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Sixteenth Century Journal, Vol. 11, No. 3, 450th Anniversary Augsburg Confession. (Jun. 25, 1980), pp. 36-46.

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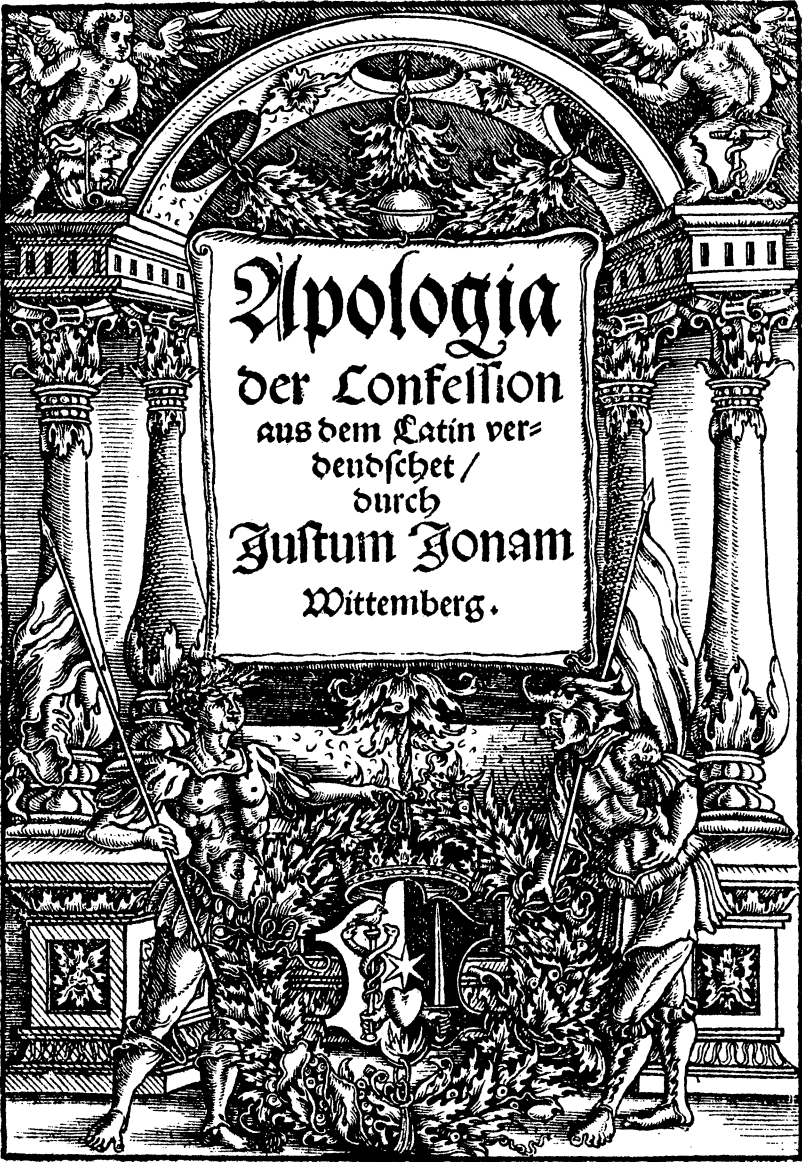
The Function and Structure of Gospelling: An Essay on "Ministry" According to the Augsburg Confession

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A sequential reading of the Augsburg Confession (CA) discloses the significant position ministry occupies within the Lutheran proposal for the reformation of the church catholic. Assuming an orthodoxy grounded in the dogma of the Trinity and argued in the Christocentric soteriology of the "Fathers" (CA 1-3)¹ Philip Melancthon proposed "justification by faith rather than works" (CA 4) and the "ministry of word and sacraments" as the "means" by which "justifying faith" is obtained (CA 5). The rest of the "chief articles" of Part I of CA describe the consequences of a faithful ministry of the gospel: a "new obedience" embodied in "good works" for the neighbor (CA 6); the "church" as the gospelling reality in the world centered in the "audible" and "visible" words of oral and sacramental communication (CA 7-15); "civil government" as God's ministry of law and order (CA 16); the return of Christ to judgment (CA 17); and the proper distinction between human and divine freedom, sin, faith, good works, and the cult of the saints over against the worship of those who are right with God by faith alone (CA 18-21). Part II of the CA gives an account of the "abuses which have been corrected" in Lutheran territories: withholding the cup from the laity in the Mass (CA 22); clerical celibacy (CA 23); celebration of the Mass as meritorious sacrifice (CA 24); casuistic auricular confession (CA 25); meritorious fasting and monastic vows (CA 26-27); and belief that political episcopacy is divinely instituted (CA 28).

