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"WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN TO DO?: A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE FROM
PERTINENT WRITINGS OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER IN LIGHT OF RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CHURCH"

A SEMINAR PAPER SUBMITTED TO
THE SCHOOL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
SACRED THEOLOGY MASTER

BY

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"What Is A Christian to Do?: A Study of Christian Service
From Pertinent Writings of Dr. Martin Luther in Light of
Recent Developments in the Church"

INTRODUCTION: The Proper Balance

What is a Christian to do? This question has been one of some significance throughout the history of the Church. When tension has arisen in relation to this question, it has often been due to an imbalance between two great teachings of the church: "the priesthood of all believers," and "the office of the Holy Ministry." Our Lord has established His church in such a way as to keep these two teachings in proper balance. Whenever the priesthood of believers is exalted at the expense of the office of the Ministry or vice versa, there is imbalance and thus a departing from the way God intends for things to be.

Luther lived at a unique time to be able to address this subject and to keep the two doctrines in proper balance. On the one hand, imbalance had occurred in the Roman Catholic Church with an elevation of the clergy at the expense of the laity. "Against the hierarchical claims of Roman theology Luther stressed the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers."¹

On the other hand, after 1525, with Karlstadt, the "Zwickau prophets," and the Anabaptists, Luther observed the opposite imbalance. The authority of the laity was exalted

¹F.E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 137.

at the expense of the clergy. To address this problem Luther emphasized the God-ordained office of the Holy Ministry for the administration of the means of grace in His church.² Speaking to the imbalance of laity over clergy Luther calls the office of the Ministry, the office of the local pastor, "the highest office within the Christian church."³

This paper will, from the Lutheran perspective, address the imbalance that occurs when the priesthood of all believers is exalted at the expense of the clergy, specifically when what God has given the laity to do is made to be the same as what God has given the clergy to do, i.e., the tasks of the office of the Ministry. Applying pertinent writings of Luther, this paper will attempt to exalt both the laity and the clergy by emphasizing the distinctiveness of what each has been given by God to do.

I. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

A. The Identified Problem: A Passive Laity.

A passive laity is identified by several Lutheran authors of the late Twentieth Century as a major hindrance to the mission of the church. Many Lutherans have followed

²Herman A. Preus, "Luther on the Universal Priesthood and the Office of the Ministry," Concordia Journal, vol. 5, no. 2, (1979), 55.

³Mayer, 135-138.

Hendrik Kraemer, who in his 1958 book, A Ministry of the Laity, urges that the laity ought to be thought of as subjects and agents rather than as objects.⁴

The Commission of Mission and Ministry of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, in its 1969 report, also notes a passive laity as a hindrance to the mission of the church.

As long as the laity considers itself to be a passive element in the church to be served by the professional clergy the institutional self-interest of the church is bound to be dominant over the essential character of the church as a mission of God to the world.⁵

Oscar E. Feucht in his 1974 book, Everyone a Minister, laments that, "in most churches the laity belongs to the audience and is engaged in what we call church housekeeping tasks."⁶ He says that the "consumer only" mentality held by so many church members needs to be changed.⁷ He asserts that there must be a change "from passivity and patronage to participation and activity," that the laity needs to be more than merely "church maintenance men and women."⁸

⁴Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), 18-19.

⁵The Commission of Mission and Ministry, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Mo., 1969 Report, quoted in Oscar E. Feucht, Everyone a Minister: A Guide to Churchmanship For Laity and Clergy (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), 106.

⁶Feucht, 55.

⁷Ibid., 68.

⁸Ibid., 119.

Donald A. Abdon in his 1977 book, Training and Equipping the Saints, says, "Failure to realize that all Christians are evangelists has hurt the mission of the church immeasurably."⁹

The Mission Task Force of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, in its, Mission Blueprint for the Nineties: Summary, states, "We stereotype laypeople as the bottom of a church pyramid, service receivers rather than service providers."¹⁰

When answering the question, "What is a Christian to do?", the above authors answer that the Christian needs to be doing more in the church. Though these authors believe the laity aren't doing enough in the church, they also believe that it is not necessarily the laity's fault. "Unfortunately the layman's own congregation may have given him this limited image of himself."¹¹

Kraemer blames an over-emphasis on Word and Sacraments as a contributing factor:

⁹Rev. Donald A. Abdon, Training and Equipping the Saints, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Parish Leadership Siminars, Inc., 1977), 15 (emphasis his).

¹⁰The Mission Task Force of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Mission Blueprint for the Nineties: Summary, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1990), 6, (hereafter, Blueprint).

¹¹Feucht, 55.

Moreover, the predominant concentration on these marks of the Church [the Word and Sacraments] as the only essential ones has contributed enormously to the feeling amongst the laity of being objects and not subjects.¹²

B. A Contemporary Solution.

1. The Removal of Distinction Between Laity and Clergy.

This passivity of the laity is believed to result from the laity's "limited image" of themselves. They have been stereotyped as "the bottom of the church pyramid." It is pointed out that the dictionary definition of layman is someone without special training or skill.¹³

Kraemer says that even though the Reformation sought to eliminate the distinction between clergy and laity, the stress on the need for the preaching office, with a specially qualified group to bear this office, ended up elevating the clergy and giving the laity a secondary status.¹⁴

To rescue the laity from this "secondary status" the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is brought to the fore. I Peter 2:9 is cited to prove that, in the New Testament, the status of the laity has been elevated to that of minister.

¹²Kraemer, 125.

¹³Blueprint, 6.

¹⁴Kraemer, 65-66.

Mission Blueprint for the Nineties: Summary, after giving the dictionary definition of layman as one having no special training or skill, says, "But the Scriptures say: 'You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9)."¹⁵ According to Feucht, "These titles (in I Peter 2:5,9) raise all believers to the status of 'ministers.'"¹⁶

These writers would agree with Kraemer in equating "ministry" with the Greek word, διακονία.¹⁷ Kraemer says that "Church is ministry" and that "the ministry of the clergy and the ministry of the laity are both aspects of the same diakonia...."¹⁸

¹⁵ Blueprint, 6.

¹⁶ Feucht, 37.

¹⁷ For a brief discussion on the Greek word, διακονία, which reaches the opposite conclusion, see, Drevlow, Drickamer, Reichwald, C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther, Forward: "Walther's Lasting Legacy" by Pastor Armand J. Boehme, STM and Dr. Theodore F. Nickel, (Freeman, S.Dak.: Pine Hill Press, 1987), xvii, where Boehme notes, "However, the word's primary meaning is servant/service, and not ministry... Far from proving that the use of this term indicates that everyone is a minister, this term simply teaches that everyone in the Church (ministers included) are servants of Jesus Christ - i.e. diakonia = everyone is a servant." See also H. Beyer, "diakoneo, diakonia, diakonos," in G. Kittel, Vol. II Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 81-93.

