The Ministry in Its Relation to the Christian Church

As Seen on the Basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions
with Applications to Specific Problems of the Church in Our Time

A Report of the
Commission on Theology and Church Relations
of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod
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Introduction

The Task

The present study on the Ministry endeavors to carry out the instructions given to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations by the 1965, 1967, 1969, and 1971 conventions of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The resolutions of the Synod with which this study is concerned are the following:

1. 1965 Resolution 5-14. This resolution called for the ordination of called male teachers. It was not acted on by the Synod, but referred to the CTCR for a report to the next convention.

2. 1967 Resolution 2-28. This resolution, among other things, referred the request of Overture 2-78, "To Study Nature and Function of Diaconate in the Lutheran Church," to the CTCR for comprehensive study.

3. 1969 Resolution 2-15. In view of the fact that the CTCR had not yet completed its study of the Ministry and related questions, and in view of the further fact that other groups within the Synod and in the Lutheran Council were studying the question of the Ministry, the Synod asked the CTCR "to coordinate these various studies and issue a statement to the Synod by the next convention."

4. 1971 Resolution 8-07. The Synod requested the CTCR "to study and define the office of evangelist, especially as it relates to the office of the pastor and to the doctrine of the church and ministry, and that the Commission report to the Synod on this at an early date."

5. 1971 Resolution 5-03. In refraining from granting franchise to teachers "at this time," the Synod resolved "that continued study be given to the question, especially as it relates to the current CTCR study of teacher ordination."

6. 1971 Resolution 2-05. The Synod encouraged the CTCR "to give high priority to the early completion of its assignments in this area."

The Commission's Procedure

Even a cursory reading of the above resolutions indicates something of the magnitude of the task assigned to the CTCR by the Synod. Some of the questions are complicated, and even hotly debated. The task of coordinating a number of studies on the Ministry is very great. If different study groups have reached different conclusions, it may not be possible to coordinate the studies in any real sense of the term.

The CTCR recognizes that the doctrine of the Ministry does not stand alone as an isolated doctrine, but is intimately related to the salvation which God provided for mankind in Christ; to the Gospel which is the good news of this salvation; and to the church, which comes into being and is sustained and nourished through this Gospel.

In approaching its study of the Ministry, the CTCR did not proceed on the assumption that we do not yet know what the Ministry is, or that we must wait for a number of other studies before we can speak with assurance on the subject. Although we have not found Biblical and confessional statements which contain a direct answer to each question, the Commission believes that Holy Scripture presents a view of the Ministry which can be clearly set forth, and that the Lutheran Confessions also speak clearly and Biblically on the Ministry. The Commission also holds that specific questions concerning the diaconate, called male teachers, evangelists, and other ministries can and must be answered on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

In response to the Synod's request that the Commission coordinate various studies on the Ministry, the CTCR decided to draw up its own statement on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions; to examine its own statement critically by comparing the findings of other groups which studied the same questions; and finally to make any necessary corrections or amendments.

An examination of various contemporary ministry studies in the Lutheran Church reveals the fact that some of them emphasize the distinction between "ministry" (that is, Christian service of various kinds which may and should be performed by all Christians) and the "Ministry" (that is, a special office in the church).

The CTCR recognizes and endorses the validity and importance of this distinction. It notes, however, the specific questions addressed to the CTCR for study all pertain to the Ministry as a special office in the church. For that reason, this study does not directly address itself to the ministry of all Christians, but rather questions of the Ministry as the office of Word and Sacrament in the church. The first part summarizes important aspects of the Biblical and confessional teaching on the Ministry. The second part applies these emphases to the offices of teacher, deacon, and evangelist.

