry are being shaped by its goal to achieve multiculturality. Persons who have been marginalized over the years have developed their own theological method which has empowered them to celebrate their own identity, be it African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or female. They have emphasized God as One who has sided with the poor and the outcast. Salvation is not only liberation from the bondage of sin, but also from structures of society which oppress and which prevent fullness of life. This critique of society has extended to church structures also.

How do we celebrate and acknowledge all of our gifts for ministry while providing the best possible organizational structures?

Women are searching for a useable tradition in a male-dominated, hierarchical church structure. They want their experience of the faith to be heard, accepted, and appreciated in ways that will authorize and empower all of God's people for ministry. Other marginalized groups struggle with structures of the church which have often excluded them from meaningful participation and have not adequately addressed their cultural context. These structures have created a dichotomy between the power they believe to receive from the gospel and the actual political power they are granted in the church. They long for the freedom of the gospel message to be reflected in the way the church is structured. To be an inclusive church, the experiences of all these people need to be taken seriously when asking the question, "What is ministry?"

The current psychological state of America is another context that has to be taken seriously in defining ministry. Pastoral ministry is a tremendous challenge in our present society. The authority and the identity of the pastor was once highly regarded. Respect for persons in leadership positions in American society today, however, has diminished. We have been disillusioned by our political leaders, our charismatic evangelists, our experts, doctors, teachers, and so forth. Our heroes and heroines have feet of clay.

Pastors are no exception to the watchful eyes of the public. While the office of ministry is still respected (as evidenced by the continued calling of pastors to congregations), the persons who hold those offices are under great scrutiny. Pastors who humbly and earnestly feel called to ministry have to work hard at earning respect. The authority they once had to interpret the Word of God for daily life is jeopardized by disillusioned people.

Not only are we highly critical of the personal profiles of our leaders, our expectations for their performance are high as well. Once we relied upon our pastors to interpret the Word of God in sermons, worship, the distribution of the sacraments, Bible studies, catechesis, church administration, and spiritual care. Now along with these tasks we expect pastors to be experts in social work, therapy, communication, economics, group dynamics, and other specialized fields. This places pastors under tremendous pressure as they work to establish their identities in their congregational communities. The demands on their time and talents are great. As pastors strive to be good role models, effective leaders and organizers, brilliant homileticians, profound teachers, spiritual mentors, loving spouses, and parents, as well as being openly available to the people they serve, they find themselves pulled and stretched in many directions.

We celebrate those people who respond to the call to ordained ministry and brave the challenges for the sake of the gospel. In this context women and men still believe the sacrifices and struggles are worth it and that their lives of service can have a profound effect upon peoples' lives.

Likewise, we celebrate the ministry of all the people of God. Yet, authority and identity issues are also found in the lives of the laity. We believe and teach that ministry is tied to baptism. By virtue of this sacrament we are all called into vocation. Every service we render to our neighbor is service to God. Lay persons' ministries range from parenting to teaching, to prison ministry, to counseling, to health care, to civil service, to the whole spectrum of living and working in this world.

They also render service in the church. The life of every congregation depends upon the willingness of people to teach, to do managerial and maintenance tasks, to participate in worship, to do visitation, to uphold one another in love, and to give of their material resources as well as their time and talents. Our expectations of the people are great. They too are stretched and pulled in many directions.

Being empowered through their baptism to do ministry, lay people want their service to be acknowledged and regarded as significant. They need to have their experience authorized. Is the authority we grant them compatible with our high expectations? Their identity as Christian witnesses and servants needs to be affirmed as well. Do we identify them as ministers as they serve in their homes, in their places of work, and in the church?

When we acknowledge these realities and examine the historical background of the understanding of ministry, we may need to ask if the model of the threefold office of ministry is an appropriate way to organize the ministry of the church in our present context. Does the office of bishop undermine the identity and authority of pastor? Does the office of deacon confuse the notion of vocation and distract from the ministry of the whole people of God? In a multicultural context, does this organizational model of ministry look like yet another structure that localizes power in the hands of a few? How do we celebrate and acknowledge all of our gifts for ministry while providing the best possible organizational structures?

At first glance the question, "What is ministry?" appears to be a simple one. But as we attempt to answer it we begin to realize the complexity of it all. Each of our answers emerges out of our own cultural and historical contexts. In every congregation, ministry is being shaped in response to particular ministry needs.

We live in a world where ministry needs are as acute as ever, not only in the realm of human relationships and evangelism but in relation to all of creation itself. This is what makes the question of ministry so important for each of us to ask. As the Task Force studies this question, we would be wise to examine our own ministry context so that together we can arrive at an answer that best facilitates ministry now and that inspires us for ministry in the future.

Book Reviews

LET THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH: THE VOICE AND MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. By Andreas Aarflot. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1988. 128 pages. Paper. $9.95.

In the preface Aarflot, Bishop of Oslo, asks, "In what way can the church be relevant both to God and human beings?" This slim volume is his answer. He discusses church order and structure (including the Scandinavian folk church model), the ministry, the Office of the Keys, the episcopate, church-state relations (again with a uniquely Norwegian perspective), the church's mission, its prophetic role in the modern world, the office of deacon and the church's service of *diakonia*, the confessions, ecumenicism and unity, and finally, doxology.

High points of the book are his discussion of church order and structure, the church's mission, and the church as a community of praise. His analysis and comparison of the Scandinavian folk church and the American church model is eye-opening and informative to the American reader. Aarflot regards the church as having a mission which is trinitarian in structure: it issues forth in justice for the created order, the missionary and evangelistic proclamation of the good news of salvation by grace, and continued self-renewal. His discussion of doxology corrects the seeming trend to ignore the relationship of praise and adoration within the church community to theology and mission, "A depressed church has no attraction... a singing church... may become a missionary church."

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BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND THE CHURCH: TEXT AND CONTEXT. Edited by D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988. 240 pages. Paper. $12.95.

THE CHURCH IN THE BIBLE AND THE WORLD: AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY. Edited by D. A. Carson. Exeter: The Paternoster Press & Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987. 359 pages. Paper. $19.95.

The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship sponsored study programs that resulted in these volumes of essays, both edited by Prof. D. A. Carson of Trinity Theological Seminary, Deerfield, Illinois. *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* contains eight essays showing how the interpreter's theological or ecclesial context determines biblical interpretation.

The introductory essay by Prof. Carson describes current factors that influence interpretation. Four essays then deal with specific aspects of NT thought. R. T. France argues against the use of "Kingdom of God" as an equivalent for "church." Gerhard Maier of Tübingen discusses the interpretation of Matthew 16:17ff. to show how exegetical biases determine evaluations of historicity and significance (the title "The Church in the Gospel of Matthew" promises far more than the article contains). Edmund P. Clowney analyzes how one uses the rich ecclesial language of the NT. His article has a rich discussion of metaphorical and symbolic language. P. T. O'Brien asks about the hermeneutical implications in contemporary views on the "Principalities and Powers" in the NT. The three final essays discuss the church in African and liberation theology and social justice in order to isolate hermeneutical issues. The collection is an interesting illustration of evangelical theology moving into the mainstream of biblical interpretation. Only the essay by Maier seems to address the subject in more traditional evangelical manner. The volume raises questions of significance for all theology that is formulated outside of the so-called first world.

The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study is concerned with the identity of the church as understood biblically and in the light of its contemporary mission. That is a theme worth considering. Four essays deal with the biblical understanding of the church (E. P. Clowney) as an eschatological entity (P. T. O'Brien) and its worship (R. R. Shedd) and ministry (R. K. Y. Fung). The last three relate to the task of missionary evangelization. D. A. Carson discusses the effect of contextualization on the church in mission, S. Sumithra the relation of syncretism and secularization to the renewal of the church, and D. H. Adeney the significance of persecution.

