

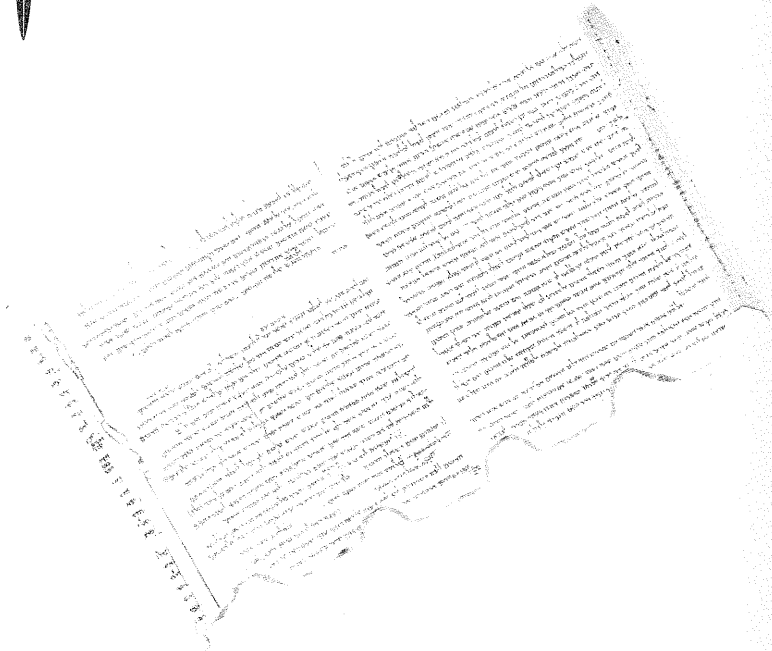


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The 1978 Reformation Lectures

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary
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Mankato, Minnesota

October 26-27, 1978

THE PULPIT AND THE PEW
IN LUTHER AND THE CONFESSIONS

Dr. Herman A. Preus
Professor-Emeritus

Luther Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota

F O R E W O R D

We are happy to bring you in this March, 1979 issue of our Quarterly the 1978 Reformation Lectures delivered by Dr. Herman A. Preus, Professor-Emeritus, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, on October 26-27, 1978, at Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Dr. Preus delivered two rather than the three customary lectures. They were entitled THE PULPIT AND THE PEW IN LUTHER AND THE CONFESSIONS.

Lecture I: The Office of the Ministry

Lecture II: The Role of the Laity

There were three reactors rather than the customary two. They were Prof. Theo. J. Hartwig, Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota; Prof. Rudolph E. Honsey, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota; and Dr. Milton E. Zagel, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (retired). Their reactions are also printed in this issue.

It should be noted that material similar to that which appears in these lectures is being printed in the March, 1979 issue of the CONCORDIA JOURNAL of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

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by Dr. Herman A. Preus

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LECTURE I

The Office of the Ministry

1. One of the neglected areas in the thinking and life of the Church is that surrounding the doctrine of the ministry. This is a two-pronged doctrine. It involves the universal priesthood of all believers and the office of the holy ministry and their relation to one another. What authority has each? What is the proper balance between them? The following pages will try to give Luther's answer to this problem.

2. I believe the spirit of our age compels the church to face the whole problem of the relation of pulpit and pew, of minister and layman. If the Bicentennial had left us a slogan it would undoubtedly have contained two concepts: equality and freedom. These basic concepts of American life have been dominant in our thinking long before 1978. But the Bicentennial focused our attention on them. "All men are equal." "All men ought to be free." The emphasis is highly important. An overemphasis can be destructive.

3. It is good and right to say that before God all men are equal. God plays no favorites. His love is offered to every person. Christ died for all men. Every person has the right to be what God meant him to be. The words of our Constitution that "all men are created equal" mean that every citizen has equal rights under the law of the land.

4. All this is good and right. But drive the principle into the ground with overemphasis and it may undermine the virtues of respect for authority and reverence for government and law. I am equal to the policeman on the corner, but I am not above the law. I am equal to my employer, but somebody has to pilot the ship and somebody has to stoke the engines. I am equal to my professor, but someone has to teach and someone has to learn.

5. Now apply this to the church. As a layman I am equal to my minister. But somebody has to preach and somebody has to listen. We can't all preach. We can't all sit in the pew. This confronts us with the relation between the man in the pew and the man before the altar. Here is no question of inequality. The man at the altar is no better than the man in the pew. He only has a different calling and a different job to do. As Luther said in the Christian Nobility, "All Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office."¹ Each owes the other equal respect.

6. But Luther saw that an imbalance between them had arisen in the church. He saw on the right a stance of class and superiority of priest over layman. After 1525 he saw the reverse: the authority of the layman exalted to the demeaning of the God-ordained office of the Holy Ministry. He found himself compelled to correct this imbalance and to find the right relation between the laity and the ministry. Searching the Scriptures, as always, he came up with the two-pronged doctrine of the ministry. On the one hand he caught Peter's great idea of the priesthood of all believers. And on the other, Scripture revealed to him that God had instituted the office of the Holy Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Both were established by God. The problem for him, as for us, was to

harmonize the two and find the right balance between them. Being little interested in structure he did not spell out his position in detail. Some have felt that he left us an insoluble paradox. Others find him confusing. I am inclined to think that the confusion, if there is any, is caused not so much by Luther as by his interpreters.

7. In the history of the church the pendulum has swung back and forth between the authority of the clergy and that of the laity. Orthodoxy followed Luther's line fairly well, emphasizing the office perhaps more than the universal priesthood. Pietism moved the emphasis from the office to the priesthood of the laity. There has been a varying emphasis in Lutheranism ever since. Note for instance the difference between the high-church accent in Sweden and the low-church profile in Württemberg. A similar variation can be found among the Lutheran Churches in America.

8. Today the church finds herself caught up in the spirit of the age, as was noted before. Men are straining for equality and are restless under authority. In such times there is little place for any sort of adulation of the minister. The man in the pew has equal rights with the man at the altar, and he is beginning to want to exercise those rights in the church. It is a proper desire. But the layman is not sure, neither is the minister, at what point he may be beginning to infringe on the prerogatives of the minister.

9. History has seen this emergence of lay power before. The pattern of the emergence is interesting as we see it in this generation and the previous one. I have seen the evolution in my own lifetime. In my section of the country

a layman began to lead the singing in the congregation. Then he was called on to read the lessons. The time came when he was clothed in clerical vestments and put behind the altar to conduct the liturgy. Soon he was invited to preach. He began assisting at Communion, first picking up the little "thimbles."

10. Now let it be understood that this development is not the result of the pushiness of the laity. They have been invited by well-meaning pastors who will not be hampered by tradition. In praise of the laity the church architects have joined the parade. Churches are built with the altar and pulpit placed in the center of the nave, eliminating the chancel and putting the minister in the midst of the congregation. No class distinction here. No ruling ministry lording it over a docile congregation of laymen. After all, are we not all priests? Doesn't Peter say so? Yes, even Luther himself?

11. Well, what does Luther say about all this? Have no doubt; he will find his answer in the Scriptures. Luther's doctrine of the ministry developed in a changing historical situation. He is torn throughout his life between the Roman concept of a priestly hierarchy on the right and the anti-clerical lay theology of the Enthusiasts on the left.

12. Luther starts from where he is in the historical-ecclesiastical situation. He has grown up under a pope and a priestly hierarchy that completely dominate the faith and life of the laity. The man in the pew is humbly subserviant to the priest, who through the sacrament of Ordination is given a higher status than the layman and by his character indelibilis represents a class far above the lowly layman. The common

Christian can approach God only through the mediation of the priest. To him the church is an organization of Christians ruled by a priestly hierarchy that holds the Keys of the Kingdom of God, the power to open or close heaven to humble sinners. All spiritual authority rests in this priesthood whose high priest is the pope, the vicar of Christ on earth. For did not Christ give the Keys to Peter, Bishop of Rome? And is not the Pope the successor of Peter, the heir of his authority?

13. This is not the place to trace Luther's spiritual and theological development. That is too well known. But a large part of this development revolved around the doctrine of the church and the ministry. The time came when Luther began to see the corruption and the heresy that were poisoning the church and particularly the hierarchy. And he had to ask himself, Was it possible that Christ could have given the power of the Keys, the power over men's souls, to an ecclesiastical bureaucracy as corrupt as the court of Louis XIV or Pope Leo X?

14. At this point Luther is compelled to re-examine the whole problem of the ministry, the holy office. Driven by the corruption of the hierarchy and its priesthood it is no wonder that he found help and comfort in the rediscovery of the great principle of the universal priesthood of all believers. But it did not knock him off balance. Boring deeply into the Scriptures he sees clearly on the one hand the holy office, on the other the universal priesthood. It seems logical to first take a look at the Office of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY

15. Christ has instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry to administer the Keys, Word and Sacraments, on behalf of the entire congregation of believers. And no one steps into that office without the authorization and call of the church, or, if you please, the congregation of priests. That does not mean that the office of the ministry arises out of the priesthood of believers. As Regin Prenter says, "Without God's command and institution believers could not set the office in motion."²

16. Luther searches the Scriptures. He hears the command of Christ, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28,19.20). He sees the Lord choosing Paul and the Apostles and sending them throughout the countryside, establishing congregations, appointing elders, presbyters, bishops, pastors to lead the congregations. In his treatise On The Councils And Churches he makes the office of the ministry one of the marks of the church. "Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers or has offices that it is to administer. There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions on behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul says, ". . . his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers, and governors, etc. The people as a

whole cannot do these things, but must entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other. It must be entrusted to one person, and he alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments."³

17. Luther makes good use of the Old Testament in this connection, especially Psalm 110,4: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." After about twenty-five pages, mostly on the universal priesthood, he comments: "Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation . . . Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed in behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians."⁴

18. Luther uses Titus 1, 5-7 to establish the fact that the office of the holy ministry is a divine institution. "Paul says to his disciple Titus: 'This is why I left you in Candia, that you might complete what I left unfinished, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you, men who are blameless. . . . For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless,' etc. (Titus 1: 5-7). Whoever believes that here in Paul the Spirit of

Christ is speaking and commanding will be sure to recognize this as a divine institution and ordinance, that in each city there should be several bishops, or at least one. It is also evident that Paul considers elders and bishops to be one and the same thing, for he says: Elders are to be appointed and installed in all cities, and that a bishop shall be blameless."⁵

19. So the New Testament gives Luther the pattern for carrying on the ministry of Word and Sacraments. The responsibility for seeing it done lies in the church, as a practical matter, in the congregation where all Christians are priests. This congregation of priests has the authority and responsibility to select one of their number as their minister. The office is established by God, and the congregation fills the office by calling and ordaining a minister. Or it might rather be said that God fills the office through the action of the congregation. This action as God's action must be emphasized to avoid charging Luther with an Übertragungstheorie, as some Luther scholars have done, i.e., the theory that the office of the ministry grew out of the universal priesthood, "in which all the believers, all of whom were priests . . . through the call . . . transferred their own right to exercise the priestly function to these called servants."⁶ This would nullify the idea of the office as a divine institution and make the universal priesthood the only divinely established ministry.

