

# The Voice and Ministry of the Gospel: The Historical Development of the Lutheran Pastorate

*Geoffrey A. Kieta*

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Philip Melanchthon wrote in his *Loci Communes*, "We should know that the voice of the Gospel must sound forth among people publicly....We should understand that there must be the public ministry of the Gospel and public gatherings...and to this assembly we should join ourselves" (Chemnitz, *Loci II*, p. 685). Throughout his locus on the church, Melanchthon repeatedly pairs the voice and ministry of the Gospel. Although he nowhere defines "the voice," I have come to the conclusion that for Melanchthon the "voice" is nothing more or less than proclamation. In that sense, the two are really one. "The voice and ministry of the Gospel" seems to me to be a fitting title for our look at the historical development of the Lutheran pastoral ministry.

Our task is really quite broad—so broad that it would be possible to write a thick volume on our subject. But our purpose is not idle academic speculation, but rather an attempt to synthesize from the experience of the Lutheran church during the five centuries of its existence a kernel of wisdom that we can then use to provoke discussion regarding the direction of ministry in Latin America. To that end, our examination of the history of the Lutheran pastorate will concentrate on two aspects of its development. First we will ask, what has the Lutheran pastor done throughout history? Second, we will ask, what has been his relationship to other ministries which the Lutheran Church has established? Finally, we will ask ourselves' does this hold any lessons for our Lutheran churches in Latin America today?

Obviously, one could expand this kind of a study into a detailed treatment of all the forms of ministry which have been used by the Lutheran Church down through the ages. To a certain extent, we will do that in the second part, but our principle focus will be on the parish pastorate. One could also expand the study to the time of the apostles, but we will limit ourselves to Lutheranism. This is done primarily because of the unique understanding with which the Holy Spirit has graced the Lutheran Church. While we unequivocally assert the divine origin of the public ministry, that is, that God calls each and every ministry from and through the Church, we also confess that the public ministry is derived from the priesthood of all believers. With Luther, we assert that priests are born—born of washing with water and the Word, and that each of us has a priesthood before God. We recognize that all that belongs to the public ministry belongs first to the Church as God's royal priesthood. For that reason, we confess that all that God commands of the public ministry, he first commands of all Christians. Nevertheless, we maintain that the public ministry is not something that evolved for the sake of simple convenience. God himself ordained and established the one ministry of the Word. God left the development of specific forms of that ministry to the Church. Our study of the pastoral ministry in the history of the Lutheran Church is aimed at looking at how we Lutheran Christians have exercised our freedom of form within the God-given ministry of the Word.

In each of the two sections that follow, we will follow a roughly chronological approach. We will look first at the Reformation period, focusing on the developments after the Diet of Worms in 1521. Before the Diet, the Lutheran Church had not yet moved to break permanently with Rome. After that date, despite the hope of reconciliation which led to the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530, the Lutheran Church was really independent. In our look at the Reformation, we will consider the church in what I chose to call the

"Middle Reformation"—from 1521 until the death of Luther in 1546—and what sometimes is called the "Post-Reformation" but which I prefer to call (along with J.A.O. Preus) the "Late Reformation," the period after the death of Luther until the death of Martin Chemnitz in 1586. The second period we will look at can be simply called the Age of Orthodoxy. For our purposes it will be the era from Chemnitz to the rise of Pietism. If we must attach dates, they could be from 1586 until the publication of *Pia Desideria* by Philip Jakob Spener in 1675. The third period we will simply call European Lutheranism, and it will include the innovations of the Pietists, some observations about the effects of rationalism, and the impact of the confessional awakening in the 1800s. Finally, we will look at the Lutheran churches in America, especially those of the Synodical Conference, and particularly after 1850.

### I. What has the Lutheran pastor done throughout history?

In order to learn something from the history of the Lutheran pastorate, the first logical step seems to be to look at what the church has asked the pastor to do throughout the centuries. In line with the scriptural teaching that the forms of ministry are adiaphora, I expected to see a marked development in how the church has conceived of the specific work of the pastor. This really was not the case. In fact, as we shall see, the Lutheran Church has been quite consistent in its view of shepherding throughout its existence. After a great deal of study I began to realize why. Simply put, the form of the Lutheran pastorate is an expression of our theology. We believe that God has established the ministry to publicly exercise the keys: to reprove sin, to exercise church discipline when necessary, and to hear confession of sins and pronounce the forgiveness of Christ on the penitent sinner. All the activities of the church, including prayer and worship, are directly connected to these two basic functions, the preaching of the law and of the gospel. Since the public ministry exists to exercise these functions on behalf of the body of Christ, a general office naturally developed that combined and oversaw all of the functions of this ministry.

#### *The Reformation Period*

Even before the Diet of Worms, Luther was clear about what the ministry should do. Repeatedly he speaks of the work of the office of the ministry and repeatedly he makes direct application to the office of the pastor. August Pieper quotes from the St. Louis edition, "There is such an office or ministry in the whole world to preach, baptize, forgive, withhold forgiveness, administer the Sacraments, comfort, warn, admonish with the Word of God and whatever else belongs to the office of a pastor" ("Luther's Doctrine of Church and Ministry," p. 261). Likewise Luther tells us in *Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers*, "A parish pastor can claim that he possesses the office of the ministry, baptism, the sacrament, the care of souls, and is commissioned, publicly and legally" (LW 40:385). Again, Luther comments in his treatise *That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven from Scripture*:

Therefore, whoever has the office of preaching imposed upon him has the highest office in Christendom imposed on him. Afterward he may also baptize, celebrate mass, and exercise all pastoral care; or, if he does not wish to do so, he may confine himself to preaching and leave baptizing to others-as Christ and all the apostles did (LW 39:314).

Or again, "If the office of teaching is entrusted to anyone, then everything accomplished by the Word in the church is entrusted, that is, the office of baptizing, consecrating, binding, loosing, praying, and judging doctrine" (*Concerning the Ministry*, LW 40:36).

Although Luther never wrote what we would consider to be a pastoral theology textbook, he did expand and edit the instructions for the parish visitors in electoral Saxony. These instructions very nearly serve the same function. In this work Luther and Melanchthon summarize what a pastor should teach and preach concerning a multitude of subjects, which include the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, penance, the role of tribulation in life, and others. The sections on baptism and the Lord's Supper (LW 40:288-293) contain a number of practical comments about the administration by the pastor as well as points to remember when teaching. Luther also addresses a number of practical questions on worship in the section "The Human Order of the Church" (LW 40:292-301). In his introduction to the work Luther also makes clear his views on the responsibility of the pastor for spiritual oversight. He says, "For actually bishop means supervisor or visitor . . . to see to it that each parish pastor visits and watches over and supervises people in regard to teaching and life" (LW 40:270).

E. G. Schwiebert gives us an overview of the practice of this ministry in his monumental work *Luther and His Times*. He tells us that in the Wittenberg parish the pastor and his three or four assistants were responsible for the Town Church and 13 village churches. He writes:

No less than 500 sermons had to be preached during the year in such a parish, as many services were held during the week. The minister's first duty was the preaching of the Gospel. In addition he conducted private confessions and confessions for Communion, visited the sick, instructed the children for confirmation, and kept a financial record of the congregation. Then there were weddings and funerals (p. 629).

As the Reformation progressed, the concept did not undergo a great deal of change. Melanchthon's treatise "On the Power and Primacy of the Pope" states:

The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confession of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops (Tappert p. 330).

Melanchthon supported this view throughout his locus on the ministry (see Chemnitz, *Loci* II, pp. 685-692) where he related the call to preaching and differentiates between the priesthood of all believers and to administering "those things which pertain to the public ministry of the Word and Sacraments." Between 1549 and 1555 Melanchthon revised the questions used for pastoral candidates' examinations. Schwiebert believes that he made them more demanding. He tells us that Melanchthon expected the pastoral candidate to "be familiar with the fundamentals of Lutheran teaching and how it differed from that of the Roman Church" as well as "an elementary knowledge of church history" and "the fundamentals of Christian ethics" (p. 624).