Both books illustrate well the commitment of evangelical Christians to the witness of the Bible, especially the New Testament. The second volume is also a good illustration of the point made at length in the first. There is little evidence that the Western catholic tradition provides any kind of normative standard for the church. Neither the Ecumenical Creeds nor the Particular Confessions of Reformation Christendom seem to play any significant role. The essays therefore read somewhat biblicistically. I stress the word somewhat; this is not obscurantism, but a nuanced (if unstated) procedure that assumes the biblical text is itself not only the final, but the only authority.

Edgar Krentz
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

RETHINKING REALIZED ESCHATOLOGY. By Clayton Sullivan. Mercer University Press, 1988. ix and 144 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

This book presents a reassessment of C. H. Dodd's view of realized eschatology, first published in *The Parables of the Kingdom* in 1936. Dodd's contention was that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God not as a future reality but rather as a power already present in his life and ministry. Sullivan says Dodd based this contention on the hypothesis that Jesus' statements could be traced back to two documents, Mark and Q—an hypothesis which subsequent biblical criticism has made questionable. Dodd's biblical support for his view was erratic and sometimes forced. This Kingdom version of realized eschatology should thus be rejected for lack of substantiation.

Sullivan suggests that Dodd actually had two versions of realized eschatology—not only the idea of the Kingdom's temporal presence in Jesus, but also the understanding of Jesus' ultimate significance in a nontemporal sense. And in this latter, christological version of realized eschatology, the author believes Dodd's contribution is still valid: Jesus was a well-intentioned teacher and healer who truly believed that the Kingdom (which he understood as a place, according to Sullivan) was about to appear but who was mistaken. Although Jesus himself was subject to historical relativism, God overcame this relativism through the resurrection.

The proposed substitute for Dodd's theory leaves us with a purely human Jesus who has ultimate significance only through being resurrected by the action of God (a God who is apparently other than Jesus). Strangely enough, the author ignores the church's doctrine of the two natures of Christ in seeking the meaning of the Christ-event, but in an appendix cites early church theologians to support his idea that Jesus conceived the Kingdom as a place. Sullivan's argument does not square with other developments in eschatological thinking that might well make this book already passé.

Faye E. Schott
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

THE SILENCING OF LEONARDO BOFF: THE VATICAN AND THE FUTURE OF WORLD CHRISTIANITY. By Harvey Cox. Oak Park: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988. x and 208 pages. Paper. $9.95.

Harvey Cox has provided a companion for Boff's theology in this lively historical account of the Vatican's formal silencing of Boff in the wake of the controversy generated by his *Church: Charism & Power*.

There is an excellent bibliography for beginning students of Boff or of liberation theology in general. There is also a substantive argument: Cox defines the silencing in terms that transcend "personal" confrontation. On one level, the story *is* a personal confrontation between Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Boff. But Cox sees this not so much as a clash between two individuals as a clash between exemplars of two ecclesiological traditions (and two ecclesiological possibilities). He retells "old" stories as a way to shed light on "new" ones. This leads him to discuss not only the contemporary Brazilian context of Boff's theology or the German (and Italian) context of Ratzinger's, but also the historical roots of Boff's theology in the Franciscan movement and of Ratzinger's theology in nineteenth century Germany. The Christianity of the 21st century will either look more like Boff's or more like Ratzinger's. Cox sees the issue not as one of heresy or orthodoxy, but of "how or whether Christianity can become a global faith in a culturally pluralistic world."

It is most appropriate, I think, that a Franciscan who understands the importance of silence and humility should embody the controversy surrounding that question. Boff's theology of liberation provides a model for dialogue which is essential for a world faith in a culturally pluralistic world. Cox highlights the fundamental distinction between silence (which is essential for dialogue) and silencing (which is its antithesis).

Steven Schroeder
Cedar Falls, Iowa

AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO JESUS OF NAZARETH. By Juan Luis Segundo. Vol 5 in *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988. viii and 148 pages. Paper. $16.95.

This is a book for the person interested in and familiar with evolutionary thought. It attempts to put Jesus of Nazareth into the present context which, according to Segundo, is universal and characterized by the ecological and political task. However, it is not the context of the ordinary pastor or member of a congregation, but presupposes acquaintance with evolutionary thinking in greater measure than is generally existent. Segundo prefers Alfred Russell Wallace's theory of evolution to those of Lamarck and Darwin because Wallace takes into account internal reasons for selection and allows for 'super-regulators' minds. "Intelligence is capable of going against the second law" of thermodynamics, against entropy. This is called negentropy. He frequently refers to Gregory Bateson and Teilhard de Chardin.

With regard to Jesus, he believes that his project was the kingdom of God as a substitute for the order actually existing in Israelite society. In Jesus, the discovery that God is love takes on cosmic dimensions. As might be expected, he frequently refers to the earlier volumes of his work. The community must repeat the lesson taught by evolution: "Like Jesus, it must die and rise day after day. The death is visible, the resurrection is not. There is a wager involved, which only faith can make."

The book can be best understood if the reader is familiar with Segundo's total approach.

Wilhelm C. Linss
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

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Briefly Noted

SHILOH: A BIBLICAL CITY IN TRADITION AND HISTORY. By Donald G. Schley (Sheffield Academic Press, $42.50 [$31.95 for subscribers]). About 40 percent of this Emory dissertation is devoted to reviewing the history of research on Shiloh in the 19th and 20th centuries. In his own reconstructions, S. puts forth a number of controversial positions: The story of the birth and dedication of a child to divine service in 1 Samuel 1-2 originally dealt with Saul, not Samuel; the priesthood at Shiloh traced its ancestry back to Aaron and had no connection with Abiathar and the other priests at Nob; the battle in which Saul died was the same as that in which the ark was captured; Shiloh was not destroyed at that time, but only 300 years later with other cities in the Northern Kingdom. For my money too much is made of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, and Phinehas, the son of Eli, in an attempt to establish the Aaronic origin of Eli's family. The pun between Samuel and Saul in the former's birth account also does not prove that it was originally Saul's birth account. RWK

INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. By J. Alberto Soggin (Westminster/John Knox, $29.95). This is the third English edition of a standard textbook first published in Italian. S. laments in the Preface that he did not begin this edition with discussions of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, and other exilic literature, including the redactional unity of the book of Isaiah, rather than the present arrangement, which treats the three-part Hebrew canon and then the Deutero-canonical works (the detailed outline of this book is virtually identical with earlier editions). Nevertheless, he has completely updated and reworked the earlier editions (this one is 100 pages longer), though he still pays little attention to literary analysis, a burgeoning new discipline. In general, the book reflects the methodological pluralism and the confusing state of a discipline that now has few universally accepted conclusions. At times S. seems unable—or unwilling—to choose clearly between several hypotheses, and not all the works cited in the bibliographies have been fully worked into the discussion of the introduction itself. New positions: there are no Pentateuchal sources that antedate the end of the 7th century; the Decalogue is not older than Deuteronomic times (in previous editions its earliest form was dated to Mosaic times); there was a deuteronomistic redaction of Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and possibly Isaiah; the relationship between the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint in Jeremiah has become fluid again. There are numerous typographical errors, and the translation at times seems a bit wooden. RWK

ANALYTICAL KEY TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. VOL. 4. ISAIAH-MALACHI. By John Joseph Owens (Baker, $34.95). This book parses each word in the Hebrew Prophets verse by verse, gives the page number in the Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon where the word is discussed, and suggests an English translation. Volume 4 is the first to be published. All students of the Hebrew Bible will want to thank the author and wish him Godspeed to complete the whole project. RWK

THE BOOK OF RUTH. By Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Eerdmans, $26.95). In this clear and meticulous commentary, H. rehearses recent discussions about the controverted legal issues in the story of Ruth and puts forth his own, often new, interpretations. He favors a pre-exilic origin for the book, which, in his view, affirms that the same divine guidance which led Israel's famous ancestors also brought David on the scene. At the same time, the book declares that foreigners who, like Ruth, truly seek refuge under Yahweh's wings are welcome in Israel. H.

