

# *Does a Congregation Ordinarily Have the Right Temporarily to Commit an Essential Part of the Holy Preaching Office to a Layman?*

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## ***Thesis 1: The public preaching office is an office of the word.***

Note 1: Since the following theses are concerned with the preaching office, it is the *materia circa quam* of this lecture. It is therefore of utmost importance for us to define this term succinctly and in accordance with Scripture. We say the public preaching office in order to show that we do not mean the *office in abstracto* but rather *in concreto*. We mean by this that what will be considered is not the office itself separate from the people who bear it, but rather the ministry in view of the people who are in this office.<sup>1</sup> The question in our thesis is: What type of office do the public preachers in the church hold? And this is the shortest and simplest answer: the office of the word.

Note 2: Luther translated the Greek words διακονία, λειτουργία, οικονομία, etc. with the word *Amt*. See John Gerhard in his *loc. de minister*. §8. From this it is clear that this word “office” in recent times has been used (or rather misused) in anything but the biblical sense.

Note 3: So the public office in the church is a ministry [*Dienst*] that is performed through the word. Here belongs first Acts 6:4: “We however will keep to prayer and the office of the word” (διακονία τοῦ λόγου). Without a doubt this verse sums up that which the apostles and all preachers should consider as the essence of their ministry, namely, to wield the word, that is, the word of God. It is obvious that the τοῦ λόγου is the genitive of object. The apostles wanted to say: Our special ministry, our noblest office, is to be that which has the word of God as its object (*objectum reale*). We will exercise our office through the word. The beginning, middle, and end of our ministry is the word. Next is 2 Timothy 4:5: “Do the work of an evangelical preacher” (εὐαγγελιστοῦ). Timothy’s work and that of every evangelical preacher should be that which is signified by its name: he should be an evangelist, a herald of the joyous message. The gospel, the word of God, is therefore the real object of the ministry (*objectum reale ministerii*). That is, it is the object on which the ministry and work must concentrate. Therefore Paul also says in Titus 1:9: “Keep to the word which is certain and can teach.” Also 2 Timothy 4:2 says: “Preach the word, hold ... etc.” Matthew 28:20 contains the general mandate [*Generalmandat*] of the Lord to his church and to her public ministers: “and teach them to keep everything that I have commanded you.” The doctrine, however, is contained in the word. Therefore Christ graciously committed the office of the word to his disciples (Lk 24:47). Of the remaining apostolic instructions the most important here is 2 Corinthians 3:6 ff., where the holy apostle calls the ministry of the preacher an office of the New Testament (διακονία καινῆς διαθήκης) or of the spirit (πνεύματος, v. 6.) or the office, which preaches righteousness

(της δικαιοσύνης, v. 9.) He calls it this because this ministry imparts the new fellowship with God [*Gottesgemeinschaft*], the life-creating Spirit of God, the righteousness established in Christ through the word, the λόγος τῆς καταλλαγῆς (5:19). This word indeed belongs to all Christians, but its proclamation is the special calling of those to whom it is officially committed, v. 20. According to this the significance of the activity of the office rests in the divine origin and content of the word proclaimed by those bearing the office. Therefore the thesis says that the public preaching office is called an office of the word. See also the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope §67 ff., Luther in the *Epistle Postil* D. II. Epiph. Erl. v. 8, 28, and also his *Confession Concerning the Supper of Christ*, Walch xx, 1378.

***Thesis 2: Whenever someone is given the office of the word, all offices in the church that are carried out through the word are also thereby granted to him.***

Note 1: Since we saw in Thesis 1 that a preacher occupies the office of the word, the question is: What does that mean? What is a preacher to whom the office is committed authorized to do? The answer first of all in general is, everything that is performed through the word.

Note 2: Second Corinthians 5:19 says: “For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself and did not reckon their sins against them and established among us the word of reconciliation.” Christ reconciled us, who had thrown away heaven and salvation through sin, to God. He did this by dying for our sins and by being raised for our justification. He thereby opened the gates of the kingdom of heaven to us once again. And in order that we might be able to enter into heaven reopened, he established among us the word concerning the reconciliation. According to Thesis 1, Note 2 the public proclamation of this word is the special call of the bearers of the office. The Lord in Matthew 16:19 calls this office “the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” The giving of the keys is the symbol of a certain entrusted, conferred power because he who has the keys has admittance to everything. When Christ gave the keys to Peter and his successors in office to administer them publicly in the name of the church, he thereby taught that he wanted to establish them as the administrators and stewards of his house. They were established to open the treasures to the worthy and grant them possession and use of such treasures and to shut out the unworthy and turn them away from the kingdom of God. We steadfastly maintain that the office of the word and the keys of the kingdom of heaven are identical. Therefore we find that with the keys of the kingdom of heaven every ministry function [*Dienstverrichtung*], power, and authority is bestowed so that with these everything may be performed that is necessary for the kingdom of Christ or for the ruling of the church. In other words: he who is to administer the word publicly has thereby received the right to perform whatever is accomplished through the word. Our thesis must therefore be correct.

Note 3: Our dear father Luther writes: “To whomever the office of the word is committed also is given all other offices which are performed in the church through the word” (*Concerning the Ministry*, AE 40: 3–44). Melanchthon wrote: “It is obvious that in the Scripture the power of the church and the keys mean one and the same thing” (*Corpus Reformatorum*, XII, 494). Matth. Flacius wrote: “Now the keys comprise and include all

lawful authority and might of church government, to do something or leave it undone. This cannot be denied nor should be.”<sup>2</sup> Only the pope and the pope’s bishops have their *casus reservatis* in which others cannot validly function. Chemnitz writes concerning this: “This circumstance has to do with reserved cases, namely, in the ancient church the judgment of severe crimes which called for the punishment of excommunication was committed to the bishops. In this way, in accordance with their advice, the proper amount of public repentance would be laid upon the guilty for his improvement and for the upbuilding of the church.... At a later time the *casus reservati* was changed from this so that the word of God could not absolve a repentant sinner through just any preacher even if he was rightly called. Only the bishop or the Roman pope could do this. This arrangement was made not for the sake of order or discipline but rather because the full power to forgive sins supposedly resided in the pope. According to his whim this power was then conferred on the ministers of lesser grades. They acted as if God’s word could only forgive sins when, insofar as, and only in the circumstance that the power which is in the heart of the pope is added to it. The might and power of the word of God supposedly differs according to the different grades of those who administer it so that when administered through the one it can only forgive small sins but when administered through the pope it can forgive all sins, even the greatest ones.... This was invented in order to strengthen the power of the antichrist.”<sup>3</sup>