Chemnitz wrote a fair amount in which he demonstrates the same concept of the pastoral ministry. In his locus on the church, Chemnitz says, "Scripture expressly states what kind of work it should be in which the ministers of the church should labor." He goes on to specifically treat what he calls "the doctrine of the duties of faithfulness of the ministers of the church." His six points cover understanding the fundamentals of doctrine, proclaiming the whole counsel of God, knowing the Word so that he can judge true and false doctrine, teaching the Word in all situations (he uses especially 2 Timothy 3:16 along with several other passages to illustrate this point), being an "example to the flock," and prayer for the Holy Spirit's power in his ministry (Chemnitz, *Loci* II, pp. 706,707). This is especially significant because Chemnitz' *Loci* were developed as twice-a-week lectures which he gave to the other pastors in Braunschweig in his capacity as superintendent (J. A. O. Preus, *Loci* I, pp. 14,15). In his *Enchiridion*, which was written as a manual for pastoral candidates to prepare for their initial

examination and for pastors to review for the bi-annual examination that was demanded in Braunschweig (J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin*, p. 149), question 2 asks, "What, then, is the office of the ministers of the church?" Chemnitz answers:

I. To feed the church of God with the true, pure, and salutary doctrine of the Divine Word . . . II. To administer and dispense the sacraments of Christ according to His institution . . . III. To administer rightly the keys of the church, or of the kingdom of heaven, by either remitting or retaining sins . . . and to fulfill all these things and the whole ministry . . . on the basis of the prescribed command, which the chief Shepherd Himself has given His ministers in His Word for instruction, Mt 28:20.

Question 4 asks "What, then, are the chief parts regarding which either one who is to be ordained, or one who already is pastor of a church, is to be examined?" The response: "1. The call. 2. The doctrine of the Word and Sacraments. 3. Ceremonies to be observed in church assemblies and in the administration of the sacraments. 4. The life and conduct of ministers of the church" (pp. 26,27).

Obviously, it would be possible to say a great deal more about the Reformation concept of the work of the pastorate, but one thing should already be clear. The Lutheran Church in the beginning already had a concept very similar to the one that we know. Pastors throughout this period considered their first calling to be to preach and teach the Word. That meant that they must know the Word and be able to expound it. In addition, the Reformers very clearly place the public administration of the Sacraments in the hands of the called worker, and specifically, in the hands of the pastor, although by no means exclusively. The Reformation era pastor was charged with the ministry of the keys, with reproving and binding the sins of the impenitent and loosing the sins of the penitent with the announcement of God's grace. He was enjoined to visit the sick and the dying, to lead public worship, and to take the lead in church discipline. Additionally, alongside of Luther's clearly articulated doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and his repeated assertion that the congregation had the right to raise up and depose pastors and ministers, Luther, Melancthon, and Chemnitz all asserted the need for the pastor to exercise spiritual oversight within his congregation.

### *The Period of Orthodoxy*

On the whole it is far more difficult to speak of the period of Lutheran Orthodoxy. This is true for two reasons: principally, because the sources are in German and Latin and have not been made available to us in English. C. F. W. Walther does a service in this regard, as both his *Kirche und Amt* and *Pastoraltheologie* are replete with citations from the Lutheran fathers.<sup>1</sup> The other great difficulty in speaking about this period is the extremely negative view that the overwhelming majority of historians take of this period. It makes many of their statements very suspect.

There were, to be sure, some very serious problems in this period, as even our own writers will attest (for example J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, Leroy Dobberstein, and Arnold Koelpin). The central problem to pastoral praxis was the relationship between church and state at this time. J. P. Koehler speaks with contempt of the "servility" of the clergy to the princes after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) (p.15). Robert Clouse goes so

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<sup>1</sup>Unfortunately the English translation of *Church and Ministry* is rather obviously intended to bolster the "Missouri position" and occasionally leaves the English reader wondering about the usage of the original German terms. According to a review of the recently printed translation of his *Pastoral Theology*, printed in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, there has been a "considerable abridgment of Walther's original text, which is most severe in Walther's extensive quotations from earlier sources" (Brug, *WLQ* 93:62). Nevertheless, the availability in German (as opposed to Latin) of these sources that are probably not in our personal libraries does help somewhat.

far as to claim, "Princes were believed to be accountable to God alone for their sins. No clergyman would dare to exercise church discipline against a secular ruler, since that would be a sign of disobedience" (p.42). In the second half of this paper we will look at the pastorate in relation to the rest of the church in the *Landeskirche*.

Our immediate concern is for the pastoral practice of this time. Clouse records almost in passing a testimony to the continuity of the Lutheran pastorate during this period. In a section entitled "Hymns and Devotional Literature" (pp. 48-52) we read, "The warm and vibrant faith of the Age of Orthodoxy is not always clearly evident to us in the theological works of the period. But the hymns and devotional literature of that time are different." He cites Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608), "pastor and theologian in Westphalia" who lived through the plague and buried 1,300 people in a six month period. He also wrote "Wake, Awake for Night Is Flying" and "How Lovely Shines the Morning Star." Johann Heermann (1585-1647) was "pastor at Koeben during the Thirty Years War." Koeben was sacked four times by the Catholic army during the war and also suffered the plague, but Heermann still wrote stirring and comforting hymns. Johann von Rist (1607-1667), also a pastor, suffered terribly during the Thirty Years War, but authored 680 hymns (*Lutheran Cyclopedia* [LC] p. 678). Of course, Paul Gerhardt, pastor in Berlin, not only was "the leading hymnist of the period" but was also a famous preacher, who sacrificed his position when he refused to compromise with the Calvinists. His wife and four children preceded him in death (LC, p. 329), yet he still authored 134 German and 14 Latin hymns. Carl Schalk evaluates these hymns in glowing terms: "Poetically, his hymns reflect clean, smooth ideals; theologically they reflect a soft, warm attempt to bring objective faith into close relationship with life situations" (p. 66). Schalk tells us that the liturgical practices of the Reformation were observed throughout the 17th century, with Gerhardt being one of the most positive influences (p. 68).

I cite this not as an apologist for the Age of Orthodoxy, but rather to show that church life continued throughout the period, and that the pastorate established in the Reformation was very much alive during this period. Pastors were preaching and teaching, marrying and burying, administering the sacraments and leading worship, even if church life did suffer as a result of the *Landeskirche* system and the upheavals of the Thirty Years War.

A very cursory review of the classical Lutheran dogmaticians and teachers whom Walther cites in his *Pastoraltheologie* tends to confirm the evangelical pastoral practice of the period. Walther cites Erasmus Sarcerius<sup>2</sup> (1501-59), Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-88), Jakob Rembach (1693-1735), Lucas Osiander (1571-1638), Salomon Deyling (1677-1755), J. A. Scherzer (1628-83), Johann Gerhard (1582-1637), Georg Dedekennus (1564-1628), Fredrich Balduin (1575-1627), J. Konrad Dietrich (1575-1639), Johannes Fecht (1636-1716), and Arnold Mengerling (1596-1647) among many, many others on such topics as the importance and the practice of preaching and on a variety of practical and theological questions regarding baptism, confession, and the Lord's Supper. These citations demonstrate that the pastorate during the classic period of Lutheran Orthodoxy was still following the same model.

On the other hand, we must recognize that this era, especially near the end, did begin to show serious deficiencies in pastoral practice, not in regard to the form, but rather in the actual substance of the work. Without a doubt, the subsequent calls of the Pietists for preaching and teaching that touched the people and for pastoral education that emphasized the Christian life struck a cord with people of the era because they saw deficiencies in this area. The oft-repeated criticisms of preaching as too polemical and dogmatic and of subservience to the state during this period doubtless were on target in many cases, due principally to the all too cozy relationship between church and state. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the pastoral office underwent little formal change in the age of Pietism.

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<sup>2</sup>The dates for all these men are taken from the appropriate alphabetic entry in the *Lutheran Cyclopedia*.