believes that the kinsman reneged on his opportunity to redeem Naomi in chapter 4 when he discovered that he was expected to marry Ruth and not the aged Naomi. If he had married Naomi—who was beyond the child-bearing years—there was no chance that her heir would benefit from the redemption. Part of the New International Commentary on the Old Testament, this conservative volume will rank highly among contemporary studies of the book. RWK

MIKRA: TEXT, TRANSLATION, READING, AND INTERPRETATION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE IN ANCIENT JUDAISM AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY. Edited by Martin Jan Mulder (Augsburg Fortress, $79.95). This hefty, authoritative, 929-page volume is part of the series Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum [roughly: Collection of Jewish Matters Pertaining to the New Testament], which attempts to offer a comprehensive picture of ancient Judaism and early Christianity by drawing on the best of Jewish and Christian scholarship. The twenty chapters of this book on Scripture (=Mikra) discuss writing itself, canon, textual transmission, Jewish lectionary systems, ancient versions (Septuagint, Targum, Peshitta, Latin), the interpretation of Scripture at Qumran, in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, in Philo, Josephus, and the rabbis, as well as the Old Testament canon and the interpretation of its text in the ancient church—among other things. Its theme: how did the biblical books develop into Mikra, and how could this unique text give rise to such a wealth of interpretations? The bibliography runs for 56 pages and the indexes to biblical and other sources for another 77! A first rate reference work! RWK

The bibliography on women in the Scriptures is becoming immense. Ben Witherington, who recently published *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, provides a companion volume, **WOMEN IN THE EARLIEST CHURCHES** (Society for New Testament Studies, Monograph Series 59. Cambridge University Press, $44.50). Six chapters describe attitudes toward women in first-century Mediterranean cultures, women in the family according to Paul, women's role in the Pauline churches, women in Luke-Acts, in the churches of the other three evangelists, and in Christian movements prior to C.E. 325. Witherington concludes that Paul and other NT writers do not simplistically affirm the patriarchal system of antiquity, but give women roles as exemplars of faith, as witnesses to gospel events, as leaders in prayer and prophecy involved in many forms of ministry. Thus the NT supports liberation within the community, but not reform of society. Paul was neither chauvinist nor radical feminist. Luke shows how the gospel liberates and creates new options for women. It was the Gnostic and Montanist crises in the latter half of the second century that led to a restriction on women's ministry with men. The growth of ascetic community life supported that reaction. Witherington's work is important, supported by an immense amount of research in ancient texts and modern literature, clearly presented, and therefore open to appropriation and debate.
Edgar Krentz

LIBERATION THEOLOGY. By Phillip Berryman (Pantheon, $16.95). Even though the main body of Berryman's work is centered in Latin American liberation theology, he is concerned with similar expressions of liberation thought in the Third World, the Black community in the USA, and the feminist liberation movement. Berryman affirms that feminist thought is much more radical than even the Black and Third World versions of liberation theology. In this book Berryman makes a lucid analysis of the methodology and the main motif of Latin American liberation theology. Great emphasis is placed on the experience of the poor as the point of departure for theological reflection. An outline of the content of this book is made around the following three propositions: (1) Liberation theology is an interpretation of the Christian faith out of the suffering, struggle, and hope of the poor. (2) It is a theological critique of society and the ideologies that support it. (3) Liberation theology is a critique of the practice of the church and Christians. José David Rodríguez, Sr., Cataño, Puerto Rico

LORD I BELIEVE: SUGGESTIONS FOR TURNING THE CREED INTO PRAYER. By Austin Farrer (Cowley, $6.95). This is a reprint of the second edition of the late British theologian's devotional manual from 1958. Farrer has been called the Anglican communion's one genius of the 20th century. The book is extremely well written. Farrer follows the text of the Apostles' Creed and shows, in his meditations, how the different parts of the creed might be rendered into prayer. The final chapter of fifteen pages is a redemption of the meaning and use of the rosary among evangelical catholics. There is much good in this book for personal meditation, and there is every likelihood that such meditation would filter through into preaching and teaching to the well-being of one's parishioners. "To pray is to give God back the mind of God, colored by our own. But we must first be given the mind of God, thoughts and concerns from a level above mortality." Ah, yes. JCR

WE ARE THEOLOGIANS. By Fredrica Harris Thompsett (Cowley, $8.95). This is a book on the ministry of the laity written for an Episcopal audience and, therefore, citing from numerous writers, both historical and contemporary, within the Anglican communion. The author also includes large numbers of citations and stories regarding the role of women in the church throughout history. The emphasis for the future church is on listening others into speech (a concept frequently used by the late theologian Nelle Morton) and upon the church as a center of hospitality in our pluralistic age. JCR

THE LIVING PSALMS. By Claus Westermann (Eerdmans, $27.95 Cloth; $17.95 Paper). W., a premier form critic, whose *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* has done much to shape study of the Psalter in the second half of our century, shows in this book, via connected commentary on selected Psalms, how his earlier theories work out in practice. On Psalm 23: ["This Psalm places] two actions side by side: the provision a shepherd makes for his flock and the provision God makes for the one who trusts Him. It is this trust, this 'declaration of confidence,' which above all makes it possible to compare God to a shepherd.... But this trust rests on real life experiences, in which suffering, anguish and doubt all play a part." This is W. at his scholarly and pastoral best, marred only by the translator's failure to use more inclusive language. RWK

PSALMS. PART I. By Erhard S. Gerstenberger (Eerdmans, $24.95). As part of The Forms of the Old Testament Literature commentary series [FOTL], this is a form-critical commentary on the first 60 Psalms. In his introduction G. describes the various genres of the Psalter and proposes that even the wisdom (instructional) psalms were used in cultic worship (cf. Neh 8:7). In much of Israel's poetry he detects a tension between familial worship and more official religious institutions. Royal ceremonialism was ultimately an adaptation of popular rites and prayers to the needs of the court. G. notes that the Psalms were composed by men and for men alone, because women had little to do with ritual affairs. Distinctively female topics are all but lacking in the texts. Far from justifying sexual discrimination, this fact suggests that users of the Psalms must adjust to the fact that since New Testament times women have been the pillars of the Christian churches and justly claim active participation in worship and church administration. On the intention of Psalm 23: "The prayer aims at reestablishing the personal relationship with God, probably within a ritual of petition for individual sufferers who were perhaps persecuted or ostracized." RWK

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Preaching Helps

The Resurrection of Our Lord—Seventh Sunday of Easter, Series A

Easter Quake

It is the fall of the year while I write these words about the springtime of the universe. It's late in the Pentecost season as I sit thinking about Easter.

"Every Sunday is a little Easter," they tell me, so this exercise should not be so odd. Actually we are living every day in the presence of the Christ who always brings his entire history with him: Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and the Gift of the Spirit. If we could hold all that in mind simultaneously and meditate on all of it equally, then we would have no need of parceling it out to the various times and seasons of the year. But, small as we are, we do need to break things up into bite-sized pieces, and even then it is a hard thing to lay hold of the gift of the Risen Christ.

This particular fall has had a peculiar impact on my view of Easter. Last week the earthquake struck the Bay Area where I live, and in the same week my mother suffered through chest pains and an angioplasty. Disturbances like these in the bedrock of life raise more urgently than ever perennial questions of mortality and community.

Helping us to think yet again about the dimensions (both existential and economic or political) of the Easter Event are two veteran pastors.

Richard E. Koenig is back in New England as Pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Woburn, Massachusetts, after some years as editor of *Lutheran Partners*. It is a pleasure for me to welcome him to these pages, in part because he was so welcoming to me when I landed as a young pastor in a parish neighboring his some years ago. And in part simply because he thinks and writes so well and helpfully.