20. In spite of certain passages where Luther seems to support this view, the evidence is overwhelming that Luther never gave up the basic idea that the office of the ministry is instituted by God. True, the universal priesthood is also established by God. But the two institutions exist

side by side without contradiction. "All are priests, but not all are pastors (Pfarrer),"⁷ says Luther. Ernst Sommerlath puts it clearly when he says that "we must abandon the idea that the office grows out of the universal priesthood." Instead, it is "an original ordinance of the church, which expresses the will of the Head of the Church."⁸

THE CALL

21. This raises the question of the call, without which no man can assume the office. Luther's idea of the call is distilled and concentrated in the fourteenth article of the Augsburg Confession: "No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called."

22. It should be clear from what has been said that the selection and call of a Minister by a congregation is not simply a democratic, political, social or ecclesiastical act of a group of like-minded people. Neither is it a choice of options I have as an individual. I cannot say: It is purely my decision whether I want to be a lawyer, a doctor, a plumber, or a minister of Christ. Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you (John 15, 16). It is likewise true that you do not decide alone that you will be a minister of His. You do not brazenly step into the holy office and tell a congregation that you are going to be their minister. You will enter that holy calling only when God calls you through the church and thus puts you into that office. This is no mere human arrangement for the preservation of order in the Church. It is an orderly process by which the congregation

seeks to carry out Christ's command to make disciples through the Means of Grace. And the man who is regularly called by the congregation can be sure that he is called by God.

23. In the more pietistic circles of American

Lutheranism people have no hesitancy in speaking of an inner call. One of the great missionaries of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, Daniel Nelson, heard the call of God when he was shingling his roof. He promptly climbed down, packed his bags, and set off for China. There are many similar stories in our history. It might be well to investigate these and see if the calls were confirmed by the call of the church, by a congregation or a synod. Luther recognizes that the call to the Apostles and Prophets was an immediate call from God. But since that time, he believes, God's call is mediated through the church.⁹ This call is the legitimate call on which a man can depend, for it is the church which has the authority to call a minister. And only with this external call can the candidate in Anfechtung have confidence that he is called by God. Those who depend on their inner call alone, Luther regards as Schwärmer.¹⁰ "The divine call is of two kinds: the one mediate, the other immediate. God now calls all of us to the ministry of the Word by a mediate call, that is, a call which takes place through means, through man. But the Apostles were called immediately by Christ himself, as the Prophets in the Old Testament were called by God himself The mediate call is, after the Apostles' time, the common kind of call in all the world. Nor is this to be changed. We should rather highly commend it because of the sectaries, who despise it and boast of another calling, whereby they say

the Spirit impels them to teach. But the impostors are lying. True, a spirit impels them, but one that is not good but evil."¹¹

24. The entrance into the holy ministry thus becomes an awesome thing, both to the congregation and to the candidate, a thing one does with fear and trembling. Luther writes in 1533, "If I wanted to write about the burdens of a minister as I know and have experienced them, I would frighten all away from the office. For a good minister must hazard everything, so that nothing is dearer to him than Christ and eternal life. ."¹²

25. To an ordained minister he writes, "My dear brother Benedict, you have been appointed by God to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ at N., in order to further His holy name with the pure doctrine of the Gospel. To this task we call and send you in the power of God, just as God has sent us. Therefore be earnestly vigilant, be industrious, pray God to sustain you in this high calling, so that you may not fall away because of false doctrine, heresy, sects, or because of your own notions, but that you may begin your ministry in the fear of God, in faithful industry, in constant prayer, and may discharge it properly in Christ."¹³

26. There was a time, not long ago, that young men thinking of the ministry were told, "Don't go into the ministry unless you feel that you absolutely have to." That extreme awe of the office has faded. Recognizing the many serious young men who feel constrained by the love of Christ to seek the office, one encounters candidates who talk quite freely about their motives. Some go because their parents have always wanted them to go into the ministry. Others find their

greatest satisfaction in public speaking and know that the pulpit will give them a platform and an audience. Some can't decide what their life work should be, so why not try the seminary? I shall not dwell on those who by their own confession went to seminary to avoid the draft.

27. Luther drives every pastor and theological student to a scorching examination of conscience with his solemn warning to those who are thinking of entering the ministry. Deploring the corrupt state of the Roman clergy, Luther writes in his treatise on the Babylonian Captivity, "Therefore my advice is: Begone, all of you that would live in safety; flee, young men, and do not enter upon this holy estate, unless you are determined to preach the Gospel, and can believe that you are made not one whit better than the laity through this 'sacrament' of ordination."¹⁴

28. Now that women are admitted to seminaries and to the ministry, this problem of motivation toward the ministry enters a new phase. The old historic view of the parsonage and the minister's wife as the helpmeet of the pastor and the keeper of the parsonage is fading out before the advance of women's liberation. Many young brides reject this role. They want to pursue their own careers. But at that point they face a decision involving a real temptation, as do their husbands. It must be very easy for a woman at that point to say with her husband who is at seminary, Wouldn't a team-ministry of husband and wife be interesting, and wouldn't that be the best solution of our problem? The same problem is there in reverse when a young man is marrying a young woman who is entering the seminary. Here a deep self-examination had better be made. What is my motive for seeking the holy office of the

ministry? It is the same old question that faces every person who is debating whether or not to enter the ministry.

29. Happy is the man who enters the holy ministry with the full assurance that he has been called by God. "Let the preacher of the Gospel be sure that he has a divine call. Moreover, it is expedient for him to follow the example of Paul and highly praise and exalt his calling before the people (I Cor. 4, 14) so that he may gain the respect of those who hear him. . ."¹⁵ This man can have the assurance that he is one of God's princes. "But," says Luther, "who of us dares believe this and apply this to himself, that he is one of the heavenly princes? Yet it is so. I and all other godly ministers are princes. It seems to be the most monstrous pride to arrogate this to oneself. But it is not pride, for it rebounds to the glory of the King. Since He himself is the King of glory and of heaven, therefore those who enter into His ministry are His counsellors and great princes even though they do not believe they are such great personages."¹⁶

30. A congregation about to call a minister ought to approach its task with the same awe that the candidate feels toward the holy office. For "if it is true that God has established and instituted the spiritual estate with His own blood and death, it is easy to conclude that He will have it highly honored, and not suffer it to be destroyed, or to cease."¹⁷ . . . There is no dearer treasure nor any more precious thing on earth or in this life than a real and faithful pastor or preacher."¹⁸

31. With this attitude toward the holy office a congregation will approach the call and ordination of a minister with concern and with prayer.

Luther frequently ties the call and ordination together. In his treatise on the Babylonian Captivity he says, "Ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite, whereby one is called to the ministry of the church."¹⁹ Writing on The Private Mass and The Consecration of Priests, he declares, ". . . ordaining should consist of and be understood as calling to and entrusting with the office of the ministry. . . . Our consecration shall be called ordination, or a call to the office."²⁰ He sees 2 Tim. 2, 2 as a reference to ordination. "However, listen how simply St. Paul speaks about ordination in 2 Tim 2 (:2): 'what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.' Here there is neither chrism nor butter, it is solely the command to teach God's Word. Whosoever has received the command, him St. Paul regards as pastor, bishop, and pope, for everything depends on the Word of God as the highest office, which Christ himself regarded as his own and as the highest office."²¹

32. Luther would have made a great bishop. Maybe he was one. Even in his most profound theological treatises he sounds like a pastor and a churchman whose main concern is to nourish the congregation's life in Christ by the Gospel. His advice on the calling of a pastor is just as relevant to a congregation today as it was in 1523. In his treatise Concerning The Ministry he writes to the followers of John Huss in Bohemia assuring them of their right to call and ordain their own pastors, since the Roman bishops were not bringing them the Gospel. "Let those who come together cast their ballots and elect one or as many as are needed of those who are capable. By prayer and the laying on of hands let them commend and certify these to the whole assembly and recognize

and honor them as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, believing beyond all shadow of doubt that this has been done and accomplished by God."²²

33. The all-important thing to Luther in all this discussion is that the Word of God be preached and the Sacraments administered for the life of the church. In the same letter to the Christians in Prague, he writes, "Ordination indeed was first instituted on the authority of Scripture, and according to the example and decrees of the Apostle, in order to provide people with the ministry of the Word. The public ministry of the Word, I hold, by which the mysteries of God are made known, ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest function of the church, on which the whole power of the church depends, since the church is nothing without the Word and everything in it exists by virtue of the Word alone."²³

34. In his Table Talk Luther has left us an account of his ordination of Magister Benedict Schumann in 1537. He composed a complete Liturgy of Ordination, which appears handwritten in a Wittenberg Agenda of 1539. It became widely used in the churches everywhere and has much in common with the Ordination Liturgy now in use in American Lutheran churches.²⁴

HONORING THE MINISTRY

35. A congregation owes honor and respect, yes, even obedience to the office of the ministry. "Rejecting the office of sacrificing the mass, let him (the minister) teach the Word of God and govern the church."²⁵ This is not the only place Luther

says that the minister is to "govern the church." Neither does it contradict the power he ascribes to the laity and the universal priesthood. There must be order in the church. God has instituted both the office of the ministry and the universal priesthood of every Christian. He has given power to rule the congregation. BUT --to rule it, as Luther says, by the Word. He says it again in his Open Letter To The Christian Nobility. In speaking of the role of the minister or the Catholic priest he says, "I would speak only of the ministry which God has instituted and which is to rule a congregation by means of preaching and sacraments, whose incumbents are to live and be at home among the people."²⁶

36. The power of the universal priesthood is not rejected in these statements of Luther. After all it is the church -- the congregation -- which chooses the minister, clothes him with the authority of the office which God has instituted. "By prayer and the laying on of hands let them commend and certify these to the whole assembly, and recognize and honor them as lawful bishops and ministers of the Word, believing beyond a shadow of doubt that this has been done and accomplished by God."²⁷ This Luther applies to ministers and bishops alike.