***Thesis 3: The rights given with the office of the word (in the narrower sense) are the authority to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, and the authority of spiritual jurisdiction.***

Note 1: The foregoing theses proved that with the office of the word is bestowed everything that is performed through the word. So now the question becomes: “What is performed through the word?” What are the rights of one called to the preaching office? When we use the phrase “in the narrow sense” in the current thesis we want to indicate that there are essential and derived rights of the preaching office. The derived rights belong to the ministry of the word in the wider sense, concerning which we will speak in Thesis 7. Our present thesis is taken from Walther, *Church and Ministry*, Part 2, Thesis v.

Note 2: All essential parts of the office of the word can be subsumed into the above-mentioned powers (Mt 29:19–20; Jn 20:21–23; Jn 21:15–16; 1 Cor 4:1; see Walther).

Note 3: Our Confessions often witness that the rights to the above-mentioned powers are the essential parts of the preaching office. And so it says in the Augsburg Confession, article xxviii: “Our churches teach also that the authority of the keys or bishops according to the gospel is an authority and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and handle the sacraments.... This same authority of the keys or the bishops is used only with the teaching and preaching of God’s word and the administration of the sacraments according to their call, either to many people or few.... Therefore the bishop’s office according to spiritual rights is to preach the gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine, to reject doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, and to exclude the godless from the Christian congregation if their godlessness is obvious. All this is without bodily force, through God’s word alone” (*Triglotta*, 84; see also Apology xxviii; Smalcald

Articles, etc.).

Pol. Leiser further writes in the *Harmony of the Gospels*: “It is the office of him who receives the keys of the city from the king, if he is to be faithful to his king, to receive the true citizens inside the walls in order to lay before them, not his commands, but the king’s. He makes sure that the citizens have food and clothing. He expels those who will not live according to the laws of the city.... The authority of the keys of the kingdom of heaven is similar to this. For it is the office of the ministers of the church first to receive [new citizens] into the church through baptism as the sacrament of reception.... Second, it is their office to explain to those previously received the doctrine of Christ, not the dreams of men, not the doctrines of the philosophers, not the decisions of councils.... Third, they must be concerned that the believers are fed and given drink with life-giving care of the new man through use of the table of the Lord.... Fourth, if some disrupt the peace of the church and either through false teaching or through a godless life become an offense to others and will not accept any admonishment, they must be excluded from the fellowship of the saints and put out of the church. If they return through repentance and have put away the offense, they are permitted again into the fellowship.”

Finally, Martin Chemnitz writes: “This office has power given from God (2 Cor 10), but it is a power such that it is circumscribed by certain duties and boundaries. These are namely to preach God’s word, to instruct the erring, to admonish sinners, to warn the lazy, to comfort the distressed, to lift up the weak, to confront the opponents, to test and condemn false doctrine, to punish sinful morals, to administer the Sacraments instituted by God, to forgive and retain sins, to be an example to the flock, to pray privately for the flock as well as speak the public prayers in the church, to take over the care for the poor, to publicly excommunicate the stubborn and later accept them back and reconcile them with the congregation, to install ministers of the church according to the direction of Paul.... For that is what belongs to those two greatest parts, namely, the authority to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments and the authority of spiritual jurisdiction.”

The dogmatists called this twofold authority of the preachers the *potestas ordinis* and the *potestas jurisdictionis* (see Gerhard, *loc. de min. eccles.* §192).

***Thesis 4: Ordinarily the congregation, which has the right of calling, is not only bound to the preaching office until the Last Day, but also may not mutilate it; that is, she must establish all its essential parts together.***

Note 1: As we have seen, the holy preaching office is an office of the word that authorizes the bearer for all offices which are performed through the word, namely, public preaching, public administration of the holy sacraments, and the use of spiritual judgment. Since we are speaking here of the preaching office insofar as its relationship to the congregation is concerned, it is necessary for our goal to answer the question: What is the relationship between the congregation, for which and through which the preaching office subsists, and the office not only in general but also in regard to its individual essential parts? The thesis gives the answer.

Note 2: The congregation, that is, the invisible assembly of believers, whose visible representatives naturally are the voting members, have received the keys and the spiritual

priesthood *principaliter et immediate* (Treatise §24) [chiefly and immediately] from the Lord (Mt 18:15–20; 1 Pt 2:5–10). But the keys are publicly administered by the preaching office (Thesis 2, Note 2). It follows then that the congregation is the only entity through whose election, call, and sending the preaching office can be committed to certain qualified persons (Acts 1:15–26; 6:1–6). Therefore Quenstedt writes: “By the word ‘keys’ is understood the power of the church, of which the right to call and commission ministers is a part.”

Note 3: This Thesis says that the congregation is ordinarily bound until the end of time to the preaching office. That is proved not only by the divine institution of the preaching office in general (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 4:11), but also from the command of Christ that the office of the apostles should endure until the Last Day (Mt 28:19–20): “Go and teach all people ... and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” Thus the congregation must establish the preaching office in its midst and be bound to it until the Last Day.