¹⁸ Kraemer, 143.

The idea that the office of the Ministry is the same thing as the pastoral office is seen as problematic.¹⁹ The goal is to get the laity involved in the church's "ministry." It is determined that, in order to do this, any distinction between clergy and laity must be removed.

This removal of distinction moves in a progression of thought that starts by having the clergy function as the clergy only for the sake of order,²⁰ rather than because the office of the clergy has been ordained by God. The pastor exercises the priesthood that all possess in common,²¹ but a separate order of priests, according to Feucht, is more related to the Old Testament than to the New Testament.²²

Doing away with the distinction between clergy and laity is seen as a major step towards activating a passive laity.

The Old Testament distinction between priest and people, clergymen and laymen, is at an end. Christ, our high priest, has made all Christians priests unto God. All Christians are God's clergy, and so there is no special clerical order in the church.²³

¹⁹Abdon, 20.

²⁰Ibid., 61-62.

²¹Feucht, 42.

²²Ibid., 45.

²³Howard Grimes, The Rebirth of the Laity, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), no page number given, quoted in Feucht, 34-35.

Abdon notes that Luther says in his exposition of I Peter 2:5, that the priesthood of believers has the office of the ministry. He reasons that, "All Christians hold the office of the Ministry because the office and the functions of the Ministry have been given to all."²⁴ In other words, according to Abdon, since all Christians have the office of the Ministry, all Christians hold or do the work of the office of the Ministry.

Kraemer comes to the same conclusion, "...in the Church everybody has the apostolic and ministerial 'office' (Amt), whether he or she is an ordained minister or not."²⁵

This view can lead to the idea that there is no need for an ordained clergy at all:

For example, C.P. Wagner describes as "exceedingly effective" the evangelism method of a congregation which "believes so much in body life that they refuse to hire pastors for their churches. They believe that the Holy Spirit provides each church with all the gifts needed for healthy church life, and that when members are properly using their gifts, a professional minister is simply excess baggage..."²⁶

Another researcher has noted,

²⁴Abdon, 22 (emphasis his). See also Feucht, 35.

²⁵Kraemer, 180 (emphasis his).

²⁶C.P. Wagner, What Are We Missing?, (Carol Stream, Ill.: Creation House, 1973), 81. Quoted in, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Evangelism and Church Growth, (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, 1987), footnote 86, 43.

much of the literature promoting the ministry of the laity has insisted that the best thing for the church would be the disappearance of the clergy from the ecclesiastical scene.²⁷

A Lutheran author who supports elevating the status of laity to minister, admits,

that the pastoral ministry is an endangered profession. There are many variables which contribute to this perception. The impact of Oscar Feucht's highly popular book, Everyone A Minister, is probably a significant factor.²⁸

B. The Criterion For Service: Matthew 28:19-20.

Elevating laity to "ministers" is seen as necessary in light of the thought that, "The only fully legitimate Mission is the Mission of the one Church."²⁹ It is reasoned that, if the only legitimate mission is the mission of the Church, and the laity make up the Church, to solve the problem of the passive laity, what a Christian should be doing is the mission of the Church. "This applies to the whole Church, to all its members."³⁰

Feucht echoes this point, "All receive the same commission He gave to the believers on the mount of

²⁷James Glasse, Profession: Minister, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 83.

²⁸Alan Harre, "Can the Laity Be Effective in God's Vineyard?" Issues in Christian Education, vol. 18, no. 1, 1983, 22, fn. 5.

²⁹Kraemer, 135 (emphasis his).

³⁰Ibid. (emphasis his)

ascension."³¹ So that, according to this view, the answer to the question, "What is a Christian to do?" is, "Make disciples." And, "Disciple-making is most effective when each Christian has a part in responding to the Great Commission."³² Indeed, "Only full memberships of Christian churches can fulfill the Lord's great commission."³³ So that, "The Lord's Great Commission to disciple all nations is a divine responsibility and privilege given to every baptized Christian."³⁴

C. The Pastor's Responsibility: Ephesians 4:12.

If the Christian's task is making disciples, the church's task is "equipping its members to participate in the Great Commission."³⁵ Scriptural foundation to support this idea is found in the re-translation of Ephesians 4:11-12.

The King James Translation reads,

³¹Feucht, 46.

³²Win Arn and Charles Arn, The Master's Plan for Making Disciples, (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982), 63. Win and Charles Arn, though not Lutherans themselves, are consulted by many within the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

³³Feucht, 143.

³⁴Blueprint, 6.

³⁵Arn, 128.

(11)And He gave some, apóstles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, (12)for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

Newer translations remove the comma in verse 12 between "saints" and "for the work of the ministry." They also change the word, "perfecting" to "equipping" and remove the definite article from in front of "ministry" to get a translation that goes something like,

(11)And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12)for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ.³⁶

Based on this re-translation, "the main part of the ministry of the clergy should be to enable the laity to fulfill their peculiar, inalienable ministry."³⁷ So that what is needed is for pastors to be "trained to offer solid instruction to the laity to equip them for ministry."³⁸

The purpose of the pastoral office according to this view, is to see to it the God's people are engaged in the "ministry" of making disciples of all nations. "The pastoral office is the training function so that the rest of the ministers of Christ can function effectively in ministry."³⁹

³⁶See Abdon, 25; Kraemer, 140; Feucht, 96.

³⁷Kraemer, 167.

³⁸Blueprint, 6.

³⁹Abdon, 25.

II. LUTHER'S ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM OF A PASSIVE LAITY.

A. A Matter of Faith

1. For Action.

For Luther, the Christian life contains two parts: "faith in God and love toward one's neighbor."⁴⁰ The problem of a passive laity, to Luther, is a faith problem. Luther responds to the problem of a passive laity this way,

So let him who wishes to do good works begin not with the doing of works, but with believing, which makes the person good, for nothing makes a man good except faith, or evil except unbelief.⁴¹

So then, for Luther, it is not because of status that a Christian does what he is to do. It is because of faith. In Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 14-16, 1537-38, Luther notes that faith gives the assurance that the works done in one's calling are truly good works,

Wherever there is such faith and assurance of grace in Christ, you can also confidently conclude with regard to your vocation and works that these are pleasing to God and are true and good Christian fruits.⁴²

⁴⁰LW 30, Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter, 1522, 47 from Luthers Works, 55 vols. (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing House and Fortress Press, 1957-1985); (hereafter LW).

