

Session #6: Speaking the Word as
Ecclesiastical Supervisor—Part 2

The report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance stated that “ecclesiastical supervision begins with the office of Synodical President.”

Blue Ribbon Task Force on Synodical Structure and Governance.
Congregation, Synod, Church. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.
2007. p. 13

“But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.”

Titus 2:1

“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Galatians 1:8

“However, according to God’s Word, the right to judge doctrine has not been taken away from the laymen by the establishment of the ministry. On the contrary, this is their most sacred duty, as in the first place all those passages of Holy Scripture that command laymen to judge doctrine incontestably declare.

Walther, C.F.W. Church and Ministry, 1987 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. p. 332

“When Christ says: ‘My sheep hear my voice’ (John 10:27); ‘they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him.’ (v. 5), does He not appoint the sheep as judges and give the hearers the right to judge, prove, and condemn, and this with absolute authority?”

Walther, C.F.W. Church and Ministry, 1987 Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. p. 334

Synod as a whole is to supervise how each individual pastor cares for the souls in his charge. Synod, therefore, has the right of inquiry and judgment. Especially is Synod to investigate whether its pastors have permitted themselves to be misled into applying the so-called "New Measures" which have become prevalent here, or whether they care for their souls according to the sound Scriptural manner of the orthodox Church.

1847 LCMS Constitution, V. 15 Concordia Historical Institute
Quarterly 16 (April, 1943). Page 12

Every member of Synod is to strive in all seriousness, according to his calling, abilities, powers, and means that the synodical goal, namely, the very necessary preservation of the purity and unity of doctrine and the support and extension of the church, be reached as soon as possible.

1854 LCMS Constitution, VI, I, 1. Moving Frontiers, p. 160

“The practice of visitation, which began in Saxony in 1528, indicates that Luther regarded the larger body of believers as having some responsibility also for the local churches.”

Wollenburg. An Assessment. p. 105

“The president acts as representative of the churches in the confessional fellowship in such authorization, and publicly attests the recognition that the churches of the Synod give to this act of the congregations and the person whom it has called.”

Wollenburg. An Assessment. p. 103

The very existence of the Synod indicates that the church must do some of its work jointly. The Synod is not an alien organization. It is the whole confessional fellowship of congregations. In this case, by common agreement, certain offices are filled by the Synod or its commissions through authority delegated from the congregations.

CTCR. The Ministry. p. 31

To preserve the unity of the true faith, and to prevent schism within the confessional fellowship, supervision of the doctrine of pastors and teachers is not only a wholesome practice but a necessary one. Such supervision is intended to prevent factions created by self-appointed leaders who seek to draw men after themselves. The supervision is carried out by those persons whom the churches themselves choose. Thus, it is not imposed upon the congregations by some sort of ecclesiastical authority, but represents a willing subordination of the pastors and congregations to one another in the interest of maintaining the unity of the confession.

The ministry of Word and sacrament and the public administration of the Office of the Keys is entrusted to the office of the public ministry. In a congregation, therefore, the man who holds the office of the public ministry is a steward of the mysteries of God. He is the shepherd, overseer, and elder of the church in that place. The ultimate responsibility for what is taught and for guiding the lives of the flock is his.

Jerome therefore teaches that the distinction between the grades of bishop and presbyter (or pastor) is by human authority. The fact itself bears witness to this, for the power is the same, as I have already stated. Afterwards one thing made a distinction between bishops and pastors, and this was ordination, for it was decided that one bishop should ordain the ministers in a number of churches. But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right.

Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 331

CALL- restricted to the call into the office of the public ministry in the congregation or to another assignment in that ministry. It should be also used for auxiliary offices that are directly supportive of the teaching and preaching function of the pastoral ministry...

CTCR. The Ministry. p. 33

According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest. All this is to be done not by human power but by God's Word alone. On this account parish ministers and churches are bound to be obedient to the bishops according to the saying of Christ in Luke 10:16, "He who hears you hears me."

Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 84

In cases where bishops possess temporal authority and the sword, they possess it not as bishops by divine right, but by human, imperial right, bestowed by Roman emperors and kings for the temporal administration of their lands. Such authority has nothing at all to do with the office of the Gospel.

Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 83

Since Paul clearly testifies that he did not desire to seek confirmation from Peter, even after he had come to him, he teaches that the authority of the ministry depends on the Word of God, that Peter was not superior to the other apostles, and that ordination or confirmation was not to be sought from Peter alone.

Tappert, Theodore G.: *The Book of Concord : The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 2000, c1959, S. 321. (Emphasis added)

He shall arrange in advance for an official visit to each congregation of his district at least once every three years and otherwise as he deems it necessary. He may call upon the circuit visitors and vice-presidents to assist him with the triennial visitation of congregations.

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons.

Hebrews 12: 5-7

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

Hebrews 12: 7-9

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12: 10-11

A bishop may be entrusted with the task of seeing to the running of a great diocese. But the meaning of such an assignment can only consist in this, that he thereby gives room and support to the Church's ministry. His actual office is the office of pastor, also when he is a pastor for the pastors. By human arrangement he may have the work of superintendency. By divine mandate he has solely the office of preaching the forgiveness and justification of sinners for Christ's sake.

Sasse, Hermann. We Confess Anthology, We Confess the Church. Concordia Publishing House. St. Louis, MO. 1999. p. 71

But we poor sinners will continue to fail, to overreach in pride, to ignore in apathy, to turn away in rebellion. In each case we rejoice because we know that our great ecclesiastical supervisor, Jesus, has washed away our sin, given us new life, and made us His own.