This paper 1) presents the basic perspective of ministry proposed in and radiating from CA 5 in the context of Luther's distinction between the ordained and the unordained ministry based on baptism; 2) argues a particular interpretation of the relationship between the ordained and unordained ministry derived from the CA; and 3) hones in on some neuralgic implications for Lutheranism and its task of "gospelling" in an ecumenical and missionary context.

¹The entire Part I of the CA is proposed as "grounded clearly in the Holy Scriptures and is not contrary or opposed to that of the universal Christian church or even of the Roman church (in so far as the latter's teaching is reflected in the writings of the Fathers)." Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), p. 47:1. Hereafter cited BC. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (3. ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936), p. 83d:3. Hereafter cited BSLK. This trinitarian base is later supported by the "catalogue of testimonies (*catalogus testimoniorum*)" added to the Formula of Concord in 1580. BSLK, pp. 1103-1133.



The Basic Perspective

There is considerable consensus among scholars that the CA's view of the "office of preaching (*Predigtamt*)" or "ecclesiastical ministry (*ministerium ecclesiasticum*)" is deeply rooted in Luther's understanding of ministry as "gospelling" by all the baptized as well as by those whom they call and ordain as public servants of the gospel.² Although CA 5 stresses the "institution" of gospelling, *i.e.* the ministry of preaching and teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments in order "to obtain" faith (which justifies, according to CA 4), there is no clear definition of what God "instituted". But, when CA 5 is read in conjunction with CA 14, a ritual institution is suggested. "Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call (*ordentlicher Beruf—rite vocatus*)."³ Ordination is the liturgical event by which baptized gospellers are called into a public ministry by the church. This emphasis on "order" and "public calling" reflects Luther's view of God's caring ministry for his creation in terms of three "estates (*Stände*)": political government (*politia*), household and economic order (*economia*) and the church (*ecclesia*). While the first two estates disclose God's "worldly regiment," which he exercises as Creator, the third reveals his "spiritual regiment" as Redeemer. Thus, there are the ministries of the "sword" and of the "word," both of which need to be properly distinguished within the "two kingdoms" of the one God who is Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit.

Melanchthon emphasized the Lutheran commitment to order when he began the CA with a strong affirmation of the trinitarian God as the sole source of justifying faith in Christ, which is obtained through a divinely instituted function of "gospelling," and which is to be properly distinguished from a divinely instituted "legislating" (CA 1-5, 14-16). The ministry of the word (*ministerium verbi*) is subject to no human authority, whether it be exercised by the common priesthood of all the baptized believers or by those ordained for the public ministry of the gospel.⁴ In contradistinction to Luther, who confronted Rome with the common

²For a summary of issues and interpretations see Holsten Fagerberg, "Amt, Amter, Amtsverständnis," VI in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Gerhard Müller and Gerhard Krause, eds., (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1977-), II, 553-574. Useful are Edmund Schlink, *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, tr. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1961), ch. 7; Leif Grane, *Die Confessio Augustana* ('Göttinger Theologische Lehrbücher,' Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), chs. 5, 7, 14, 28; Wilhelm Maurer, *Historischer Kommentar zur Confessio Augustana* (2 vols., Gütersloh: Mohn, 1976-1978), I, ch. 25; II, chs. 17-18; and Geroge A. Lindbeck, "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Ministry: Catholic and Reformed," *Theological Studies* XXX (1969), 588-612.

³BC, p. 36; BSLK, p. 69. Maurer I, 210-223, on "*rite vocatus*" and "*publice docere*." Lindbeck, p. 589: "The ministry is *de iure* to the extent that it serves the Word."