37. Ernst Sommerlath says that the congregation owes the holder of the office obedience as long as he is carrying out the work of the office in accord with his divine commission. The congregation shall follow the faith of the minister as Hebrew says (13, 7): "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God: consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith." And in verse 17: "Obey your leaders and submit to them: for they are keeping watch

over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly" Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians (2 Cor. 2, 9): "For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything." The minister has his commission from Christ and offers His message in Christ's stead, as Paul says, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5, 20).

38. The call of a minister "imposes on the congregation that extends the call the obligation to honor its pastor and to hear his word as the word of Christ" (Wll, 415, 30). The authority of the minister has already been discussed. And it appears that Luther sails a straight course between the two doctrines, using the one to correct the clerical tyranny of Rome or any other church and the other to the radical anti-clerical activities of the Enthusiasts. And if a thorough examination is made of both the early and the mature Luther one can see that he arrived at a beautiful balance between the two doctrines. There seems no better way for the Lutheran Church to avoid pompous preachers or arrogant laymen and to bring harmony between the two than to maintain the balance which Luther found in the Scripture and the words of Christ.

39. Luther regards the relationship between the minister and the laity as a holy relationship, a marriage of love and respect. No conflict. No jealousy. No competition. Let the minister be faithful to his ordination vows and the congregation will honor him and follow him. In all this Luther is summoning us, all of us, laymen and pastors alike, to join hands in carrying out our

priestly function of teaching, witnessing and preaching the Word of Life in Christ, of being constant in prayer for others, and of offering ourselves as a living sacrifice for our neighbor, "even as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5, 25).

-- Herman A. Preus

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Reaction to Lecture I - Dr. Milton Zagel

HOW THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD
HAS DEALT WITH THE ECCLESIASTICAL PITFALLS
OF THE PAST

My participation in this program is a result of my exceptionally indepth exposure to ministerial activity through the years. Even though my family background is preponderantly clerical, and I myself have had several years of experience as a clergyman (ministerial assistant, parochial school teacher, service pastor, and chaplain), it is my long experience as a lay observer that is responsible for my being on this platform. For what it is worth, my track record for having been exposed to a veritably kaleidoscopic succession of ministerial performances is not likely to be challenged. Back in preparatory school and seminary days my so-called "church partner" and I attended as many churches (ours included) as feasible in the Twin Cities and St. Louis. Later on, I was able to continue the practice, first as a student, then as a service pastor, and, finally, as a chaplain in the Army of the United States, since no regular congregational responsibility was involved in these capacities. Since that time my wife and I as perennial church-shopper members of the Church-at-Large have observed an inordinate number of ministerial performances. If, therefore, the first part of my comments seems too autobiographical to be in good taste, let me say that sometimes the cause does sanction the means.

When one listens to the lectures that have brought us together here, one finds oneself in a role similar to that of a potential customer in an automobile showroom. The vehicle stands there in its pristine, unruined, and undented glory, marvelously designed and engineered, and the question arises: How will it hold up when it hits the realities of the road? Here one has a lucid exposition of the perfectly orchestrated relationship between the Universal Priesthood and the "called and ordained servants of the Word," and again the question arises: How does it work?

My purpose in these comments is to discuss from my observations how the ministry has functioned and then to offer some considerations which, with divine blessing, could improve the operational capabilities.

It is interesting that in the Divine Commission as recorded in Matthew 28 and, if allowed, Mark 16, three different words are used to instruct us as to what we are to do. Only the word in Mark, making an announcement of importance, might suggest a rhetorical approach. The other two, in Matthew, indicate as much as: Get the information across, a teaching activity. In teaching, one uses not only the spoken word but also the demonstration. In observing ministerial activity, one notices not only what is preached from the pulpit and promoted in a congregation, but also what is not said, or even condoned by not demurring.

From another angle there are several words in the Divine Commission which have a way, as the Germans put it, of "falling under the table" (getting lost in the shuffle). Matthew: "Then the eleven went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw

Him, they worshipped Him: but some doubted." In Mark we have essentially the same thing, but there is a little more: "He (Jesus) upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." There was a breakdown of faith.

A contributor to the Homiletic Magazine of October 1894, (presumably J. P. Beyer) used the text for a "Pastoralpredigt" -- I suppose we should call it a conference or synodical sermon -- in which he leaves no doubt that weakness of faith is a minister's worst occupational disease, as it is with all of us.

/If this approach seems too disquieting to anyone, please remember that I am "Missouri-oriented." I am inclined to think that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Mephistopheles had "Missouri" in mind -- prophetically -- when he said in Fuast (line 2836 ff), "The Church has a strong stomach . . . can tolerate almost anything and anybody" (translation slightly shaded)./

What are the symptoms of this occupational disease? "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image . . . to bow down to it . . ." (Lev. 26, 1). We are always inclined to be very critical of Aaron but, really, his little golden calves were out in the open where anyone could easily see them. You might say that Aaron's idolatry was open and above-board. But graven images come in a great variety of shapes and sizes, some in disguise, and some even invisible. Voltaire is credited with the observation: "If people do not have a god, they make themselves one." These homemade gods or graven images are the really insidious ones. Western Civilization, a house "empty, swept, and

garnished" is especially ingenious in designing these homemade lares and penates. We call it "fine idolatry." A rearrangement of priorities is its hallmark.

Since the Christian ministry is what it is, it is also the professional area where malpractice pitfalls are most treacherous. It is the area to which Screwtape assigns his best operatives. If he can gain control of the preparatory schools, the seminaries, and their minions by jumbling the priorities, the rest is easy. It leaves the Universal Priesthood holding the bag, so to speak.

There is a veritable continuo of fearing, loving, and trusting in creatures and things as we should "fear, love, and trust in God" that is always obscuring or drowning out the announcement of God's love in Christ. I should like to cite a few examples -- instances when "Menschenfurcht" (cowering and groveling before the world), weakness of faith, a feeling of inferiority, have caused us to take wrong turns in the past.

In the 20's, we of my generation went off to our respective Concordias, or whatever they were called, if we had designs on entering the service of the Church, or we might have gone to Valparaiso University, if our interests lay in secular fields. It was assumed in our circles, as a result of being generally and totally uninformed, that Valpo was the only safe institution of higher (secular) learning in the country and was supported as such, especially on a certain Sunday in January. The other universities from coast to coast were summarily stamped as "godless." Questions arose: Was the Holy Spirit of the Third Article really so feeble as to be powerless at a university? More so than at the local Farmers' Elevator Co.

or at a meeting of Union Local #231, where Lutherans consorted with "outsiders" without qualms? It did not square with Romans VIII. Were Lutherans never to have the services of professional people such as architects, lawyers, economists, physicians, etc., who were members of their own denomination? Obviously Missouri Lutherans wishing to pursue careers in such fields had to be trained outside the existing church-oriented "system." (Incidentally, Valpo could not possibly then -- or now -- staff its own departments with dedicated Lutheran Christians.) Was there really that much difference between Valpo mathematics and secular mathematics? Or were Lutherans expending for secular purposes, where the pursuit of knowledge is an end in itself, the resources that God-fearing people had contributed for the propagation of the Gospel. After all, Lutherans, too, could -- and usually for much less money -- get quality instruction in subjects of their own choosing at schools that were supported by their own people in the form of funds rendered to Caesar. The Universal Priesthood did not know any better, and it could be demonstrated that the pastors were also at a loss. It was all due to a downgrading of the Holy Spirit's power and a groveling before the world's view of higher education. How often we heard: "We want to build a great university!" Why? (Maybe beat Notre Dame?)

Those of us preparing for service in the Church were adjudged to be safe. /Even those at St. Sebald's on the hill northwest of Arlington./ We were at our respective preparatory schools, where we were trained by a fourth-generation faculty, who were trained by third-generation faculty, who were trained by second-generation faculty, who were indeed trained by those dedicated, enterprising, and well-educated people who had come to this country for a fresh start. Somewhere along the

line -- Professor Oswald B. Overn and I have discussed this at length -- little by little there was erosion and dilution. The erosion has now reached a point where our St. Paul Concordia sends out alumni notes which point up the state of affairs. In one issue, for instance, the Luther statue representation is redrawn in such a way as to portray the Reformer standing there, armed with Cupid's quiver and bow, and holding his fist firmly planted on -- a heart-shaped bow of Valentine candy. The Bible has disappeared. If you go in for symbolism, you may find that quite revealing. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6,21)

Just as the founding fathers of our country set up a system of self-government that was to be foolproof, in the same way our church fathers of the 19th century organized a ministerial training system that was to be even more foolproof. It seems to have been, by the grace of God, amazingly effective. We all remember how much the Lord of the Church has done for us, collectively and individually, through the ministrations of some of our teachers. The parochial system, however, as time went on, fostered a kind of un-intellectualism (not anti-), in theological matters as well as secular, which became detrimental to the Gospel ministry. I, for instance, went through six years of Classical studies without ever contemplating the fact that the period represented in these studies was the very "fullness of time" that God had chosen for the appearance of His Son in the flesh. Those of you who are watching Ronald Eyre's "Long Search" on Educational Television on Sunday evenings may have been surprised, as I was, to see Plato's image among the Rumanian icons and asked yourselves, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (I Sam. 10, 12) The point I am making here is that

there is no informational acquisition that cannot be all things to all men. Students trained as unimaginatively as we, were bound in later life to fall for those devices, fetishes, and escape mechanisms which have become such important substitutes for, or at least interfere with, declaring "all the counsel of God." Since our "allgemeine Bildung" (all-around education in the arts and sciences) was so skimpy, Dr. C. F. W. Walther even deemed it necessary in his day to write an introduction to a volume entitled Geschichte aus Kirche und Welt zu Dr. M. Luthers Kleinem Katechismus by Hermann Fick, a collection of stories (some of them quite, quite apocryphal -- one wonders whether Dr. Walther might have been quite sleepy when/if he read them), stories which pastors were to use, in the way some use Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, to give their sermonic offerings at least some semblance of erudition and cultural orientation.