I.
The Ministry in the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions

Institution of the Ministry

The Augsburg Confession explicitly states that God instituted the office of the ministry: To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. (AC, V, p.31)

However, in Holy Scripture we do not find words of institution for the Ministry on the order of the words of institution for Christian Baptism (Matt. 28: 19, 20) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-24, and 1 Cor. 11:23-25). Nevertheless, we do find that Christ, even before His suffering, death, and resurrection, expected the Gospel of the kingdom to be proclaimed in all the world. "This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations" (Matt. 24:14). "Truly I say to you, wherever this Gospel is preached in the whole world, what she [Mary of Bethany] has done will be told in memory of her." (Matt. 26:13) After His death and resurrection, our Lord's earlier expectation became His explicit command. He commanded His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19,20). "He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48). "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained' " (John 20:21-23). "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

In obedience to the Lord's instruction and command, the apostles began proclaiming the Gospel of forgiveness through Christ on the day of Pentecost and thereafter, and carried on this work until their death. The apostles taught the church at Jerusalem (Acts 2:42). Peter strengthened the brethren, as the Lord had commanded him (Luke 22:32; Acts 8:14-25). St. Paul founded numerous churches in Asia Minor and later also in Europe, and repeatedly visited and strengthened these churches as need and opportunity arose.

Ministers of the Word Other Than Apostles

The command to preach and to teach the Gospel in all the world had been given to the twelve apostles The task of evangelizing the world was, however, too great to be accomplished by twelve men in one life- span, shortened in the case of most of them by martyrdom.

The apostles soon sought and found assistants. Because the work of ministering to the temporal needs of the many widows in the church at Jerusalem required much time and energy, and prevented the apostles from devoting sufficient time and energy to prayer and the Ministry of the Word, the apostles asked the church at Jerusalem to choose seven suitable men who could be appointed to take charge of this work (Acts 6:1-6). These men are often referred to in later ecclesiastical writings as "the seven deacons," although Scripture does not call them deacons. Nor can their office simply be identified with the office of deacon which later developed in the church as one of the

orders of clergy. They were appointed to a service which was related to the preaching of the Gospel only insofar as it freed the apostles for this task. Nevertheless, we soon find two of the so- called "deacons" preaching the Gospel (namely, Stephen, Acts 6:8 ff., and Philip the evangelist, Acts 8:5 ff.).

Soon we find others engaged in the work of preaching and teaching the Gospel. Some men who had been scattered by the persecution which arose after the death of Stephen preached the Gospel to Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11:19ff.), and a church which was destined to become very influential in a short time came into being. In this church, according to Acts 13:1 ff., there were prophets and teachers, who evidently were engaged in some way in the service of the Gospel.

St. Paul, who had come into the church by a miraculous conversion, and to apostleship by a special call (Acts 9:15; 22:21), recruited many helpers who became preachers of the Gospel. Notable among them were Timothy and Titus. They in turn were instructed to enlist other competent and faithful men for the task of proclaiming the Gospel. Paul writes to Timothy, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2: 1, 2). There can be no question about what Timothy had heard from Paul before many witnesses, for Paul was faithful to his own commission, which he describes in Rom. 1:1-6:

> *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

This was Paul's call and his teaching. This was what Timothy heard from him, for this is what Paul was to entrust to faithful men who would also be able to teach others. The same apostle instructs both Timothy and Titus with respect to the qualifications for

such men, whom he calls bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Those qualifications include aptness to teach, that is, the ability to give instruction in sound doctrine. This underscores teaching as a very important function of the public ministry.

Names and Titles of Ministers

Holy Scriptures does not specify one preferred name for the Ministers of the Gospel. A variety of designations is found, but the task is always essentially the same, namely, the proclamation and teaching of the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. (Cf. 1 Tim. 1:3; 3:2; 4:6, 11, 13; 5:17; 6:2)

At first, the proclaimers and teachers of the Word in the church at Jerusalem were the apostles. Later on James is reputed to have been the bishop of this church with a number of elders assisting him (Acts 15:6-13; cf. Acts 15:1 and Gal. 2:12). At Ephesus the teachers of the church are called elders (Greek: presbyters, from which the word "priest" is derived; Acts 20:17-28). That there were men with well defined ministerial functions in the churches at the time of the apostles seems clear also from 1 Thess. 5:12: "But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you."

How great was the variety of designations for the men who ministered in the apostolic church is illustrated by Paul's statement in Eph. 4:11: "And his [the ascended Lord's] gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." Although there was this variety of ministers, each name indicating some special ministerial function, the overall task which they served was one and the same, namely, "the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). To this list there could be added from other passages in the New Testament the designations of "bishops and deacons" (cf. Phil. 1:1). The name "priest" is, however, not found for the servants of the Word in the New Testament, nor are we told who ministered at the celebrations of the Lord's Supper. From all this it is clear that the Ministry of the Gospel is a great work, involving various functions of preaching teaching, shepherding, supervising, and administering (cf. 1 Cor. 12:5, 6; 2 Cor. 8:19, 20). But every function is intended to serve the all-embracing aim

and purpose of the Ministry, that is, to make known the good news of Christ and His salvation.