⁴¹LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, 364.

⁴²LW 24, Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 14-16, 1537-38, 220.

2. For Status.

For Luther, the problem of a "second-class" status is also a matter of faith. According to Luther, it is only one's status before God that makes any difference. Faith makes the difference in one's status. "The righteous man draws his life out of his faith, and faith is that whereby he is counted righteous before God [Rom. 1:17]."⁴³ What a Christian does will flow from faith. In the Large Catechism Luther states, "For in the sight of God faith is what really renders a person holy, and alone serves Him, but the works are for the service of man." (LC I, 145)⁴⁴

This is why Luther places so much emphasis on the marks of the Church. It is through these marks that God Himself elevates the status of both the laity and the clergy. It is God's Word, "the Gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified"⁴⁵ that is to be preached. "To preach Christ

⁴³LW 44, Treatise on Good Works, 1520, 31.

⁴⁴Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 623. (AC = Augsburg Confession; Ap. = Apology to the Augsburg Confession; LC = Large Catechism; SC = Small Catechism; Tr. = Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope), (hereafter, Triglot).

⁴⁵LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, 346.

means to feed the soul, make it righteous, set it free, and save it, provided it believes the preaching."⁴⁶

This feeding of the soul, to make it righteous, to set it free, to save it, must be received passively, by faith. For "faith cannot exist in connection with works - that is to say, if you at the same time claim to be justified by works, whatever their character...."⁴⁷

It is faith that gives believers in Christ the status of children of God. There is no better status. This thought is expressed by Luther as follows, "We are the sons of God, members of the flock and people of God, under the one Shepherd, Jesus Christ. If you can firmly and surely determine this, then you are blessed."⁴⁸

For Luther, it is one's status before God that is foundational to answer the question, "What is a Christian to do?" What a Christian does flows from the faith that passively receives the gift of being made a Christian,

The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸LW 6, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 31-37, 1536, 9.

⁴⁹LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, 359.

For Luther, one's status does not depend on works. When works are done in order to obtain some benefit, either temporal or eternal, they do injury to faith which gives all things.⁵⁰ Faith in Christ for salvation gives one all the status he needs. Christian living will follow in every aspect of life.

One's status before God, through faith, produces works of love to one's neighbor,

Behold, from faith thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss.⁵¹

3. To Remove Distinctions in Works.

For Luther, faith also makes all works equal before God. Before God, all distinctions in works are removed. What makes any work good is that it is done in faith. Faith makes all works done in faith equally good.

For the works are acceptable not for their own sake but because of faith, which is always the same and lives and works in each and every work without distinction, however numerous and varied these works are...⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., 370-371.

⁵¹LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, 367.

⁵²LW 44, Treatise on Good Works, 1520, 26.

The man of faith simply does what the situation calls for without having to be instructed. He does what needs to be done whether big or small gladly and willingly, confident that what he does pleases God. It is doubt that wants to make distinctions in works in order to try to win God's favor. The man of faith knows he already has God's favor, in Christ!⁵³

4. Luther and I Peter 2.

Since one's status before God is a matter of faith, and since all works done in faith are equal before God, it is not necessary for the Christian to be elevated to the status of "minister," or to do the works God has given to be done in the office of the Ministry. In fact, Luther drew a sharp distinction between the priesthood of all believers and the office of the Ministry.

Luther does say in his exposition of I Peter 2, "They (the members of the congregation) all have this office..."⁵⁴ (i.e. the Office of the Ministry). But he does not say that all are to do the works of that office. To the contrary, Luther says that, "only a few are selected from the whole group to administer the office in the stead of the

⁵³Ibid., 26-27.

⁵⁴LW 30, Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter, 1522, 55.

congregation."⁵⁵ It is for the very reason that all have equal authority that, "nobody should come forward of his own accord and preach to the congregation. No, one person must be chosen from the whole group and appointed. If desired, he may be deposed."⁵⁶

Elsewhere Luther is even more clear on this point when he says, "It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors."⁵⁷

What the priesthood is to do is first addressed by St. Peter in verse nine of the second chapter of this epistle, "That you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Luther comments on this passage, "Thus we see that the first and foremost duty we Christians should perform is to proclaim the wonderful deeds of God."⁵⁸

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid. This is also the emphasis in the Lutheran Confessions. In their only reference to I Peter 2:9 the Lutheran Confessions state, "Lastly the statement of Peter confirms this, 1 Ep.2,9 (First Epistle of St. Peter, chapter 2, verse 9): 'Ye are a royal priesthood.' These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood." (Tr. 69), Triglot, 523-525.

Because it has the priesthood, the Church can elect and ordain ministers, but there is no reference here to the priesthood holding or doing the work of the office of the Ministry.

⁵⁷LW 13, Psalm 82, 1530, 65.

⁵⁸LW 30, Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter, 1522, 65.

The Greek word used by St. Peter in verse nine of chapter two is the more general, ἐξαγγέλλω, "to proclaim or declare" rather than the more specific, εὐαγγελίζω, "to preach or proclaim the Gospel." In LXX the term, ἐξαγγέλλω, is used in connection with the offering of sacrifices as in Psalm 106:22, "Let them also offer up sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His works with joyful singing."⁵⁹ St. Peter may be locating such proclamation by the priesthood, at least in part, in the words they confess in the liturgy.⁶⁰

St. Peter devotes the greater part of the rest of this epistle to explaining what the priesthood is to do in terms

⁵⁹Gerhard Kittel, ed., Geoffery Bromley, tr. & ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. I, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 70.

⁶⁰See discussion in, Norman Nagel, "Luther and the Priesthood of All Believers," Concordia Theological Quarterly, vol. 61, no. 4, 1997, 289-290, including footnote 14: "...J. Kelly, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 100: 'Again, however, as at 5, it is hard not to overhear a eucharistic note in the words. In the early 2nd cent. we know that the eucharist was understood primarily as a sacrifice of praise and reached its climax in a prayer giving glory and thanks to God for His goodness in creating us, in sending His Son, in redeeming us, etc. = in short proclaiming His mighty deeds. It is entirely likely that in the 1st cent. too, when Christians met together for the breaking of bread, such a recital featured prominently in the memorial they made of Christ; and the regular use of proclaim (exaggellein) in the LXX with the sense of cultic proclamation, or the rehearsal in adoring language of God's righteousness and praises, suggests that this is at any rate part of what is covered by the verb here...'"

of keeping one's "way of life (ἀναστροφή⁶¹) excellent among the Gentiles" (v.12). Here is given St. Peter's own "Table of Duties" to instruct the royal priesthood as to how to keep its way of life excellent in reference to: authorities, 2:13-17; servants and masters, 2:18-20; husbands and wives, 3:1-7; and pastors, 5:1-4. Luther follows that same path.