Back in the "godless universities." How surprised I was /things have changed drastically now, but I shall get to that in my second response/ -- how surprised I was when, in 1935, I found religion everywhere on the campus of the University of Iowa. There were the skeptics and arrogantly irreligious, of course, but they were as easy to spot as Aaron's golden calves. The picture was somewhat reminiscent of Mars Hill, to be sure, but "Gottsucher" (seekers of divine truth) were much in evidence. We had "Religion in Life Week" once a year. (Prof. Rehwinkel of our St. Louis faculty was the live-in theologian at one of these.) We had regular University Vesper Services at which the sermons were mostly pap, of course, but sometimes there was substance. The famous School of Religion had just been founded (in which I had a little research appointment). And Johnny-come-lately "Missouri," gradually awakening to the fact

that students had immortal souls also, had brought in one of its first student pastors with a tripartite assignment: 1) provide a church home for the transient student population, 2) minister to the spiritual needs of patients from all over the state in five hospitals, and 3) reassemble the lost and straying sheep of the house of "Missouri" that had drifted in all directions after their congregation had collapsed a number of years before that. For this most demanding tripartite assignment they picked a superannuated man of very precarious health. After his health collapsed, he was succeeded by an almost unbroken line (one shining exception) of ministerial operatives for whose kind Theodore Graebner reserved the alphabetical designation: UBD -- unburied dead (minister). The student pastorate degenerated to the level of a "room and board" job which enabled the incumbent to work for an advanced degree of his own choosing in complete unhurried comfort. You can imagine what happened to the campus ministry. Everything went from bad to worse until a few years ago it became positively obscene and notorious. Much of this was not only accepted but even encouraged by a well-meaning but thoroughly inept administration.

A chaplain in the military soon finds out that home congregational membership and the military uniform have one thing in common: They both cover up what is really there. Even the visible church puts on a cloak of invisibility when in uniform. It gives one pause. Also, in the military one discovers that the image of the Protestant clergyman is not a reassuring one. The chaplain is not taken seriously, not because he is a "man of God," which would be understandable, but because he is not a "man of God" in the estimation of the people he is supposed to serve. From the number of subterfuges he uses, one gains the impression that he

does not have such confidence in his product and, like his civilian peer, is always looking for ways to make himself and his offerings palatable to the world. (In recent weeks one has even gained the impression that an infectious warm smile is a pastor's first asset.) The world always gladly assumes the responsibilities of the Universal Priesthood in determining ecclesiastical priorities.

As a result of the number-one occupational disease alluded to above, the "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" is modified, watered down, or even surrendered entirely to hold on for dear life to financial revenue, numerical strength, worldly respectability, social acceptability, and even popularity. These are the pitfalls that have so signally throttled the Church's mission in the past.

Tomorrow: What can the Universal Priesthood do to counteract the ravages of the occupational disease?

Reaction to Lecture I - Prof. Rudolph E. Honsey

As you can see from the last page of your program, this year's series of Reformation Lectures is a continuation of a tradition begun several years ago. In all of these lectures the speakers have drawn copiously from the writings of Dr. Martin Luther as well as from the Holy Scriptures themselves. Nor should that be in the least surprising, since the Great Reformer had steeped himself in the Scriptures to such an extent that he truly lived and breathed the truths contained therein. He did so to such an extent that he found in the Scriptures the answers to important questions, and he used clear Scripture passages to support and defend his position, whether he was interpreting a difficult passage in Genesis or the Psalms or the Prophets, or whether he was debating with Dr. Eck or writing his response to Erasmus in his monumental work "ON THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL."

A casual look at the titles of the Reformation Lectures given over the years here at Bethany might well impress us with the variety of subjects on which Luther had something worthwhile to say. However, not only their variety, but also their timeliness strongly suggests itself. It is truly amazing that a man who was born almost 500 years ago and who packed so much into a lifetime of only moderate length could speak so relevantly on so many subjects and issues that directly confront us today. In the annual presentations that we have sponsored, we have benefited from the expertise of scholars in many areas, in all of which Luther himself had something substantial and worthwhile to contribute, because he had immersed himself in Holy Scripture, and with his many God-given

talents was able to get to the heart of the matter and communicate it to others.

As we examine the subjects of these lectures, I would also submit that they are timely. Let us briefly enumerate the subjects presented during the past five years. In 1973 the lectures dealt with an issue that is extremely important to all who take the Bible seriously: "HOW IS THE LUTHERAN CHURCH TO INTERPRET AND USE THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS?" The lecturer, Dr. Robert Preus, a nephew of our speaker, emphasized the inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures. As perhaps never before, today the Bible is a battleground, and it is all-important that we accept it as God's Word and that we interpret it in accordance with sound and scriptural principles of interpretation.

Today, however, even among many who profess that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, there is a strong tendency to down-grade the importance of the Means of Grace, particularly the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was therefore appropriate that for 1974 the committee in charge of these lectures selected the topic "THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REFORMATION FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH TODAY WITH REFERENCE TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE, THE CHURCH, AND CHURCH FELLOWSHIP." Those lectures were delivered by Dr. Manfred Roensch of Oberursel, Germany.

The next two series of lectures took into account our National Bicentennial. In preparation for that important observance, Prof. B. W. Teigen addressed those in attendance on the subject "THE LUTHERAN DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL." Significantly one of the reactors that year stated that very few Lutherans in our country had taken

up such a topic in seminars or essays in spite of the fact that it was very obviously a pertinent one.

In the Bicentennial Year Prof. E. C. Fredrich of Mequon, Wisconsin, presented another series of lectures on an American Lutheran theme: "THE QUEST FOR TRUE LUTHERAN IDENTITY IN AMERICA." While obviously Luther could speak with no authority about American Lutheranism, the doctrine that he so capably and clearly taught is still an important touchstone for differentiating true teaching from false, since it is based on Scripture.

Last October Prof. Kurt Marquart was again the speaker, as he had been ten years before. This time he spoke on the central doctrine of Scripture, "THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION." Obviously that subject must always be important and relevant.

It is our great privilege and pleasure this year to have Dr. Herman A. Preus share with us a few of the results of what has been a long and devoted study of the writings of Dr. Martin Luther. Surely the Great Reformer's thoughts and statements on the people in the pulpit and the pew are always of great interest and importance to us. Of late in particular it has also no doubt caused a few problems. It was with great interest that I first read Dr. Preus' presentation on "THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY," and then also, with you, heard him present it this morning. I feel in particular that the second paragraph of the copy I received is extremely pertinent, and bears repetition. Dr. Preus states: "I believe the spirit of our age compels the Church to face the whole problem of the relation of pulpit and pew, of minister and layman. If the Bicentennial had left us a slogan it would undoubtedly have contained two concepts: equality and freedom. These basic concepts of

American Life have been dominant in our thinking long before 1978. But the Bicentennial has focused out attention on them. 'All men are equal.' 'All men ought to be free.' The emphasis is highly important. An overemphasis can be destructive."

The essayist's warning not to overemphasize the concept of equality is very well taken. While in general we do hold to the statement in our Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," that is, all have equal rights under the laws of the land, we must also admit that there is a difference where there is a matter of authority. Furthermore, since Dr. Preus does not mention it, I would like to add that the statement "all men are created equal" by no means implies that we are all alike, as though we were all cans of Campbell's Tomato Soup. The Lord has made us different in appearance, interests, abilities, accomplishments, and so forth. But we are created equal before the law, as we also are alike before God, who shows no partiality.

Dr. Preus rightly emphasizes the fact that we must keep a proper balance between the two teachings: the Office of the Ministry and the Spiritual Priesthood of All Believers. To maintain such a balance is not easy. He points out that in various periods in the history of the Church the pendulum has swung to one side or the other. He also pointed out something that has been more noticeable during the last few years: the swing of the pendulum toward active lay participation, which is in general good, but not without dangers if it goes too far. If, for example, the pastor leaves the planning and conducting of a Sunday worship service to the young people without careful supervision, as is done in some circles,

the results may at best be questionable.

The speaker's reference to Luther's concern that there be no imbalance between the ministry and the priesthood of believers deserves serious consideration. Unlike Carlstadt, Zwingli, and Calvin, Luther was a conservative reformer. He showed himself as such also in objecting on the one hand to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and on the other hand to the revolt of the peasants. The two teachings must be kept in tension and balance, as must also several other teachings in Scripture, for example, God's desire of salvation for all and predestination, justification and sanctification, and law and gospel.

Luther had the right understanding of the office of the ministry. He was convinced that a minister had not through his ordination been given the indelible character which set him apart from the common people for the rest of his life, as the Church in which he had been brought up taught and practiced in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Our lecturer has also pointed out that Luther was bothered by the contradiction between that teaching and "the corruption and the heresy that were poisoning the Church and particularly the hierarchy." It was only after considerable study and soul-searching that Luther had arrived at the true teaching of the Bible on the doctrine of justification, and such was the case also with regard to other doctrines, including that of the ministry.

Our speaker quotes from Luther's treatise "ON THE COUNCILS AND CHURCHES" regarding the office of the ministry. Included in that quotation is a reference to Ephesians 4:11, in which various manifestations of the office of the

ministry are listed. Luther himself was a remarkable combination of preacher, pastor, professor, translator, author, musician, among other things. His concept of the ministry must have been quite comprehensive, and he did not hesitate to appeal to his degree of Doctor of Theology when it was warranted.