## *European Lutheranism after the Age of Orthodoxy*

The Age of Orthodoxy was finally brought to a close by the rise of Pietism. Pietism is usually considered to have been born with the publication of *Pia Desideria* by Spener in 1675. Obviously, Pietism did not triumph in a moment, and staunchly orthodox Lutherans like Valentin Loescher (1673-1749) doggedly opposed it (Robert Preus, I, pp. 30, 40). Indeed, the name Pietism was given to the movement by its opponents. The truth is that European Lutheranism was in conflict for many years after 1675. Pietism's excesses ultimately contributed to the success of Rationalism. Rationalism and the Prussian Union provided an environment that led to a reaction in the form of the Confessional Awakening, starting in 1817 (the three-hundredth anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses) and continued through the nineteenth century. The child of the awakening was the free church movement in Germany, which still exists today, although in a far less confessional state.

Each of these movements is worthy of separate consideration, but we will treat them together because the point that interests us is the work of the pastor in all these movements. The surprising reality is that the pastorate didn't vary greatly as to form. The role of the Lutheran pastor was well established in the minds of the people as the shepherd of the flock. The Pietists, as Clouse says, considered the ministry to be "the key institution . . . in their program" (p.100). As we shall see, they did not really attempt to supplant the office of parish pastor, but rather to augment it with greater lay participation and a wider variety of offices. In reality, the movement was launched by pastors. Both Spener and August Hermann Francke served as parish pastors for part of their ministries (Spener as an assistant in the cathedral at Strasbourg and Francke in Erfurt and Glaucha). Both men also later served in other capacities, Spener as "senior" or superintendent in Frankfurt and Francke as a professor in Halle (Clouse, pp. 75-79; LC p.730).

Spener enunciated the general agenda of Pietism in *Pia Desideria* which described a six-point program for the renewal of Lutheranism:

1. Personal religion should be deepened by a greater attention to a study of Scripture.
2. Laymen must be more involved in the work of the church.
3. Christians ought to be encouraged to practical works rather than spending all their time in dry theological debates.
4. In all theological debates a spirit of love must be shown, so that others can be won to Jesus Christ.
5. Theological education should be improved with a special emphasis given to the moral and spiritual life of the ministers.
6. Preaching should be marked with conviction and fervor so that people might be converted (Clouse p. 77).

It is interesting to note that this program does not call for a radical reorganization of the ministry, but rather a refocusing of that ministry. Spener calls for a practical Christianity that touches people's daily lives with the Word. He calls for a spirit of love in theological debate, preaching which touches people's hearts and lives, and theological education that looks first to the "moral and spiritual life of the ministers" rather than to their academic prowess. In many respects, it is easy to believe that we could have been in sympathy with the program, if it had not abandoned the confessions and the objective study of Scripture for emotionalism and subjectivism.

Francke, Spener's successor as the leader of the movement, worked hard from his position as professor at Halle to realize this dream. Clouse again says:

The way to revive Christianity, [the Pietists] believed, was to restore the early church. The first step in this direction was to have godly ministers. The pastor was to be the shepherd of the flock

and not another official. To do this he should be well trained, lead a holy life, and preach in a clear and forceful manner. The church also needed a greater involvement on the part of the laymen if apostolic power was to return. Pietists emphasized Luther's teaching of the priesthood of all believers. To encourage lay participation, they tried to break down the distinction between clergy and laity (p. 93).

The result of this movement was a subtle but important shift in thinking about *how* a faithful pastor shepherds his flock, not necessarily in *what* a faithful shepherd should do. Like Luther the Pietists emphasized the ministry of the Word, teaching and preaching. As the movement continued, however, they left the orthodox teaching of Francke and Spener with regard to the sacraments and greatly downplayed their use. They also began to practice church discipline in a legalistic way, binding men's consciences to a very severe lifestyle that Spener himself practiced. Church discipline, however, had always been a part of the ministry. It is interesting that orthodox Lutherans now began to attack the Pietists on the emphasis that they placed on visitation. Walther quotes Arnold Mengerling (1596-1647), superintendent at Halle as "the first of our theologians who has spoken out against the necessity of home visits on the part of the preachers" (p. 275). What makes this interesting is that it seems unlikely that the practice would have been attacked by Luther, who spoke clearly of the pastor's need to "comfort, warn, admonish with the Word of God" and who specifically instructed the parish visitors, "The pastor, who knows his people and daily associates with them, must distinguish between the weak and the obstinate" (LW 40:292). Daily association and intimate knowledge of the people certainly seems to be in line with the practice of a visitation ministry.

The Pietists worked hard to establish this kind of ministry. They established many different institutions to train workers for the church, and always they included two key components: the study of the Scripture and the instilling of moral values. They often neglected the Confessions, indulged in legalism, and failed to hold to the objective statements of Scripture, but they did practice the pastoral ministry.

Throughout the rise and fall of Pietism the state church continued to exist. At the end of the 19th century, when Rationalism reigned supreme in the universities which produced ministers for the Lutheran *Landeskirchen*, an otherwise unknown clergyman named Gustav Bittkau published a textbook on pastoral theology (*Pfarramtkunde: Praktische Winke zur Führung des geistlichen Amtes*). He breaks his discussion into two general parts, "The Pastor and Preacher in His Spiritual Activities" and "The Pastor in His Official Activities (*in seiner pfarramtlichen Tätigkeiten*)." Under the first part he considers five subsections:

1. The Preacher in the Worship Service,
2. The Spiritual Deeds of his Office (*Amtshandlungen*—here he deals with baptism, confirmation, marriage, communing the sick, burial, and the installation of elders),
3. The Care of the Soul (*Seelsorge*—to the physically well, to the sick, to the "morally weak," and to the imprisoned),
4. Catechism Instruction,
5. Scholarly Activities (the importance of study, topics of study, the means and preparation for preaching).

Under the second part, "The Pastor in His Official Activities," he considers five more points:

1. The Pastor and the Office of Ministry (*das Pfarramt*—acceptance, rights, and responsibilities, keeping the books, reports, files and records, and supervisory responsibilities),
2. The Direction of Ecclesiastical Congregational Organizations (this section deals with church polity),
3. The Activities of the Pastor in Clubs and Organizations (this section deals with congregational and national church organizations, such as the national women's union, the evangelical youth union, etc.),

4. Supervision of the School,
5. The Pastor's Free Time.

(Bittkau, pp. xiii-xvi)

Without entering into the evident unionism and the weak subscription to the Scriptures or an examination of the position of Bittkau concerning the sacraments, it is clear that Bittkau envisions a general outline that is very much in keeping with the Reformation and the modern concept of the pastorate. The only new thing that I readily see is the emphasis on organizations like youth clubs and women's groups, which did not exist during the time of Luther, but which came into being in the seventeenth century through the influence of men like Christian Friedrich Spittler (1782-1867).

Another important movement that we should consider is the Free Church movement. On September 27, 1817, Frederick William III amalgamated the German Reformed and Lutheran churches at the court and in the military and appealed for a general union throughout Prussia and Germany. Many other states followed suit, and in the 1820s and '30s a series of measures were taken to make the union compulsory. In 1834, the previously published Union Agenda, which attempted to make worship the same in all Union churches (and which tried to steer a middle road on the Lord's Supper) was made mandatory. Already in 1817, Claus Harms led the opposition by publishing 95 theses against the Union. By the 1830s "free churches" were forming outside of the Landeskirchen. The free churches were very confessional, and as such began to establish seminaries. For the most part, they ultimately combined into the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (*Selbständige Evangelische Lutherische Kirche* or SELK) of today.<sup>3</sup> Since these churches were founded on a confessional stand and since they enjoyed fellowship with the Missouri Synod from early on (one group sent the LCMS over 200 pastoral candidates in the second half of the 19th century), we can conclude that their view of the ministry was again very much in line with the accepted Lutheran view. Indeed, the largest group, the "Old Lutherans," specifically installed a ministry in which there were parish pastors assisted by elders (LC, pp. 332,333).