The Pastoral Office in Its Relation to the Total Gospel Ministry

That it is the will of God that local churches should have their own shepherds Scripture itself makes plain. St. Paul instructed Titus to see to it that the churches which had come into being in a number of towns on the island of Crete were supplied with pastors, whom he calls "elders," in keeping with the custom prevailing at the time. "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective and appoint elders in every town as I directed you." (Titus 1:5)

The office of pastor is therefore a most important office in the service of the Gospel. People who have, through Word and Sacrament, been incorporated into the body of Christ need to be gathered into congregations where they continue to be instructed in the Word, nourished with the Sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, and in every way edified in Christ and equipped for the church's mission in the world. The pastor stands in the place of Christ in his relation to the people of God. He is entrusted by God through the call of the church with the responsibility of expounding and proclaiming the Word of God, of administering the Sacraments, and of exercising supervision of the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made him overseer (cf. Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). These functions are usually performed by pastors in a parish setting. Certain functions of the pastoral office may, however, be performed in various other settings in which facets of the mission of the church are involved, such as in institutions or the armed services.

Important as the pastoral office was at the time of the apostles, and as it continues to be also in our day, pastors are not the only ministers, nor is their ministry the total Ministry of the Gospel. In New Testament times the apostles exercised a ministry that transcended the bounds of every local parish, embracing all the churches that had come into being. They guarded the unity of the church, and kept a watchful eye on the doctrine and life of all the churches. (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:28; Acts 15; 20:28; 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1-3)

So also today, the parish pastor often does not perform the whole Ministry in all its functions. Many ministers, by whatever title they may be known bishop, president, pastor, executive secretary, professor are necessary for the welfare of the total church as well as of individual congregations. For example, the training of future pastors and teachers for the churches claims the total time and strength of many ministers who occupy the position of professors or administrators at the church's educational institutions. Such persons are usually not thought of as pastors, but they are Ministers of the Gospel, performing labors necessary for the church as a whole and for all individual congregations.

The Call to the Ministry in Apostolic Times

While Holy Scripture does not set forth an explicit and detailed doctrine of the call into the Ministry, it does occasionally speak of such a call. The twelve apostles were chosen and called by Jesus Himself. St. Paul was called by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. In a vision, the disciple Ananias, who was to baptize Paul, was told by the Lord of Paul's call: 'He is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). In his epistles, Paul frequently refers to his call (cf. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Cot. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1). During a worship service in the church at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were called to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles when the Holy Spirit said: "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). The elders of the church at Ephesus were reminded by Paul that they must watch over and feed the church of the Lord, because the Holy Ghost had made them guardians of this flock. (Acts 20:28)

How this call came, in every instance, to those who became ministers in the church in apostolic times Holy Scripture does not say. Some may well have been chosen directly by the church, while others, with the consent and approval of the church, were appointed by the apostles. (Cf. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)

In whatever manner the call to service in the Gospel may have been issued and received, the person so called was held accountable to his Lord, in whose service he stood. "Obey your leaders," the writer to the Hebrews admonishes his readers, "and

submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account" (Heb. 13:17). St. James admonishes his readers, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness." (James 3:1)

Ordination in Apostolic Times

Just as there are, in the technical sense, no words of institution for the Ministry in the New Testament, so also there is no record of an institution or ordination to the Ministry. There are, however, references to the laying on of hands, a practice that may be understood as a form of ordination. The laying on of hands, however did not originate with the apostles, having been practiced already in ancient Israel. The children of Israel were commanded to lay their hands on the Levites "that it may be theirs to do the service of the Lord" (Num. 8:9-11). Moses was commanded to lay his hands on Joshua, the son of Nun: "You shall commission him in their [the people's] sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of Is Israel may obey." (Num. 27:18-20)

The apostles were therefore following an Old Testament example when they "ordained," that is, when they "prayed and laid their hands upon" the seven men who were chosen by the church at Jerusalem to minister to the widows (Acts 6:6). There are other New Testament examples of such "ordination." (Cf. Acts 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Tim. 5:22; and 2 Tim. 1:6)

