

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

VI THESES ON THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

On the basis of theses drawn up by Prof. Blaess and Dr Hebart after discussions by the Sub-Committees, the doctrine of the Office of the Ministry was discussed at Joint Meetings held on April 13 and May 4, 1950, and adopted in the following form at the Joint Meetings on May 4 and May 25, 1950.

**Reviewed July 2001, unedited*

1. The New Testament ministry is the office instituted by Christ for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the Gospel and the administering of the Sacraments, through which as through instruments the Holy Ghost works saving faith in the hearts of men.
Matt. 10; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 9:1,2; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 2 Cor. 3:5-8; Augsburg Confession V; Form. Conc.. Sol. Decl. XI. 29.
2. The office of the ministry is therefore an office instituted not by man, but by God. 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28; Apology XIII. 11.
3. Since it is Christ's will that His Gospel be preached and the Sacraments administered, and since the use of the means of grace is essential to the existence of the Church on earth, and since according to the Lord's promise the Church on earth is to remain until the end of time, Matt. 16: 18, the office of the ministry is an office, which is simultaneous with the Church and to which the Church is bound from its beginning to the end of time. Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15,16; Rom. 10:8-17; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 16:25,26; Augsburg Confession XXVIII, 8-10, 20,21.
4. Though the power to remit or retain sin, to make known the Law and the Gospel, was originally and immediately given by the Lord of the Church to all Christians, that is, to the whole Church and also to the individual congregation, and though all believers are a spiritual priesthood, yet the office of the ministry is not identical with the spiritual priesthood of all believers in Christ. But there is a vital connection between the two inasmuch as the ministry by the institution of the Lord necessarily exists within the Church which is the royal priesthood and the People of God.
Matt. 16: 15-19; Matt. 18: 15,20; 1 Peter 2:9; John 20: 19-23; Luke 24:33-36; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Cor. 12:28,29; Rom. 10:15; Smalc. Art., Tract. 24, 67-69.
5. The office of the ministry is essentially an office of service to the Lord and His Church with the Word and the Sacraments, which office the ministers of the Church must exercise in obedience to their Lord and the directions given in the Word. Therefore, the office of the ministry does not give to those who bear it, arbitrary power over Christians, nor does it deliver the ministers of the Word up to the arbitrary directions and commands of men. Likewise, it is not a Levitical priesthood of the New Testament (Apol. XIII, 7-11; XXIV. 58.59); nor are those who bear it an exclusive class distinct from Christians generally; nor do they possess a peculiar sanctity or an indelible character; nor does the ministry possess the power of self-perpetuation.
Matt.23:8-12; 1 Cor- 3:5; 4:1,2; 2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 1:23-25; 1 Peter 5: 1-3; Matt.20:25-28; Apol. XXVIII, 13,14; XXII, 9; XXIV, 86 (German and English text re Liturgia); Smalc. Art., Pars 11, IV, 9; Form. Conc., Sol. Decl. XII, 30; XI. 29.
6. According to the New Testament the spiritual functions of the Apostolate are continued only in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.
Acts 6:1-4; Acts 1:,23; Acts 20:28; Phil. 1;1; Col.4:17; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 5:17; Titus 1:5ff; 1 Peter 5:1; Heb. 13:17; ApoL XV, .2 (.): Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 10. 13.15.60-65; Smalc. Art., Pars 11, IV, 9; Form. Conc., Sol. Decl X, 10.
7. No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacrament unless he be regularly called. (C.A. XIV). The Lord calls individuals into the office of the ministry through the Christian congregations. Acts 13: 1-4. and the Christian congregation, either alone or together with other congregations, or through properly appointed representatives, calls qualified persons (1 Tim. 3:1.7; Titus 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 2:24.25; Acts 1:24) into the office of the ministry publicly to exercise the functions of this office. The minister of the Word is thus called by the Lord through His Church, and by the Church as through human agency and authority, but in obedience to the command of the Lord. He is therefore the servant of the Lord Jesus, a minister of the New Testament, a

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steward of the mysteries of God, called to serve by publicly administering the means of grace. 2 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 10:15; 2 Cor. 5:18; 1. Thess.5:12.13; Augsburg Confession XIV: Apol. VII. 28 (end of paragraph); Smalc. Act. Tractatus: 14.15.24. 26. 67.69.

8. Ordination, though not a Sacrament, is the solemn ecclesiastical rite in which a duly qualified person (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9), having accepted a call by a congregation or the Church, is received by the Church as a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 4: 11; Titus 1:5) and publicly declared to be a minister of the New Testament, his call thereby being ratified and publicly acknowledged, and the blessing of the Lord is invoked upon him with the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands is an old and biblical rite, but it has no divine command and is not essential for the validity and efficacy of the office. Acts 6:6; 8:17: 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Num. 27:18; Smalc. Art. Tractatus 70.
9. Although the office of the ministry is the only office ordained by Christ for His Church of the New Testament, yet the Christian congregation has the authority to establish auxiliary offices (elders, deacons, teachers, Sunday-school teachers and superintendents, trustees, wardens, etc.) after the example of the apostles and the early Christian Church (e.g., diaconate). Acts 6:6; Rom. 16:1.
10. Similarly the Church at large has the liberty and authority from Christ to establish various ecclesiastical and administrative offices for the common prosecution of various undertakings in obedience to the Lord's command to make disciples of all nations. 1 Cor. 12:4-13, 26-28; Acts 11:21-23. This necessitates proper guidance and direction, spiritual and otherwise, I Cor. 14:40; 2 Cor. 8:18-21; 9:5, because the Lord has commanded that everything be done decently and in order and in accordance with the law of love. Such arrangements may vary according to time and circumstances. All external arrangements in congregations and in church bodies and all ranking of the ministers are purely of human right and the efficacy of the ministry of the Gospel is not bound to any human institution. Matt.23:8; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Augsburg Confession XV; XXVIII, 5-29; Smalc. Art. Tractatus: 10, 11, 61-65.
11. Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament. 1 Cor. 14:34,35 and I Tim. 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired.