

administer the sacraments in the church and to supervise the flock committed to their care.⁴

D. OFFICE AND FUNCTION

A distinction must be made between "office" and "function." Failure to make this distinction results in confusion. For instance, when a congregation is temporarily without a man to fill the office of the public ministry in its midst, it may ask a properly supervised teacher or a lay leader to perform some functions of the office of the public ministry. This is done in an emergency situation and not as a mere convenience. However, performing such functions does not make those who do them holders of the office of the public ministry. Even in such emergency situations a congregation properly requests a man who does hold the office of the public ministry and is serving as pastor in a neighboring congregation to assume that office for them as "vacancy pastor" or "interim overseer." Thus the oversight and accountability remain with one whom the church has called and designated as a pastor and who supervises those who temporarily perform some pastoral functions. Such practices are common and reveal a "folk" understanding of the ministry even if the root of such practices is not consciously analyzed.

E. OTHER OFFICES IN THE CHURCH

The office of the public ministry includes within it all of the functions of the leadership of the church. Early in the history of the church we have an example of the church selecting some of its members to carry out in the stead

⁴Cf. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 59—62. "In the Confession and in the Apology we have set forth in general terms what we have to say about ecclesiastical power.

"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. Accordingly Jerome teaches clearly that in the apostolic letters all who preside over the churches are both bishops and presbyters."

of and under the direction of the apostles some of the functions of their ministry. In Acts 6 we read that, at the request of the apostles, the church selected and commissioned certain men to perform functions that the apostles had been carrying out. They were appointed to the duty of providing for the physical support of the widows in the church. They were called by the church in prayer and were set apart for their office by the laying on of hands. Scripture suggests (although it does not say it directly) that this new office was of great help to the work of the church. It is reported that immediately after they were commissioned "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem" (v. 7). The calibre of these men is forever memorialized in Acts 6 and 7 by the account of the witness and martyrdom of Stephen.⁵

The church has the right to create offices from time to time that have the purpose of extending the effectiveness of the office of the public ministry. Here a word of C. F. W. Walther is instructive. He wrote: "The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching . . ." ⁶ Walther sees such offices as "sacred offices of the church," and each exercises a function of the pastoral office of the church and is an aid to the pastoral ministry.

The church has the right to distinguish such auxiliary offices of the church from each other. Some require extensive knowledge of Scripture, ability to teach or to counsel, or other capabilities that are closely related to the teaching and shepherding functions of the office of the public ministry. The church has always exercised the right to designate some of its offices as so involved in the spiritual functions of the office of the public ministry that it has provided specific training, is more formal in summoning members of the church to such offices, and has rightly included such offices within its

⁵Serving in the distribution of food did not in and of itself entitle Stephen, for instance, to preach or teach publicly. Since he clearly did so, our great theologians of the past, like Chemnitz and Gerhard, surmised either that the "seven" of Acts 6 were selected from among the ministers of the Word to begin with, or that some of them were subsequently ordained into the ministry of the Word. However, we are not told in the Scriptures that Stephen either was or became an elder of the Word.

⁶C. F. W. Walther, "The Theses on the Ministry," in *Walther and the Church*, ed. Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 79.

concept of "ministry." Such offices call for functions that not only are necessary for the functioning of the public ministry but that only *the church* performs as an institution. Thus, the teaching of the faith in a Christian school is a function unique to the church. Properly speaking, a professional, trained teacher who is called as a teacher by the church may be said to be performing a function of the office of the public ministry. The teaching of the faith to the children and youth of the flock is a major duty of the pastoral office. To refer to it as "the teaching ministry" is less awkward and readily understandable in the church.

By using the term "teaching ministry" we are indicating the special nature of the auxiliary office of teacher in our church. One who is in the "teaching ministry" (man or woman) meets the following qualifications established by the church. He or she

- has been trained in the educational institutions of the church, has received specific training in the understanding and teaching of religion, and has been certified as suitable and eligible for the teaching ministry by a faculty of the church. In some cases the requirements have been met by means of a colloquy program that includes training and evaluation.
- has been placed into the teaching ministry formally and officially by an assignment of the Board of Assignments, which is the Council of Presidents of the Synod.
- is given authority to function in the teaching ministry in specific places by the formal call of a congregation or other legitimate calling agency (e.g., a District, the Synod, or others).
- serves under the supervision of the called pastor in a congregation or under other pastoral supervision in nonparish calls.
- does work that is specifically spiritual in nature. Although he/she may teach some "secular" subject, the philosophy of Lutheran education includes the demand that the faith of the church be evident in all activities of the school. Law and Gospel, sin and grace are operative in the curriculum and methodology of a Lutheran school.
- knows and publicly subscribes to the Lutheran Confessions.
- is accepted formally as a member of the Synod, with the obligation to attend official conferences and District conventions.
- may be chosen to represent groups of teachers as a delegate to conventions of the Synod.
- is answerable for the confessional purity of his/her teaching and is pledged to a life that befits the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- may be removed from office because of impure doctrine, an ungodly life, or incompetence.
- is pledged to be concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of those committed to his/her care.