And Don Prange is back with Prophetic Voice. He calls us to read the lessons of the liturgical year in the light of issues of economic justice (and vice versa). His commitment to making these connections is coming to the attention of more and more audiences. Don offers workshops for congregations, synods, seminaries, colleges and other groups. For further information contact him at Box 311, Nora, Virginia 24272.

The ground shook and split on the first Easter. Some folks ignored the signs and missed the newness, moving on in all the same old ruts. Others heard choirs of angels in the world's creaking and groaning and came freshly alive. I pray that you and yours may experience rifts and watersheds, breaks with the past and new beginnings as you celebrate once again the triumph of the crucified.

Yours,

Robert H. Smith
Preaching Helps Editor

The Resurrection of our Lord April 15, 1990

Psalm 118:1-2, 15-24
Acts 10:34-43
Colossians 3:1-4 (5-17)
Matthew 28:1-10 or John 20:1-18

FIRST READING

Matthew is anxious to have us readers understand that the stone, set and sealed and securely guarded (27:65-66), did not just roll aside naturally or accidentally, nor was it pushed aside by fraud or any human ingenuity. It was thrust aside by earthquake and angel, indeed by "great earthquake" and "angel of the Lord," and that means that God has done it and no human being. We stand confronted not by a mere conundrum or logical puzzle but by the presence of God and the act of God. Confronted indeed by the mystery of the mercy of God.

Matthew has made little mention of angels throughout the narrative of Jesus' ministry. But that angel of the Lord is there at the beginning (1:20,24; 2:13,19) as here at the end, at Jesus' entrance into life and at his exit from it. God stands at those mysterious gateways of the life of Jesus, giving and receiving his being.

And his resurrection is the signal that all our beginnings and endings lie in the hands of God. What and who we are is not determined by chemistry and biology alone, but by the God who gave Jesus and who raised Jesus.

Women came looking for the crucified, for a corpse, for a dead friend. And the angel gave them a word of new life, and that word is the heart of the Gospel reading: "He has been raised just as he said." The end of all his living and teaching is not death but new life, exalted life, life as the one with "all authority" (v.18).

The women were commissioned to leave the place of death and take that news of life to the disciples, to revive those disciples and to create the new family of Christ's brothers and sisters, people who trust that their origin and their destiny are in life-giving hands. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"I think I am a good preacher, but frankly I don't quite know what to do with Easter." It's been some years since I first read that quote. The periodical in which the statement appeared I have forgotten, but I have never forgotten the statement. A Christian preacher who does not "know what to do with Easter" prompts shock or pity, or both. Yet who of us has not secretly felt something of the anonymous preacher's perplexity, if not the doubt the statement implies? Why?

The reason for the perplexity is the Resurrection itself. Other texts can be "treated," "handled," "done with," but not those that baldly proclaim the Resurrection. Here as at few other points in the liturgical year we encounter texts where we are treated, handled, done with rather than the other way around. He is either dead or alive. Joseph Campbell and *The Power of Myth* will not help us in dealing with what the first witnesses report. We must take what they say on their own terms or not at all.

Once we get over the shock of the Resurrection (again!), then there is much indeed that we can do with it. Paul tells us that "when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." The foundation for this amazing promise is clearly the Easter event.

During the spring and summer of 1989 many people were going to see a film entitled "Field of Dreams" from a novel by Ray Kinsella. The picture is an engaging work of creative imagination in which the film-maker uses the sights, sounds, and history of the game of baseball to frame a story of a young man's reconciliation with his dead father. It is a film that can be enjoyed on different levels simultaneously. Some have hailed the picture for going against the stream and affirming transcendence in a secular age. "Transcendence," it seems to me, is a bit weak for the vision that the film holds up for us: what we see is not all there is; beyond death are

possibilities for the re-knitting of severed relationships and the enjoyment of beauty.

The significance of "Field of Dreams" is not its success as a film, as popular as it may be, but the way it reveals the human heart's yearning for the Easter proclamation. God's act in raising the dead Jesus gives us permission to admit our longing for a life free from sin and sorrow. We need not hide what we feel any longer but may allow God's life and love to flow into us to be our life by faith.

What do we do with Easter? Preach it straight at our fear of death and the ache for life that will not cease. Preach it, having once again ourselves stooped down, looked into the empty tomb, and believed. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

The idolatrous world system (at that time the Roman Empire and its Palestinian puppets) invited allegiance in the voice of "the Tempter" (Mt 4:3, 6, 9). Jesus' responded, "You must worship Yahweh your God, and serve God alone" (v. 10). The world demanded conformity and refused to take "no" for an answer. Those who not only refuse to submit, but insist on alternatives, experience the "Good Fridays" of violent repression. And yet the crucifixion is not a moment of defeat. What you see is not what you get! The rejected "stone" of a social, economic, political alternative based on mercy and justice Jesus taught and practiced becomes the "keystone" (Ps 118:22) of a totally new order. Again and again Jesus' followers "failed to understand the teaching of scripture" (Jn 20:9), but the Resurrection transforms not only their understanding; they begin to act on the possibilities of the new order Jesus proclaimed and lived.

In beginning to define their new way of life in the midst of a still hostile and violent empire, the advice to "look for the things that are in heaven" (Col 3:1-3) hardly signals some new spatial reality after death; it relates to principles for change in the here and now. And to understand some fundamental "heavenly" principle, the continuing context of Colossians 3:5-17 is important, especially "to kill everything that belongs only to earthly life... especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god" (3:5).

So the new community becomes a living witness to a way of life based on "doing good and curing all who [have] fallen into the power of the devil" (Ac 10:38). This is how the resurrected Christ is "revealed" (Col 3:4) to the world.

It is significant that women are the first to experience the Resurrection. It is always those who know the most oppression who are the most creditable witnesses to possibilities for change. They are forerunners of "third world" sisters and brothers whose faith and hope witness to the power of the Resurrection in the world today. When you hear South Africans singing,

"It doesn't matter if you should jail us
We are free and kept alive by hope..."

you know the Lord is risen indeed! That "third world" witness to the Resurrection reaches out to North American Christians with a clearly angelic, "Don't be afraid!" (Mt 28:5). DP

Second Sunday of Easter
April 22, 1989

Psalm 105:1-7
Acts 2:14a, 22-32
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

FIRST READING

John pictures an act of new creation: Jesus breathes on the disciples the gift of the Spirit of God, just as God in the beginning leaned over lifeless Adam and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils (Genesis 2:7; Wisdom 15:1), just as the Spirit breathed new life into all those bones filling the valley of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 37:9).

It is a precious gift, and it could be given only after Jesus had been "glorified" (John 7:39), only after he had been "exalted" and "lifted up" on the cross. And that is near the heart of the mystery on which John meditates. New life gushes forth out of the death of Jesus. Was it Barnabas Lindars who coined the phrase, "the infinite fruitfulness of the passion of Christ," to describe what John regards as the center of this gospel? It is a good phrase, and it connects Good Friday and Easter as they should be connected. Together they constitute one great festival of new life.

And that is what Thomas must "see" and "touch" if he is to come to anything that deserves the name of "faith." He must be persuaded that the Living One is the Wounded One. All our lives we look for strength and joy and substance which somehow avoids wounds. Like all the rest of us, Thomas could not believe that nails and spears could have anything to do with glory and life.

Not until he put his finger into the print of the nail and put his hand into the wounded side. This one and this one only is "My Lord and My God." RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The poor wretches have convinced themselves that they are going to be immortal and live for all time by worshipping that crucified sophist and living under his laws. Therefore, they despise the things of this world, and consider them common property. They receive these doctrines by tradition, without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan or trickster comes among them, he quickly acquires wealth by imposing upon these simple folk.

