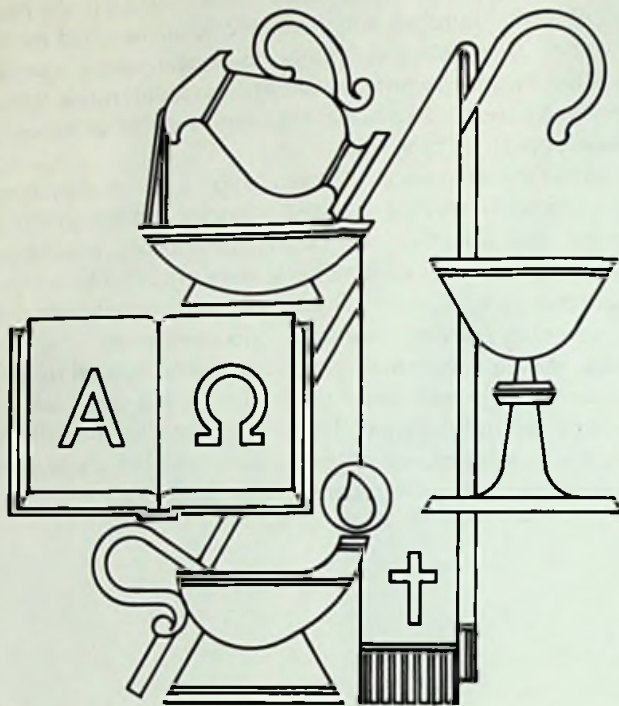


I. THE MINISTRY IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS



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Since we are examining the doctrine of the ministry in the Lutheran Church, it is important to note the following passages from the Lutheran Confessions that set forth the doctrine of the ministry:

Augsburg Confession

That we may obtain this faith [i.e., that we are justified by grace, through faith, for the sake of Christ], the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake (AC V, 1—3, *Trig.*, p. 45).

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called (AC XIV, *Trig.*, p. 49).

But this is their opinion, that the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments. . . . This power is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, according to their calling, either to many or to individuals (AC XXVIII, 5, 8, *Trig.*, p. 85).

Apology of the Augsburg Confession

The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we must subscribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it (Ap XIII, 12).

Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

The second article is even clearer than the first because Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence. He did not give them the power of the sword or the right to establish, take possession of, or transfer the kingdoms of the world. For Christ said, "Go therefore and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20), and also, "As the Father has sent me, even so I

send you" (John 20:21). Moreover, it is manifest that Christ was not sent to wield a sword or possess a worldly kingdom, for he said, "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36). Paul also said, "Not that we lord it over your faith" (II Cor. 1:24), and again, "The weapons of our warfare are not worldly," etc. (II Cor. 10:4) (Treatise, 31).

For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers.

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, "When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. . . .

Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, "You are a royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation. . . .

From all these facts it is evident that the church retains the right of electing and ordaining ministers. Wherefore, when the bishops are heretics or refuse to administer ordination, the churches are by divine right compelled to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves (Treatise, 67—72).

These passages from the Lutheran Confessions emphasize the following aspects of the Lutheran understanding of the ministry:

- God has given the Word and sacraments that people may come to faith.
- God has arranged that the Word and sacraments should be taught and administered.
- Since such a ministry has been established by God, individuals are called to be ministers by the church.
- Those who are called to be ministers hold and exercise the office of the ministry.
- The Power or Office of the Keys, given by Christ to the church, is

exercised publicly on behalf of the church by the called ministers.

- The power of the ministers is the power to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and forgive and retain sins.
- The power of the ministry is not a temporal power but a power in spiritual matters of Word and sacrament.
- Ministers cannot arrogate such authority to themselves, but it must be conferred by the call of the church.