B. The "Table of Duties."

To Luther, since one's status before God does not depend on what one does, and since all works are equal before God, what a Christian is to do is not limited to what God has given those who hold the office of the Ministry to do. This is evident in Luther's "Table of Duties." Here we see that, to Luther, what a Christian is called to do will depend on his calling in life.

It is noteworthy that the German title for this section of The Small Catechism is, Haustafel, translated, "House Table" ("Table" meaning "Chart," as in Chemistry's "Periodic Table"). This title identifies the intended audience as those in a household, and locates where a Christian does what God has for him to do, in the Christian's calling in life.

⁶¹Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, Frederick W. Danker, A Greek = English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), ἀναστροφή, ἡς, ἡ, 61.

As Daniel Kauzmann noted in his Handbook (16 Sermons on the Catechism) of 1569:

It is called "Haustafel" of the Christians because every Christian should daily view it and call to mind therefrom his calling, as from a table which portrays and presents to every one what pertains to him. It teaches all the people who may be in a house what each one ought to do or to leave undone in his calling.⁶²

Luther's superscript for the "Table of Duties" roughly translates, "Several passages for various holy orders (heilige Orden) and stations (Staende), whereby these as through a particular lesson are to be admonished (or exhorted - ermahnen⁶³) as to their office (Amt) or service (Dienst)."⁶⁴

The nouns in this superscript appear frequently throughout Luther's writings in his discussions of what a Christian is to do. "Holy orders" (Ordnung) and "stations" (Staende - sometimes also translated in English as, "estates") are almost synonymous. The term, "station"

⁶²Cited by F. Bente in, Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books, Triglot, 89.

⁶³Cassell's German English Dictionary, compiled by H.-C. Sasse, M.A. M.Litt., Dr. J. Horne, Dr. Charlotte Dixon, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1966), consulted throughout for various German translation.

⁶⁴Translated from, Die Bekenntnisschriften: der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 523.

(Stand) may also describe what is within a particular "order," perhaps similar to the English, "calling." Within the "orders" are the "offices" (Ämtes), which can also be equated with one's occupation or vocation. Within these various offices "services" (Dienstes), works or tasks of Christian service, are performed.

As we shall examine in what follows, according to Dr. Luther, there are three orders of creation which God has established, through which He governs His World. These are, "the home, the state, and the church."

The first two headings listed in the "Table of Duties" describe the order of the church. The next two headings describe the order of the state. The the rest of the headings up to "For All in Common" describe the order of the home. Each individual heading above each listing of Scripture passage(s) represents an "office." The Scripture given under each office designates Christian "service" done by those within that office.

The service given below the heading "For all in Common" does not include Matthew 28.⁶⁵ There is no direction given

⁶⁵The Lutheran Confessions do not cite Matthew 28:19,20 in reference to what a Christian layman is to do. Matthew 28:19 is cited four times in reference to our Lord's command to baptize (Ap. IX,2; SC IV,4; LC SP,21; LC IV,3). The only time Matthew 28:19,20 is cited is in The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope and refers to what authority is given to the office of the Ministry, "...that Christ gave to the apostles only spiritual power, i.e., teach the Gospel, to announce the forgiveness of sins, to administer the Sacraments, to excommunicate the godless without bodily

"to make disciples" in the "Table of Duties." Instead, the service given "For All in Common," in addition to the directive to pray for all people, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Herein are comprehended all the commandments. Rom. 13,8ff."⁶⁶

For Luther, the specifics of what a Christian is to do depend on one's office. The Scriptural directives given in the "Table of Duties" bear this out. But in general, for all in common, for Luther, the criteria are the Ten Commandments.

C. The Ten Commandments.

Much of what Dr. Luther wrote in regard to the subject under discussion was in response to the monasticism of his day. Luther was greatly angered by the notion that the works of the monks, which were not ordained by God in His Word, were actually considered to be of greater value than works done by "normal" Christians which are ordained by

force [by the Word], and that He did not give the power of the sword, or the right to establish, occupy, or confer kingdoms of the world [to set up or depose kings]. For Christ says in Matthew 28:19,20, 'Go ye, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;' (Tr. 31), Triglot, 513. The context shows that this passage is used to describe the authority given, "to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, or elders, or bishops." (Tr. 61, Triglot, 521)

⁶⁶Triglot, 563.

God's Word. Thus the "Table of Duties" is made up of passages of Scripture. Much of what Dr. Luther says about this topic in reference to the Ten Commandments is also a response to monasticism.

In his Treatise on Good Works, 1520, Luther notes,

The first thing to know is that there are no good works except those works God has commanded, just as there is no sin except that which God has forbidden. Therefore, whoever wants to know what good works are as well as doing them needs to know nothing more than God's commandments.⁶⁷

It is clear from the context of this passage that Luther is referring to the Ten Commandments.⁶⁸

Luther ties doing the Commandments to faith and one's calling. "Believe in Christ and be found in a calling that has a word of God, and do in it what He has commanded. Take the Ten Commandments in hand...."⁶⁹

Most of what Dr. Luther writes in answering the question, "What is a Christian to do?" has to do with the Second Table of the Law. What one is to do in regard to the First Table of the Law is to praise God, which Luther calls,

⁶⁷LW 44, Treatise on Good Works, 1520, 23.

⁶⁸Ibid. A few lines after the above quote it reads, "And when the young man in Matthew 19[:16-22] asks what he should do to inherit eternal life, Christ sets before him nothing else but the Ten Commandments."

⁶⁹LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 269.

"the easiest work of all... this takes neither work nor effort. For what could be easier to do than to say: 'Praise be to Thee, O merciful God?'"⁷⁰ (Perhaps much like St. Peter's "proclaiming the wonders.")

The Second Table of the Law, directs man towards acts of love to his neighbor. Man does not live for himself alone, he also lives for others around him. He brings his body under subjection so that he can freely serve others.⁷¹

For Luther, the Ten Commandments are God's answer to the question, "What is a Christian to do?" They are the "true fountain and channel from and in which everything must arise and flow that is to be a good work, so that outside the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God." (LC I, 311)⁷²

One will find plenty to do with the Ten Commandments so that there will be no time to do anything else.