Note 4: This last statement is speaking of things under normal circumstances [*ordentlicher Weise*]. But in these last troubled times it can happen that the public preaching office can easily be taken from the congregations, and there are emergencies in which the order of the holy office neither can nor should be kept. In such true emergencies every Christian can preach the word, absolve, baptize, yes, also administer the Lord’s Supper; and indeed, when this is done such things are as valid and effective as when they are performed by an ordained pastor. Everyone, however, who deviates from the order should know why he does it. The reason for such is nothing else than that which God’s word itself gives, that love is the fulfillment of the law. Whoever does not know his reason and acts haphazardly sins against his conscience and misuses his Christian freedom. It should also be noted that in emergencies one may deviate only as long and as far from God’s order as long and as far as the emergency lasts. Deviating from the order without need in the name of love would be based on nothing but self-will and despising of divine order and of the majesty who instituted such order. To such a person should be applied Luther’s words: “Yes, many may also come forth and say: Why do we need pastor and preacher anymore? We ourselves can read at home. They go in certainty and do not read it at home either. Or, wherever they do read it at home yet it is not so fruitful or powerful as the word is through public preaching and the mouth of the preacher whom God has called and established to speak it to you” (*House Postil* D. viii. Trin. Walch viii, 1816). What is said here concerning the public preaching of the gospel pertains obviously also to the preaching of the gospel to individual sinners, that is, to private absolution. Although it should not be denied that absolution is the gospel, which all Christians as spiritual priests are called to proclaim, yet we must still firmly hold that wherever absolution has a certain public character laymen should absolve only in an emergency. Otherwise they ruin God’s order. Thus Luther says: “Other Christians, although they do not have the ministry, still have the command in emergencies to comfort you when you are despairing of your sins” (*House Postil* D. xix p. Trin.). And in another place he says: “We all have the authority to hear confession, but no one should presume to do this publicly except him who is chosen to do it by the congregation. Privately, however, I may use it, for example, when my

neighbor comes to me and says: Dear friend, my conscience is burdened. Absolve me so that I may be free. This I may do; but, I say, this must happen in private” (*Church Postil* D. Quasimodogen.).

Note 5: The congregation is also directed to the use of the ministry of the word, which God has instituted and sustains in the church, because through this office eternal blessings are given to men (2 Cor 10:4ff., 13:31f.). The preaching office is an office of the word and those heavenly blessings are supplied through the word. Further, preaching, administering the sacraments, and using spiritual judgment are essential parts of the office of the word. And God receives men, rescues them from sin, death, and the power of the devil, and gives them eternal life through the individual parts of the office as well as through the entire office. Therefore it follows that the congregation must not mutilate the office; that is, it must establish all the essential parts of the office together. Suppose that a congregation had only one preacher and indeed committed to him the office of proclaiming the gospel through public preaching, but under no circumstances allowed him to baptize, to administer the sacrament, to absolve or retain. In this way they would mutilate the office, which they neither are able to do nor are permitted to do, as we will see later. Without preaching no faith is possible, Romans 10:14. Without baptism an adult is in constant danger of shipwreck in every temptation. And baptism is the only means of grace for children (Mk 10:15f.; see Jn 5:4; 1 Pt 3:21; Gal 3:27; Eph 5:23; etc.). The goal of the holy supper is above all to seal the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28), to strengthen an ever-tottering faith, to further brotherly love and the unity of confession (1 Cor 10:17). These means of grace do not make up the keys only when taken together. Rather, each one truly and certainly opens up heaven to the repentant sinner as well as any other. Can one of these means of grace be lacking without bringing men’s souls into the greatest of danger? Certainly not. It is also obvious that, since a congregation must establish the office of the word, therefore it must establish all the essential parts of it together.

Note 6: A short witness of John Gerhard may find a place here. He writes: “The necessity [of the preaching office] depends on the divine order. For it has pleased God to save through foolish preaching those who believe it (1 Cor 1:21). The result of this pleasure is the dependence of that highest and most costly work, namely, the conversion and salvation of men, upon the preaching of the gospel and therefore also upon the office of the church, and the inseparable connection of them both (Rom 10:14; Eph 4:11–12; 1 Tim 4:10). Therefore in Obadiah they are called saviors.”<sup>4</sup>

***Thesis 5: The congregation can establish grades (τάξεις τάγματα) of the one office of the word; that is, they can arrange matters so that this person cares for one part of the office of the word and that person cares for another part. This is done, however, only de iure humano.***

Note 1: If we hold fast to the principle derived from the last thesis that all essential parts of the office must be established by the congregation, we are led to the question: Is the congregation duty bound to have all parts of the office administered together by one person? The answer according to the above thesis is no.

Note 2: From the apostolic instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:40 that everything should

occur in the church in an honorable and orderly fashion (κατὰ τάξιν), the order was created in the old Lutheran church especially in large parishes that certain persons should be appointed exclusively for certain functions of the holy office. And so there were afternoon preachers, assistant preachers, deacons, archdeacons, subdeacons, so-called catechists, etc. etc., who in part only preached, or only baptized, buried, comforted, held confession, administered the holy supper, etc. These are pure orders that were also known by other names in the ancient church. And even now in the larger churches it is often necessary and salutary to establish such grades in the functions [*Verrichtungen*] of the preaching office. This also occurs in many of our churches in America when alongside the head or senior preacher there are one or more assistant preachers who have divided themselves into caring for different functions of the office. Now, such order did not first become necessary during the historical development of the church. Rather, this was sanctioned already in the apostolic age by the apostles themselves and introduced into the church. The apostle in Ephesians 4 mentions, along with prophets and teachers, pastors. They were set over a certain flock of the church (1 Pt 5:1–2), and did not only teach but also administered the holy sacraments and carried out care of souls. There were also teachers who simply explained the doctrine to the people and who later became the catechists (Rom 2:20; Heb 5:12). The apostles included all grades under the name of the episcopate or the presbyterate, which is the same thing. And when the congregation commits the care of different parts of the preaching office to different people, they really confer in reality to each one the office of the keys because each one opens up heaven through the part of the ministry of the word that he administers. The congregation then also confers the office of the word, the preaching office itself.

Note 3: It is of the highest importance firmly to hold that there is no command of God concerning which and how many grades or orders there should be in the holy office. If an order of these grades of the ministry were *de iure divino*, as the antichristian papacy teaches,<sup>5</sup> we would naturally be bound to such grades as were introduced in the early church by the apostles. From the letters of Paul, however, which were written to different congregations, we can see that in the time of the apostles not all churches had the same number and type of grades and orders. They were free. It only remained that when they were established consideration was given to order, benefit, and upbuilding. If, however, it was free in the apostles' time, then it must also be so now. The arrangement even now that the care for one part of the preaching office is conferred to this person and another part to another person is a human if also a good, salutary, and often-needed order.