⁴This is Luther's proposal in "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," 1520. *Luther's Works* 44. James Atkinson, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), p. 129. On the link between baptism and "emergency bishop," see Lewis W. Spitz, "Luther's Ecclesiology and His Concept of the Prince as Notbischoff," *Church History* XXII (1953), 113-141.

priesthood, an instrument of reform centered in the elevation of the baptized prince as "emergency bishop (*Notbischof*)," Melanchthon pointed up the special ministry of the ordained to demonstrate the Lutheran commitment to ecumenical function and structure.⁵ In the Apology to CA 14, Melanchthon expressed the Lutherans' "deep desire to maintain the church polity and various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy," albeit with the proviso that "ecclesiastical order" is to be understood as the creation of human, not divine, authority.⁶ "If ordination is interpreted in relation to the Word," (rather than to persons and juridical structures) "we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. The ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises."⁷ Even bishops exercise their office of supervision "by divine right (*nach göttlichen Rechten*)"--or, as the Latin text puts it with care, "according to the gospel (*secundum evangelium*)"--as long as they are faithful to the gospel. If they teach anything contrary to the gospel and oppress consciences with various moralistic laws, they are not to be obeyed.⁸

Thus, the CA makes a commitment to the best of the ecumenical tradition regarding the function and structure of gospelling: the ordination of faithful communicators of word and sacraments, which are the means by which justifying faith is obtained. But, in addition to this commitment to "catholic substance," there is the CA's insistence on the "Protestant principle" to let God be God: the office of the ministry is the tending of the gospel in cruciform servanthood rather than in self-righteous authority. For the basic function of gospelling is pneumatic: word and sacraments are the "means (*Mittel, instrumenta*)" by which God gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith "when and where he pleases (*ubi et quando visum Dei*) in those who hear the gospel."⁹ In other words, those whom the church calls and ordains to do public gospelling are to be communication experts--"instrumentalists"--well trained and dedicated to the means of the Holy Spirit rather than persons who glory in vocational self-righteousness. CA 7 connects CA 5 and CA 14 by insisting that the one Christian church endures by the "pure" preaching and teaching of the word and the "right" administration of the sacraments.¹⁰ Gospelling is the God-instituted function whereby justifying faith is obtained and nourished in the "gathering (*Versammlung*)" structured to serve the gospel. The ordained must be expert discerners of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the face of other "good news," and thus they preserve the purity of the "audible" and the rightness

⁵For Luther's changes of emphasis from "common" to "special ministry" see my essay, "The Ministry in Luther's Theological Perspective", The Martin Luther Colloquium 1973, Institute for Luther Studies at Gettysburg, Pa., *Bulletin* (Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg) LIV (1974), 24-30.

⁶BC, pp. 214:1; 215:5; BSLK, pp. 297:1; 298:5.

⁷Apology 13:11. BC, p. 212; BSLK, p. 293.

⁸CA 28:21, 23. BC, p. 84; BSLK, pp. 123-124.

⁹CA 5:2-3. BC, p. 31; BSLK, p. 58.

¹⁰BC, p. 32:2; BSLK, p. 61:2.

of the "visible words."¹¹ Public gossellers must be expert discerners of the "signs of the times" in order to know how to communicate the gospel *purely*. They must be hermeneuticians of Scripture and tradition in order to administer the sacraments *rightly*.¹² Such expert and faithful communication of the Word and sacraments are "sufficient for the unity of the church."

CA 7 makes it clear that "uniform ceremonies (*gleichförmige Zeremonien*)" or "human traditions (*traditiones humanes*)" are not necessary to the true unity of the church. Ordained ministers are charged with the responsibility to separate the evil forces of self-righteous uniformity from the wholesome power of the christocentric gospel. This struggle for purity and unity is a part of their office of ministry in the church. As Melancthon put it, in his Apology to CA 7 and 8, "Hypocrites and evil men are indeed associated with the true church as far as outward ceremonies are concerned. But when we come to define the church, we must define that which is the living body of Christ and is the church in fact as well as in name . . . In this life . . . because the kingdom of Christ has not yet been revealed, they [the wicked] are mingled with the church and hold office in the church."¹³ Orthodoxy and orthopraxy are never guaranteed by public or private gosselling; they emerge only when gossellers are in therapeutic conflict with themselves as sinners who are simultaneously sinful and righteous before God. CA 5 insists that it is the Holy Spirit who creates believers; any *ex opere operato* understanding of gosselling is rejected. The fact that the word is preached and the sacraments are administered does not guarantee the conversion of unbelievers since faith is the result of God's free will rather than the self-evident fruit of human homiletics or liturgics. Thus, faithful ministry is always task-oriented and can never find satisfaction in its own success. That is why CA 5 rejects those who teach that the Holy Spirit comes only through introspection without the externality of the gospel, the audible and visible word.