Only occupy yourself with them (the Ten Commandments), and try your best, apply all power and ability, and you will find so much to do that you will neither seek nor esteem any other work or holiness. (LC I, 318)⁷³

⁷⁰LW 14, Psalm 147, 1531, 111.

⁷¹LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, 364.

⁷²Triglot, 669 & 670 (emphasis mine).

⁷³Ibid., 673.

It is great presumption to try to invent a better life than is prescribed in the Ten Commandments.⁷⁴ On the other hand, there is great joy in knowing one is doing what God has ordained. (LC I, 120)⁷⁵ It is our foolish reason that yearns to do something strange and special.⁷⁶

Good works are not to be done for the benefit of God. He doesn't need our works. Good works done as a result of faith, according to the Ten Commandments, are done for the purpose of serving one's neighbor.

D. "Holy Orders."

For Luther, the place for the exercise of good works done in faith according to the Ten Commandments, is precisely within one's calling. "Is it not an excellent boast to know and say that, if you perform your daily domestic task, this is better than all the sanctity and ascetic life of monks?" (LC I, 145)⁷⁷ One's calling is the natural place for the outflowing of good works. The Scripture passages in the "Table of Duties" put the doing of the Commandments into one's calling.

⁷⁴Ibid., 671.

⁷⁵Ibid., 615.

⁷⁶LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 256.

⁷⁷Triglot, 623.

In his superscription for the "Table of Duties" Luther uses the term, "order" or "estate" to describe one's calling in general. In Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper, 1528, Dr. Luther identifies the three orders (Orden) or institutions established by the Lord as, the office of priest (Das Priester Amt), the marriage estate (Ehestand) and worldly authority (Die weltliche oberkeit).⁷⁸

According to Luther, in this 1528 work, the office of priest is made up of those who preach and who administer the sacraments, as well as those who supervise the community chest, those who serve as sextons, and those who serve as messengers of the same. He notes that these are holy works of God.⁷⁹

Holy works of God are also done by fathers and mothers in the estate of marriage, who regulate the house and raise children, bringing them up to serve God. The same is true of children and servants who are to be obedient to their elders and masters. Those of this estate Luther calls, "living saints on earth."⁸⁰

⁷⁸D. Martin Luthers Werke, 26 Band, Vom Abendmahl Christi, (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1909), 504. (Hereafter WA). We note that here Luther uses the term "office" for "order" when it comes to the church or "spiritual order." We also note that here Luther uses the term "priest" as equivalent to "pastor" and distinct from "the priesthood of believers."

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., 505.

Luther was concerned that much evil was spoken about the estate of marriage. He noted that those who recognized it as "The Estate of Marriage" would find great joy and delight in it. It is because God has ordained this estate and because the works done therein are done in faith, that these works are well pleasing to God. For example, when a wife in faith,

suckles the child, rocks and bathes it, and cares for it in other ways; and as she busies herself with other duties and renders help and obedience to her husband. These are truly golden and noble works.⁸¹

So also,

when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child... God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling - not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in faith.⁸²

In this estate, children also have a great, good, and holy work assigned to them in obeying their parents according to God's Commandment.⁸³ Parents are to discharge their duties in this order "not only to support and provide for bodily necessities for their children, servants,

⁸¹LW 45, Estate of Marriage, 1522, 40.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³LC I, 112, Triglot, 613.

subjects, etc., but, most of all to train them to the honor and praise of God." (LC I, 168)⁸⁴

Holy works of God are also done by the prince, judge, officials, notaries, chancellors, servants, and all who service such, as well as by all the obedient subjects. These positions belong to the "earthly authority" order. Those who serve in these positions, all live pure and holy lives for God as they do their duties.⁸⁵

Included in this order are those who enforce the law of the land and protect the people. Even when the work of some in this order, like that of soldiers, may seem unchristian, in fact, it is precious and godly work because through it God protects His people and punishes evil doers.⁸⁶

Luther compares worldly government to the office of preaching, noting that it is a glorious ordinance and a splendid gift of God:

Therefore as it is the function and honor of the office of preaching to make sinners saints, dead men live, damned men saved, and the devil's children God's children, so it is the function and honor of worldly government to make men out of wild beasts and to prevent men from becoming wild beasts.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Ibid., 629.

⁸⁵WA 26, Vom Abendmahl Christi, 1528, 505.

⁸⁶LW 46, Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved, 1526, 96.

⁸⁷LW 46, A Sermon on Keeping Children in School, 1530,

Luther notes that the works done in these three orders are considered holy in the sight of God. They are holy because these three institutions (orders, stations) are found in God's Word and Commandments.

As he did in the "Table of Duties," Dr. Luther also states in his Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper, that what is common to all three stations is Christian love. That all things are to be done in love is the sum of all the Commandments.⁸⁸

Luther adds that, though all of the works done in these three orders are holy, none of them save. Salvation comes only through Christ, but those who are saved by faith in Christ, do such works and keep such orders.⁸⁹ The Christian life is faith active in love.⁹⁰

In On the Councils and the Church, 1539, Luther speaks of these three orders as "the three hierarchies which God ordained."⁹¹ In this work, Dr. Luther is more precise in his terminology. He refers to the three orders as, "home, state, and church."

237.

⁸⁸WA 26, Vom Abendmahl Christi, 1528, 505.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰LW 31, The Freedom of a Christian, 365.

⁹¹WA 50, Von den Konziliis und Kirchen, 1539, (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1914), 652.

For Luther, these three hierarchies derive authority from the Fourth Commandment (LC I, 158).⁹² Thus much of the discussion in On the Councils and the Church concerns what the Christian is to do in relation to and under the authority of each hierarchy which Luther here calls, "government" (Regiment). Luther points out that there is enough to do in living rightly and resisting the devil under these three existing hierarchies without having to add anything else.⁹³

Regarding the home, Luther talks of how parents and house lords must be obeyed, how children and servants must be divinely fed, nourished, ruled, and given care. He notes that there is enough to do in ruling a house so that there would not be need of anything else to do.⁹⁴

However, there is also "earthly government" (Goettlichen Regiment) in which there is also enough to do as we are faithful and obedient. If one serves in this position of authority, he is to judge, protect, and promote land and people. According to Luther there would be enough to learn, to do, to live, and to suffer in these two "rules" (Rechten) without need of another.⁹⁵

⁹²Triglot, 627.