Obviously, there are many other important movements during the centuries from 1675 to the present in Germany. But the important point of this section is that the Lutheran Church had a firmly established concept of the pastorate in general terms. Doctrinal problems or indifference, association with the state, "Romish" views of an apostolic succession, and resurgent confessionalism all played a role in the day-to-day approach to fulfilling that view, but in general the view was consistent.

### *American Lutheran Churches*

Lutheranism came to the United States very early. Swedish and Dutch Lutherans were here well before the Revolution. But, as E. Clifford Nelson has noted, they suffered greatly because they lacked pastors. They appealed to various sources in Sweden and Holland before they finally went to Gotthilf A. Francke, the son of August Hermann Francke and head of one of the charitable foundations that his father had established, whom they first contacted in 1733. They reported that they had no church, no ordained ministers, no preaching, and no administration of the sacraments. Starting in 1742, pastoral candidates began to come to America from Halle (Nelson, pp. 43-44). This was the beginning of a process that continued until at least the end of the 19th century. The New York and Pennsylvania Ministeria, the Buffalo, Missouri, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Synods, as well as many others, all benefited from pastoral candidates sent from Europe to serve as pastors. Carl Lawrenz has pointed out that these men came from a state church environment and in many cases sought to re-establish what they left behind, including their concept of what pastoral service was (p. 482).

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<sup>3</sup>The *Evangelische Lutherische Freikirche* (ELF) of our own Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) also stems from this movement.

Unfortunately, the European mission societies and associations could never supply the needs of the many immigrant Lutherans in America. Henry M. Muehlenberg, who arrived in 1743 as one of the very first German Lutheran pastors in America, saw the need to seek other sources. By 1749 he acquired property near Philadelphia to found a seminary. Unfortunately, the American Revolution put this to an end, and no real seminary would exist in America until the Gettysburg Seminary was founded in 1826 by Samuel Schmucker (Nelson, pp. 43,44,128).

What I find intriguing is that throughout this period the Lutherans consistently looked for trained pastors who would recreate the ministry of Europe in the United States. Luther had made it clear that a local church, in necessity, could simply elect and ordain its own pastors, but the Lutherans in America generally chose not to follow that advice. The Saxons who came with Walther and Stephan brought pastors and pastoral candidates with them. Even after Walther clarified the doctrine of church and ministry in the Altenburg Theses and the conflict with Grabau and the Buffalo Synod,<sup>4</sup> he continued to get men from Germany through a variety of sources, and he also founded Concordia Seminary to train pastors himself. Walther certainly knew that it wasn't necessary to seek seminary or university trained men to serve as pastors, but he apparently held to the need for formally trained men to fulfill the pastoral ministry, because that was what the whole church in America looked for. The only exception that I know of is certain Norwegian and other Scandinavian bodies that were influenced by the Haugean movement, and as a result de-emphasized the pastoral ministry in favor of lay preaching (LC p. 281).

Throughout the early history of Lutheranism in America, Lutherans continued to look for pastors. The General Synod founded Gettysburg Seminary, the General Council founded the Philadelphia Seminary and eventually established the German Home Mission Committee which it charged with finding suitable candidates for ministry in the U.S. Further, they established a church paper, called *Siloah*, whose purpose was to call attention to the needs and work among German Lutherans in the U.S. During the same period, Missouri founded Concordia Seminary (1839), Wisconsin founded her seminary (1863), Minnesota hers (1884), and Michigan hers (1889). All of these efforts were apparently based on the conviction that the Lutheran Church in America needed a pastor who fulfilled the same functions as the pastor in Germany.

This view is extremely clear in two German pastoral theology textbooks published in the United States. One, C. F. W. Walther's *Pastoraltheologie* (1875), as we have already noted, was at pains to bring the testimony of the earlier Lutheran leaders to bear on the practice of ministry. Walther's text contains 50 untitled chapters. I have divided them into the following divisions:

1. Pastoral theology in general (chapters 1-3)
2. The call (chaps. 4-6)
3. Financial support (chap. 7)
4. The candidate begins his ministry (chaps. 8-10)
5. Preaching (chap. 11)
6. Baptism (chaps. 12-14)
7. Confession of sins (chaps. 15-16)
8. The Lord's Supper (chaps 17-18)
9. Marriage, engagement, and divorce (chaps. 19-26)
10. Confirmation (chaps. 27-29)

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<sup>4</sup>In this discussion, Walther opposed an episcopal understanding of ordination into the ministry as something that is necessary. The Lutheran Church had by and large drifted into a Roman view of apostolic succession of bishops and the need for the apostolic blessing through the laying on of hands in order to be a pastor. Walther championed Luther's understanding that the Keys belong to the Church, and the Church has been given the ministry as a gift of God and needs no bishop and no laying on of hands.

11. Pastoral care (chaps. 30-37)
12. Need to pastor one's own flock (chap. 38)
13. Church discipline (chaps. 39-43)
14. Church polity (chaps. 44-47)
15. Pastor's relations (to church, synod, and other ministries) and his removal (chaps. 48-50).

Walther's view of the pastor's activities is clearly conditioned by his times. That is, he devotes a great deal of attention to marriage in a frontier situation in which it was probably a difficulty. He spends time on financial support, not an issue with the state church. On the other hand, there is nothing surprising in his division. It is the same public administration of the keys that we have seen before.

The other work of interest is John Schaller's *Pastorale Praxis in der Ev.-Luth. Freikirche Amerikas*. Writing in 1913, Schaller developed eight chapters:

1. The Call
2. The Pastor (deals with his character, marriage, etc.)
3. Entrance into the Ministry
4. The Pastor as Public Teacher (under this heading he deals with preaching and the sacraments, as well as confirmation and Christian education)
5. The Pastor in the Private Care of Souls and as *Episcopus* (here he deals with visitations, school, marriage, burial, and church discipline)
6. The Pastor as Overseer (*Regierer*—mentions various congregational organizations and activities)
7. The Pastor and Congregation in Relation to the Synod
8. Leaving the Congregation.

Schaller is writing a little later than Walther, but his outline reflects the same general understanding of the work of a pastor in the congregation.

It is interesting to note that two areas of pastoral practice have received special attention in the twentieth century. One is evangelism. G. H. Gerberding's *The Lutheran Pastor*, written shortly after Schaller (1915) for the Evangelical Lutheran Church, follows an outline quite similar to Schaller's and also omits a specific chapter on evangelism. The earliest reference that I found was in the 1931 work of John H.C. Fritz (LC-MS), *Pastoral Theology*. The other area is counseling in a specific technical sense. Obviously, the many references to care of the soul touch on this subject, but even Fritz does not include a specific chapter on the subject (although he does treat a number of topics that today are included under this subject in his chapter on "The Cure of the Soul"). The LC-MS had published a textbook on counseling called *Pastoral Counseling with People in Distress* by 1970. Of course, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary textbook, *The Shepherd Under Christ* (1974), also includes a chapter. But counseling does not seem to have been considered a separate function of the pastor before the middle of this century.

### *General Observations*

It does appear that the Lutheran Church, in nearly all its manifestations, has been remarkably unanimous in its concept of the work of the parish pastor. Pastors in the Lutheran Church first and foremost administer the Word and sacrament publicly on behalf of the people. Pastors exercise spiritual oversight over the entire program of the congregation. Pastors bind and loose sins. Pastors bring the Word of God to the homes of the people. Pastors take the lead in scriptural church discipline. Pastors lead public worship. Apart from the very significant developments of evangelism and counseling, the Lutheran pastorate has maintained a remarkable

consistency for nearly five hundred years. Throughout the ages, on a congregational level, the pastoral ministry has been the primary voice and ministry of the gospel for countless Lutherans.

## **II. What has been the Lutheran pastor's relationship with other ministries throughout history?**

The Lutheran pastorate has proven to be an enduring institution up until this moment of history. In terms of its function, that is, in terms of what the parish pastor has done, we have seen a great deal of uniformity of concept, even if it must be admitted that practice will obviously vary widely according to circumstance. However, our purpose to trace the overall development of this institution would be incomplete if we looked only at that aspect. There is another important consideration: the relation of the parish pastorate with other ministries. If it is true that the functions of the Lutheran pastor have shown a remarkable consistency, the opposite is true of his relationship to other forms of ministry. The Lutheran Church has been very inventive in devising additional forms of ministry to enhance or complement the proclamation of the Word and has associated the pastorate to those forms in a variety of ways. In this second section, we examine some of the other forms of ministry that have been employed and see how the pastor has interacted with these forms.