Note 4: Our church confesses in the Smalcald Articles: “Here Jerome teaches that such a distinction between bishops and pastors comes only from human arrangement, as one sees in the work” (*Triglotta*, 523). If the distinction between church government [*Kirchenregiment*] and the office of pastor is a human arrangement, how much more then the distinction between preachers who are in one and the same congregation, even if on account of their functions they have titles of one being higher and another lower!

We allow ourselves here to refer to the enlightening handling of this subject in Martin Chemnitz's *Examen Concil. Trident.* After Chemnitz has named the grades of the office in the apostolic and ancient church and established that they were entirely free and were

established only for the sake of order, he continues: “In entirely the same manner, with the same goal and with the same freedom, most of those grades used in the ancient church are also retained among us.” And later he says further: “Third, that which we reject in the papist doctrine of grades is that they claim that according to Christ’s institution and command and according to the tradition of the apostles it is necessary to have just so many grades in the individual churches. For above we proved the opposite from the apostolic history. And the fathers in whose time there was such a distribution of grades of the ministry of the church confess explicitly that these rest neither on divine command nor apostolic tradition.” The doctrine of Scripture, the history of the church, and the nature of the matter are even so many protests against the unfortunate false doctrine adopted even by so-called Lutherans of a supposed distinction in the grades of the office according to divine right.

***Thesis 6: If the congregation commits an essential part of the preaching office [to someone], they commit it in its entirety virtualiter, with the provision to care only for the designated part. (The one called to a part of the ministry, however, does not have the right to take over the part of another without a further call.)***

Note 1: If the following are true: (1) He who has the ministry of preaching, administering the sacraments, and using spiritual judgment occupies offices that are accomplished through the word and has the office of the word or the preaching office to administer (Theses 1–3); (2) the congregation is not only bound to the ministry of the word in general, but also to its individual parts and therefore may not mutilate the ministry (Thesis 4); (3) finally, the functions of the preaching office may be divided up (among ministers) but only according to human right (Thesis 5); then it is obvious that the congregation must *virtualiter* commit [*ubertragen*] the entire ministry of the word even to someone who is given care for only a part of it. In other words, preaching is the audible word; the holy sacraments are the visible word, that is, a visible preaching of the gospel; all church discipline, if we might say it this way, is the tangible word, that is, a manifest use of the law or gospel. All these parts that the preaching office administers differ neither in origin nor in use. They all flow from the word and have in mind the salvation of men. Therefore nothing else is possible than that the entire word belongs to each function of the office. What does the congregation commit to him who, for example, is only to baptize? Without doubt it is the keys to which baptism belongs. With these keys, which he administers according to divine order in the name of the congregation, he opens heaven and the treasures of God’s grace to a particular part of the congregation. But he who only preaches does this same thing. Do both have different keys? Or is one key easier and more convenient than the other in opening [heaven]? Absolutely not! The difference is only this: heaven is audibly opened through preaching and visibly opened through the holy sacrament. If one hears person A open the house door and sees person B open it with the same key, no one would be so foolish as to believe that A has half the key and B has the other half. It can mean nothing else than that anyone who has even one function of the ministry of the word to administer must have the entire office to administer this one part. Even though he is only bound to administer

one part of this office, still *virtualiter* he is qualified for the administration of the other parts.

Otherwise, if our assertion was not correct, the human order according to which the congregation established grades was broken, for example, if at some time one of the function-holders resigned, then the congregation would be guilty of mutilating the ministry. Or again: consider a time when one who has been established to care for a certain part of the office takes over another's part for the sake of love. Could he do this with a peaceful conscience if he was not convinced of what we developed above? In short, the foundation of our second thesis is correct. And so the following simple syllogism is undeniable: If an office that is administered through the word is given to anyone, then thereby the office of the word is given. Person A administers an office in the church that is carried out through the word. It follows that person A also has the office of the word.

Note 2: Apostolic practice also establishes the correctness of our thesis. According to 1 Corinthians 1:17, St. Paul had given others the care for of administering the sacrament of baptism while he himself kept entirely busy with the oral proclamation of the gospel. In no way, however, had the apostle relinquished the right to baptize, as v. 14 and following prove. Although for the sake of usefulness he merely administered a part of the office of the word, he still knew that this right that he used in practice involved also the right to administer other parts of the office.

Note 3: Therefore it says in the Smalcald Articles: "For the gospel commands those who lead the churches to preach the gospel, forgive sins, and administer the sacraments. And beyond this it gives them jurisdiction so that those who live in public vice can be put under the ban and those who wish to improve themselves can be released and absolved. Now everyone, even our enemies, must confess that all who lead the churches have this command in common, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops."<sup>6</sup> The celebrated Dr. John Karpzov interpreted this as follows: (1) All pastors of the church together have both types of authority [the *potestas ordinis et iurisdictionis*]; (2) These types of authority are conferred in entirety with ordination and are not given to one any *more or less* than any other.<sup>7</sup>

In the same Smalcald Articles it says further: "Just as in a time of need a mere layman can absolve another and become his pastor [*Pfarrherr*]" (*Triglotta*, 523). By the word *Pfarrherr* (in the Latin *minister et pastor*) we understand a person who has the office of the word and also all offices that are performed through the word. And so according to our confession a layman who absolves in an emergency already makes use of an essential part of the office of the word and is not only authorized to do so on account of his spiritual priesthood, but he is also the pastor of him whom he absolves. That is, he has the entire office although he only uses a part of the office of the word. In other words, in emergencies he could *valide* administer all other parts of the ministry although only one single part makes him the minister or pastor of the other. For without possession of the spiritual priesthood he also could not do a single priestly work. Now, however, concerning the use of the ministry of the word, which originates from the conferral of the priestly rights,<sup>8</sup> we find that a minister of the word cannot use any part of it unless he has the entire office.