From these examples it is clear that in Biblical times there was a form of ordination in which chosen men were publicly and solemnly charged through the laying on of hands with specific functions and duties, at times political, at times spiritual. Along with the specific functions and duties of the office, there was bestowed authority commensurate with those functions and duties. St. Paul, for example, wrote to two men he had "ordained": "Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth" (1 Tim. 4:12) and "Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." (Titus 1:13)

Ministry and Ordination in the Post-Apostolic and Reformation Church

The Ministry, and ordination to the Ministry, continued as a matter of course in the Christian church after the days of the apostles. In the Western church, out of which the Lutheran church came at the time of the Reformation, there developed in time seven orders of clerics, all of whom were ordained. Ordination by the laying on of hands was in time elevated to one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. (See Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Twenty- third Session, Chapters I--IV , and Canons 1--8)

The time of the Reformation saw the pot which had boiled ominously during the Middle Ages and the scholastic period exploding with elemental force. Various movements took form. On the one hand, the so-called left wing of the Reformation, under leaders like Thomas Muenzer and Menno Simons, generally had no specifically called and ordained ministers, but depended on charismatic leaders. Men preached as they believed they were moved by the Spirit.

On the other hand, the Reformation churches that followed Martin Luther, as well as the Reformed churches begun by Huldrich Zwingli and continued under John Calvin and others, took a middle road. The church of the Augsburg Confession rejected both the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church about ministry and ordination as well as the unstructured way of the left wing of the Reformation. It wanted to retain a rightly called and publicly ordained Ministry.

Statements of the Lutheran Confessions on Ministry and Ordination

The Augsburg Confession states: "To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments" (AC, V, p. 31). Concerning the call to the Ministry, the same Confession states: "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." (AC, XIV, p. 36) The papalist theologians who examined the Augsburg Confession noted correctly that the Confession did not stress or even call for ordination. In the Confutation, which was the Roman Catholic answer to the Augsburg Confession, Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession was approved, but with the proviso that the adherents of the Confession "employ canonical ordination."

To this Melanchthon responds that the Lutherans deeply desire to maintain existing church polity and the various ranks of ecclesiastical authority, in spite of the fact that the adherents of the Augsburg Confession recognized that these were ordered by human authority (Apology XIV). It was the cruelty of the bishops toward the adherents of Luther's teaching and toward the Gospel itself which compelled the Lutherans to give up canonical ordination as practiced in the Church of Rome, and to ordain their own ministers.

The manner in which the Lutherans viewed the ministry and ordination in their relation to the church is most clearly set forth in the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, adopted at Smalcald in 1537 and intended as a supplement to the Augsburg Confession. The Treatise insists, first of all, that the right to call and ordain ministers belongs, not to the hierarchy, but to the church. On this point it states:

> *When the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel, and are unwilling to administer ordination, the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves. For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing and ordaining ministers.*
>
> *[Treatise, 66-67, p. 331]*

Secondly, the Treatise emphasizes that ordination is nothing more than the confirmation of the election and call of the pastor. On this point the Treatise states:

> *These words [I Peter 2:91 apply to the true church which since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterward a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands, nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation.*
>
> *[Treatise 70-71 pp. 331--332]*

Summary of the Biblical and Confessional Teaching Concerning the Ministry

Holy Scripture teaches, and the Lutheran Confessions affirm in accord with Holy Scripture:

1. That it is the will of God that the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ be preached in all the world.
2. That all who through such preaching and the administration of the sacraments come to faith in Christ constitute Christ's church on earth.
3. That there should be Ministers in the church who preach and teach the Word, administer the sacraments, oversee the flock, and, where necessary, exercise church discipline and even excommunication.
4. Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions do not, however, teach that this Ministry must have one form, but rather show that various functions of the Ministry may be performed by various men. According to their functions they may be called elders, bishops, evangelists, pastors, or teachers. The church distributes the various functions included in the Gospel Ministry among a greater or smaller number of persons, according to need and circumstances. She may find it necessary at times to increase the number of "offices" within the one Office of the Ministry in order that all functions necessary for the performance of this Office may be adequately carried out. At other times, she may find it expedient to abolish some "offices" and commit the functions of the Office of the Ministry to fewer people.