### *The Reformation Period*

It is sometimes asserted that the pastorate of the congregation is the one office instituted by Christ and that all other offices derive from that institution. Further, it is held that Luther viewed the issue that way. My purpose is not to enter into that debate, although I will state very clearly that my reading of Luther's works on ecclesiology gives me a far different impression. My purpose rather is to examine the structure that the church under Luther and the Reformers took.

While it is possible to maintain the so-called "Missouri position" in the face of the Reformers' practice, I think a more logical conclusion is that the Reformation church is perhaps the richest in diversity and innovation in ministry that the Lutheran church has ever seen. That would seem to me to support a different point of view than that held by the LC-MS.

One unique reality of the Reformation era is that Luther and his co-workers were starting over. Although it was not their intention, they found themselves building a church from the ground up. But that is not to say they were working in a vacuum. Just the opposite, they were dealing with people who had been nominally Christian for centuries, and who had inherited traditions and concepts that greatly affected their lives of sanctification. Luther faced several difficulties, but one of the greatest was the passivity of the people under the Roman system. Alongside of this, the Middle Ages had been a time in which the church and state had been so intimately associated that they were sometimes almost considered interchangeable. I doubt we can imagine the outlook that growing up at the end of the fifteenth century would produce, but we know the result for the Lutheran Church. Luther appealed to the princes to reform the church, not because he misunderstood the problem of church and state meddling in each other's affairs, but because he saw no other answer. Luther and Chemnitz both clearly understood that the church was not subject to the princes, and yet they also recognized the princes as baptized Christians who had a responsibility before God to use their resources for the good of the church. Without a doubt, Luther considered this to be a temporary solution. Unfortunately, it did not remain temporary.

We should note, however, that all the Reformers, through the time of Chemnitz, were very clear on the point. Luther speaks to the issue in a number of places. A typical comment is found in the instructions to the parish visitors:

In this matter, too, we shall not neglect to solicit the help and counsel of our gracious Lord. While His Electoral grace is not obligated to teach and to rule in spiritual affairs, he is obligated as temporal sovereign to so order things that strife, rioting and rebellion do not arise among his subjects (LW 40:273; see also comments in Lawrenz, p. 481).

Likewise Chemnitz makes the point very clear. In his *Enchiridion*, questions 21-28 deal with who may rightly call and under what circumstances. The answer to question 23 is particularly revealing:

The ecclesiastical ministry belongs to the kingdom of Christ. And since Christ wants his kingdom and the kingdom of the world to be separate, therefore the appointment of the ministry does not properly belong to the political right of the magistrate . . . . But since a political magistrate, if he is a Christian and pious, is a member of the church . . . that is therefore the concern also of a pious magistrate that the ministries of the church be rightly ordered and administered (pp. 32-34, esp. p. 33).

Clouse maintains that in the territorial churches no pastor would dare to discipline the prince. Perhaps that was true in the next period, but it certainly was not yet true during the Reformation. Indeed, Chemnitz himself lost his position as superintendent of the duchy of Braunschweig for opposing Duke Julius when the Lutheran duke had his twelve year old son ordained and tonsured according to the Catholic rite (J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin*, pp. 196-204).

In the beginning, the situation was very confused. In the early 1520s, the Reformation was taking root in Saxony, but there were serious concerns about the state of the church outside Wittenberg. Schwiebert compares Luther to the general at the head of the Reformation army and the faculty of the university to his staff. But he points out that many of the men in the trenches were lacking (pp. 630,631). The very first visitations were organized on somewhat of an ad hoc basis to determine the situation and make recommendations. As the process continued, the instructions of the visitors became more and more explicit. In a sense, the first additional office established by the Lutheran Church was the office of professor, because Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, Amsdorf, etc., were professors at the university. But the second office was parish visitor. For these men Melanchthon wrote the *Instructions for the Visitors of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony* which Luther later expanded (LW 40:266). The mission of the visitors was two-fold: evaluate the spiritual and the financial state of each parish. Generally speaking, two churchmen and two court officials conducted the visitations, at least as they became more regular. Luther's instructions focus almost totally on the spiritual concerns, as is fitting for an office of ministry in the church. The visitors' call was one of spiritual oversight. Luther, in fact, directly relates their task to that of the bishop, as it was originally conceived (LW 40:270). Even the physical oversight was undertaken to enable the church to continue its ministry, and for that reason it also must be considered a part of the ministry of the church.

The purpose of the visitation was to remove from office men who were unworthy or unqualified. Very quickly it became apparent that the neglect of the medieval Catholic Church, combined with the obvious financial and political benefit of going along with the Reformation in Electoral Saxony, had caused the conditions of many of the country parishes to be deplorable. The church of Saxony began to press into service whatever men of ability they could find and called them "emergency preachers" (Schwiebert, pp. 619,620). In some cases these men worked only part time. In nearly all cases they had extremely limited theological education. For that reason Luther immediately began to prepare helps for them. The *Kirchenpostillen*, which are really "canned" sermons, were written to give these men edifying material to preach—and they succeeded admirably. To this period also belong the Catechisms, written in part, as it is clear from the instructions to the church visitors, to serve as a doctrinal guide for the emergency preachers (Schwiebert, pp. 631,632,636,637). Luther also produced both the *Deutsche Messe* and the *Formula Missae* at this time, so that the worship services

could be led in a way that was edifying and that removed false Catholic concepts from the worship service (Bergendoff, LW 40:xii).

Already at the time of the Reformation, the princes and the independent cities established a law, called the Church Order (*Kirchenordnung*) that regulated the affairs of the churches within their jurisdiction. Ordinarily, it began with a statement of the doctrinal beliefs of the prince and his region. It also established the offices of the various parishes within the jurisdiction and the overall supervision, both with regard to doctrine and practice on the one hand and finances and administration on the other (LC, p. 179). The exact distribution of these offices varied somewhat; so we will look specifically at the situation in Wittenberg and in Braunschweig as general examples. With regard to the organization of the parish itself, Koelpin states:

From the outset, Luther recognized at least two offices as basic to each parish, a pastor and a sacristan .... In cities even more were necessary. The city church at Wittenberg was served by eleven persons, each with distinct duties. In addition to Pastor Bugenhagen, there were three deacons, one chaplain to serve the village churches attached to the parish, a teacher for the Latin school and his three assistants, and a teacher for the girl's school and his assistant, who at the same time served as sacristan. The deacons and chaplain assisted the pastor. The teacher was responsible to the pastor, while his three co-laborers served under his direction (p. 756).

Several points are immediately obvious. First of all, the pastor exercised oversight within the realm of his parish, which actually consisted of more than just the Wittenberg congregation. Schwiebert tells us that there were in fact thirteen village parishes attached to the Town Church, all of which were under the supervision of the pastor, but which were served primarily by the chaplain or chaplains (p. 629). Secondly, we see that education is a concern as old as the Lutheran Church itself. Of course, in the Middle Ages all schools were church schools, but the Lutheran Church remained deeply involved in education until modern times. The school teachers and their assistants are clearly regarded as part of the ministry, and in the instructions to the parish visitors there are explicit instructions for the school teachers regarding both their secular and religious curricular responsibilities (LW 40:314-320). Koelpin points out that "the office of the schoolteacher had a vital role in the church's public ministry of the Word" (p. 757). A third office that is mentioned is the deacon. Koelpin explains that the deacons "were responsible primarily for the administration of the parish's temporal affairs . . . . Different from the schoolteacher's role, the deacon registered and cared for the poor, visited the sick, and managed church property and occasionally preached" (ibid.).