To sum up: the CA understands gosselling as a communication event tied to word and sacrament, which are properly distinguished from each other as well as from the worldly ministry of law and order. Fully aware that Luther grounded the ministry in the sacrament of baptism, Melancthon assumed that all the people of God tend the life of the gospel in the world. But the church calls and ordains some to do gosselling in public for the sake of good order. God-instituted gosselling created the church (CA 5) and perpetuates it (CA 7).¹⁴ While ordination provides for an orderly

¹¹Melancthon used Augustine's definition of sacraments as "visible words" in an interesting interpretation of Rom. 10:17, "Faith comes from what is heard." Apology of CA 13:5. BC, pp. 211-212; BSLK, pp. 292-293.

¹²See also Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 132-134.

¹³BC, pp. 170:12, 171:17; BSLK, pp. 236:12, 237:17.

¹⁴Latin text of CA 7:1 ". . . ecclesia perpetua mansura sit" (Italics mine). BS, p. 61:1 This is the basis for a Lutheran doctrine of the "indefectibility" of the church. See Paul C. Empie, Austin Murphy and Joseph A. Burgess, eds., *Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Dialogue VI: Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), p. 31:5.

tending of the gospel in the world, any baptized Christian may in an emergency perform the ministry of word and sacraments.¹⁵ Thus the CA reflects the early Lutheran theology and practice of ordination. On May 14, 1525, the first Lutheran pastor was ordained in a simple rite during which Luther, the local pastor Bugenhagen, the layman Melanchthon, the mayor of Wittenberg, and several judges laid hands on the ordinand.

Ordained and Unordained Ministries

Although the CA laid the theological groundwork for an “evangelical” understanding of ministry--centering in gospelling as the God-instituted function determining the unity and mission of the church--, it did not pursue the question of how the “office of the gospel” (CA 5) is related to the ministry of the whole church on the one hand, and to those whom the church ordains on the other (CA 14). Later Lutherans wrestled with this question in various ways, especially with the question of “teaching authority (*magisterium*)”--whether or not there ought to be a visible official ministry bearing witness to the unity of the people of God in the world.¹⁶ What follows is *a* (not *the*) Lutheran way of clarifying the relationship between the ordained and unordained ministries, based on the CA’s assertion that the function and structure of gospelling is to have “order” in the church.¹⁷

The “office of the gospel” can be understood as the function of every baptized Christian both in and outside the church. God will always call gospellers (CA 5), whose tending of the gospel assures that “one holy Christian church will [exist] and remain forever” (CA 7). The “assembly of believers” is defined as the gathering “in which (*in qua*)” gospelling takes place.¹⁸ Consequently, there is no church unless there is the function of gospelling. If one interprets the genitive “of” as a subjective genitive, then the “ministry *of* the gospel” means that there is a ministry done *by* the gospel. This ministry is the responsibility of every believer “ordained” by baptism (and its reaffirmation by “confirmation” after catechetical instruction) to be a gospeller. In this sense, the church’s mission in the world

¹⁵“Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope,” 1537. BC, p. 331:67; BSLK, p. 491:67.

¹⁶The “neo-Lutheran” Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling argued a sacerdotal notion of the ministerial office in 1850 in Erlangen, Germany. See Fagerberg, pp. 586-587. His notion was strongly defended by the leader of the Buffalo Synod, J. A. A. Grabau, in America. See Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *Lutheran Confessional Theology in America, 1840-1880* (“A Library of Protestant Thought,” eds., John Dillenberger et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 253. See also my essay “Lutheran Teaching Authority: Past and Present” in *Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Dialog VI*, pp. 138-148.

¹⁷For the detailed argumentation see Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, ch. 8.

¹⁸See the exegesis of “*in qua*” as the link between “ministry” and “church” in Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), pp. 120-121.

is mandated to every Christian--the "common priesthood (*allgemeines Priestertum*)."¹⁹