II.
Application of the Biblical and Confessional Teaching on the Ministry to Various "Offices" in the Church

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, in the resolutions referred to in the beginning of this document, asked the CTCR to deal specifically with the ordination of called male teachers, the nature and function of the diaconate in the Lutheran Church, and the office of evangelist. In dealing with these questions in the following paragraphs, the Commission is attempting to apply the doctrine of the Ministry as it has been drawn from Holy Scripture and formulated in the Lutheran Confessions.

The Called Male Teacher

The task assigned by the Synod to the CTCR with respect to called male teachers contains two distinct questions:

A. What is the office of the called male teacher in relation to the office of the Ministry?

B. Should called male teachers be ordained?

The Office of the Called Male Teacher in its Relation to the Office of the Ministry

Neither Holy Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions describe an office corresponding exactly to the office of the called male teacher in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The teachers referred to in the New Testament (e.g., in Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28 ; Eph. 4:11) were teachers of the faith to congregations, not teachers in anything like a Lutheran elementary or secondary school.

The teachers in the schools advocated by Luther and instituted by city councils in Germany were not called, but employed by the city council. Moreover, the teaching of religion to the children was not generally committed to the teachers in the elementary schools, but to the pastors.

The Lutheran elementary school is a development particularly on American soil, and is found in congregations of The Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod with greater frequency than in other Lutheran bodies.

In The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod the office of called male teacher is as old as the Synod itself. The Constitution of the Synod, worked out and adopted in 1846, contains a number of references to teachers. Pastors and teachers are often named together. According to the Constitution, the purposes of the Synod include the training of future pastors and teachers for the service of the church; conscientious examination of the candidates for the office of pastor and teacher; and supervision over the con duct of pastors and teachers in office. The work of the teacher has been viewed as a function of the Ministry. When no teacher was available or the congregation was too small to support a teacher, the pastor as a matter of course taught the parish school l. This practice persisted well into the 20th century.

In dealing with governmental agencies the officials of the Synod have consistently maintained that our called male teachers belong to the clergy of our church, and that they are to be considered ministers, although not pastors. As early as 1869, Prof. C. A. T. Selle wrote: Our Synod bears testimony to the fact that teachers are to be classified with the so-called clergy, when our Synodical Constitution lays down regulations for their examination, and afterward declares them to be, like the pastor, standing members of the Synod.' **[*]**

Consequently, the called male teacher has been viewed as performing a function of the Ministry, but not the whole Ministry. He has not been a parish pastor, nor has he been referred to as a pastor. However, he has been called, just as pastors have been. Normally, his call, like that of the pastor, has been a call with unlimited tenure. However, teachers have never been ordained in The Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod. The pastor has been acknowledged as the shepherd of the whole congregation, including the teacher or teachers. Because the pastor is responsible for the doctrine taught in the congregation, the teacher has been responsible to the pastor in his teaching of religion, as well as in his Christian life and conduct.

The Ordination of Called Male Teachers

With respect to the question referred to the CTCR in 1965 Resolution 5-14, the CTCR declares:

> *Since called male teachers in The Lutheran Church-- Missouri Synod are called to perform certain functions of the Ministry, and are considered clergy, and since, moreover, ordination is an adiaphoron, that is, a custom of the church not divinely commanded, there are no biblical or theological reasons why teachers could not be ordained to perform that function of the Ministry to which they are called.*

In view of the above declaration, and in view of the widely expressed desire for the ordination of the Synod's called male teachers, and to express to these teachers the importance of their high office as a part of the public Ministry of the church, the CTCR recommends:

1. That the Synod approve the ordination of synodically certified and called male teachers and directors of Christian education; and

2. That the President of the Synod be asked to appoint a committee representative of all groups particularly concerned in this matter to consider the implementation of this recommendation in all aspects, and to report to the President. Some of the aspects to be considered are: criteria for eligibility for ordination, necessary changes in the synodical Handbook. and appropriate liturgical forms for the ordination of called male teachers.

(**NOTE:** The CTCR understands "synodically certified" teachers to be those who have been recommended to the Council of Presidents by the faculty of a synodical terminal college or the committee on colloquies.)