J. A. O. Preus outlines for us the conditions that obtained at Braunschweig at the end of the Reformation period, during Chemnitz' ministry there. Basically, the parish was served again by a team of pastors, with one having overall supervision. Likewise, there were a variety of officials who had more specific functions and therefore more specific titles (for instance, Chemnitz himself was not the pastor and was not called pastor). But Preus also tells us that another problem existed throughout the late Reformation. As in Luther's day, there was an extreme shortage of clergy. Preus argues that there were in fact two levels of clergy, an upper level of university-trained men and a lower level of men with little or no formal training. Generally speaking, the city pastors were the more educated and the better paid, while the country parishes had to make do with what they could get (*The Second Martin*, pp. 146,147). This situation, obviously, began already at Luther's time and led to a very similar situation in Saxony. Schwiebert compares the city and country clergy and arrives at very similar conclusions (pp. 626,627).

The solution in Braunschweig was the same as that in Saxony. Chemnitz conducted visitations and examinations of all members of the clergy in the duchy. For this purpose he wrote his *Enchiridion*. Additionally, Chemnitz lectured twice a week on theology (J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin*, pp.147,148).

In general, the Landeskirchen considered the prince to be the overall head of the church. This caused some problems, especially if he interfered or if he didn't like a certain activity of the public ministers. The spiritual head of the ministerium was the superintendent and his assistant, often called a co-adjutor. These offices grew out of the parish visitors and were charged with assuring that the Word was preached correctly and the sacraments administered according to their institution (Bergendoff, LW 40:xiii). Preus tells us that after World War II they came to be called bishops. Alongside the superintendent was the consistory. Schwiebert calls it a "court" (p. 617) while Preus calls it "the governing ecclesiastical body." He goes on to state that Chemnitz, who was both superintendent and chairman of the consistory, was "the chief ecclesiastical and theological leader of the principality" (p. 148). If I understand Schwiebert and Preus correctly, the consistory was the government agency responsible for the administration of the state church.

There seems to have been a variety of other offices in the churches as well. One that especially bears mention, because it will continue afterward until the end of the monarchy, is the court preacher, which was a position of considerable influence and prestige. He appears to have been no more than the personal pastor of the prince and his family and highest officials. In that case, he would seem to really be pastor by another name.

A great deal more could be said about the organization of this period, but what strikes me is the evangelical freedom with which the Reformers adapted the ministry to a unique situation, and yet they were committed to retaining what could be preserved from the past. It also is clear that they regarded their work as that of proclaiming the Word in season and out of season, and they did everything they could think of to provide for that proclamation.

### *The Period of Orthodoxy*

In many respects the period of orthodoxy continued the structure of the church that obtained at the time of Luther. The office of superintendent continued, as did the practice of visitations. Pastors continued to have a staff of ministers with whom they worked. The Church Order continued to be the guide to the working of the *Landeskirche*. The church of the Age of Orthodoxy maintained two other important offices that had already existed during the Reformation period: the theological professor and the court preacher. Both of these positions were extremely prestigious in their day (Clouse, p. 40).

Unfortunately, after Luther's death the marriage of convenience between the Lutheran Church and the state began to experience difficulties. Dobberstein's comments clearly illustrate the decline:

The laity of Luther's day was ill-equipped to carry out its responsibilities in the church. As a result, Luther encouraged the Lutheran princes and councils to carry out the administration of the congregations. As long as it was understood that these men were functioning as members of the church and were acting in the place of their fellow Christians within the church there was no problem. After Luther's death that distinction was lost. Aided by the peace of Augsburg in 1555 which established the *cuius regio eius religio* principle, the Scriptural truth of the priesthood of all believers was lost in the centuries which followed. Church affairs, church discipline and the appointment of pastors became political decisions . . . . Even the return of the confessional movement in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century did not result in a church polity that reflected the priesthood of all believers (p. 709).

Clouse comes to the same conclusion, and gives us a more detailed picture of the state of the church after Luther's death:

Doctrines were explained to the laity by pastors who were largely controlled by secular rulers. One of the unforeseen consequences of the Reformation was a reduction in the status and number of clergy in Protestant lands. In contrast to Roman Catholics and Anglicans there were few aristocrats among the German Protestant clergy. Ministers were usually drawn from the lower classes and were looked down on by the nobles. In the universities the theological faculty was the only one open to the poor. Protestant clergymen produced under such circumstances had less polish and capacity for adjusting to higher society than their Roman Catholic counterparts. But what they lacked in sophistication and understanding of the world they made up for in learning that sometimes bordered on pedantry....Congregations served by these clergymen were passive. They had no rights, no organization, and little control over the pastor....Every aspect of church life was controlled by the princes. They saw to it that the church had no bishop, synods, or other aspects of independent rule. Through his appointed consistory the ruler controlled church finances, arranged discipline, and chose the clergy....Princes controlled not only the legal structure of the church but also doctrinal areas. Often the ruler had little theological knowledge, and his intervention was hasty, thoughtless, and inconsistent. Territorial rulers became "Protestant Popes" (pp. 40,41).

Clouse notes that the theologians knew that the princes were not bishops, and they insisted that government officials should not preach or administer the sacraments, but rather their role was to see that these things were done by the duly ordained clergy (p. 42). But already we see a subtle shift in thinking from Luther, who held that the princes were baptized members of the church acting on behalf of the whole church, and the later thinking which seems based more on order. This was also to have an effect on the thinking of the pastors about their own work.

August Pieper presents an interesting analysis of the development of what he terms the "monarchical" pastorate. His thesis is that in the German territorial church the Lutheran pastor fell back on a Roman Catholic concept of supremacy within his parish. He states:

The designation *Pfarramt* (the local pastorate) as a title stems not from Scripture, but rather from the papacy....*Parochus*, *Pfarrherr* and *Pfarrer* designates in the Roman Church that chief priest who is to care for the area which surrounds the church and the priest's residence and who then also has the right to collect fees that are paid . . . . The Lutheran meaning of the word in the German territorial churches is very similar to the Roman (the word is, moreover, not commonly used in some territorial churches). The thought is always that the *Pfarrer* really is the one (as head pastor) upon whom all the functions of the ministry are conferred, and that he really is entitled to all the income of the *Pfarre* (parish). Besides him there can be no other pastor, but rather only assistants, deacons, etc., who really only carry out the functions that have been given to the pastor in his place (p. 165).

In many respects, the system that existed during the period of orthodoxy bore many external similarities to the Reformation period, but the thinking had changed. The creativity with which the ministry was conducted in the 16th century is not evident in the 17th, largely due to the control exercised by the state. The parish pastor and all other ministers are hampered by the fact that they have no synodical organization and are in effect political extensions of the state, viewed by the princes as means of advancing political policy. For this reason, they become progressively less responsive to the spiritual needs of the people, as progressively less spiritual men are appointed. Likewise, the prestige of certain positions may have had some temporary benefits; but in the long run the elevation of the court preachers and of the theological professors would weaken Lutheranism in the age to come. Finally, the tendency to "romanize" the parish and concentrate power and function in the hands of

the pastor over against his associates would lead to a situation in 19th century America in which you had a "one man, one church" mentality.

### *European Lutheranism After the Age of Orthodoxy*

In response to the decline brought on by the state church and the intellectualism of the period, Pietism exploded onto the scene and brought with it a new period of creativity in the structure of church offices. The Pietists did remain committed to the concept of ministry, but they looked past the pastorate and established new forms. Unfortunately, their doctrinal drift limited the usefulness that some of these forms held.

One of Spener's major goals was to increase the activity of the laity in the church. He rightly associated this need with the study of Scripture, and that really was the basis of the small groups that he began to form in his home in 1670. This practice would increase over the years. Even in the first part of this century, the so-called "Augsburg Church" (the state Lutheran church of Poland) had a clergy that was unresponsive to the needs of the people, and lay leaders began to form their own study groups. The WELS involvement in Poland came through one of these lay leaders, a man named Maliszewski (Wendland, p. 35).