Finally, John Gerhard writes: “Although there are different orders in the ministry of the church, all ministers of the church have the *postestas ordinis*, which consists of the preaching of the word and the administration of the sacraments, and the *postestas iurisdictionis*, which consists in the use of the keys, in same manner.”<sup>9</sup> We must either agree with this or deny it: that anyone who, for example, only baptizes is a minister of the church, a pastor. There is no third choice.

Note 4: The last sentence in the thesis was not originally in the plan of the author. An apparently unresolvable difference that came up during the debate moved him to make this addition. Even if this is not entirely the place for it, still he has the good intention of avoiding every misunderstanding. Namely, when the congregation establishes grades of the office, they make an order [*Ordnung*], even if it is only a human one. To break it would not in and of itself be a sin, but still it would be contrary to order in the church, yes, contrary to love. When, for example, in a large congregation the one who only administers the sacraments dies, the congregation is in no way compelled to give the administration of the sacraments to the pastor who only preaches. Rather, they could call someone else. If the second pastor permanently takes over the business of the first, the congregation must first explicitly authorize him to do such. It is, however, self-explanatory that in the case of a vacancy the remaining pastor takes over the functions of ministry of the other until this place is filled again. We also do not want the above addition to be understood as if the congregation must first explicitly commit the part of the ministry of the one to the other who takes it over. Rather, we only have in mind ecclesiastical order and benefit. Naturally it would be a terrible lack of order if he who, for example, is to baptize simply took to himself the activities of his colleagues.

***Thesis 7: There are ministries that are indeed necessary to the governance of the church and therefore belong to the preaching office in the wider sense, which however do not necessarily involve the conducting of the office in the narrower sense. Therefore such helping ministries can be performed also by those who do not thereby become entitled to exercise also the office of the word and the sacraments.***

Note 1: The goal of the present lecture has been partially completed through the previous theses. Namely, we know now that anyone who discharges an essential part of the office of the word can only do this because the entire office of the word has been conferred to him. He really occupies the entire preaching office. One difficulty has not yet been raised. Since the congregation without doubt has the right to give only one function of the preaching office to a certain person for administration, should she not have the right to confer the ministry of the word in a particular circumstance to someone who appeared qualified and was chosen from her midst? More precisely, if a congregation without a preacher wants to celebrate the holy supper once, may she not temporarily call someone from her midst for this administration and on this one occasion confer to him the holy office? The objection that then the preaching office would be mutilated cannot be raised in all circumstances. Still, the wish of the congregation to have a preacher to administer all the components of the ministry could be quickly fulfilled and the divine order upheld to establish the entire preaching office and not mutilate it. Everyone can see

that for this difficulty to be solved the answer must be found to the question placed at the beginning of this lecture. The following theses will therefore show who ordinarily may administer the preaching office.

The present thesis concerns itself with the answer to the question whether the ministry of the word in the strict sense necessarily must be given to everyone who is called to a nonessential part of the office. We said necessarily. For here we are not really talking about whether a layman or someone placed in the office of ruling can *rate*, that is, validly, administer not only a part of the office but the entire preaching office. What we have in mind here is whether the office *sensu strictiori*, that is, the office of the word and sacraments, is contained in the office of lay-elder, which has certainly become a separate offshoot of the preaching office. Also, for example, we are concerned with whether the school teacher who indeed administers a part of the holy office is authorized for the carrying out of the entire ministry. Even if we must resolutely affirm that a person entrusted with a helping office in the church can *rate* administer the entire ministry, still we can answer the question whether such a person can also *legitime* administer the office of the word in the strict sense with a just as resolute *no*.

Note 2: The Holy Scripture teaches that there are ministries in the church that are necessary for its ruling and therefore belong to the preaching office in the wider sense. Already under Thesis 5, Note 2 we saw that the offices of the church of the higher order, as Scripture itself enumerates them, flow out of the apostles' ministry, the preaching office of today, and have their root in it. This relationship has its origin as much in the nature of human procedure as in the special divine decrees concerning the redemption of the world. When, for example, an organization is created that is to work toward a particular goal, its first offices already contain all the tasks, powers, and functions in themselves that become necessary later through growth of the organization. Everything that comes afterward is already present and is only a development of that which was first. So also the offices of the church. Evangelists, pastors, elders, and deacons do not occupy offices that from time to time were newly instituted by God. Rather, they were instituted at the same time in and with the apostles' office. Also the offices of the church of the lower order are the products of two factors, the office of apostle and the congregation. While these offices were offshoots of the apostolate, so they were also necessary to the governance of the congregation. In the beginning the apostles oversaw all the offices of the congregation. The administration of the material goods of the congregation was entirely in their hands. Also the care of those in need, especially the widows, with bodily goods and other requirements of bodily support was their duty. And when they made use of the assistance of individual brothers, which certainly must have happened, this happened only in a casual fashion. Because of the continual growth of the congregation the twelve were not able to care for all the parts of the holy office in like fashion. They asked the congregation therefore to designate men who had good reputations and were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom so that a part of the present load of the apostles' office could be committed to them. In accordance with this, the congregation chose seven deacons whose duty primarily was the care of the poor and administration of physical goods in the congregation. These ministers, whose moral qualifications are listed by St. Paul in 1

Timothy 3:8–13, whether they occupy the office of elder in the narrow sense (πρεσβύτεροι) or the ministry of ruling (προϊστάμενοι, ἡγούμενοι) or the office of deacon (διάκονοι) (Rom 12:8; Heb 13:7, 17, 24 and similar verses), bear a part of the office of the church and stand at the side of the office of the church κατ' ἐξοχήν, the preaching office. Therefore the offices of the rulers, elders, assistants to the poor, the school teachers, sacristans, cantors in our congregations are likewise to be considered as holy ecclesiastical [*kirchlich*] offices.

Note 3: Still, these offices in no way involve the conducting of the preaching office in the narrow sense. Already at the institution of the diaconate the apostles explicitly kept the office of the word for themselves (Acts 6:4). The deacons could “acquire a good rank for themselves” (1 Tim 3:13), and also become qualified for the preaching office in the narrow sense. Still herein it is stated that in and of themselves they in no way were already authorized for the conducting of the preaching office. The most important verse in question here, however, is 1 Timothy 5:17: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially [μάλιστα] those who labor in word and doctrine.” Here two classes of elders are put forth. There are those who labor in word and doctrine and occupy the ministry of the word in the narrow sense. There are also those with whom this is not the case whose ministry was different, namely, which was for the ruling of the congregation introduced for the censure of morals and the preservation of discipline in the church, Romans 12:8.