Dr. Preus referred in his lecture to Luther's use of the Old Testament, particularly his extensive comments on one of the Messianic Psalms, Psalm 110, verse 4, which reads: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Making application of that verse to those who are called into the ministry, Luther emphasizes the importance of having men who are qualified to serve in that capacity, and also to avoid the confusion that would result from a situation in which of one's own accord one would presume to carry out those duties. It would be in place here to state that if we were to compare all the great accomplishments of Luther, his commentaries on the Old Testament would rank very high. In the American Edition of his works, the first eight volumes are devoted to the Book of Genesis alone. While on certain details one would differ with Luther, his over-all grasp of the meaning of that great book, his penetrating insight, and not least his humble Christian faith as a child of God make the reading of his commentary both enlightening and edifying. The same is true of his five volumes on the Psalms, in which he shows more insight into the meaning than do most modern commentators who have the advantage of considerable data produced by recent scholarship. Luther's commentaries are very rewarding to the reader. He sees Christ prophesied in certain psalms, because, unlike most modern interpreters, he believes in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament.

With regard to the public ministry, our speaker makes a number of important statements. He emphasizes the importance of the call: not the inner call, which is subjective and smacks of pietism and enthusiasm, but the call issued by a congregation to someone to serve them as a pastor. While the speaker does not directly state it, it is surely implied that the person has qualifications to serve as such, both natural and developed through proper preparation. Also, when we speak of the "public" ministry, we must understand "public" as meaning "in behalf of others" who have delegated to him the duties that he is to perform.

Dr. Preus also refers to Luther's distinction between an "immediate" call such as the prophets and apostles received, and a "mediate" call such as congregations issue to pastors. Luther, therefore, emphasizes the importance of the call. However, in one passage Luther does refer to exceptional circumstances that would warrant preaching without a call. Ewald Plass, in his second volume of "WHAT LUTHER SAYS," p. 947, quotes Luther as follows: "If we should come to a large group of people who are not Christians, we might act as the apostles did and not wait for a call; for the preaching ministry is not established at that place. If, then, a person said: There are no Christians here; I will preach and instruct them in Christianity, and if a group then came together, chose him, and called him as their bishop, he would have a call." (W 16, -- E 35, 61 -- SL 3, 723). However, that is an exception.

Our speaker has also reminded us of how seriously Luther regarded the office of the ministry and the preaching of the Word. That same spirit

characterized the great Lutheran leader of a century ago, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who 94 years ago devoted his Friday evenings to lecturing to students on the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, as we can learn from reading those lectures in the book bearing that title. If only such seriousness of purpose would motivate all who aspire to become God's spokesmen and Christ's ambassadors! Unfortunately, it is true that other considerations have influenced some to seek and take up the ministry, as our lecturer has noted.

Luther emphasizes that ministers are "servants," which the word literally means. However, they are first of all servants of CHRIST. They are to serve HIM, and not be men-pleasers. Then, they are also servants of the people they serve. But, as we shall later see, they are not to be treated as lackeys, but accorded the respect due their office. On the other hand, neither are they lords over their parishoners. In a sermon on Matthew 20:24-28, given on December 5, 1537, Luther condemns false motives for preaching, but also reminds the hearers of their obligations. It would be well for all of us to be reminded by his words: "My office, and that of every preacher and minister, does not consist in any sort of lordship but in serving all of you, so that you learn to know God, become baptized, have the true Word of God, and finally are saved. Never do I claim worldly power; princes and lords, mayors and judges, are to establish and provide for that. My office is merely a service which I am to give to everyone freely and gratuitously, nor should I seek from it either money or goods, either honor or anything else. For if I were to preach in order to receive a big salary, to be made a king or an emperor, you could not get me

into the pulpit with ten horses. I would not take a thousand florins for every sermon, for I would know that I would go to the devil with them if I sought no more in the ministry than how to become rich. For as soon as I preached for the sake of money, I would preach what the people like to hear in order thereby to get the money. Therefore I am preaching freely, for nothing, and this I must do; nor should I seek either honor or good from it. Otherwise I would just as soon have learned something else, have become a manual laborer or a tradesman. Even today I could work as a clerk in order to support myself. But I have been bidden to serve you and whomever I can with teaching, instructing, comforting, and exhorting with the Word of God, that you may be saved, that I do not lord it over you but bring you together with myself under one Lord, who is called Christ. Beyond this service I seek nothing.

"But, to be sure, if I do you this service, it, in turn, is your duty to support me. For since I am to serve you by my preaching ministry, I cannot at the same time attend to earning my support. Therefore you are obliged to support me, too, entirely for nothing; for he who serves at the altar, says St. Paul, should live from the altar." (W 47, 368 -- E 44, 220f -- SL 7, 1040f)
(Quoted from Ewald Plass: WHAT LUTHER SAYS, Vol. II, pp. 923 f.)

There is one paragraph in the printed copy of our lecturer to which I want to react, since the subject is a very controversial one, involving a practice which until recently was not followed in the Lutheran Church, although for years it has been practiced in some of the Reformed Protestant Churches. It is paragraph No. 28 in your printed copy:

"Now that women are admitted to seminaries and to the ministry, this problem of motivation toward the ministry enters a new phase. The old historic view of the parsonage and the minister's wife as a helpmeet of the pastor and the keeper of the parsonage is fading out before the advance of women's liberation. Many young brides reject this role. They want to pursue their own careers. But at that point they face a decision involving a real temptation, as do their husbands. It must be very easy for a woman at that point to say with her husband who is at the seminary, Wouldn't a team-ministry of husband and wife be interesting, and wouldn't that be the best solution of our problem? The same problem is there in reverse when a young man is marrying a young woman who is entering the seminary. Here a deep self-examination had better be made. What is my motive for seeking the holy office of the ministry? It is the same old question that faces every person who is debating whether or not to enter the ministry."

I would be interested in getting an answer to one question in particular: How do the proponents of the practice of ordaining and installing women as ministers explain the passages that forbid women to preach publicly, among others the two following passages, which are quoted from William Beck's AN AMERICAN TRANSLATION:

1 Timothy 2:11-15: "A woman should learn in silence, completely submitting herself. I don't let a woman teach and have authority over a man; she should keep silent. The reason is that Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam wasn't deceived; the woman was deceived and so fell into sin. But women, having children, will be saved if they live in faith, love, and holiness, and use good judgment."

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35: "As in all the churches of the holy people, the women should be silent in church because they are not allowed to speak. They should submit, as the Law says. If there is something they want to know, they should ask their husbands at home. It is a disgrace for a woman to speak in church."

Among the many other points that Dr. Preus stated in his presentation, we shall mention only a few, in all of which he concurs with the Great Reformer: That the doctrine of the Public Ministry does not simply flow out of the doctrine of the Universal Priesthood of Believers, but is in fact a doctrine based on the special command of our Savior to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them, and preaching the Gospel to every creature; that the acceptance of the call issued by fellow believers, and not the rite of ordination, is what establishes the true relationship between the pastor and the congregation; and that the most important function the pastor possesses is to preach the Word of God and administer the Sacraments in accordance with Christ's command.

In his closing section entitled "Honoring the Ministry," Dr. Preus presents some of Luther's teachings on the importance of the office of the Ministry. In his writings Luther often speaks of the important work of pastors. He uses three words which in German sound similar: "lehren," meaning "teach;" "naehren," meaning "feed" or "nourish;" and "wehren," meaning "defend." The pastor must instruct his people, "teaching them to observe all things" that their Savior has "commanded them," as we read in Matt. 28:19. He must "feed" them with the Word and Sacraments,

heeding our Lord's command to Peter: "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," John 21:15,16. And he must also "defend" them by exposing false teachings, urging them to follow Christ's warning: "Beware of false prophets," Matt. 7:15, and by warning them against temptations in this life, remembering John's warning: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," 1 John 2:15, and Peter's warning to beware of the devil, who "as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Peter 5:7.

Earlier we quoted a passage from Luther in which he emphatically stated that he was not a lord over the people, and in which he would refuse to yield to monetary consideration. Now let us hear what he says with reference to such as would try to dominate the pastor or prevent him from preaching the truth when that may not be palatable to their taste. He says very pointedly: "You are not lords over preachers and the ministry; you have not established the office. God's Son alone has done so. Nor have you contributed anything to it. You have far less right to it than the devil to the kingdom of heaven. You should not lord it over the ministry or give it directions. Nor should you keep it from rebuking. For its rebuke is not of men but of God, who does not want the rebuke hindered. He has commanded it." (W- Br 10, 255, 257 -- E 56, 47, 49f -- SL 21b, 2837, 2839) (Quoted from Plass: WHAT LUTHER SAYS, Vol. II, p. 926.) These are strong words indeed, as were his words in denouncing hierarchical tyranny.

In the closing paragraphs of his presentation this morning, Dr. Preus very pertinently referred to those twin passages from Hebrews chapter 13: verses 7 and 17, which exhort us to remember and

obey our leaders, or as the King James Version puts it, "them that have the rule over you." They are, of course, those whom God has placed over us in spiritual matters: our pastors. Thereupon he aptly quoted Luther with reference to the people's obligation to show their pastor the honor due him and to hear his word as the word of Christ. I was particularly impressed with one sentence which, I feel, is a summary in a nutshell of this entire topic: "There seems no better way for the Lutheran Church to avoid pompous preachers or arrogant laymen and to bring harmony between the two than to maintain the balance which Luther found in the Scripture and the words of Christ." (Para. 38) It surely ought to be our hope and prayer that such a balance can be maintained.

Dr. Preus has given us much to think about: much that is sound, for not only is it grounded on the writings of Martin Luther, but also on Holy Scripture. The topic is very relevant today, and ought to provoke considerable discussion.

Reaction to Lecture I - Prof. Theo. J. Hartwig

In presenting his topic, the essayist voiced concerns with which we are in whole-hearted sympathy. These concerns, however, are perhaps less of a problem in our own church bodies than in the essayist's. I do not sense an agitation among the laymen in our circles for more "lay power" in the church or for the "right" of women to be ordained into the public preaching ministry.

The essayist calls attention to 1525 as a watershed year regarding Luther's shifting emphasis on the doctrine of church and ministry. The Peasants' War of that year, and the peasants' misapplication of what Scripture teaches about the universal priesthood of believers, was likely on the essayist's mind. If Luther placed more emphasis on the office of the ministry after 1525 than before, then some evidence from the sources might have been cited to strengthen the thesis and thus assure us that it is factual.