Although not pledged to remain in the teaching office for a lifetime, the normal expectancy of the church and of teacher candidates is that, unless prevented by personal circumstances, the teaching ministry of an individual will be followed as a lifelong calling.

These are the criteria by which our church designates the occupants of its teaching ministry office.

F. ONE MINISTRY OR MANY?

Is there one ministry in the church or many?⁷ In common parlance we do refer to "the pastoral ministry," "the teaching ministry," "the youth ministry," "the music ministry." Such terminology does convey meaning. It usually indicates that someone functions in a special way in the church by authorization of the church, usually full time and in a capacity that supports the ministry of Word and sacrament. However, less than cautious use of the term "minister" and "ministry" tends to blur the distinctions that need to be made and leads to practices that are theologically insupportable and that confuse the church about the doctrine of the ministry.

Putting it simply, there is only one pastoral office, but the office which we formally refer to as "the office of the public ministry" has multiple functions, some of which are best handled by another, e.g., the parochial school teacher who is performing *that* function of the pastoral office. The pastoral office with all of its functions is mandated for the church. Other offices are established by the church to assist in carrying out pastoral functions.

Thus, we may speak of various "ministries" in and of the church, but we must be careful to distinguish them properly. An office is not defined solely by what one who holds it does (function) but by the duties, responsibility, and accountability assigned to it. The pastoral office is unique in that *all* the functions of the church's ministry belong to it.

⁷Cf. *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed. under "Amt." "Strictly speaking only the Lutherans have a doctrine of the ministry, while at the corresponding place the Calvinists treat of ministries [*Aemter*, offices] and the Roman Catholics and Orthodox, as well as, in their own way, the Anglicans, of the hierarchy Lutheranism powerfully underscores, with its doctrine of the preaching ministry [*Predigtamt*] (AC 5) as *the* ministry [*Amt*], the position of the Gospel as the lifegiving center of the congregation." (Our translation.)

G. PARISH AND NON-PARISH PASTORS

In considering the office of the public ministry one must consider the relationship between "parish pastors" and "non parish pastors." Some would deny the necessity for any distinction. To them only men whose office of the public ministry is carried out as pastors of congregations that are geographically locatable are really in the ministry of Word and sacrament. Others point to the personnel listing for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in *The Lutheran Annual*. It includes 18 categories under the heading "Pastors of Missouri Synod." Only one of them is "parish pastor." To be sure, the vast majority of names listed are designated as "parish pastor," and the parish pastorate is the primary form of the pastorate. But other kinds of pastors serve to provide a support system for the work of the parish pastor and his congregation. The classification code of the Synod also includes such designations as "Administration-District," "Administration-Synod," "Campus Pastor," "Military Chaplain," "Professor Serving a Synodical School." These are all listed as "pastors" and are often called "pastor" by people in the church. The question therefore arises whether or not only parish pastors are holders of the office of the public ministry.

Some would solve problems in this area by asking what a man does during the week. Does he preach from the pulpit every Sunday? Does he celebrate communion once a month or more often? Does he make sick and shut-in calls? On that score only parish pastors—and not even some of them—would qualify as being in the office of the public ministry.

The more theologically appropriate questions to ask are the following: Has the church found an individual to be qualified for the office of the public ministry? Has the church called him to exercise an overseeing and shepherding ministry in the church? Has the church formally called him to hold the office of the public ministry and entrusted him with the responsibility of that office, even though it may ask him to specialize in certain functions of this office? And is he, upon installation into the office, pledged to be and remain accountable for the faithful conduct of his office to God, to the church, and to the believers committed to his care? Questions such as these indicate a need for clarity and precision in the issuing of "calls."