⁹³WA 50, Von den Konziliis und Kirchen, 1539, 652.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

And yet there is a third rule or government,

where the Holy Spirit rules so that Christ calls it a comforting, sweet, and light burden. But when the Spirit does not rule (where faith is absent), it is not only troublesome and terrible, but also impossible. As Paul says in Romans 8, "What is impossible for the Law," and elsewhere, "The letter kills."⁹⁶

E. God's Provision Through Offices.

According to Dr. Luther, within the orders of creation God has ordained specific offices in which He puts His people. Through these offices God provides for His world. The office of the Ministry is just one office of a great number of offices through which God provides. The Christian can serve in one or more of a wide variety of ways depending on his calling, and the office(s) in which God has given him to serve. These offices are all God given. One ought not think one is failing to serve properly if the service one renders is not a task of the office of the Ministry.

If an office or vocation were to be regarded as disreputable on the ground that Christ did not pursue it himself, what would become of all the offices and vocations other than the ministry, the one occupation he did follow? Christ pursued his own office and vocation, but he did not hereby reject any other.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷LW 45, Temporal Authority, 1523, 100.

Luther continues, that when it comes to the office Christ pursued, the apostles and all spiritual rulers had to follow him. In devoting their time to preaching they left some of the other offices or vocations to those who did not have to preach, because each must attend to the duties of his own calling. "Since not all Christians have this same function, it is fitting that they should have some other external office by which God may also be served."⁹⁸

Luther lamented that if only a man would regard himself and his office, attending to his duties alone, the world would be full of good works in a short time. And these works would all be done so quietly that only God would know.⁹⁹ Indeed everyone will find enough good works to do in his own station without having to look for anything special.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Ibid., 101. See also, Kurt Marquart, "Church Growth As Mission Paradigm: A Lutheran Assessment (A Luther Academy Monograph Published by Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas, 1994), 78: "In Pentecostalism and pietism we face a new monasticism, which again wants to 'churchify' all good works, and narrow the priesthood's arena of daily life to some "ministry" of ceaseless religious chatter. No! The life and work of a faithful garbage-collector is a far better worship of God..." (emphasis his).

⁹⁹LW 44, Treatise on Good Works, 1520, 99.

¹⁰⁰LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 256.

Every occupation has its own honor and duties before God. "All the estates and works of God are to be praised as highly as they can be, and none despised in favor of another."¹⁰¹

When one does the work of his office and station in life, in faith, everything one does in that office or vocation is good fruit, even something that seems menial, like when a farmer loads and hauls manure.¹⁰² A Christian even has God's Word preached to him in his occupation by the very tools he uses in his trade:

You have as many preachers as you have transactions, goods, tools, and other equipment in your house and home. All this is continually crying out to you: 'Friend, use me in your relations with your neighbor just as you would want your neighbor to use his property in his relations with you.' In this way, you see, this teaching would be inscribed everywhere we look, and engraved upon our entire life...¹⁰³

Great joy comes from living life in one's calling in knowing that as one provides for others in his calling, it is actually God providing through him.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹LW 46, A Sermon on Keeping Children in School, 1530, 246. See also LW 14, Psalm 117, 1530, 15.

¹⁰²LW 24, Sermons on the Gospel of John, Chapters 14-16, 1537-38, 231. For the same "manure illustration" see LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 266.

¹⁰³LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 237.

¹⁰⁴LC I, 150, Triglot, 623-24.

For He will be working all things through you; He will milk the cow through you and perform the most servile duties through you, and all the greatest and least duties alike will be pleasing to Him.¹⁰⁵

God's provision through the various offices or occupations is referred to by Luther as the "mask" God wears as He provides for others through the one serving in a particular office.

What else is all our work to God - whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in war, or in government - but a child's performance, by which he wants to give His gifts in the fields, at home, and everywhere else? These are the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things.¹⁰⁶

It is the social positions like, magistrate, emperor, king, prince, consul, teacher, preacher, pupil, father, mother, child, master, servant, that are the external masks through which God provides the necessities for life. They are the masks through which God works to preserve and govern the world.¹⁰⁷

Luther urges everyone to remain in his calling and do his duty there without worrying about what lies outside of his own vocation. When he does this he has the sure joy and

¹⁰⁵LW 6, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 31-37, 1536, 10.

¹⁰⁶LW 14, Psalm 147, 1531, 114.

¹⁰⁷LW 26, Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4, 95-96.

confidence that the work he does is ordained by God. Regardless of the station, it is a divine work because it is the work of a divine calling, and has the command of God.¹⁰⁸

F. The Distinction of Offices.

For Luther, in order for the gifts to flow properly from God through all of the various offices in this life, it is important for there to be distinction between the offices. Though in God's eyes there is no distinction between people, in this world God ordained things in such a way as to work properly with distinctions. "In this world God wants the observance of order, respect, and distinction among social positions."¹⁰⁹ Luther goes on to say that these distinctions must be observed carefully, for if they were ignored, "there would be a disturbance and confusion of all social stations and of everything."¹¹⁰

For Dr. Luther, it is actually the distinction of the offices that keeps the free flow of God's gifts coming to others through these offices. When one thinks he needs to be doing the tasks of someone else's office (for example, the office of the Ministry), he is distracted from doing the

¹⁰⁸LW 27, Ibid., 119-120.

¹⁰⁹LW 26, Ibid., 97-98.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 356.

tasks God has given him to do in his own office or occupation. What God calls the Christian to do are the actual tasks of the Christian's own occupation. This is the office in which God has put him.

A cobbler, a smith, a peasant - each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [1 Cor. 12:14-26].¹¹¹

According to Luther, God has given the unique work of each individual office or occupation. The Christian is to focus his attention on that office or occupation where God has placed him. The Christian service or tasks of that office or occupation is what God has given him to do uniquely and individually.

Thus someone who is a magistrate, a householder, a servant, a teacher, a pupil, etc. should remain in his calling and do his duty there, properly and faithfully, without concerning himself about what lies outside his own vocation.¹¹²

What that duty is depends on one's office,

If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty. If I am a magistrate, I perform the office which I have

¹¹¹LW 44, To the Christian Nobility, 1520, 130.

¹¹²LW 27, Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 5-6, 119.

received by divine command. If I am a servant, I faithfully tend to my master's affairs.¹¹³

III. THE DISTINCTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY.

A. Who Serves in the Office.

According to Dr. Luther, this distinction between offices is also necessary to keep the free flow of God's gifts coming from the office of the Ministry. To Luther, the office of the Ministry, through which God administers His means of grace to bring people to faith, which gives them that status of children of God, and moves them into acts of service to their neighbor, is given to all Christians in common. But God has not given the office of the Ministry to every Christian to serve in individually.

What God has given to all in common, He has given for their benefit and the benefit of His Church. God has given to His Church the office of the Ministry for the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Though this office belongs to all in common, no one is to take this office or the tasks of this office upon himself. Except in the event of in an emergency, one must be put into this office in order to do the tasks of it. The one in the office does the tasks of the office for the benefit of those to whom the office is given.