No, the above was not written by a reporter covering the Jim Bakker trial. It was, in fact, written by a pagan satirist known as Lucian of Samosata who lived a good part of the second century A.D. Lucian was not a doubter. He was convinced that the Christian folk were fools, nice fools but fools. It is clear that he did not think very highly of their pastors or preachers.

In the light of today's Gospel, Lucian's phrase about the Christians "receiving these doctrines by tradition, without any definite evidence" catches our eye. It's exactly what Thomas refused to do—until he learned what it means to believe. In the spirit of the age, preachers have frequently been heard to celebrate Thomas the doubter rather than Thomas the believer on this day.

There is, then, another theme running through today's readings that offers a fresher possibility for the sermon than Thomas' doubt. The theme is faith as the gift of the Spirit resulting from the Easter event. The Gospel portrays the risen Christ blessing the apostles with his peace and then bestowing on them the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is given to equip the apostles for their saving work in the world. Thomas finally comes to believe and then goes out to serve. The second reading is a glorious description of Spirit-wrought faithful steadfastness under persecution; the first, faith's Spirit-wrought testimony to the risen Christ.

So our attention is drawn to the church in the world acting out its faith. We think of Christians in El Salvador and the pressures they are under and wince. Yet our colleagues speak in glowing terms of how the risen Christ is manifested in the faith of the poor and oppressed in that land. The struggles of Christians there can instruct and inspire us on living the resurrection life as a community of faith. The theme of the day deals with possibilities, not difficulties for Christians, with faith, not doubt. The church is to be what it essentially is, the residence of the Spirit of the Living Christ. The Spirit is Christ alive in us as his faith-filled people. When the church knows what it is, it will be what it is meant to be in all circumstances, in all difficulties. For the Spirit gives the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

The male disciples of Jesus were still too caught up in their own idolatrous power games to readily experience the Resurrection and its mission content. It is seldom different within the

patriarchal theological captivity of the church today. But if the resurrected Jesus could break through closed doors (Jn 20:19) before, then the power of the Spirit can bring a liberating sense of peace (Jn 20:20, 21) today. Even those (like Thomas) caught up with the need to prove the Resurrection as historical fact can have their 'belief' expanded to realize that the only real proof of the Resurrection is a living faith which gives witness (Ac 2:32) to a new way of life with a radically new social, economic, political order. Happiness (Jn 20:29) is not to be found in being an eye-witness to the Resurrection but in the believing (cf. 1 Pet 1:8). Happiness means understanding that "the signs that Jesus worked" (Jn 20:30) point to a new order, a new creation. And ultimate happiness is in the mission of working to establish peace and justice in the world when we are caught up in the spirit of "so am I sending you" (Jn 20:21). Theologies of the Resurrection as historical fact mean nothing without a theology of mission rooted in the "signs" of justice and liberation. It is the only way to worship Yahweh in history (Ps 105:1-7). DP

Third Sunday of Easter
April 29, 1989

Psalm 16
Acts 2:14a,36-47
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

FIRST READING

They were walking, walking down, down into their old life, back down, and they admitted it to the stranger who joined them on their downward way. Like Thomas, they could not conceive of redemption or liberation except through power, and the crucifixion of Jesus had spelled for them the end of Jesus and the end of their hoping.

Jesus patiently spoke to them of the "necessity" of suffering and pointed to the Scriptures in support of the notion of sacrifice and love as the way of Godly victory.

The scene with Jesus at the table in Emmaus is in some respects the fitting response to the temptation of Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel. There in the beginning Satan attempted to persuade Jesus to use power and entertainments and propaganda to establish the kingdom. Here at the end Jesus, who did not shrink from weakness and death, establishes a new community, not by sword but in the breaking of the bread, not by lording it over others but by sharing with them a simple meal of fellowship and love.

When they recognized him, knew him, penetrated the mystery of his life and being, he parted from them. And they went up, back up, up to Jerusalem and entered the community of the brothers and sisters, whose sustenance is the word of life. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Last week we spoke of the church as the recipient of the Spirit of the risen Christ. This week we are privileged to speak in terms even more personal as we listen to the beloved story of the risen Christ's appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus.

We recently did a favorite hymn survey at our church. While not at the top of the list any more, Henry F. Lyte's well-known "Abide with Me" still draws its share of votes. Lyte's inspiration for his prayer for the Lord's supportive presence was the King James Version's translation of verse 29 of the Gospel: "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Beautiful words, those. Given the dark circumstances of his life at the time, it is no wonder that the author found them an irresistible source of comfort.

And so will our people. We preachers are constantly tempted, especially today, to look out over the heads of our congregation at the far horizon of the world and miss what is going on in the personal lives of our members. Like Christians down through the centuries, their plea

is the same as the Emmaus disciples': "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Life even for those who are economically comfortable is often filled with pain and anxiety. They, too, feel the need of God's presence in Christ every passing hour. God's mighty act in raising Christ is not diminished but enhanced when it is used to assure the believer of God in Christ in his or her life.

But how this presence is conveyed is the unique contribution of these texts, saving us all from *Schwärmerei* (German for groundless religious emotionalism). The disciples' hearts burned within them as Christ opened to them the Scriptures. He was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Add to Lord's Supper and Holy Scripture the allusions to Baptism in the second reading (v. 22 and v. 23), and we and our hearers stand before God's entire set of vehicles for the grace which removes the blindness of our lost condition and produces confidence in him (v. 21 of the second reading).

Again and again life stops us dead in our tracks, and we stand still looking sad (v. 17, Gospel). Being human means to live separated from God, forced to bear in secret burdens or sorrows that cry out for recognition, for understanding, for help—in short, for the Savior's presence. How sad it is when our eyes are blind to that presence. How immensely comforting it is for the baptized to behold once again the Christ who is always for them because he lives risen from the dead.

"Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as he comes to us in his holy supper" (second Eucharistic Prayer, *LBW*). The confident expectation of this petition is based on the joyous discovery of the Emmaus disciples that he does indeed abide with his people upon faith's invitation. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

"Breaking bread" (Lk 24:35 & Ac 2:42) is clearly one of the signs of the Christ with deep implications for a radicalized sense of mission. World hunger and deprivation related to other material needs on a global scale can only be addressed by a transformed social, economic, political order. And if we are asking the question, "What is to be done?", "the scriptures" (Lk 24:32) are clear and sufficient. Jesus' explanation of the scriptures somehow led to the following:

> *The faithful all lived together and owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed* (Ac 2:44, 45, also 4:32-35).

So breaking bread really translates into new community and the meeting of human need. What a system for making "love for each other real and from the heart!" (1 Pet 1:22). What a powerful witness to the resurrection! And this isn't Marxist ideology; it's Scripture! Doesn't it make "our hearts burn within us"? (Lk 24:32) DP

Fourth Sunday of Easter
May 6, 1989

Psalm 23
Acts 6:1-9; 7:2a, 51-60
1 Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

FIRST READING

The imagery of John 10:1-10 is curious and difficult: "I am the door of the sheep." And yet maybe it is not so obscure. All three lessons this Sunday focus on leadership in the new community, and that is either marvelous coincidence or inspired guess.

John 9 is all about blind leaders, with emphasis on "blind." John 10 continues the themes of John 9, but now the emphasis shifts to

"leaders." Those who would lead the people of God, those who would be shepherds of the flock of God, are here viewed through the strange "riddle" or "figure" (*paroimia*) of the sheepfold, its door, and its gatekeeper.

Too many would-be leaders are like "thieves and robbers" (*kleptai kai lestai*) who climb into the sheepfold "by another way" (*allochothen*). Over the wall instead of through the door. They want to avoid the one who is the door. They seek to bypass Jesus and his style. What they really want is not to serve and nurture the flock but to profit from the flock.

The history of politics supplies endless examples of leaders willing to send men and women like sheep to the slaughter, or willing to bleed their own citizens white while surrounding themselves and their cronies with luxuries. The history of religious movements supplies its own depressing examples.