To come to the critical point of the reaction, in this reader's judgment the essayist seems to set up a sharp difference between the universal priesthood of believers and the office of the public ministry or pastorate. Thus, there is strong reluctance to look on the ministerial office as issuing from the priesthood of believers. According to this view, believers could not, without God's express institution, have set the ministerial office into motion. Hence, the rejection of the Uebertragungstheorie which holds that the ministerial office grows out of the universal priesthood. Ernst Sommerlath is quoted with approval, and passages are cited from Luther's writings to support the stated position.

Now, does this imply that the New Testament office of the ministry may be equated with an Old Testament counterpart? Does it imply that the New Testament ministerial office or pastorate -- the office held by the clergy -- exists by special divine command apart from other ministries of the Gospel? If this were so, then is not this a theology of the ministry which leads down the road to Rome?

I would like to submit that there is but one office of the New Testament ministry, namely, the spiritual priesthood created by the Gospel. In this sense we understand Luther when he says that the Gospel constitutes the church (WA 56: 165), i.e., the church's existence is understood alone in terms of the Gospel. Therefore it is in the very nature of the office of the spiritual priesthood to proclaim the Gospel and to administer the sacraments. That, indeed, is a divine ordinance. But the form which the office takes can vary with the circumstances, and any attempt to exalt one form above others leads to corrupting the doctrine of the church and ministry. We agree that the pastorate or ministerial office is ordained by God, but as a species of a genus: one form among many others. To my mind, this captures the spirit of what Luther writes about the church and ministry. I would like to close these comments with pertinent quotations from Luther.

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a priestly royalty." Therefore we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. But the priests, as we call them, are ministers chosen from among us. All that they do is done in our name; the priesthood is nothing but a ministry. This we learn from I Cor. 4:

"This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

LW 36; 113

Let everyone who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) And therefore this "sacrament" of ordination, if it is anything at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the church. Furthermore, the priesthood is properly nothing but the ministry of the Word -- the Word, I say; not the law, but the gospel.

LW 36; 116

The estate I am thinking of is rather one which has the office of preaching and the service of the word and sacraments and which imparts the Spirit and salvation, blessings that cannot be attained by any amount of pomp and pageantry. It includes the work of pastors, teachers, preachers, lectors, priests (whom men call chaplains), sacristans, schoolmasters, and whatever other work belongs to these offices and persons. This estate the Scriptures highly exalt and praise. St. Paul calls them stewards and servants; bishops; doctors, prophets; also God's ambassadors to reconcile the world to God, II Corinthians 6. Joel calls them saviors. In Psalm 68 David calls them kings and princes.

Haggai calls them angels, and Malachi says, "The lips of the priest keep the law, for he is an angel of the Lord of hosts." Christ himself gives them the same name, not only in Matthew 11 where he calls John the Baptist an angel, but also throughout the entire book of Revelation to John.

LW 46; 220-221

If he is at a place where there are Christians who have the same power and right as he, he should not call attention to himself. Instead, he should let himself be called and chosen to preach and to teach in the place of and by the command of the others. Indeed, a Christian has so much power that he may and even should make an appearance and teach among Christians -- without a call from men -- when he becomes aware that there is a lack of teachers, provided he does it in a decent and becoming manner. This was clearly described by St. Paul in I Corinthians 14, when he says, "If something is revealed to someone else sitting by, let the first be silent." Do you see what St. Paul does here? He tells the teacher to be silent and withdraw from the midst of the Christians; and he lets the listener appear even without a call. All this is done because need knows no command.

If then St. Paul says here that anyone from the midst of the Christians may come forward if there is a need and calls him through such a word of God, and tells the other to withdraw and deposes him by the power of his word, how much more right does a whole congregation have to call someone into this office when there is a need, as there always is,

especially now! For in the same passage St. Paul gives every Christian the power to teach among Christians if there is a need, saying, "You can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be admonished." Again, "You should earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order."

Let this passage be your safe foundation, because it gives such an overwhelming power to the Christian congregation to preach, to permit preaching, and to call -- without a call from men -- so that we should have no doubt that the congregation which has the gospel may and should elect and call from among its members someone to teach the word in its place.

LW 39; 310

Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is the communal office of public teaching. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of the congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion. If everyone were to preach to his neighbor or if they did things for one another without orderly

procedure, it would take a long time indeed to establish a congregation. Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed in behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians.

LW 13; 334

LECTURE II

The Role of the Laity

40. We clergymen are being deflated and cut down to size these days. I got a questionnaire recently, asking: "Why did you join St. John's Church?" A few weeks later I got the results:

1. I was invited by a friend (a layman). 40%
2. I liked the people in the congregation. 20%
3. I liked the location. 20%
4. I liked the church building. 10%
5. I liked the Minister. 3%

41. If the clergy are that unimportant in bringing people into the church, how terribly important the laity must be. I discovered how important they are the first month I was in the ministry. When I came to my first and only parish in Minneapolis, they had been without a resident pastor for over a year. I lay awake nights before I got there expecting to find the congregation in shambles. Imagine my surprise when I came and discovered that the congregation was rolling along

as smoothly as ever. In fact, a spark of new life had been kindled because the laymen had suddenly discovered their power and had been compelled to exercise the responsibility which the Bible and the Confessions had long since laid on them. A lay leadership had developed which said to the pastor: You go about your business and prepare good sermons, teach the confirmands, and visit the sick, and let us run the business of the organization. Since that day I have looked up to the laity as the backbone of the church.

42. I've been dubbed a high-churchman now, so my people are wondering why I suddenly am getting excited about the role of the layman in the church. I'll tell you why. As I look around the church I see the clerical leaders, bishops, theologians, leading in all directions, and the church winds up with little direction from the men we have chosen to lead us in the way of truth and the Word of God and the faith once delivered to the saints.

43. A book is just off the press entitled The Myth of God Incarnate. It is written by seven British theologians, one of them the chairman of the Church of England's Doctrinal Commission, all trying to prove that Christ was only a man and not God. The American edition is published by Westminster Press, an official "agency of the United Presbyterian Church that is charged with promoting the cause of Christ through books."¹ It holds the same position as the Augsburg Publishing House does in the American Lutheran Church. If the United Presbyterian Church through its publishing house can promote this kind of anti-Christian book, it is no wonder that 40 percent of its members do not believe the

Bible to be the infallible rule of faith and practice.

44. I look around the Lutheran Church and see much theological confusion and I wonder why divorced pastors are permitted to continue as shepherds of the flock. I hear theologians treating the Bible as a strictly human book, denying the virgin birth of Jesus, rejecting or explaining away miracles, and nobody calls them to account.

45. So I begin to wonder how long before the people in the pews will rise up and say, We've had enough of this nonsense. Now you laymen will probably ask, What right have we laymen to judge in these matters and to challenge our leaders? That's what this paper is all about.

46. I am going to talk about the role of the layman in the church, and about the authority and responsibility given him by Holy Scripture, as interpreted by Luther and the Confessions. (The term layman has no reference to sex historically.) I am aware that in my audience are many of the clergy, pastors, theological students and professors. But I believe that what I have to say about the laity is as important for the clergy as for the laity. Because after all the laity will never know or exercise their authority and responsibility except by the inspiration and guidance and teaching of the pastors and the theological professors.

47. What I would like to do in this paper is:

1. to make clear what is the role, the authority and the responsibility of the layman in the church;

2. to challenge the laity to exercise this authority and responsibility;
3. to challenge the pastors and teachers to help the laymen to fulfill their role in the congregation and the church;
4. to appeal for an INTELLIGENT AND LITERATE LAITY.

My principal sources are the Scriptures, Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions.

48. Our problem today in the church is that the idea of confession, in the sense of confession of faith, seems to be a fading concept. A big city church with a large radio audience has corrected or improved the customary rubric "Let us confess our holy Christian faith." The Pastor announces: "Let us make a statement of our faith." The next Sunday he says, "Let us declare our Christian faith." An adaphoron like this is nothing to quibble about. But it may reflect a gradual disappearance of the concept of confession of faith. The long history of this term and its use have in the thinking of the church filled it with meaning and given it a halo which no other term can have. Jesus' word, "Whosoever shall confess me before men . . .," means more than "Whosoever shall make a statement of faith concerning me."

49. Confession is the first act of a child brought into the faith in Holy Baptism. Confession in this sense is strictly the language of the church, and only in the context of the Christian Church is the word understandable. The same is true of the Confessions of the church. A non-Christian outsider can have no idea what we are talking about when we speak of confessions.

50. The Christian has a unique life-style, as Moltmann points out in his recent book.² It may be pressing the point to suggest that the Lutheran Christian has a unique life-style among other Christians. It would be pretty hard consistently to detect by his life-style what denomination a man belongs to. And yet, when you get to know a man, his thinking, his religious and moral posture, his liturgical taste, you may suspect what denomination or sect he belongs to.

1. Does his religious talk reveal a man who lives by grace alone?
2. Does he resemble Paul in Romans 7, living in tension between Law and Gospel, flesh and Spirit, but victoriously aware that, though a sinner, he is righteous through faith in Christ?
3. Does he like to go back to his Baptism for assurance of life and forgiveness?
4. Does he take seriously the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood?
5. Does he appear to live in the freedom of the Gospel, unfettered by legalism?
6. Does he know what he believes and what his church believes?

Surely there are many Christians in other denominations who reflect this life-style. But that does not change the fact that this is a life-style pictured in the Lutheran Confessions. It is reasonable to suggest that a knowledge of the Confessions could make a person a better Christian and a more intelligent Lutheran.

51. What is an intelligent Lutheran layman? I am speaking of a person committed to Christ, to the Word of God, to the Faith once delivered. Luther did not answer that question explicitly, as far as I know. He did say in his Preface to

the Large Catechism that the contents of the Catechism "represent the minimum of knowledge required of a Christian. Whoever does not possess it should not be reckoned among Christians nor admitted to a sacrament."³ It is not clear whether he is talking about his own complete Catechism or about the ancient three-part catechism. But in the next paragraph he adds: "As for the common people, however, we should be satisfied if they learned the three parts which have been the heritage of Christendom from ancient times. . . ."