But the "office of the gospel" can be understood in a second way: if one interprets the genitive "of" as an objective genitive, then the "ministry of the gospel" means that there is a ministry done to the gospel. This ministry is the responsibility of the believer ordained by the church to be a gospeller in the church. This ministry, which CA defines as "public" because it is based on a "regular call (*rite vocatus*)," is the ministry of an ordained cadre of the church. In other words, every baptized member of a congregation is a minister of the gospel in the world, engaged in an "outward-directed" ministry, but the ordained pastor of a congregation is a minister of the gospel in the church, engaged in an "inward-directed" ministry. He / she tends the gospel in the congregation; the congregation bears testimony to the gospel in the world. This does not mean that the ordained minister is excluded from the congregation's mission to the world, for he / she is an integral part of the community of believers. But he / she is pastor of pastors, the teacher of teachers, the paradigmatic example to the "common" ministers of the gospel called "laity". The church has appointed him / her to tend the gospel in the congregation and thus, if need be, stand over against the congregation in what has been called the "prophetic" ministry of the gospel. In this sense the pastor is the critical discerner of the gospel, insisting that the gospel is the power of Jesus Christ rather than other "good news." The pastor is the ordained expert who must be able to make the proper distinction between law and gospel, God's creation and his redemption, faithfulness to the gospel, tradition, and idolatry.

There is, then, a certain ranking of priorities of the various functions and structures of gospelling in the CA. Since the gospel creates the church, the office ordained to tend the gospel in that church is the highest office.²⁰ Although every baptized member of the church shares the responsibility of communicating the gospel in the world, not everyone can do so in the same way. So some of their own are ordained to tend, to guard, and to alert the church to the purity of the gospel. Melancthon is, therefore, willing to call ordination a sacrament--provided that this sacrament, a visible word, is not performed for the ordinand but for the Christian gathering. The ordained pastor is called to be the embodied faithful functionary of gospelling; he / she is the God-instituted "element", like water, wine and bread, to provide the gospel (i.e., word and sacraments). When these means are faithfully communicated, the Holy Spirit works faith in those who hear the gospel (CA 5).

¹⁹For Luther's understanding see Maurer, II, 140-141 and Paul Althaus, *Die Theologie Martin Luthers* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1962), pp. 270-274. It is to be noted that to Luther "common (*allgemein*)" did not mean "equal," but rather "gospelling" through the various vocations in the world, "callings (*Berufe*)."²⁰ See Gustaf Wingren, *Luthers Lehre vom Beruf* ("Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus" X, Ernst Wolf, ed., III, Munich: Kaiser, 1952).

²⁰Apology of CA 15:44. BS, p. 305:44.

Although CA has little to say about a gospelling tradition, the Apology of CA 14 affirms the idea of a gospelling "succession."²¹ Edmund Schlink has argued that "since public preaching takes place through the church's ministry (as asserted in CA 14), one can speak of an apostolic succession of office. But this succession rests not on a succession of ordinations (calling to office can take place both through an individual bearing office and by the congregation), but rather on an identity of the Gospel and Sacraments which Jesus Christ instituted and in which He commissioned the Apostles to continue."²² Although this argument is in essential agreement with CA 14, it does raise the question of whether ordained ministers or the community of the common priesthood should ordain. It is quite proper to argue, in accordance with CA 14 and the Reformation practice of ordination, that the community should ordain, albeit not without the advice and consent of the cadre of the ordained. It is only proper that the church's call to ministry be accompanied by a collegial approval of the ordinand on the part of those known to be faithful in the succession of the gospelling function. However, there should be no doubt regarding ordination as a call to gospelling--to a *function*, rather than to a ritual endowing a person with special qualities such as an "indelible character," "special charism," or other interior endowments. When, for one reason or another, the function of gospelling ceases, the church has a right to determine whether or not an ordained pastor should be recalled to service. Normally, the rite of ordination discloses the church's desire to commit the ordinand to the ministry of the gospel for life. Consequently, the matter of ordination and reordination of pastors serving in Lutheran communities, as well as those transferring from other communities, needs to be considered carefully and clarified juridically. Any juridical arrangement is an "adiaphoron," carrying with it the instruction "that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things [church order, *Kirchenordnungen*, and ecclesiastical rites] are necessary for salvation" (CA 15).²³

Neuralgic Implications

Although there is no consensus among Lutherans on the understanding of the ministry, especially on the relationship between the ordained and the

²¹Melanchthon argued in the Apology of CA 14 that the medieval bishops "disrupt" the church and its ministry rather than the Lutheran "evangelical" movement. BC, pp. 214-215; BSLK, pp. 296-297, especially BC, p. 214:2: ". . . the cruelty of the bishops is the reason for the abolition of canonical government in some places, despite our earnest desire to keep it. Let them see to it how they will answer to God for disrupting the church".