Jesus is the door. The church in every generation needs shepherds who enter through that door (Ac 6; 1 Pet 2), that the sheep may have life and have it abundantly. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

This is Good Shepherd Sunday. The familiar and beloved motif does not appear in readings for Series A with the clarity of other years. True, the Gospel is taken from John 10, but in the portion we read, the image is that of Jesus as the door of the sheep rather than the Good Shepherd. The first and second readings, however, present us with a marvelous opportunity to view the Good Shepherd from a different aspect—as the one who suffers on our behalf, "patient, meek, though guiltless" (*LBW* #111).

For the New Testament the atonement wrought by God in Christ turns on the fact that Christ was sinless (1 Pet 2:22 of our second reading; also 2 Cor 5:21). For the first Christians the evidence for our Savior's sinlessness was visible in the way he suffered: "No guile was found on his lips. When reviled, he did not revile in return; when suffering, he did not threaten" (second reading). If the first Christians concluded, with Nicodemus, that no one could do the works that Jesus did unless God were with him, they were even more convinced that no one could suffer the way Jesus did without being linked with God in a special way for a special purpose, namely, to be the means of atonement for humankind's sin. In sacrificing his life for the sheep, the Good Shepherd becomes one with the sheep and provides them with an unforgettable model for their behavior under persecution.

It is the model of Christ who is both Shepherd and paschal victim that our first and second lessons hold before us. Whatever opposition his readers were encountering (and we do not know for certain what it was), the writer of 1 Peter is absolutely certain that he knows how it must be met: Christians must suffer innocently and patiently, as did their Lord.

Professor Roger Johnson of Wellesley College (Massachusetts) tells of the remarkable growth of the Chinese Christian Church in recent years following the Cultural Revolution. A principal reason for that growth, he discovered on his visits to China, was the impression made upon the vast non-Christian Chinese public by the way Chinese Christians bore up under persecution during the brutal days of the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guards made sure that the suffering of their victims was public, which was what made possible the public's observance of their behavior. When the terror ended, people by the thousands began seeking out the churches that were left to find out what made those Christians what they were. Many stayed on to become Christians themselves.

Such are the wonderful things the Spirit of God is doing in our day. But what of us? By the grace of God it is highly unlikely that we will preach this Sunday's sermon to Christians under persecution. (From this preserve us, heavenly Father!) But it is not unlikely that we will be speaking to people who have known other types of suffering and who know that they will know suffering in their lifetime, too. How will they (we!) handle it? In the Rite of Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation), our prayer for each confirmand is for "patience in suffering." Can this not be the goal of this sermon, to equip us on

the basis of the Good News of the Suffering Shepherd with power to bear whatever cross is laid upon us patiently? Who knows how many will be brought to Christ if we suffer with the fortitude of our Chinese brothers and sisters? REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

Shepherding is another of the important signs of the Christ, and the "Good Shepherd" (Jn 10:11) is the antithesis to "thieves and brigands" (Jn 10:8). When false shepherding relates to oppressive political and economic systems (cf. Ezek 34), it is clear that Good Shepherding implies political and economic alternatives. But any alternative way of life has to develop its own practical structural and administrative processes (cf. Ac 6:1-6). At that point it becomes a threat to existing forces of control and domination.

Reactions begin with verbal attacks: "They are possessed and raving; why bother to listen?" (Jn 10:20; Ac 2:13). Verbal assaults (and you know all the labels) turn quickly to repression (Ac 5:17, 18) and violence (Ac 7:55-60). Whole communities of people soon come under the threat of persecution (Ac 8:1-3), both from "death squads" and from official governmental policy, realities Peter seems to be addressing in his letters. When people are living under violent governmental systems, good shepherding and good pastoring take on even more crucial dimensions. Sisters and brothers in El Salvador, South Africa, the Philippines, and far too many other places know what that means. They know in their daily experiences the power of the cross and the resurrection, and in the power of the Spirit they are struggling daily with the meaning of good shepherding. Psalm 23 is no mere pious devotion for them; it is a political statement!

The resurrection calls to us sheep who have "gone astray." It calls us to "come back to the shepherd and guardian" of our souls (1 Pet 2:25). Resurrection calls us to name the false shepherding idolatries of our own economic and political system, and to become activists in pursuing the alternative of good shepherding. DP

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 13, 1989

Psalm 33:1-11
Acts 17:1-15
1 Peter 2:4-10
John 14:1-12

FIRST READING

James Moffatt years ago captured the sense of the key verse in his translation: "I am the real and living Way." The discussion in the context is all about the way, the path, the road very much less traveled.

The opening verses of chapter 14 articulate a traditional Jewish and Christian view of the last things. That picture is much modified by the end of the chapter. The beginning is very future-oriented, and the end speaks of the present indwelling of believers by God and Christ and Spirit.

Jesus is a strange Way in at least two senses. His Way leads relentlessly to the cross. It is through the cross, and not around the cross, that he mounts up to that oneness with God which was his before the foundation of the world.

And while Jesus is the way, he seems also to be the goal. How often humanity cries out with Philip, "Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied!" "Just let us for once see God!"

The Evangelist respects that cry and points the reader not beyond Jesus but to Jesus. If we would hear the voice of God and see the works and deeds of God, look to Jesus. He does nothing on his own authority. He is not simply identical with the Father, but the Father dwells in him so richly, so deeply, in such unique and abundant fashion, that we are confronted in the words and works of Jesus with the words and works of God. He is "the real and living Way."

In touch with that life, living in and on that Way, disciples will have Life welling up in themselves, and the result will be an outpouring of "greater works," works of love in greater abundance, generation by generation. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

I have to agree with Reginald Fuller that "it seems artificial to try and detect any single theme running through today's lessons," in spite of the fact that Eastertide is one long, seven-week rejoicing in the company of the risen Lord. The Risen One is present in all three readings, though veiled in the case of the Gospel. But unless your congregation is radically different from most others, the preacher for the day will also have to take into consideration that the second Sunday in May is usually observed as Mother's Day in the U.S. While bending or blending the liturgical year to conform with popular culture may give one pause, these readings offer some interesting possibilities.

Clearly, the Gospels for this Sunday and the next were chosen originally because they seem so beautifully suited as words of the Risen Christ to his disciples in the "great forty days" prior to the Ascension. Given our modern understanding of the Easter event and the farewell discourses, this use of the text is an exercise in poetic license. The virtue of the older interpretation was to remind us that our existence as Christians is "between the times," between the time of Christ's visible presence among us and whatever awaits us when he will "come again and will take [us] to himself." In the interim we are to live out our calling as God's people. We are to "declare his wonderful deeds" with the kind of heroic abandon and aggressive resolution displayed by Paul and Silas.

We note with interest today that Luke goes out of his way to point up the response of women to Paul's missionary efforts. The first reading mentions them twice, at verse 4 and again at verse 12. The Pauline tradition in the New Testament traces the faith of Paul's co-worker Timothy back to his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). (Could it be that Lois was one of the "not a few Greek women" who believed when the Word of the Lord did its work in Beroea?) The church, Paul says, is the mother of us all. In whatever sense this is to be understood, it is clear from the New Testament and from our own experience that the life and devotion of many mothers made the church as mother a reality for us.

I imply no sexist stereotyping of the role of women. Christian nurture is a shared responsibility of both fathers and mothers. In the bad old days of *Kinder, Küche, und Kirche* ("children, kitchen, and church") as the proper domain of women, the idea of shared responsibility was not sufficiently acknowledged, if at all. Yet time and time again we come across testimony to the particular and peculiar value of the work of women in the maintenance of the church and the transmission of the faith. This is especially true of the role played by mothers.