Note 4: When it is clear that the ministry of the word κατ' ἐξοχήν includes everything that is necessary for the ruling of the congregation, but on the other hand the so-called office of elder in no way involves the conducting of the preaching office *sensu strictiori*, then the office of elder must be comprised of helping ministries [*Hilfsdienste*] that can be administered by those who thereby do not become preachers and who do not have the authorization to administer the office of the word and sacraments. It has been believed that it takes something away from self-enlightening power of the Scripture when it is held that the difference between the ministers of the church installed especially for the proclamation of the gospel and the so-called lay-elders is more than something external and incidental. Some have thought that the non-hierarchical spirit of the Lutheran church needs to be brought to light so as no longer to permit there to be any lines of distinction between the two classes of elders. But, they think, the distinction lies so deep in the [historical] character of the church that it will not fade away. There are two things here upon which this matter depends. First, the knowledge of the Holy Scripture and the understanding of it in its many dogmatic, ethical, spiritual, legal, and other relationships, which can only be gained through years of long study, is such an essential presupposition of the ministry of the teaching elder that an office of elder from which this is lacking can only be considered an incomplete grade of that office. This being said in no way denies that a layman can come to a deep understanding of the Scripture through personal investigation in the Scripture, grasping its fundamental contents and judging doctrine according to it as according to a universal rule. Likewise we can in no way doubt that in innumerable circumstances the individual layman will far exceed the individual theologian in vivacity and truth of understanding Scripture, since faith, which is the key

to the knowledge of Scripture, is not bound to professional study. The layman will only still lack in some degree the conscious theoretical and practical view through which all members of this spiritual organism are first united for working together and are put to use working together.

It is well to notice that the command to shepherd the church with God's word and to lead her to salvation does not apply to everyone who occupies an office in the church. It applies only to those who proclaim the gospel. The essential difference between lay-elders and teaching-elders was established fundamentally by the Lord himself.

The school diaconate takes a middle position between the teaching ministry of the teaching elder and the above diaconate insofar as laboring in doctrine is one of its chief duties. But its ministry is confined only to a part of the congregation even if it is the most precious part. On the other hand the teaching presbyter is a bishop, that is, an overseer of the adults as well as the young. And when the preaching office and the teaching-diaconate coincide [in one office], still the essential part of the latter is to lend parents assistance in training [their children] and to take care of the children personally in every detail. Its ruling side consists in school discipline. But this must remain the least important element. The personal ministry to every individual child is the most important matter. To watch over discipline must remain the matter of the bishop. The school teacher is placed under him not only in matters of office but also as the caregiver of his soul.

Note 5: Let us take notice here of a special circumstance. When someone merely gives external help in the administration of the holy supper, this demonstrates that the one helping has the preaching office as little as the sacristan helping in baptism demonstrates the same. An external helping with the ministry of the word in the strict sense indeed does not happen outside of or in addition to the word. It should be counted among the true functions of the ministry [*Ministeriums*]. But this helping concerns itself with a highly unessential part of the holy ministry. He who examines and authorizes the communicants holds the office of the word precisely in the narrow sense. See Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, 186, footnote 10. Further, we wish again to make clear that in all circumstances where we grant only to the preachers the ministry of the word in the narrow sense, we only have in mind the legitimate order.

Note 6: Our confessions witness, even if only incidentally and indirectly, that the whole helping diaconate is connected with the ministry of the word and therefore is to be placed under it as an offshoot of the same. The Formula of Concord says: "We believe, teach, and confess, that ... the entire congregation, yes, every Christian, but especially the ministers of the word, as the leaders of the congregations of God."<sup>10</sup>

The following witnesses might find place here from the private writings of our orthodox fathers. Luther writes concerning deacons: "The office of deacon is not a ministry of reading the gospel or the epistles, as is common today, but rather to distribute the goods of the church to the poor, in order that the priests might be *freed* from the burden of temporal goods and may keep to prayer and the word of God more diligently and more freely" (Walch xix, 140). Further, John Gerhard writes concerning the elders who rule: "In the apostolic and first churches there were two classes of presbyters, which in Latin were called seniors, as is seen in 1 Timothy 5:17. The one type administered the

office of teaching, or as the Apostle himself says, labored in word and doctrine, who were called bishops, pastors etc. Others were established, however, for the censure of morals and the preservation of discipline in the church ... these were called rulers and leaders [Vorstehet], as is seen in 1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:8. Ambrose writes concerning 1 Timothy 5: Also the synagogue and afterwards the church had seniors, without whose knowledge nothing was undertaken in the church. And I do not know through what negligence this has fallen into disuse as if through laziness or more probably through the arrogance of the teachers in that they wanted all the honor.’ Both classes carried the name ‘leader’ [Vorstehet] ... and senior [Vorgesetzte] ... The holy college that Paul calls the *presbyterium* was made up of both types together.”<sup>11</sup> Danish Bishop Brochmand witnesses that the distinction between teaching elders and ruling elders is not simply arbitrary: “Saravia and Erastus strongly maintain that a presbyterium consisting of ecclesiastical and private persons is not a divine but rather a human invention. We use the verse 1 Timothy 5:17 against them ... where the Apostle explicitly teaches that there are elders of two classes. The one perform their ministry through teaching but the other was given the care for ecclesiastical discipline. This interpretation is supported by Paul himself when in 1 Corinthians 12:28 there is mention of rulers, that is, such men who do not teach so much as rule the church. For they are distinct from the apostles, prophets, teachers.”<sup>12</sup>

To see how the ministry of lay-elder was seen in the old Lutheran church, see the witnesses in Walther’s *The True Form etc.*, 101 ff. See also his *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, where among other things the special functions of ministry of the elders and the deacons are mentioned.