²²Schlink, *Coming of Christ*, p. 122.

²³BC, p. 36:2; BSLK, p. 69:2. On "adiaphora" see Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, ch. 14 and Arthur C. Piepkorn, "*Ius Divinum and adiaphoron in Relation to Structural Problems in the Church: The Position of the Lutheran Symbolical Books*," in *Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V*, pp. 119-127.

unordained ministry, bilateral dialogue groups of Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians tend to converge on the notion that the CA and the Lutheran confessions stress the priority of the ordained over the unordained ministry. During the first international Lutheran / Roman Catholic dialogue, for example, both sides agreed "that the office of the ministry stands over against the community as well as within the community," and that "the ministerial office represents Christ and His overagainstness to the community only insofar as it gives expression to the gospel."²⁴ Moreover, there was "substantial convergence" on the question of ordination since "the transmission of office proceeds in both churches in a similar manner, that is, through the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit for his gifts for the proper exercise of ministry." Thus "the question of whether ordination is a sacrament is chiefly a matter of terminology."²⁵ Even though there was no agreement on the teaching authority (*magisterium*), especially on papal primacy, "it was nevertheless agreed that the question of altar fellowship and of a mutual recognition of ministerial offices should not be unconditionally dependent on a consensus on the question of [papal] primacy."²⁶

The second international Lutheran / Roman Catholic dialogue, regarding practical steps to foster unity, dealt primarily with the CA, the ministry, and the office of bishop; the participants perceived "a number of substantive areas of agreement," noting that "in view of the new challenges and opportunities we cannot be satisfied with simply referring to and repeating the CA of 1530."²⁷ Since the CA proposed doctrinal changes to Rome for the sake of an ecclesiastical reformation based on a faithful reassessment of Scripture and the tradition of the ancient church, it seems only appropriate that the CA's understanding of ministry should be tested in doctrinal dialogue with Roman Catholicism. Recent discussions regarding the Vatican's possible "recognition (*Anerkennung*)" of the CA as an unheretical ecumenical confession of faith have also stressed the basic convergence concerning the office of ministry.²⁸

The bilateral North American Lutheran / Roman Catholic dialogue of the last fifteen years has advanced Lutheran arguments on ministry, especially the ordained ministry, which are still awaiting a critical test on the part of Lutheran constituencies in America and abroad. Distinguishing between the unordained "ministry of the people of God" and the "special Ministry" of the ordained, Lutheran participants converged with Roman Catholics on the view that ordination has "a once-for-all significance" and that Lutheran ordination "is reserved to the district or synodical president

²⁴"Report of the Joint Lutheran / Roman Catholic Study Commission on 'The Gospel and the Church,'" *Lutheran World* XIX (1972), 9:50.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 10:59.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 12:67.

²⁷Reported in *The Lutheran*, April 2, 1980, p. 19.

²⁸See the very positive assessment of the CA by Roman Catholic theologians in Harding Meyer, Heinz Schütte and Hans-Joachim Mund, eds., *Katholische Anerkennung des Augsburger Bekenntnisses?* ("Ökumenische Perspektiven" IX, Strassbourg Ecumenical Institute: Frankfurt am Main: Lembach and Knecht, 1977).

or a pastor designated by him."²⁹ It was on the basis of this "presbyteral" view of ministerial succession that the Roman Catholic theologians cautiously recognized "the validity of the eucharistic Ministry of Lutheran churches."³⁰ But it is doubtful whether the dialogue's hermeneutical method, or its historical interpretation of CA's doctrine of the ministry in the context of the Lutheran confessions, will be accepted by most Lutheran theologians.³¹ The fact that some Lutheran churches ordain women, and others do not, has only increased Lutheran divergence regarding the relationship between the ordained and unordained ministry. Attempts to summarize existing Lutheran views on ministry frequently end in linguistic and theological mediocrity.³²