As we grow in our awareness of women's reality and appreciation of women's gifts, we do well to reflect on our debt to those who, for many of us, first taught us to know our Lord and embodied his grace for us. Whatever lamentable prejudices confined them to their roles, many times blessings came from the way they accepted their tasks and carried them out. Further, we do well, as parents female and male and as members of the extended family of faith, to accept our role as models of love for the Lord and commitment to his church. This may not be a between-the-times activity as dramatic as Paul's preaching in Ephesus, but it could be the kind of work that will turn the world upside down. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

If the "many rooms in my Father's house" (Jn 14:2) is only a pious expression about "heavenly mansions," or if the "spiritual house" of "living stones" (1 Pet 2:5) is only a matter of pious liturgies and hymn-singing, then our theology will be no threat to the idolatrous "edicts of Caesar" (Ac 17:7).

The "Father's house" and "the way to the place where I am going" (Jn 14:4) call for an unsettling mission in a world of injustice and oppression. The church house is meant to be a gathering place for communities in which breaking bread and good shepherding are acts of "thoughtful worship" (cf. Rom 12:1, 2). It is in such a context that we can reflect together on the full meaning of "the Way, the Truth and the

Life" (Jn 14:6) for "turning the world upside down" (Ac 17:6). To "sing a new song" to honor a God who "loves virtue and justice" (Ps 33:3, 5) calls us to that subversive mandate. These are the "greater words" (Jn 14:12) to which communities gathered around the risen Christ are called! DP

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 20, 1989

Psalm 66:1-6, 14-18
Acts 17:22-32
1 Peter 3:15-22
John 14:15-21

FIRST READING

Death is the great spoiler. Death fascinates, mesmerizes, captivates, and depresses. Death always seems to have the last word. But Jesus promises, "I will not leave you desolate" (Greek: *orphanous*). "I will not abandon you on the doorstep like some castoff, some foundling infant." He is speaking in the first place of power transcending his own death, but that is power to put every death into perspective.

More powerful than death are "the Father," the "Counselor" (*Parakletos*) or "Spirit of truth," *agape* (vv. 15, 21), that "knowing" (vv.17, 20) which is faith (v.12), and the One who speaks these words, the resurrected and living Christ.

Death defeats us by depressing us and separating us from trust in God, by enervating us and separating us from the energy and the will to love the neighbor. And death is defeated wherever people "see" Jesus Christ (v.19), wherever people know him as the living one, as the one who is in the Father and in the believer. That is a very deep kind of seeing and knowing (cf. 17:3).

Death and unbelief and indifference to the neighbor suffer defeat wherever the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, is indwelling people, binding them to the truth which is nothing less than the life of God.

Resurrection is celebrated wherever people meet the shocks of daily life and of the end of life with trust and love, which is the life of Christ welling up to eternal life. Resurrection is celebrated wherever people live by the Spirit of truth rather than by the spirit of the times. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

If last Sunday's lessons posed a bit of a problem for us as far as a common theme is concerned, this Sunday's set more than compensates. On the eve of the festival of the Ascension of our Lord we are presented with the vision of the church as a loving community, open to all. Christ's command to love was lived out by the first Christians. They reached out to all to include all. They aimed at having "unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the community, a tender heart and a humble mind" toward one another (second reading). The unity of spirit to which the early Christians aspired was not regarded as an impossible ideal. The imperative to "have unity of spirit and love of the community" sprang from the certainty that the Lord Jesus had not left them desolate but had given them his Spirit. The Spirit dwelt within them and could then be called upon to forge community.

Throughout its history Christianity has repeatedly discovered that its real strength lies not in its power as an organization but in its ability to bring forth communities where people genuinely love and care for one another. In 1979 one of the predecessor church bodies (PCB's) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America released a study entitled "Congregations as Nurturing Communities." The study was launched by two units of the Lutheran Church in America to find out what if anything a selected number of "successful" LCA parishes had in common. Results of the "nurture study," as it was called, indicated that where genuine community existed congregations survived and grew. Congregations that had not developed a sense of community had difficulty.

A truism? Not if we consider the forces working against the creation of genuine, caring community in the congregation. The affluence of middle class America affects the quality of its life in countless ways. Instead of community there is privatization aided and abetted by the possession of resources that detach people from one another. The drive to succeed neutralizes and triumphs over the Christian impulse to serve one another in love. Then there is always and ever the pervasive influence of what we used to call the Old Adam, our sinful flesh, which drives professed believers to outrageous behavior at times in the daily life of the congregation, to the point where the church reminds one of nothing more than Beirut. We might be living in a postmodern age as far as religious thought is concerned, but we often are at the moment the door slammed shut on Eden when it comes to embodying community behavior along the lines of Galatians 5:16-6:6.

One Sunday's preaching will not bring about instant change, of course, but it can be a fresh call to the congregation to be the community of the baptized, made alive by the Spirit in the Spirit and joined together in Christ, that it was called to be. The degree to which the congregation exhibits genuine, caring community is the degree to which it qualifies as a community of the risen Christ. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

"The world," as John sees it, has been so captive to idolatrous, systemic lies that it "can never receive" the "Spirit of truth" poured out in the crucifixion/resurrection event. Its capacity for seeing and knowing is constrained by other factors (Jn 14:16, 17). Paul's dialogue in Athens (Ac 17:16-34) may get at part of the problem. Truth, for Paul, means a relationship with God, a dynamic process in which "we live, and move, and exist" as "children of God" (17:28, 29).

Paul's emphasis is always on how we can be truthful to the implications of the resurrection as children of God, how we can be truthful in bringing a new order (a new creation), how we can be truthful in doing justice.

And Peter testifies to communities of Christians so obviously living alternative life-styles that they were asked to describe "the reason for the hope" that was in them (1 Pet 3:15). They celebrated Easter with visible signs of new life. DP

The Ascension of our Lord May 24, 1989

Psalm 110
Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:16-23
Luke 24:44-53

FIRST READING

What is the Bible all about? What is the fundamental story it has to tell? Jesus names the basic building blocks of ancient scripture: "the law of Moses" (Pentateuch), "the prophets" (the former and latter prophets), and "the psalms" (probably intending all the late documents usually called The Writings today). And he boils the entire ancient scriptural narrative down to this: God's own suffering love reaching out irrepressibly to embrace all humankind in new community through the Christ.

Raised from the dead, Jesus himself regrouped the earliest community of believers, summoning them back to life, to hope, to trust, calling them out of all the holes and hiding places into which they had begun to retreat as the enormity of his death had overwhelmed them.

He ate with them, establishing them as his brothers and sisters (24:30, 41-42). And now he commissions them, or is that too strong a word? A somewhat misleading word? He does not so much tell them to become witnesses as simply to state the fact: "You are witnesses." The brothers and sisters in the new community have seen new realities. Their eyes have beheld the work of

God in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They have experienced the uprush of new vitality in their innards. They have been in the presence of new life.

And they will become a Spirit-filled community, for "power from on high" or "power from God" is clearly the Spirit of God (cf. Ac 1:8). In Luke-Acts the Spirit is power in contrast to the secular power of military might by which the Roman empire was established and maintained and in contrast to that power for which many patriots in Israel yearned. And the Spirit of God in Luke-Acts is not so much ecstatic or charismatic power as it is prophetic power. Created by Jesus Christ, who is God's "Word" to the world, the community will live by that word and for that word, returning to it for its own continued vitality and sharing life with others by telling and retelling the story.

After promising gifts and after laying before them a vision of their life and work, Jesus parted from them, blessing them. With that promise, that vision, and that blessing, they were able to return to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Spirit with great joy. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

If there are preachers who "don't know what to do with Easter" (see Pastoral Reflection for Easter Sunday above), I imagine that there are many more who "don't know what to do with the Ascension." Judging from the wearisome number of times I have endured banal remarks about the Ascension's resembling the flight of a hot air balloon, perhaps they don't even try. And that would be a shame and a scandal, another piece of evidence for modernity's evacuation of the Christian tradition.