Woman Teachers in Schools Within the Synod

As the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations pondered and discussed the question of the ordination of called male teachers, its members were forcibly impressed by the realization that what is said above about called male teachers applies equally to the thousands of consecrated woman teachers in synodical schools. They have not, to the best of the Commission's knowledge, asked for ordination. They do, however, in many instances perform a part of the Ministry of the church in teaching the Gospel of Christ. In view of the fact that ordination is not a formula by which a person becomes a pastor, but the church's declaration that the person ordained has been called to perform certain functions of the Ministry, there appears to be no biblical or theological reason why woman teachers could not be ordained to the office of teaching the Word.

It must be understood that this is a vastly different question from the question of the ordination of women to the pastoral office. On this question the 1969 convention of the Synod accepted an earlier statement of the CTCR which declared:

Those statements of Scripture which direct women to keep silent in the church and which prohibit them to teach and to exercise authority over men, we understand to mean that women ought not to hold the pastoral office or to serve in any other capacity involving the distinctive functions of this office. [1969 Res. 2-17]

This position was reaffirmed in the 1971 convention (cf. Res. 2-04). Both of these resolutions speak of "distinctive functions of the pastoral office." We understand such functions to be those set forth by our Lutheran Confessions, which state:

> *Therefore the bishop has the power of order, namely the ministry of Word and Sacrament. He also has the power of jurisdiction, namely the authority to excommunicate those who are guilty of public offenses or to absolve them if they are converted and ask for absolution.*
>
> *[Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXVIII, 13--14, p.283]*

With regard to the possible ordination of called woman teachers, and in view of the above findings, the CTCR recommends: That the President of the Synod appoint a committee of competent persons to examine all ramifications of the question of the ordination of synodically certified and called woman teachers in schools within the Synod, and report to the President no later than six months before the 1975 convention of the Synod.

The Nature and Function of the Diaconate in the Lutheran Church

This title, taken from Overtures 2-78 and 2-79 submitted to the 1967 convention, is to some extent a misnomer, since the diaconate, as this term is generally understood, is not in use in the Lutheran church in this country. In Lutheran churches "deacons" are elected officers of the congregation, sharply differentiated from the clergy. In hierarchically organized churches (for example, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian churches) deacons are defined as members of the clerical order just below that of a priest. The New Catholic Encyclopedia defines a deacon as "an ordained minister, immediately below the rank of priest in the divinely ordained hierarchy of the church." The same Encyclopedia finds the earliest certain written use of the term in Phil. 1: 1, "where from the text it is clear that the special meaning of the term was already known." The article then refers to 1 Tim. 3:1-13 where the qualifications of bishops and of deacons are laid down. The writings of early church fathers make it plain that the office of deacon was well established as part of the clerical order. Concerning the powers of deacons as well as their limitations, the New Catholic Encyclopedia states:

The powers that thus belong to the deacon are enumerated in the Pontifical: to minister at the altar, to baptize and to preach. Of these powers the last two can be exercised only to a limited degree. The deacon is only the extraordinary minister of solemn baptism, and he may exercise this function only with special authorization. Similarly, the deacon may not preach without special authorization. Special authorization is likewise required for the deacon to distribute Holy Communion to the faithful, although this function may be regarded as pertaining to his office. Only in his ministration at the altar in solemn Mass does the deacon exercise the power of his order apart from any extraordinary restriction.
[T. J. Riley, "Deacon" New Catholic Encyclopedia. IV; New York: McGraw Hill, 1967; p. 668]

We understand the questions which have been asked about the diaconate in the Lutheran Church (and notably by The Lutheran Church in the Philippines) as referring to deacons who are clergymen of an order lower than the pastor. This church in 1970 passed a resolution to institute the office of deacon, and submitted its resolution to the CTCR. We find that our sister church in the Philippines intends to institute the office of deacons in much the same sense in which this office existed in the post-apostolic church, namely, as an order of minister, subject to supervision on the part of a pastor.
In view of the fact that the Ministry includes all functions that are necessary for the successful proclamation of the Gospel, and that the sum total of these functions can rarely, if ever, be performed by one man, the CTCR declares that a church which finds the order of deacon as an order of clergy necessary for the successful performance of its work has the right to institute this office and to ordain men to it, just as Lutheran Churches in India and New Guinea have instituted the office of catechist.
The CTCR would, however, caution any church instituting this office to exercise care that only men personally suitable and qualified for this office be ordained to it (1 Tim. 3:8-13), and that their duties, and any restrictions on their powers, be carefully defined.