Few attempts have been made to draw theological and liturgical implications from the CA's basic perspective on the function and structure of gospelling, the ministry of audible and visible words. Although recent ecumenical discussions between Lutherans and other confessionally-liturgically oriented churches (such as Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Anglican churches) have focused on the "sacramentality" of the "word" and the proper relationship between its ministry and that of the sacraments (baptism, penance, and the Lord's Supper, according to CA and its Apology), few systematic treatments of this relationship have been offered in recent years.³³ One of the most significant assertions--and perhaps the most neuralgic, in its implications for contemporary Lutheranism--is the CA's insistence that the function and structure of gospelling is inextricably bound to the faithful "use" of sacraments. "Sacraments were instituted not merely to be marks of profession (*notae professionis*) among men but especially to be signs and testimonies of the will of God towards us, intended to awaken (*excitare*) and confirm (*confirmare*) faith in those who use them" (CA 13). Melancthon argued in his Apology to CA 13 that "through the Word and the rite God simultaneously moves the heart . . . therefore both have the same effect (*idem est utriusque effectus--darum richtets beides einerlei aus*)."³⁴

²⁹Paul C. Empie and Austin Murphy, eds., *Lutherans and Roman Catholics in Dialogue IV: Eucharist and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), pp. 12:16 and 14:21.

³⁰This 1967 statement is quite controversial since it speaks of "the possibility of the Roman Catholic church recognizing the validity" of the Lutheran ordained ministry, adding a variety of stipulations. See *ibid.*, pp. 32-33 (italics mine).

³¹See Arthur C. Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church", *ibid.*, pp. 101-119 and by the same author, "A Lutheran View of the Validity of Orders", *ibid.*, pp. 209-226.

³²The views of Piepkorn, for example, do not converge with such other general Lutheran positions on ordination as expressed in "The Ministry of the Church: A Lutheran Understanding," Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the USA, p. 4: ". . . just as an individual freely responds to God's calling and sending and enters the continuum of the ordained ministry, a person may leave this continuum for various reasons."

³³An exception is Robert W. Jenson, *Visible Words. The Interpretation and Practise of Christian Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), pp. 188-205 on "ordination."

³⁴BC, p. 212:5; BSLK, p. 293:5.

By interpreting word and sacrament as the means of the office of the ministry, Edmund Schlink appropriately maintains that because "God commands both, and because Christ instituted both, we are forbidden to eliminate or even overlook this divine institution. This prohibition is confirmed by statements which say the sacraments are necessary for salvation . . . This is true not only of baptism but also of the Lord's Supper."³⁵ Although CA 13 rejects both the medieval materialistic understanding of the sacraments as holy substance and the left-wing (*Schwärmer*) spiritualistic notion of the subordination of sacraments to oral communication, it does assert the Augustinian-Lutheran wholistic view of gospeling as God's audible and visible communication event. Such a view may not be in harmony with later Lutheran teachings about the ministry of word *and* sacraments, especially the relationship between the liturgical service of the word and of the sacrament, (i.e. the Lord's Supper). Later Lutherans—especially under the influence of eighteenth century Pietism and the individualistic anthropology emerging from the Enlightenment—centered the ministry in a "theology of the word" which subordinated, if it did not degrade, the Lord's Supper to the function of preaching. Thus, attempts to recover the proper relationship between word and sacraments, on the one hand, and the proper distinction between baptism and the Lord's Supper, on the other, are greeted with Lutheran fears of a resurgence of ritualistic medieval notions of ordained ministry.³⁶ Yet word *and* sacraments constitute the significant marks of gospeling and of the church.

Conclusion

When the CA asserted that the God-instituted function of gospeling is the *sine qua non* of ecclesiastical existence in the world, it addressed the chief issue of the sixteenth century Reformation: whether or not Christian liberty under the gospel can be preserved by ecclesiastical structures. The CA clearly teaches that while the function of gospeling belongs to the *esse* of the church, the specific form of this function is an *adiaphoron*—something neither commanded nor forbidden (*Mittelding*).³⁷ To this extent Lutheran contributions to ecumenical dialogues on ministry, especially on ordained ministry, must affirm the cruciformity of the gospeling function in the world.³⁸ For ministry is essentially always "service (*diakonia*)" and witness unto death (*martyrion*). That notion is the underlying power of CA's distinction between "gospeling" and "human tradition."

³⁵Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, pp. 184-185.

³⁶The recent debate over "infant communion" is symptomatic in the context of the question of "identity" in the church. See Eric W. Gritsch, "Infant Communion: What Shape Tradition?", *Academy* (The Lutheran Academy for Scholarship) XXXVI, (1979), 85-108.

³⁷The Church knows no absolute adiaphora just as it knows no absolute form". Adolf von Harnack in Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, p. 267, n. 29.

³⁸See my essay "The Church as Institution: From Doctrinal Pluriformity to Magisterial Mutuality", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XVI (1979), 448-456.