The question is also asked: Is it possible to exercise the office of shepherd and overseer in the church *only* in a typical parish situation? In the case of "administrative officials," for instance, is the church calling as an "elder of the church" a man qualified to exercise oversight when it calls him to be a District president? or a seminary professor? or a campus pastor? The answer may be yes or no. It depends on the call. If a man is asked merely to perform a necessary but only secular function for the church but is not called to public accountability as an overseer in the church, he is not in the office of the public ministry. However, District presidents who are charged with the oversight of the overseers of the flock, or professors who are charged with

the oversight of the men who are preparing to be the shepherds of the church, or men who are charged with the oversight of the faith and life of the church's youth on a college campus or in the military can be properly said to be serving in the office of the public ministry of the church.

This paper cannot delineate all of the possible ways in which the church may need to assign her spiritual leaders. Good order requires, however, that the church itself carefully define the offices and their functions to which it summons its spiritual leaders. It should exercise good stewardship in not thoughtlessly drawing men from the office of the public ministry to tasks that are necessary but that do not require one of the pastors of the church. Or, if a man agrees to accept a position that is not within the scope of the pastoral ministry, he should no longer function as a holder of the office of the public ministry but as a lay member of the church. Confusion occurs when men "resign from the ministry" but continue to appear as holders of the office of the public ministry doing such things as accepting occasional preaching engagements, performing marriages, or setting up business as ministerial marriage counselors. Since by such behavior a man holds himself forth as a pastor and performs pastoral functions without a call and without the authorization of the church—indeed having removed himself from the ministry—his actions must be declared wrong.⁸

A man who has been called by the church to serve as an elder who labors in Word and sacrament other than as a parish pastor is available to the whole confessional fellowship of the church to preach the Word, administer the sacraments, or perform any of the functions of the office of the public ministry at the invitation of any segment of the church. He does not need to be "called" each time he accepts an invitation to preach. The common usage of the church seems to sense this. Confusion arises when we assume that the church can function only as one congregation at a time, or that the ministry of Word and sacrament must be defined only in terms of the activities of a parish pastor. Worse confusion arises when a man who once held the office of the public ministry continues to function as such after he has publicly disavowed his call from the church.

We may say here that this same principle applies to auxiliary offices of the public ministry. A teacher of the church is defined not solely by his or her

⁸Cf. "A Statement on the Relationship of the Ordained Ministry to Pastoral Counseling." This statement, approved in 1978 by the Standing Committees of the Division of Theological Studies and the Department of Specialized Pastoral Care and Clinical Education of the Lutheran Council in the USA, is available from LCUSA, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, N. Y. 10010.

teaching in an elementary classroom. The church may call him or her to serve as a director of education, a director of youth guidance, or some other post that is just as vital to the public ministry as classroom teaching.⁹

H. ORDINATION

Ordination has its historical roots in the New Testament and in the church through the ages.¹⁰ It is a solemn ecclesiastical rite by which a duly qualified member of the body of Christ who has accepted a valid call from the church is presented to the church as a gift of the Holy Spirit and publicly declared to be a holder of the office of the public ministry. It is a public ratification of the call and an invocation of the blessings of God upon the new minister. While the rite of ordination including the laying on of hands is not a necessity, it is to be revered as an ancient apostolic custom. In keeping with this custom, the laying on of hands of other pastors, and the presence of teachers and members of the church from places other than the site of the ordainee's immediate call is meaningful. When a man is ordained in one congregation, for example, he is recognized as a member of the public ministry of the whole confessional fellowship. Ordination as an act does not impart an additional authority that the call does not give, nor is it a sacrament. As a matter of uniform nomenclature and in accordance with common understanding, the term "ordination" should be reserved for a man's entry into the office of the public ministry. The initial acceptance by the church of the gift also of those who are to serve in the vital auxiliary offices should be carried out with solemnity befitting the office. Tradition, common expectations, and the uniqueness of the pastoral office speak against using the term "ordination" for other than the office of the public ministry. Other suggestions regarding nomenclature appear below.

It may be added here that participation of clergymen of churches not within the confessional fellowship in the actual rite of installation is no more

⁹The *Lutheran Annual* presents seven categories of "Teachers of the Missouri Synod," only one of which is "Teacher—Elementary School."

¹⁰The word "ordination" may be used in a wide or in a narrow sense. In the wide sense it refers to the whole process of placing a qualified man into the office of the public ministry (cf. Ap XIII, 11—12). In the narrow, and more usual, sense "ordination" means specifically the rite of the laying on of hands, in other words, the form of ceremony, as distinct from the call as such. Cf. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3:454.