***Thesis 8: Whoever is to administer an essential part of the office of the word should he ordained or at any rate set apart for the ministry of the word.***<sup>13</sup>

Note 1: Anyone who administers an essential part of the holy office must have the office of the word. But since a layman, even when he occupies an ecclesiastical office of lower order, is in no way authorized according to divine order to administer the public preaching office in the narrow sense, such a one must be called to this in a special way. We say therefore in the thesis: He should be ordained, or at any rate set apart for the ministry of the word.

Note 2: With the above we are far from assigning to ordination an absolute or divine necessity since the argument for its divine institution is an *argumentum a silentio*. Rather, along with the entire orthodox church we recognize ordination as an adiaphoron. Compare Walther, *The Voice of our Church etc.*, Th. 11, Th. 6 B. Also in agreement with the church of God, however, we hold it to be relatively necessary. Ordination is an ecclesiastical order sanctioned by ancient apostolic practice which serves to clarify and publicly confirm that the call to the ministry of the word that has come before is legitimate. Danhauer writes: “Who is against this order? Who despises this usage? Such a one neither loves peace, because he is against the church, nor is a person of conscience, because he despises the means that serve unto peace of conscience. He is an obstinate person.”<sup>14</sup> Whoever omits ordination without need is a schismatic. He separates himself from the orthodox church of all time. Therefore when in the thesis we call ordination the

*conditio sine qua non*, as it were, for the undertaking of the holy ministry, we do not want to be misunderstood as if this were the case on account of divine command; but we speak in this way in the sense of our church. Namely, by saying this we mean that no one can or may administer an essential part of the holy office of the word without a call declared to be legitimate by the church (1 Cor 12:29; Rom 10:15; Js 3:1). Why did it not simply say then that one must be properly called? It is clear that if we had formulated the thesis in this way one could still say: Someone whom the congregation has called to a single duty of the office has received the preaching office for this circumstance. But that is especially what we reject. If we do not wish to deny, for example, that the administration of the holy supper by a non-ordained layman called only for a time by an entire congregation in an emergency is effective and legitimate (Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 180),<sup>15</sup> still we must determinedly stress that only the most difficult of emergencies would permit this. If a congregation in ordinary circumstances calls an unordained person, she despises ecclesiastical order. The call to the office of the word must have some public witness on account of those who run and are not sent (Jer 23:21), and ordination gives this witness. If this is the case — and no Lutheran will deny it — then it is also correct when we claim: He who should administer an essential part of the holy ministry should be ordained.

Note 3: If circumstances arise in which it is impossible to hold to the order of ordination, then we must at least demand some type of setting apart of the person called to the holy office, for Acts 13:2 says: “When they had served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke: “Set apart for me (ἀφορίσατε) Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (see Rom 1:1).

Note 4: Johann Freder, born in Cöslin and a student of Luther, functioned as a preacher in Hamburg, Stralsund, Rügen, and Wismar without being ordained. When the Greifswald theologian Dr. Knipstrov demanded that he subsequently allow himself to be ordained in order to correct the offense given, Freder would not yield to this. Rather he called ordination a snare to the conscience. For this reason he was deposed in 1551. In a Wittenberg faculty opinion given on this matter in 1553 among other things was said: Although ordination in and of itself is not necessary, it serves as a publication and approval of the call. To consider it a snare of conscience is nothing else than to say that anyone can take up the preaching office even when no examination or confirmation of the call has gone before. That is contrary to order and cannot be condoned.<sup>16</sup> The Straßburger theologian Dannhauer writes concerning ordination: “Is ordination necessary on account of conscience? It is most certainly necessary: not on account of a necessity of its goal and means (as if the intended goal could only be accomplished though this means)... Still it is necessary on account of an apostolic and positive (not moral) command: “Set apart,” Acts 13:2, and an ancient apostolic practice (1 Tim 5:21). Likewise [it is necessary] according to the need to be able to distinguish between the proven and unproven teachers of the church and for showing reverence to the ministry. Therefore no one can complain that Lutherans often use students who have not yet been ordained as vicars and allow them to hear confession, visit the sick and administer the sacrament to them. [This is our practice] so that no one might think that a pastor and an attendant are the same thing.”<sup>17</sup> Kromayer seems to contradict [the statement that only ordained men

should work in the office of the word] when he writes: “In some places, as in the region of Wurttemberg, as well as from time to time even here in Swabian churches, students of theology administer the sacraments.”<sup>18</sup> This apparent contradiction with the earlier citation from Dannhauer is solved by the following text found in the Wittenberg Judgments: “In many Württemberg, Schwabish, Alsatian, and other highland churches of the Augsburg Confession, it is customary that such *actiones sacrae* (preaching, administering the sacraments, comforting the sick, burying) are committed to ordained students of theology who do not yet have a parish or place of their own as helpers of the regular clergy.” Without ordination or some analog they would not be able to do this. They must have the entire office in order to be able to use a part of it.

***Thesis 9: Such a person cannot be called temporarily, and therefore even if he is ordained he cannot administer parts of the office in other congregations legitimate without a regular call unless necessity compels him to do so.***

Note 1: This thesis answers *no* to the question of whether a congregation can only temporarily commit the holy office to anyone whom they have called to care for an essential part of the office of the word — a question whose solution will bring this lecture to a close.

Note 2: If someone is truly called to the preaching office, he is called by God (Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28; Ps 68:12; Is 41:27). The congregation is only the instrument for the selection of the person for the work that God has chosen him to do. No one, however, can prescribe to God how long he should entrust someone with the office. The congregation can therefore never relieve or dismiss a preacher from his office unless they can prove that God himself has relieved or dismissed him from his office. Therefore if the congregation wants to give a temporary call with the provision that they can arbitrarily dismiss the one who is called, or call him only for a certain term, such a call would not be valid or right. A temporary call is no call (see above the pertinent explanations in Walther loc. cit. 41 ff.).