¹¹³LW 26, Ibid., 11-12.

Here again we see the balance in Luther between the doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the office of the Ministry. Though all are equal before God in the priesthood of believers, there is to be a distinction in what each has been given to do. This distinction is very important for Luther when it comes to the office of the Ministry.

Because we are all priests of equal standing, no one must push himself forward and take it upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that for which we all have equal authority. For no one dare take upon himself what is common to all without the authority and consent of the community.¹¹⁴

In other words, though the office of the Ministry has been given by God to the entire priesthood of believers, the entire priesthood does not hold or do the works of that office, but chooses one from among them to serve in the office, to do the works God has given to be done in that office.

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests (pastors), princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴LW 44, To the Christian Nobility, 1520, 129.

¹¹⁵LW 44, To the Christian Nobility, 1520, 129 See also LW 45, Temporal Authority, 1523, 117.

B. The Tasks of the office of the Ministry.

As it is with all the other offices instituted by God, the office of the Ministry includes the tasks distinct to that office. These tasks do not make the one who holds the office any better than the rest. But these tasks are different than the tasks performed by others in other offices.

Therefore, just as those who are now called "spiritual," that is, priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office...¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶LW 44, To the Christian Nobility, 1520, 130.

Here it can be said that, when it comes to what is the pastor's responsibility, Ephesians 4:11-12 is appropriate, but NOT in its newer translation. The Lutheran Confessions cite this passage as follows, "And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Christ pastors and teachers (here "teacher" is synonymous with "pastor"), and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Tr. 67) Triglot, 523 (emphasis theirs). Pastors are given "for the ministry." It is clear by the context that this is "the office of the Ministry" with its tasks which include, "to teach the Gospel, to remit sins, to administer the Sacraments, and besides jurisdiction, namely, the command to excommunicate those whose crimes are known, and again to absolve those who repent." (Tr. 60) Triglot, 521.

See also, LW 13, Psalm 110, 1535, 332: "Out of the multitude of Christians some must be selected who shall lead the others by virtue of the special gifts and aptitude which God gives them for the office. Thus St. Paul writes (Eph.4:11,12): 'And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints' (this means those who are already Christians and baptized priests), 'for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ' (that is, the Christian congregation or church)."

God has given the office of the Ministry to all in His Church for its benefit. The benefit is that faith is created and sustained so that those receiving God's gifts through this office, "may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness innocence and blessedness." (SC II, 4)¹¹⁷

It is for the attaining of such faith through His Word and Sacraments that God established the preaching office (AC V, 1).¹¹⁸ God gives the gifts of His grace through this office. As with all God's offices, He places one in that office to distribute those gifts.

As noted above, for Dr. Luther, it is faith that matters when it comes to one's status before God. Faith receives the forgiveness of sins that gives one the status of child of God. This faith empowers one to be able to do

See also, Henry P. Hamann, "The Translation of Ephesians 4:12 - A Necessary Revision," Concordia Journal, vol. 14, no. 1 (1988), 42-47. The main point of Hamann's argument has to do with the word, **καταρτισμόν**, translated, "perfecting" or "equipping." Hamann writes, "The idea of **καταρτισμός**, always comes to an end with the dependent noun in the genitive.", 44. This means that the second two prepositional phrases in Ephesians 4:12 cannot be combined with the idea of the first, but must give additional information, so that the three prepositional phrases all describe what the pastor is to do.

¹¹⁷Triglot, 545.

¹¹⁸Triglot, 45.

what God has given each one to do in the calling in which God has placed him.

God's gifts that produce such faith are given through the office of the Ministry, and administered by the one called to serve in that office. For, even though the forgiveness of sins has been accomplished for all by Christ on the cross, how would they know about it or know that it is given to them without the preaching of the oral Word? (LC V, 31)¹¹⁹

But it is not the man in the office who does such great things for God's people. It is the office which God has ordained for this very purpose that does it along with the Word of God that the man in this office preaches. The pastor is simply the instrument through which the blessings of God's grace are delivered.¹²⁰

From this description it is evident that, according to Luther, the Christian as a member of the priesthood of believers, is on the receiving end of what God gives through the office of the Ministry and is not involved in the doing of the tasks God gives this office.

¹¹⁹Triglot, 759. See also LW 46, A Sermon on Keeping Children in School, 1530, "Now how are men helped to this faith and to this beginning of the resurrection of the body except through the office of preaching and the word of God, the office your son performs?", 224-225. See also AC V.

¹²⁰LW 46, A Sermon on Keeping Children in School, 1530, 224.

Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion. If everyone were to preach to his neighbor or if they did things for one another without orderly procedure, it would take a long time indeed to establish a congregation. Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed on behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians.¹²¹

C. The Call.

For Luther, what sets the man apart to serve in the office of the Ministry, doing the tasks of that office, is the call to serve in that office.

God does not want people running all over the place with His Word as though they were driven by the Holy Spirit and had to preach, or were seeking nooks or corners or pulpits to preach where they have no official call.¹²²

For Luther, it is the call into the office of the Ministry that gives one the the privilege of doing the tasks of that office and not the fact that one is a member of the priesthood of all believers.

It is true that all Christians are priests, but not all are pastors. For to be a pastor one must be not only a Christian and a priest but must have an office and a field of work committed to him.

¹²¹LW 13, Psalm 110, 1535, 334 (emphasis mine).

¹²²LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 7.

This call and command make pastors and preachers.¹²³

This is the thought expressed in AC XIV, "Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach (preach - see German) in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called."¹²⁴

D. Emergency Use.

After having noted the distinction of the office of the Ministry from the other offices, and the need for one to be called into that office in order to serve in that office, some confusion arises when one reads Luther stating things like,

Then let it be your chief work to proclaim this publicly and to call everyone into the light into which you have been called. Where you find people who do not know this, you should instruct and also teach them as you have learned...¹²⁵

Here Luther seems to contradict what he has noted above about the need for a call in order to make such public proclamation. Luther himself explains this seeming contradiction as follows,

¹²³LW 13, Psalm 82, 1530, 63. See also LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 250.

¹²⁴Triglote, 49.

¹²⁵LW 30, Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter, 1522, 65.