Reginald Fuller offers a better perspective on Ascension Day in his *Preaching the New Lectionary* (1977):

> [I]f we are to be true to the perspectives of the New Testament and the early liturgy we should not think of Ascension Day as a historical commemoration. In the New Testament the Ascension is normally proclaimed as an integral part of the Easter event: God raised Jesus and exalted him to his right hand (so always in Paul)....
>
> For several centuries the church did not, either in its writings or in its liturgy, treat the Ascension as though it "occurred" on the fortieth day. With the new church calendar, we still keep it on the fortieth day as a matter of convenience... in order to isolate for contemplation one aspect of the total Easter event (pp. 34-35).

The readings, hymns, prayers, and symbolic actions (extinguishing and removing the paschal candle at the reading of "and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Ac 1:9) for Ascension Day present us with a unique opportunity to celebrate the life and work of our Lord Jesus. In biblical theology the Ascension is the final Easter appearance. Somehow the first Christians knew that what they had experienced in their mysterious encounters with the Risen Christ would not last forever. In a way this might attest to the veracity of their witness. Had the disciples been victims of mass hysteria, we would expect them to have demanded—or at least expressed a longing for—a continuation of the appearances to bolster faith. They learned that those who do not see and yet believe are the ones who are blessed.

For the church the end of Christ's appearances is an occasion for celebration. It puts the period to the story of his saving work with a flourish. This is his victory parade, the banquet held in his honor, the moment when he stands at the top of the Olympic stairs and has the heavenly anthem played in recognition of his work. This is the time when his faithful followers look back on all that he did for them and recount each act of suffering love. This is the moment when they all stand to applaud while he is given the victor's crown, garland, cup, ribbon, badge.

In Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress,* the scene that moves the heart more than any other is the entrance of Pilgrim and Hopeful into heaven. Read it again for images that describe that which the Pioneer and Perfecter received when his work was done. For him before all others, all the trumpets did sound on the other side.

In bestowing honor, praise, and glory upon Christ for his work we recognize his great salvation as our salvation: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.... Behold I make all things new" (Rev 21: 4, 5).

Let ev'ry kindred, ev'ry tribe
On this terrestrial ball
To him all majesty ascribe
And crown him Lord of all. REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

"Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Ac 1:6). It is not an improper question. It certainly makes clear the material reality of expectations for the here and now held by the followers of the Christ, but it is limited in scope and perspective. That the Christ is committed to a comprehensive new order is clearly understood, but "Israel" is too narrow a concept. The new order of the Christ is one which is inclusive and universal. *When* (1:7) is not something we need to know; only where and how. Followers of the Christ are called to be open to the power of the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:8), the "power from on high" (Lk 24:49), and then to get on with the work of being "witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8).

What is our witness? Paul speaks of the church as a place for developing a "spirit of wisdom and perception" (Eph 1:17), needed to discern the difference between the old order and God's new order. Luke says in effect: "Read my book, because I have dealt with everything Jesus did and taught" (Ac 1:1). And at the heart of what Jesus said and did is the news of the "forgiveness of debts" (Lk 24:47, cf. Mat 6:12).

Indeed, "breaking bread" (Easter III) and the "forgiveness of debts" are the fundamental signs of the new order, a new order of which Melchizedek (Ps 110:4) will be justly proud, and Yahweh will "hold his head high in victory" (110:7). DP

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 27, 1989

Psalm 47
Acts 1:(1-7) 8-14
1 Peter 4:12-17, 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

FIRST READING

1 Peter speaks of "the household of God" (*oikos*) and of the "brotherhood/sisterhood" (*adelphotes*), while Acts pictures a great new international community beginning at Jerusalem and stretching to the ends of the earth. John 17 with its talk of "oneness" is not viewing the new community structurally so much as thinking of the essential quality of that community.

Who would deny that it is a tragic thing when the community is divided into warring camps (sects, factions, parties, splinter groups) or when the community is less inclusive than the local Rotary club? But John 17 in focusing on "oneness" has something else in view, something prior.

"Oneness" means about the same as "Godness." When Jesus prays "that they may all be one," he is asking that the life of God might course in unrestricted flow through the veins of all the women and men of the new community. The Evangelist by means of this prayer of Jesus defines the life of God as most triumphantly transparent in the cross of Jesus, in the moment when Jesus is "glorified" or exalted upon the cross.

That word "glory" (*doxa*) in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) describes moments when God throws the divine weight around to win victories against enemies. God's "glory" is associated with awesome energy, blinding light, overpowering splendor. The Fourth Evangelist has pondered the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and in his mind the two are not separate moments like dark and light or humiliation and exaltation but are one and inseparable. Jesus ascended the cross like royalty ascending a throne. At that

moment the gracious designs of God for victory over death and hate were most fully realized in a human life. The flesh and bone of Jesus were perfectly plastic to the purposes of God. Jesus was taken into the presence of God with the glory he had before the world was made (v. 5). That perfect loving oneness he enjoyed is his prayer for all those who name his name in faith (v. 10). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Organized Christianity today is deeply enamored of action. Nowhere is this love affair more apparent than in conventions, where cries to "do something about it" are raised in a context where the action consists mainly of casting ballots and walking to microphones. The resolutions adopted in such settings are often breathtaking in the range of concerns they address and the scope of the actions they prescribe. But, so it is thought, better to aim too high than not to aim at all. The church needs to act.

On this Sunday of the liturgical year, the picture is of a church that is doing nothing—except praying with one accord. The picture is of a waiting church.

Years ago a little group of Christians known as the Bruderhof published a book of devotions under the title *Action in Waiting*. The foreword was written by Karl Barth, no less. The Bruderhof is a kind of Christian commune that is devoted to living an Advent-style of Christian life. The community believes that Christians act by being, especially by being people of love, of suffering, of hope, of prayer. There is action, they believe, in a certain kind of waiting.

For all of its holy (and unholy!) impatience, more often than it likes to admit, the church is left with no option but action in waiting. If we hear the Word the readings for the Seventh Sunday after Easter give us, we see that this is o.k., that at certain points in the church's pilgrimage the Spirit, as it did for the first Christians, can call for a "significant pause" (again Barth, describing this Sunday), a "break in the action," as sportscasters are frequently heard to say.

And what are we waiting for? For the risen Christ once again to pour out his Spirit upon us. For the risen Christ to pour out his Spirit for illumination, for guidance, for power.

The Spirit's hand can't be forced, but if we wait with prayer and patience for the gift, it will happen. Then we will be able to resist the devil, to suffer reproach for the Name of Christ (second reading) and carry on as his people in the world (Gospel). The risen Christ's "prayer of consecration" will be answered by our steadfastness, and he will be glorified.

Veni Sanctus Spiritus! REK

PROPHETIC VOICE

If the Ascension offers a heavenly celebrative moment, the final Sunday of Easter brings us back down to earth. To be "true... to the name of God" (Jn 17:11), to be truthful to the substance and principles of the new order, means a pro-active kind of shepherding (Easter IV); a commitment to political strategies which can bring that new order into being. But there is a "roaring lion" out there in the idolatrous empire of the world, so there is a need to be "calm but vigilant" (1 Pet 5:8). And there is a call for resistance. "Stand up" to the beast, "strong in faith and in the knowledge that your sisters and brothers all over the world are suffering the same things" (1 Pet 5:9). That may not be our reality in the North American context as much as it is in other places in the world. But that may also say that our truthfulness to the mission of the Christ and our resistance to the injustices and oppression of the empire is not as fully developed as it is among some of our third world sisters and brothers. But if we are conscious of "oneness," the solidarity for which Jesus is praying in John 17, then we must know that some parts of the Body are fully engaged in the struggle and are calling us to the struggle as well.

So as we return from the Easter season to the "upper room" (Ac 1:13), with all the memories associated with the instruction Jesus has given us there (cf. Jn 13-17), we look forward to Pentecost and the advocacy of the Spirit. DP

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