52. I believe the Lutheran Church of the 20th century has good reason to expect more than that of a Lutheran layman. And I am sure any devoted layman would aim higher than that. I believe the Lutheran Church would like to be filled with men and women and young people

1. Who know they are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ;
2. Who know their Bible, the story of God's dealing with His people, and His church;
3. Who know and respect the church's tradition and the traditions of faith and life and worship that have come down to us from our fathers and are defined for us in the confessions;
4. Who know the Lutheran tradition of faith and life as embodied and defined in the Lutheran Confessions, though this term may mean to them only the Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession;
5. Who know and appreciate the privileges and responsibilities of being members of the church of Christ and of a Christian congregation;

6. Who know that they are called to be witnesses of Christ to the world. It's a great thing to feel yourself a part of the church's rich tradition of faith and life in the company of martyrs and saints, of Augustine and Luther, of St. Catherine and Katherine von Bora.

53. Is this aiming too high? How does a child baptized into Christ come to know all this and become an intelligent church member? The answer is self-evident: He must be taught. Who is to teach him? Mother Church. How does Mother Church teach him? Through the Bible and her Confessions. What are the Confessions? They are:

1. The church's testimony of her faith to the world;
2. The church's explanation and interpretation of the Bible;
3. Mother Church's pattern of faith and life for all her children.

54. Mother Church in her wisdom and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit saw very early the need to confront the world with a united testimony of her teaching for the guidance and inspiration and instruction of her children. She began very early in her history, and her first and greatest confessional creation was the Nicene Creed, followed by the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed. These creeds up through the centuries have been the greatest unifying and educational force the church has ever created. This was Mother Church's first giant step in the process of building an intelligent laity.

55. The importance of this educational process was more and more recognized in the Catholic Church and soon catechisms began to appear. To the Creed were added the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. Even then the intelligence quotient of church members in the 16th century was so low that Luther exploded in his Preface to the Small Catechism: "Good God, what wretchedness I beheld! The common people especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching. Although the people are supposed to be Christian, are baptized and receive the holy sacrament, they do not know the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments, they live as if they were pigs and irrational beasts, and now that the Gospel has been restored they have mastered the fine art of abusing liberty."⁴

56. The result was the Small Catechism, which enlarged the old catechism to include instruction in Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confession. This became the basic content of instruction in the Lutheran Church until the middle of the 20th century. In that period the parts of the Small Catechism were scattered through many pages of larger books of instruction. The result was well illustrated at the Seminary in one of my senior Symbolics classes. The church was puzzling over new primary educational material which was trying to improve on the traditional catechism-centered curriculum. To test the results of the new approach I asked my class how many of them had never seen Luther's Small Catechism. Half the class raised their hands.

57. Luther saw that the educational process demanded a fuller explanation of the fundamental teachings of the Small Catechism, so he

wrote the Large Catechism, aiming at a more intelligent laity and better informed teachers and pastors.

58. But the Reformation was no one-man job.

The preaching of Luther went like a tidal wave through the clergy and laity of Germany. Inspired by Luther and led by layman Melancthon as their spokesman, the followers of Luther, lay and clergy -- mostly laity -- closed ranks. The Augsburg Confession was their united testimony of faith to the Emperor, to the world and to the church. It was a call to the church to reform itself in doctrine and life, to return to the Scriptures, to correct false teaching, and to restore in the church the Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

59. Confession followed upon Confession. The world was to know what the Christian faith was. The church would have the pattern and the means to teach her people what it means to be a Christian.

60. A whole new educational philosophy had emerged through the Reformer's concern to develop an intelligent and informed membership of laymen and pastors. It was not a new philosophy, but Mother Church now at least had the will, as well as the tools and the materials, for bringing up her children to Christian maturity. There were parochial schools, Sunday schools, Bible study, confirmation, catechisms, Confessions and hymnals -- all a part of the educational process, much of which the Catholic Church had long known but ineffectually used. The basis of all instruction was the Bible, God's own Word. And the key that Mother Church used to open the Bible to the laity was the Confessions. They

have been the heart of the Lutheran Church's educational material to this day, at least up to the mid-twentieth century.

61. The Lutheran Church today faces a critical threat. Ecumenical pressure, merger fever, secularizing tendencies, new morality, gradual disappearance of parochial schools, deemphasis on confirmation and Christian education, waning emphasis on Biblical and confessional studies at Lutheran colleges and seminaries, social action -- all this is threatening to wash out the solid doctrinal and confessional core of Lutheran Christian education.

62. It is strange how easily teachers in the church can forget her heritage and the things that have kept her alive and made her great. From time to time the leaders of the church are compelled by circumstances -- or by the Holy Spirit, or both -- to reassess the church's theological position, to reexamine her faithfulness to Scripture and her loyalty to the faith once delivered. They are driven back to the Bible and to ask again, What does it say? The answer of the church has not been the answer of a bishop or of a star theologian. The answer in every church body has usually been to write in her constitution something similar to what is found in the American Lutheran Church's Constitution "As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, this church accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members, both congregations and individuals: a. The ancient ecumenical Creeds: the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian; b. The unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism.

"As further elaboration of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, this church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580: the Apology, Luther's Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord; and recognizes them as normative for its theology."⁵

63. Other Lutheran bodies are even more specific.

This is the teaching of the Lutheran Church to which every member subscribes: pastor, layman, bishop, theological professor. Common sense and order should tell us that to subscribe to this body of doctrine and become a member of the Lutheran Church a person should know the confession of faith to which he has subscribed, should know and understand what it says, what it teaches.

64. The Lutheran Church has always or at least up to the present generation believed that the Confessions should be taken seriously, as they themselves demand. An honest church member, whether layman, pastor, bishop, or theological professor, will be in conscience bound to be faithful to the Confession to which he has subscribed.

65. History records that errors against the Church's Confession have usually occurred not in the laity, but in the clerical or theological leadership of the church. (Arius, Nestorius, et al.) In some cases the leaders themselves have corrected their colleagues and kept the church faithful to its confession. But this does not always happen, and there may be a time when the laity is the last ditch in the battle to maintain the truth. To promote discussion and at the risk of the wrath of some theological colleagues I shall be polemical enough to ask whether possibly that time has arrived.

66. The polemical and critical complexion of this paper is not merely to arouse discussion but to make you examine the situation. The very fact that the three big Lutheran bodies in America are popularly dubbed left wing, right wing, and middle of the road -- or, if you like, liberal, conservative, and you name it -- makes it reasonable to suggest that there may be things to be corrected on all three sides. But woe to the man or woman who points to the error, or particularly to the culprit. Ecclesiastical bureaucracies are apt to be more tolerant of a little error than of gadflies. And the church is the weaker for it. Your essayist once submitted an article to a synodical organ criticizing a theological tendency in the church. He was told by the editor, "I'll print it, and I'll tear you apart in an editorial."

67. We have a marvelous laity in the Lutheran Church, beautifully loyal to their church and to their pastor. The last thing they like to do is openly to criticize their pastor's preaching or the teaching of a college or seminary professor. I marvel at what my congregation put up with when I was a pastor. One wonders whether the inflation of the concept of LOVE in our day has dulled the concern for truth. There is no greater thing than love. But the spirit of tolerance, permissiveness and liberation in our lives calls to mind the statement of Luther in a similar situation: "A curse on a love that is observed at the expense of the doctrine of faith, to which everything must yield -- love, an apostle, an angel from heaven, etc!" (Gal. 5,9)⁶

68. It is difficult for a minister to correct confessional aberrations of colleagues, or for a theological faculty to correct itself.

Is it possibly the time for laymen to rise up and claim their Biblical authority and to exercise the responsibility which the Confessions give them: to maintain true doctrine and loyalty to the Scripture and the Confessions? Up to now they have in all humility remained silent. But there is a growing ground swell of lay criticism of the theological, ecclesiastical, homiletical, moral and social trends in the church. It is not rare to hear people grumble: 1. Doesn't our minister know the difference between Law and Gospel? 2. Doesn't our minister believe in miracles, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament? 3. What's going on at the seminaries to send out ministers like ours? 4. What business has a divorced pastor to teach my children how to build a Christian home? 5. Why doesn't the bishop do something?

69. When these aberrations are not corrected by the ecclesiastical powers that be, when confessional Lutheranism is surrendered for the sake of outward unity, what can be done? Luther and, by implication, the Confessions, facing the same situation, laid the responsibility for reform squarely on the laity. And Luther's authority for this lies in the Scripture's doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, which he finds particularly in I Peter 2, 5.9: "And like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood . . . But you are . . . a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

70. The background of Peter's statement and of Luther's interpretation is the Old Testament priesthood. There the three duties of the priest

are set forth: to teach, to intercede, and to sacrifice. Since every Christian is a priest, his duties are the same. As a teacher he is responsible for the preservation and the proclamation of the Truth: the Word of God.

71. And now comes Luther's solemn charge to the laity, a charge, which, if taken seriously, could rock the church. In 1522 Luther wrote to the congregation in Leisnig, assuring them of their right to call a pastor. The congregation has the responsibility to see that the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments administered. But now Luther goes one step further. As priests they, the laity, have the right and also the duty to see that the Word is preached in truth and purity. That means the rejection of the Roman position that "only the bishops, scholars, and councils should be allowed to judge doctrine," while "the ordinary Christian is supposed to await their judgment and obey it. . . ."

