

A Minority Opinion
to the
CTCR's Response to Questions from BHE/CUS on Lay Teachers of Theology

With respect to the first question addressed to the CTCR in this request, it is evident that the Scriptures do not speak about who can or cannot teach when it comes to the areas of philosophy, geography, ecology, archaeology and the like. In fact, one might say that biblically speaking the subjects that have little to do with theology are not an issue. This is because they are secular in nature and only peripherally and incidentally overlap the teaching of theology. Having said this, however, we must state that the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions do have something to say about the teaching of theology proper in the public arena.

The Commission's report correctly points out that in the Scriptures and Confessions the terms "teaching" and "preaching" are often used interchangeably and it cites passages such as the following: 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2:11; Ap IV, 234; VII, 48; and, Treatise 27, 67. However, the report fails to mention the obvious reason why the Scriptures and the Confessions speak in this way. In these texts the Scriptures and Confessions make it evident that the teaching of theology is quite different from all other branches of science, and that those who preach and teach theology publicly are to be duly ordained. Thus, St. Paul tells the Corinthians: "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you" (1 Cor. 11:23; cf. Gal. 1:2). That is precisely why Scripture has these words of warning: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1, NASB).

Furthermore, when a pastor who teaches and preaches every day in his particular parish is also asked to teach at the university level, he will be able to relate to students in a way remarkably different from someone teaching who has no parish experience. When we place a non-ordained teacher into the classroom to teach future pastors, we are in essence asking the students to settle for something less than we expect them to do as future pastors. And we are asking the teacher to do something that he cannot be equally qualified to do, since he has never experienced the daily joys and burdens associated with the pastoral office. This is under the very best of circumstances unfair to the students and teachers alike. In the worst case scenario and tragically for the whole church, we therefore do not make use of pastors who are natural teachers of theology simply by virtue of what they do day in and day out in their parishes. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the Confessions underscore the fact that the public teaching and administration of the sacraments are to be carried out in the church by those who have been regularly called (AC XIV).

In connection with the second question addressed to the Commission, the Response makes reference to Acts 18:28 ff. There we read about Apollos, a man of eloquence who made extensive use of this gift in the proclamation of God's Word. Yet, when it came to the issue of Baptism, Apollos did not have all the facts and was sorely lacking, knowing only about the baptism of John. It is evident from the context that God indeed used a

woman to set Apollos straight on Baptism. However, it is imperative that we take notice of the following two important facts recorded in these verses: 1) Priscilla is not doing any teaching by herself, but in the presence and with the aid of her husband Aquila. 2) This teaching is not done in the public arena, but privately, as verse 26 clearly states.

Theology is clearly not like other fields of study. Instead, if the examples of the Scripture passages above are to be our guide, we must continue to uphold the office of the holy ministry, especially in the public arena. This is particularly applicable in the Synod's institutions of higher learning, where educators oftentimes are teaching those who are considering entry into the office of the holy ministry. We must not delegate this great responsibility to those who are not the properly called teachers of theology in the church. When it comes to our universities, we dare not maintain that merely because it might be more expedient or convenient to hire a particular teacher—man or woman—this person can also be expected to teach theology classes. In so doing our institutions of higher learning would clearly be abandoning our long established practice. Furthermore, in a church that has several thousand pastors, many of whom would welcome the opportunity to teach at one of our universities, we dare not despise the gifts God has so freely bestowed on us all. We must not ask those who have no personal stake in the teaching of theology to do the very thing pastors are so well trained to do and for which they bear the full responsibility that comes with their office.

For these reasons, I would earnestly urge the presidents and faculty of our CUS not to forge ahead with such a major and most significant change to our long established requirement for theological instruction in the Synod's institutions of higher learning. The Commission's report has cited one debatable precedent from our more than 150-year history and only one other example from the entire history of Lutheranism. In my mind this is hardly enough to justify changing our practice, since it does not even begin to provide adequate rationale for challenging the traditional interpretation on this issue. To proceed with this radical change would not only be parting ways with the Synod's long established practice but also bring into question whether the CUS still wants to follow what it was originally designed to do. The CUS exists to serve the church. That is to say, far from undermining the teachings of the LCMS, and particularly the office of the holy ministry, the CUS was established to be an aid to the church and to support unapologetically the doctrines that have bound us together. If that is no longer a priority for our CUS, then its presidents and faculty must be honest in explaining to the church why they now wish to depart from our traditional interpretation of Scripture and follow their own course of action. And if that is indeed the case, then the CUS and the church together must consider the serious implications of this change for all of us in the short and long term.

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April 30, 2003