If you say, "How can this be? If he is not called to do so he may indeed not preach, as you yourself have taught." I answer that here you should put a Christian into two places. First if he is in a place where there are no Christians he needs no other call than to be a Christian, called and anointed by God from within... Second, if he is at a place where there are Christians who have the same power and right as he, he should not draw attention to himself.¹²⁶

Such public proclamation by a Christian who has not been called to serve in the office of the Ministry, constitutes an emergency use ("Where you find people who do not know this..." and "Where there are no Christians...") of what God has given the office of the Ministry to do. Luther addresses this specifically in Concerning the Ministry, 1523,

For it is one thing to exercise a right publicly; another to use it in time of emergency. Publicly one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church. In time of emergency each may use it as he deems best.¹²⁷

This same thought is expressed in the Lutheran Confessions, "Just as in the case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes the minister and pastor of another;" (Tr. 67).¹²⁸

¹²⁶LW 39, That a Christian Assembly or Congregation has the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture, 1523, 310.

¹²⁷LW 40, Concerning the Ministry, 1523, 34.

¹²⁸Triglot, 523 (emphasis mine).

E. Similar Service of Other Offices.

Though there must be a distinction between the priesthood of believers and the office of the Ministry, for Luther, there is some similarity in what each has been called to do. For Luther, the public proclamation of the Gospel is given to the office of the Ministry, but other use of the Word of God has also been given for all Christians to do within their callings.

Even though not everybody has the public office and calling, every Christian, has the right and duty to teach, admonish, comfort, and rebuke his neighbor with the Word of God at every opportunity and whenever necessary. For example, father and mother should do this for their children and household; a brother, neighbor, citizen, or peasant for the other.¹²⁹

This same thought is reflected in Luther's House Postil, 1533,

The noblest and greatest work and the most important service we can perform for God on earth is bringing other people, and especially those who are entrusted to us, to the knowledge of God by the holy Gospel.¹³⁰

¹²⁹WA 13, Psalm 110, 1535, 333.

¹³⁰WA 53, 415. Quoted from, John Warwick Montgomery, In Defense of Martin Luther, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970), 162-163, (emphasis mine). Here, as in other places, Luther does make a distinction in works, where elsewhere he says there is no distinction. In light of the discussion above, for Luther, it is before God that there is no distinction of good works. In this case, the person performing the work of proclaiming the Gospel does not improve his status before God. Only faith does that. But to the one receiving such proclamation, the benefits received are greater than what is received with other good works. That is what makes this work "the greatest and

For Luther, such use of God's Word as God gives to all Christians to do within their offices is similar to work God has given to do in the office of the Ministry.

The head of every family has the duty of training and teaching his children and servants, or of having them taught. In his house he is like a minister or bishop over his household, and responsible for them.¹³¹

But Luther is also quick to point out that this work is to be done within one's own office: "But you have no right to do this outside your own household and to force yourself upon other households or upon your neighbors."¹³²

Though there are similarities, these tasks given to all Christians are not the same as nor do they make the one who does them, one who does the work of the office of the Ministry. The balance is kept with distinction,

For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office... This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests.¹³³

noblest" according to Dr. Luther.

¹³¹LW 21, The Sermon on the Mount, 1532, 8.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid. 332.

So also, according to Luther, such similarity of task does not replace what God does through the one in the office of the Ministry.

Every Christian has and practices such priestly works (to teach, sacrifice, and pray). But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of a congregation.¹³⁴

CONCLUSION: What is a Christian to do?

According to Luther, a Christian is to be both active and passive. First and foremost, however, he is to be passive. For Luther, faith is necessary before anything active can be done. Rather than trying to elevate one's status by placing one in the office of the Ministry, for Luther, one's status is elevated by faith. Faith makes one's status before God to be that of child of God. Faith enables one to live as a child of God. Faith is active in love towards one's neighbor.

The way faith is created in a person, the way faith is strengthened, the way one is kept in faith, is by the gifts of God's grace - "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation" (SC VI, 6)¹³⁵ - given by God through His Word and

¹³⁴LW 13, Psalm 110, 1535, 334.

¹³⁵Triglot, 557.

Sacraments. The only way to get the gifts of God's grace is to passively receive them.

God delivers the gifts of His grace through His means of grace, the Word and Sacraments, which He gives out in His Church. That is His purpose for the existence of His Church: "in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers." (SC II, 6)¹³⁶

As He does with all His gifts, God has created an office through which He gives out His gifts of grace. That office is the office of the Ministry. As Luther has noted, God has given this office to His Church for the benefit of His people. God creates and sustains faith in His people through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of His Sacraments, which are the tasks of the office the Ministry. God does not put all of His people into this office, but all of His people receive the blessings of this office.

Faith, which elevates every Christian, both the laity and the clergy, to the status of child of God, propels the Christian into service as faith is active in love towards one's neighbor.

According to Luther, all Christians are not given the same thing to do. Christian service will vary according to

¹³⁶Triglote, 545.

one's calling and the tasks of the office(s) in which God has put him. The Christian will live his life in his calling by faith as a: father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, political leader, farmer, business person, doctor, dentist, lawyer, school teacher, or as whatever other officeholder God has made him to be.

By faith the Christian will do the specific tasks God has given to the office or occupation in which God has placed him. The Christian will do the specific service of his office or occupation according to God's Commandments. As he does, God will provide for others, through the Christian, whatever specific blessings He gives through that office.

When the Christian lives his life in his calling with faith active in love, loving others as God has loved him according to the Commandments, and using God's Word within his calling as the situation merits, God will use the Christian's acts of love to draw others into His Church (much like was done in the early church¹³⁷). In His Church God will make disciples through the preaching of the Gospel

¹³⁷See Hamann, 48-49, "By these lives of good works they (New Testament Christians) attract the unbelievers to the faith which they hold and confess and of which they speak as opportunity arises: '...that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven' (Matt.5:16); '...that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation' (1 Pet.2:12); '...so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives' (1 Pet.3:1)."

and the administration of the Sacraments through the office which He has created for these tasks.

As it is with all of the offices He institutes, God places one in that office to administer these gifts, the blessings, He gives through that office. The pastor preaches the Gospel and administers the Sacraments which are the tasks of the office in which God has placed Him.

Through these means of grace, God makes sinful people into His own dear children, who live their lives in the places He puts them doing the tasks He has given each of them individually to do, for the good of others and for the glory of Himself.

But since there will be times when the child of God will fail to live according to God's Commandments as a child of God, and thus be in danger of losing his "status" forever, the Christian must always return to God's Church. In His Church God will again remake His lost child into His restored child through His Word and Sacrament, administered by the humble servant whom God has placed in the office He has created for the delivery of those gifts. It all results in the Christian doing what God has given him to do because he is what God has made him to be: a child of God.

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