Lay participation and even leadership in Bible studies was not enough for the Pietists, however. They also began to encourage lay preaching. One of the most famous pietist lay preachers is Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) (Njus pp. 1-14) of Norway, who sparked a movement in that country which was brought also to the United States. This movement eventually led to a de-emphasis on called workers in some Norwegian Lutheran bodies. In church polity Spener's concept, never realized in Europe, was what Clouse terms a "presbyterian form of church government" in which laymen and pastors would share supervision through boards. He wanted to get rid of the state's influence over the church (Clouse, pp. 93,94).

Very early on the Pietists began to form societies for missions, modeled on the English mission society movement. These societies existed alongside the established church. At first, they collected funds for work in other countries (Francke began sending out foreign missionaries from his position as professor at Halle), or they focused on charitable causes or para-church activities like youth leagues and women's groups and the like. Eventually, they were operating orphanages and other charitable institutions, and they began to train and send out missionaries to work in Europe and around the globe. The Pietists' organization consisted of local mission societies that were united into larger mission associations. Eventually there were several important associations, such as the Basel, the Rhineland, the Leipzig, and the North German. These organizations exerted tremendous influence in mission work.

Initially, many Pietists believed that the most effective missionaries would be ordinary people simply sharing their faith. They began to encourage Christian tradesmen to undertake mission journeys in which they would support themselves by working and also would preach and teach. They called these journeys *Pilgermissionen*. Johannes Muehlhaeuser was one such *Pilger*. One of the men who gave shape to this movement was Christian Friedrich Spittler (1782-1867). Spittler was a layman who became secretary of the *Baseler Missionsgesellschaft*. He was also the founder of some fifty different organizations. His goal was to form a society to promote *Pilgermissionen*, which he did. However, the experience of travelers such as Muehlhaeuser, who was imprisoned and experienced a great deal of difficulty, led him to believe that it would be necessary to train these men. The first mission school that Spittler founded was the Basel Mission House, which held to a relatively high level of education. Later, he founded the St. Crischona Mission House to train everyday workers to be missionaries. Although his initial concept was that these men would be lay missionaries, the overwhelming majority of the graduates eventually served as full-time missionaries and pastors (Liedholtz, pp. 8,9,11-13; Koehler, pp. 21-23).

The mission houses and the societies that supported them sent missionaries all over the world. They did not neglect the German Lutherans in the United States, where they rarely served as missionaries, but rather as parish pastors. As time went on these groups, which were never confessional to begin with, became progressively less so. Although doctrinal formulations were anathema and they were very hazy about the call and the doctrine of the church, we would conclude that the mission societies that sent them out were bodies of Christians and therefore were issuing valid calls. Thus, for the first time since the Reformation, we see a number of new ministry positions existing within the church: home and world missionaries, administrators of charitable institutions, and workers in a variety of charitable and philanthropic ministries (i.e. youth, etc). Since the Pietists tended to be non-creedal, these new offices were able to coexist alongside those of the state church, which never went away.

The innovations of the Pietists were not lost upon the confessional Lutherans. A number of confessional Lutheran societies also came into existence (see Koehler, pp. 23,24,28,29). Frederick William Loehe's mission in Neuendettelsau and the Hermannsburg mission are just two examples. The Old Lutherans, when they separated, continued to support mission and charitable societies that were associated with confessional Lutheranism. They also maintained the importance of the laity by stressing ministry structures in which there were elders to support the work of the pastors.

Within the state church the confessional movement did have some important results. Among those who did not leave as the Old Lutherans did, there was a concerted effort to place confessional Lutherans in the consistories and into positions as superintendents. They were successful in many ways, but they did not restore Luther's concept of the priesthood of all believers, and as such, they did not address the underlying cause of the problems that led to the rise of Pietism. When Rationalism came to dominate the universities and the governments, it also came to dominate the church (Lawrenz, pp. 482,483)

In evaluating this period, we are struck by the confusion of the situation. The Pietists introduced many new forms of ministry to the church at large. Foremost is the missionary, both at home and abroad. But we cannot overlook the charitable positions, the administrative positions in the various organizations, and the special types of ministry that they devised, such as for youth and women. At the same time, they emphasized the priesthood of all believers (often with unintentioned results) and brought about innovations like lay leaders for Bible studies. Their theology left much to be desired, but many of their emphases contributed to the modern view of the pastorate as one among many possible ministries. The confessional and state churches were not left untouched, but they also fulfilled the role of preserving the heritage of the pastorate as the voice and ministry of the gospel. Unfortunately, in the case of the state church they did not end the dependency of the church on the state, which meant that the good health of the ministry was only temporary.

### *American Lutheran Churches*

The American Lutheran synods that sprang up inherited all these cross currents of thought from the churches in the mother countries. But when they transplanted the familiar forms to a country that had no state church, the forms often began to change. We can easily see several areas in which the concept mutated in the U.S.

Lawrenz notes that the first effort of these state-church Lutherans was to recreate the ministerium of the old country. By and large, the first Lutheran synods in North America weren't synods at all—they were ministeria. Some, like the New York Ministerium and the Pennsylvania Ministerium made no bones about it; they even advertised it in their names. Others, like the Wisconsin Synod, were less obvious, but were very much following that model. These ministeria tended to recreate the superintendency in America. Grabau and Stephan are examples in Buffalo and Missouri. At times in the U.S. the term that was used was the "senior ministerii" to

which office Muehlhaeuser was elected in Wisconsin (Lawrenz, p. 482). (The Michigan Synod also elected a "senior" but as an honorific for the founder of the Synod some years after his retirement.)

Another innovation that circumstances forced upon the young Lutheran churches was the development of the "traveling preachers" (*Reisepredigern*). Nelson speaks of the origins of this particular ministry:

In 1804 the Ministerium of Pennsylvania . . . provided for "traveling preachers" to visit vacant congregations. The North Carolina Synod adopted a similar plan in 1810. The synods would often choose pastors serving parishes near the frontier for this task, although young men preparing for ordination would sometimes combine a missionary tour with a search for a vacant pulpit which they might later fill on a permanent basis. The tours would last up to four months and would begin as soon as roads were passable in the spring . . . . Within a decade of inauguration, the plan produced enough congregations in Ohio to keep "six to eight" resident pastors busy. The traveling preachers followed a fairly uniform plan of action. After locating a settlement of Germans they held a worship service in any convenient structure . . . . Occasionally a Communion service . . . followed. After the service, the missionary asked all who wished instruction in Luther's catechism to step forward . . . .The next days were spent in catechization of those who enrolled. (pp. 102,103).

The Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin Synods all made use of this type of ministry at a later date, when the Midwest was being settled by immigrant Germans. Arnold Lehmann discusses the program of the Wisconsin Synod. He notes first of all that the *Reisepredigern* were not missionaries in the true sense of the term. Their purpose was not to reach the lost with the gospel, but rather to minister to German Lutheran Christians who were without a public ministry. Secondly, he argues that they were not regular pastors either, since their ministry consisted primarily of an occasional service, baptisms, and some hurried catechetical instruction along with the Lord's Supper when it was appropriate. They did not stay and serve the people on a day-to-day basis, and so it is unlikely that they spent much time either in oversight of the ongoing spiritual life of the people or in the exercise of church discipline. Rather, they served vacant parishes that were Lutheran, but were not affiliated with the Wisconsin Synod, or groups of Lutherans who weren't even parishes yet. You could say that they were church planters and gatherers, but it is clear that their purpose was to serve on a temporary basis, until a full time pastor could be provided (pp. 21-23).

Lehmann lists five reasons why the synod undertook the program:

1. The vacant congregations associated with the synod.
2. Many German settlements were without pastors and organized congregations.
3. Inroads were being made by Methodist and Baptist itinerant preachers or circuit riders.
4. The negative approach to religious practices by the Free-thinkers was causing confusion.
5. Many children in the settlement areas were not baptized, and many received little or no instruction in the Lutheran faith (p. 23).

Over time, these programs became less and less useful and so were eventually discontinued. But they had served a purpose. The sponsoring synods used theologically trained men in these positions, which were clearly temporary in nature. Their work was preparatory to the restoration of the classical Lutheran pastorate. Once again the church had resolved a difficult situation with a creative solution in ministry.