Note 3: “But how is it,” someone will object, “that a congregation cannot frequently call a foreign pastor to serve in their midst for only a period of time? Has this not always been the practice in the Lutheran Church? Therefore are there not circumstances where the congregation may therefore give a temporary call?” If a preacher preaches in a different congregation, he does this either when the congregation has a preacher and as a proxy in his call; or if the congregation is vacant and a different preacher serves in her midst, the congregation makes use of the preaching office that the congregation of this preacher has established. Then the congregation is the guest of the true congregation of the pastor or has borrowed from her. It is obvious that such a preacher in no way makes himself responsible to conduct his office on the basis of a temporary call. Compare what is written in *Pastoral Theology*, 44, *de theologis ad tempus commodatis*. Further, when students preach they do this in no way with the assumption that the ministry of the word is therefore conferred to them, but rather they serve in the call of the ordinary preacher as a proxy for a particular circumstance. Mißler writes concerning them in his *Opus novum*: “Indeed not a public call but a private mission” and “a call of love,” which sounds better

than the “private mission.”

Note 4: If a congregation may not give a temporary call, it is clear that an ordained person may not perform duties of the office in the congregation outside of their office without being validly and rightly called. Our theologians therefore answer the question: “Can one who has been driven out of his ministry administer baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other parts of the ministry in different places?” in the following way: “If someone is not regularly called to a congregation, he cannot administer the sacraments there, even though earlier he was regularly called and ordained to the office. He also cannot administer baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and other parts of the office. For he is called and ordained for a particular congregation. Now wherever this call has ceased, there has expired the authorization of the church received through ordination if the person involved is not given the care of a new congregation through a new and right call. God desires that everything should be orderly and fair [*ehrlich*]. Ordination to the office is not sufficient if there is not a call to a particular congregation [*Gemeinde*]. The sickle may not be used on another’s crop. Indeed, such a person cannot mount the holy pulpit even once in a congregation in which he is not called without the knowledge and consent of the pastor of the place” (Mich. Walther and Kaspar Brochmand).

No fewer times do they answer the question: “Can a preacher who has left his office, during the time from then until his successor in ministry arrives, take care of the ministry of the church on account of his earlier call?” They answer: “He can preach and administer the sacraments without a new and public call. For the government<sup>19</sup> that takes care of the church as well as the leaders and heads of the church want and demand this. For even if it is not explicit, still the implicit consent is there when his labor is welcome” (the Leipzig Theologians). L. Hartmann writes: “If a congregation needs an orthodox pastor, it will be granted to another ordained [man] to administer the *Sacra*, since the congregation desires it.”<sup>20</sup> One can see that our theologians recognize exceptional circumstances in which an ordained man temporarily may administer the ministry in a different congregation. Naturally this applies only when the ordained man in question has not already taken up another worldly call or entirely quit the ministry in the church and only when necessity demands it.

Note 5: Chemnitz in *loc. theol. de Eccles.* 11. 31 and Kromayer *Theol. pos.* P. II. 530 both witness that a temporary call is invalid and incorrect (*Church and Ministry*, 310–311).

***Thesis 10: The congregation under ordinary circumstances may only commit an essential part of the holy preaching office to him whom she has regularly called and set apart for the office of the word, namely, for as long as it pleases God, the Founder of the office.***

Note: This thesis gives the answer to our question. If the previous theses were correct, this last one is correct also. To Jesus Christ, the highly praised head of his church, be honor, power, and praise from now until eternity.

## NOTES

\* Translator's notes: In the translation of this article the intent was neither to be strictly literal nor to make the English perfect. Important terms in the argument that should be translated consistently with the same English words were identified so that a one-to-one correspondence would be set up. In sentence structure proper, however, English was followed as nearly as possible. Following are the important terms and their translations:

*Amt* This word usually refers back to the Luther's translation of the Greek *διακονία*, as the article itself points out. This word is often used by Luther as a synonym for *Dienst*. It is translated "office" here.

*Übertragen*. I have used "commit" here.

*Befehlen*. The word literally means "command" and is tied up in New Testament and confessional vocabulary when the Christians "*befehlen*" the ministry to someone. The term is generally also translated "commit," since it is used basically as a synonym of *übertragen*.

*Gemeinde*. This noun is translated "congregation" since the context of the article's arguments makes it clear that is the meaning in the mind of the author, even if "congregation" is not explicitly necessary in his argument.

1. Article v of the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord speak of the office *in abstracto*: the ministry of the word, that is, the word of God preached and heard.

2. *Demonstrat, quod electio praesul. et episc. non ad ecclesiast. solum, sed et ad lakos pertineat* (56).

3. *Exam. Conc. Trident.* loc. x, Sess. xiv, Can. xi, f.m. 456 A.

4. *Loc. de min. eccles.* §3.

5. *Conc. Trident.*, ed. Dr. Smets, 124.

6. In the Latin text: *Hanc potestatem communem esse etc.* (Tractate 60 f., *Triglotta*, 521).

7. *Isag. in libros eccles. luther. symbolicos.* Dresdae 1725, 924.

8. The original is *Das aber nun auf das durch die Uebertragung der priesterlichen Rechte entstandene Predigtamt angewendet....*

9. *Loc. de min. eccles.* §ccvi.

10. FC X, 10, *Triglotta*, 1054.

11. *Loc. de min. eccl.* §232.

12. *Syst. univ. theol.* II. fol. 33. Cited by Walther, *The True Form of a Christian Congregation*, 53 f.

13. The conference accepted the Thesis in the following version: "Whoever ... must be regularly called and so set apart, but also ordained according to church order." Although this edited sentence amounts to what we wanted to say in the above sentence, still we allow ourselves to place our sentence as the leading one since naturally the remarks come from it. We do not feel that we are authorized to change the notes, since they were accepted in form and in content by the conference. D. E.

14. *Lib. conscient.* P. I, 1006.

15. This text is on page 134 ff. of the recently published translation of *Pastoral Theology* [translator].

16. See *Hist. und theol. Einleitung in die Religionsstreitigk. der ev. luth. Kirche usw. usw. von Joh. Geo. Walch*, Th. iv, 419 ff.

17. *Lib. conscientia n*, 1005. Compare the witness of Joh. Fecht in Walther, loc. cit., 65 f.

18. *Theol. pos.*, 1059.

19. In America this is naturally the congregation.

20. *Pastorale ev.*, 144.