The Office of Evangelist

The Synod's 1971 convention resolved:

> *That we request the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to study and define the office of evangelist, especially as it relates to the office of the pastor and to the doctrine of church and ministry, and that the commission report on this to the Synod at an early date.*
>
> *[res. 8-07]*

In seeking to fulfill this request of the Synod, the CTCR makes the following observations:

1. The term evangelist occurs only three times in the New Testament. Acts 21:8 calls Philip, one of the seven appointed by the church in Jerusalem to take care of the distribution of alms, "Philip the evangelist." The activity of Philip which gave him the name evangelist is described in Acts 8. Verse 5 and following tell how Philip proclaimed Christ in Samaria, and won converts and baptized them. In verse 26 of the same chapter, an angel tells Philip to go down to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he finds the Ethiopian eunuch, proclaims Christ to him, and baptizes him. It seems clear from these passages that Philip had a gift for bringing the Gospel to men who had not yet heard it. He does not appear to have become a parish pastor, but went from place to place proclaiming Christ.

2. The gifts of the ascended Lord were "that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). The apostolic office was not a permanent institution in the sense that one set of apostles would in time be replaced by other apostles . As men who had been with the Lord and had "seen Him with their eyes, had looked upon and touched Him with their hands" (1 John 1:1), they could not have successors who possessed these qualifications.

The prophets of the New Testament, who are mentioned immediately after the apostles (of. Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Rev. 18:20), are frequently mentioned in the Book of Acts (of. Acts 13:1; 11:28; 21:10). The office of the New Testament

prophets is not understood in the same way by all Bible students. But it seems clear that this was not a structured office which was found everywhere in the church. Rather, the New Testament prophets, like those of the Old Testament, presumably were men specially called to this office and endowed by the Holy Spirit with the gift of prophecy, or inspired utterance. They performed certain necessary functions in the church which served the proclamation of the saving Gospel.

It would also appear that evangelists were not so much an institution in the apostolic church as men who possessed the necessary gifts for going to those who had not yet heard of Christ and proclaiming the Good News to them. The activity or function of an evangelist is to evangelize, that is, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

3. The apostle Paul told Timothy: "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). Timothy was in charge of the church at Ephesus. In some sense, he could be called a "diocesan bishop," so far as his office is concerned. This is indicated by the instruction about what should be done in the churches (1 Tim. 1:3 ff.; 2), and the instructions about what kind of persons should become bishops (chapter 3). But this same Timothy is told: "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your minis try." (Timothy also had other duties; see, for example 1 Thess. 3:1, 2.)

The work of an evangelist, then, does not necessarily call for a separate office. It is a function of the total Ministry and may be carried out even by bishops, and certainly by parish pastors. However, the work of evangelizing the unchurched is so great and pressing a task that the church may well find it desirable to appoint persons in addition to the parish pastors, who are often fully occupied with parish work, to the task of evangelizing. The church may call and ordain suitable persons specifically for the work of evangelizing. If a congregation calls an evangelist, he will as a matter of course work under the supervision of and in closest harmony with the pastor, who is the shepherd of the whole flock entrusted to his charge, including the evangelist.

Summary Statement on the Office and Functions of the Ministry

Christ Himself instituted the office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Many functions belong to this office: evangelizing, preaching, teaching, shepherding, supervising, admonishing, disciplining, and administering. Because it is often difficult or impossible for one person to perform all the functions of the ministry, the church may entrust various functions of this office to a number of persons. According to her needs, the church may under the one Ministry of the Word establish such "offices" as the situation requires. If the situation changes, she may also abolish some "offices." However, she must at all times remain faithful to the commission of her Lord to preach the Gospel, to baptize, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to feed and guard the flock of Christ.

NOTE: All citations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from The Book of Concords edited by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

[*] Quoted from a Brief, prepared for the Rev. F. A. Hertwig and Supt. S. J. Roth, Sept. 21, 1949, together with a Supplemental Brief, in the Eggen case, May 15, 1950, and the Brief filed by Alfred R. Manske and The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod on the Status of the Lutheran Teacher as a Minister of the Gospel under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Copies of these briefs are on file with the Board of Parish Education, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.