Today we again live in an era of many and varied forms of ministry. Early on our synod chose to preserve old forms alongside of the pastorate: college and seminary professors, academy, high school, and grade school teachers, as well as associate and assistant pastors. From the Pietists we have inherited missionaries, both

at home and abroad, and hopefully a healthy interest in member ministry, special ministries, and para-church ministries. We have long since jettisoned the superintendent, but we have maintained a ministry on the synodical level: synodical presidents and vice presidents, mission counselors, administrators, and planned giving counselors. We have district level ministries as well as conference level ministries. We have entered what I hope will be a new era of creativity in exercising the office of the public ministry with a variety of staff ministry positions in administration, counseling, youth and adult discipleship, and more. The pastorate is still central to the work, as the pastor is still called upon to exercise theological oversight (Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Staff Ministry to the Fifty-first Biennial Convention, p. 683) but as a co-worker among many men and women called to serve on both a full and part-time basis in the Lutheran Church.

### *General Observations*

When we see how the pastor has interacted with other ministries, we immediately see that the office is, in and of itself, eminently flexible. Pastors have been parts of large staffs (11 in Wittenberg) or smaller groups (2 or 3 pastors or perhaps 1 pastor and 3 or 4 school teachers) and have also "flown solo." Pastors have worked under direct supervision of superintendents and visitors, or they have had the less direct oversight of district presidents and circuit pastors. They have even worked largely on their own. They have been parts of synods or members of a state church. They have been surrounded by a plethora of mission, charitable, and para-church organizations, or they have worked in the simpler structure of parish and school. In all these situations, the Lord has preserved the voice and ministry of the gospel.

### **III. What lessons can we draw from this for ministry in Latin America today?**

No paper on church history is worth writing if we can't use an examination of the past to teach us something about the present. All of us are particularly interested in the state of the ministry in Latin America at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. I haven't spent a great deal of time in world missions, but it does seem to me that the question of ministry, indigenous ministry, is always very much on our minds—and it has to be, if we are to leave behind thriving, indigenous, confessional Lutheran churches.

Allow me to make some observations based on what I have learned from this study. First of all, uniformity of concept does not mean uniformity of practice. The Lutheran Church has preserved the pastoral ministry throughout all of its history, with essentially the same functions. But that doesn't mean that we always do things the same way. Gerhard advocated eleven different types of preaching: grammatical, logical, rhetorical, histrionic, ecclesiastical, historic, esthetical, scholastic, elenctic, mystical, and heroic (Clouse p. 42). I sincerely doubt that anyone here today would advocate such an approach to homiletics—even if you do know what all those terms mean. However, consider these words of wisdom from the pen of Armin Panning:

Homiletics is a major division of practical theology. Also here, more than we realize, our style of preaching reflects our training and background. For example, we are deeply rooted to the concept that the message of a text is most easily and effectively shared with the hearer in the form of a propositional statement formulated into theme and parts. To see an alternative to that method we need only tune in on one or the other of our popular TV evangelists. There we are much likelier to see a running, verse-by-verse exposition of a longer portion of Scripture. Such treatment approximates a Bible class presentation, rather than a formally constructed unit in the form of theme supported by parts. Preaching obviously can be done in the form of a homily or running commentary on the text. It might be noted that some of our students, generally those somewhat adverse to outlining, have suggested greater flexibility in our homiletical method. I don't think we're close to any major changes—at least not just yet. Blame it on our history and background (pp. 4,5).

Without entering into a debate about whether themes and parts are the most effective means of preaching, I think we should recognize that we can maintain the Lutheran concept of the ministry as the voice of the gospel without tying ourselves to every specific methodology of the WELS in 1996. In reality, what makes a pastor a pastor (as opposed to some other kind of called worker) is that he preserves the tradition of being the theological "generalist" in the congregation: he preaches and teaches, administers the sacraments, uses the keys, cares for souls, and exercises spiritual oversight. The question that we have to ask ourselves is: are themes and parts the essence of homiletics or merely accidental? If we are honest that they are accidental, then we can evaluate whether they can and should be preserved in the Latin American ambiance.

It seems to me that pastoral theology is the one area of theology that is most likely to differ from circumstance to circumstance. In Gerhard's day, advocating eleven different types of sermons was moderate. There were people who advocated even more elaborate systems. In Luther's day a pastor could preach for an hour, in Walther's at least for forty minutes, without fearing criticism. In the U.S. today, we can barely exceed fifteen minutes in some congregations. We seem to have more latitude in Latin America (I recently learned that I regularly preach at least thirty minutes), but does that mean that it will always be so? The essential thing is the clear, public proclamation of law and gospel, not the time involved or the structure of the sermon.

A related observation seems to me to be the importance of maintaining the Lutheran pastorate. Pieper said it very well:

The Lord has taught us to pray the Lord of the harvest for workers. It would therefore be an outrageous despising of Christ, of his kingdom and of his gospel, yes of grace itself, if the church would not in all places fill the public ministry commanded and given to it with the best gifts bestowed upon it by the Holy Spirit. It would indeed be an outrageous despising of Christ and his gospel if in fleshly arbitrariness the church would abolish the pastors and teachers whom God has made proficient for her in the administration of Word and sacrament and would go over to having inadequate lay preachers take turns preaching (pp. 606,607).

At the same time, let us observe the balance that Pieper adds to his comment:

Why do we Lutherans not learn something in this matter of spiritual freedom from the Reformed churches around us? They know how to draw the laity into the service of the church, also in the individual congregations and make them co-workers of the pastor. It's remarkable! No church has set forth more clearly the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers than the Lutheran church, and especially the Lutheran church in America. And no church puts this doctrine less into practice. Among us the laity is largely consigned to listening and doing nothing in the congregation, and the pastor wants to do everything by himself . . . This is due to a wrong, monarchical, monopolistic view of the office, according to which the pastor concentrates all church offices, even the purely external ones, from preacher to janitor, in his own person. Let us get rid of this erroneous tradition (p. 608).

If we do agree that the pastorate as such is an institution worthy to be replicated throughout Latin America, then it seems to me we still have to evaluate how it will be implemented. We also have to ask ourselves a very critical question: What are we modeling? I believe that we have to model our ministry so that our future pastors will have a clear model of evangelical ministry among the people of God, but we must be careful that we don't tie people to ways of preaching, or doing discipline, or ways of counseling that reflect a midwestern U.S. background.

And if we are going to preserve the pastorate, we must overcome the problem that the Reformers failed to overcome: Roman Catholic passivity on the part of the people. We do not have "pious magistrates" who can take charge and thank God for that! We need an explosion of creativity in Latin America to build member ministry and staff ministry to work alongside of the pastoral ministry. In Colombia we have spent a great deal of time discussing what model of ministry we are going to encourage the national church to follow. After a great deal of discussion, we settled on a simple statement that we would encourage the traditional pastorate with appropriate staff ministries and a strong member ministry component.

If we are in agreement that this is what would be wise and prudent, the question remains: how do we get there? We need first of all to model a ministry that is the voice of the gospel. We need to adopt methodologies that foster the ministry that is appropriate to our needs. In this conference we are discussing curricula for discipleship and leadership training as well as approaches to seminary training. All of these things must be prayerfully related to our task of establishing a ministry that truly proclaims the gospel and truly cares for souls.

A final observation is the danger of convenience. I would not want to condemn the Reformers for taking the only action that seemed possible to them, but the fact remains that the state church is a bane on Lutheranism in Europe today. For the state to dominate the church is an unscriptural arrangement, and the Lutheran Church has suffered for it. I think we must be very careful not to let arguments like "limited resources" or "what else can we do?" drive decisions that are against our better judgment. The truth is that the precedent that is set today will be the tradition of tomorrow. A confessing church must recognize that theological rationale, that is, the principles of Scripture accurately applied to our situation, must be the determining factor in our decision making process.

The voice and the ministry of the gospel are the God-ordained means to a strong and confessional church body. The challenge that faces us today is to find the forms of that ministry that serve our situation. We must support that pastoral ministry with appropriate offices and extensive member ministry so that the Word will go forth into the next century throughout Latin America.

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