

C.F.W. Walther's Theses on the Ministry*

THESIS I

The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.

THESIS II

The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.

THESIS III

The ministry of preaching is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of days.

THESIS IV

The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the latter, like the priesthood of the Levites, but it is an office of service.

THESIS V

The ministry of preaching has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a spiritual tribunal.

THESIS VI

The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.

THESIS VII

The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.

THESIS VIII

The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.

THESIS IX

Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. However, the preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has, accordingly, no right to make new laws, to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication alone, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.

THESIS X

According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.

* We append "The Theses on the Ministry" prepared by C. F. W. Walther and approved by the Synod in 1851 not merely as a matter of historical interest, but as a testimony to the theological and practical consistency of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its view of the ministry. For Walther's elaboration of these theses, cf. *Walther and the Church*, Wm. Dallmann, et al., eds. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 71—85.