72. No, says, Luther, "Christ institutes the very opposite. He takes both the right and the power to judge teaching from the bishops, scholars, and councils and gives them to everyone and to all Christians equally when he says, (John 10:4), 'My sheep know my voice,' Again, 'My sheep do not follow strangers, but flee from them, for they do not know the voice of strangers' (John 10:5). . . . Here you see clearly who has the right to judge doctrine: bishops, popes, scholars, and everyone else have the power to teach, but it is the sheep who are to judge whether they teach the voice (i.e., the words) of Christ or the voice of strangers. . . . That is why we let bishops and councils decide and institute whatever they please; when God's Word is on our side we -- and not they -- shall judge

what is right or wrong and they will have to yield to us and obey our word."⁷

73. Luther uses Matt. 7, 15: "Beware of false prophets. . . ." and comments: "You see Christ does not here give the judgment to prophets and teachers but to pupils or sheep. . . . That is why all teachers and their teaching should and must be subject to the judgment of the listeners." Scripture shows that prophets and apostles "take the right and power to judge all doctrine away from the teachers and with a stern decree impose it on the listeners instead, on pain of losing their soul."⁸

74. What would happen if our laity and our congregations really became aware of this power God has given them -- and the responsibility? What would happen to our preachers and their preaching? Have you ever heard a preacher tell his congregation of this power that God has given them? I wonder why not. Luther got excited about this and exploded: "There never would have been a universal papacy if this right of judgment had prevailed" (Concerning the Ministry).⁹

75. As anyone can see, this is pure dynamite. It sounds strangely like Carlstadt. It could indeed rock the church beyond anything Luther contemplated had he not in the same breath served up the antidote. Let no layman take this doctrine as a license to set himself up as an adversary arrogantly challenging the Minister's God-given authority. For the call of a minister "imposes on the congregation that extends the call the obligation to honor its pastor and to hear his word as the word of Christ."¹⁰

76. According to this principle every Lutheran Christian, lay as well as clerical, has the responsibility to see that the Word of God is preached and taught in truth and purity. This teaching and proclamation are done principally in the worshipping congregation and in the church's educational institutions especially in the theological seminary. The preachers and teachers are called by the church not to proclaim and teach their won individual opinions, but to speak as the voice of the church proclaiming the "faith once delivered to the saints."

77. "Our churches teach and confess." "We believe, teach, and confess." These formulas appear again and again in the Confessions. Lutheran ministers and teachers today by their subscription to the Confessions belong to the company which said this in the 16th century and is still saying it. The layman in the pew has the right to demand this teaching from pulpit and podium. He is in church or classroom to hear, not the opinion of Pastor Jones or Professor Tillich or Bultmann or Preus, but the voice of Mother Church. He is committed to the Word of God as interpreted in the Confessions. This interpretation he does not want contradicted by any individual who sets himself above the church. Professor Schlink of Heidelberg has stated the case in plain language:

Surely the Confessions are the voice of the church, important enough to be heard out first, in what they have to say, before the individual Christian lifts his own voice to speak. Since in the Confessions it is the church, not an individual, which is expounding the Scripture for its members, there is every reason for the individual member first to listen as a pupil to the church's instruction.

He should do this without offering his own additions, supplementary interpretations, corrections, or criticisms, however well these may be supported by sound exegetical observations. After all, the church is always there before the individual Christian. The church has acted upon him before he himself could act; it has instructed him before he himself was able to believe. The church, it must be remembered, is 'the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God.'

Should we not listen first to the church's exposition of Scripture since through the Word of God it has given us new birth as children of God? Living in the church as those who are borne and nourished by the church, we always have the church's Confession as our point of origin. . . . Yes, should we not from the very outset approach this exposition of Scripture by the Confessions with a confidence in its correctness which exceeds the confidence we give as pupils to this or that member of the church who may be our teacher?¹¹

78. I like George Forell's reference to the "religious amnesia" which characterizes the laity and the clergy and even the theologians of our time. "We live in an age in which many people associated with the Christian Church, both theologians and laymen, believe that we establish relevance to our time by forgetting or at least ignoring the past."¹² He is so right in stressing that if you don't know your past you don't know who you are. They are your badge of identity. They express what you are, what you believe, how you live as a Lutheran Christian. They are

there to help you know your Bible and what it says. They are there to make you an intelligent Lutheran Christian. They are there not only to give you this knowledge but to convince you of its truth, and to persuade you to stake your life on it and to accept it as your faith and your life-style. Adopt it, and, like the Reformers, you stand for something.

79. I am not ashamed to confess openly that I believe

1. that the Reformation was an act of God;
2. that Martin Luther was chosen by God to bring a reformation in the church;
3. that he and the other reformers were guided by the Holy Spirit to proclaim their new Scriptural insights in the Confessions.

This is not indeed to suggest that the Book of Concord is the infallible Word of God like the Bible, and its authors like the Prophets and Apostles inspired by God to write every word of the Confessions the way He wanted it written. But I do find the new insights gained by Luther through intensive study of Scripture to be in a remarkable way clarified, systematized, even simplified at times in the Confessions. The teachings of Scripture become clearer to me. I hear the voice of Mother Church teaching me what God is trying to say to me in the Bible. The Confessions persuade me that even as a layman I can be a theologian. I understand better the message and theology of Luther. As Leif Grane says, ". . . an historical understanding of the Confessio Augustana is impossible without a quite complete acquaintance with Luther's theology."¹³ As someone once said: "Luther supplies the wood, Melanchthon makes the fine furniture."

- a. Yes, even as a layman, I MUST be a theologian because I am a PRIEST. And as a priest it is my responsibility to see to it that
- 1) the Gospel is proclaimed in truth and purity
 - 2) that the teaching and the preaching in the church is in accord with the truth of Scripture.
- b. For as Luther says, the prime duty of a Christian as priest is to TEACH.
- c. But Luther does not let us forget that the Scriptural doctrine of the Universal Priesthood gives the layman as priest two other duties: to INTERCEDE AND SACRIFICE.
- d. The first and foremost business of the Christian as priest is to teach, or proclaim the Gospel, to declare abroad what God has done for him. "You must," says Peter, "exercise the chief function of a priest, that is to proclaim the wonderful deed God has performed for you to bring you out of darkness into the light.... Thus you should also teach other people how they, too, come into such light."¹⁴
- e. The center of the Christian's witness as priest is the Word of Scripture, and the center of the Word is Christ.
- f. The second function of the Christian as priest is to intercede, to pray for others. It is closely linked to his teaching ministry. Luther says in his FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN, "Not only are we the freest of kings, we are also priests

forever, which is far more excellent than being kings, for as priests we are worthy to appear before God to pray for others and to teach one another divine things. These are the functions of priests, and they cannot be granted to any unbeliever. Thus Christ has made it possible for us, provided we believe in him, to be not only his brethren, co-heirs, and fellow kings, but also his fellow-priests. Therefore we may boldly come into the presence of God in the spirit of faith (Heb. 10:19,22) and cry 'Abba, Father!' pray for one another, and do all things which we see done and foreshadowed in the outer and visible works of priests."¹⁵

g. Every Christian, as he shares in the priestly work of Christ, has a third function: sacrifice. This was the chief function of the Old Testament priest, and it gains its full meaning in Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. In his commentary on 1 Peter 2, 5-9, Luther calls this "sacrifice of His own body the highest function of the priestly office."¹⁶ In his treatise of 1523, CONCERNING THE MINISTRY, he says, "In the New Testament there is no sacrifice except the one which is common to all, namely, the one described in Romans 12,1, where Paul teaches us to present our bodies as a sacrifice, just as Christ sacrificed his body for us on the cross. In this sacrifice he includes the offering of praise and thanksgiving."¹⁷

h. It is on this note of sacrifice that Luther makes the idea of the Christian priesthood come alive as the driving force in the Christian life. His treatise on THE FREEDOM OF A CHRISTIAN is his most passionate challenge to the Christian to live his life for others. As Christ sacrificed Himself for us all, so we are to sacrifice ourselves for others. And this is the focus of all

three functions of our priesthood. We teach, that others may share our life in Christ. We intercede for others, bringing their burdens before the throne of grace. And we sacrifice ourselves that others may live. For the unspeakable love of Christ and His salvation are not simply gifts for me to revel in, but gifts for me to share with others.

i. In this age of awakening social consciousness and its appeal for social action, the most quoted paragraph in Luther is probably the one in this treatise. I can't resist quoting it again, for in all Luther there is no more beautiful call to a life of sacrifice for others. A Christian ought to think: "Although I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ."¹⁸

80. But there are very few laymen who understand that the Confessions have not only an educational value, but a therapeutic value. Every article of the Augustana, as well as of the Small Catechism and the other Confessions has in it a message of comfort for the folks in the pew.

Take only a sample or two. The Augsburg Confession Article I, of God, assures us that as Lutherans we are not a sect, but that we belong to the Holy Catholic Church of the fathers, and that our Confessions are in harmony with their theology defined in the Creed of Nicea.

Their faith is our faith.

Their Gospel is our Gospel.

Their Christ is our Christ.

Their Church is our Church.

It is a comfort to have these deep roots in a time of religious confusion like ours. The picture of God in all the Confessions is not that of a fearsome, angry God, but of a God of grace, a loving Father, who loved us even to the sacrifice of the Cross, and who forgives the sin of those who trust in Him.

81. This God of grace comes intimately close to us in the doctrine of Justification by Grace through Faith as presented in the Confessions. They show clearly my own helplessness and my need of forgiveness. Then they point me to the Cross and say, "In spite of your sin and unworthiness, your sins are forgiven through His sacrifice." "For by grace you are saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2, 8.9).

82. Can any one doubt the therapeutic value of the doctrine of Baptism as it is presented in the Large Catechism? "For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich

no one could find access! But here in Baptism there is brought free to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive. Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: Nevertheless I am baptized; but if I am baptized, it is promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body."¹⁹

83. Every pastor should learn from Luther to teach his laymen to recognize the therapeutic value of Baptism and to bring them the comfort that lies in that doctrine which the Confessions emphasize. Most of you will remember Luther's encounter with his friend Doctor Carl Weller. He met him on the street one day and found him in a state of deep Anfechtung and despair over his sins. Luther spoke one sentence: Doctor Weller, are you baptized? Doctor Weller went home healed and released.

84. The Sacrament of the Altar has similar therapeutic value, as the Large Catechism also points out. We should regard the Sacrament "as a pure, wholesome comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why then is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?"²⁰

85. The Confessions can lead you into a real love-affair with your Bible. While some contemporary theologians are telling you not to make a "paper pope" out of the Bible, the Confessions invite your confident trust in it and

direct you through study of it to experience the healing, comforting, liberating, and creative power of God's living Word in the Bible. And they open to you the very heart of the Gospel and of the entire Bible: the comforting doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone. August Kimme says it well in his Theology of The Augsburg Confession: "This Christ-like key to the Bible is the article of justification in organic connection to all these other doctrinal articles we have already mentioned. The Augsburg Confession in its first seventeen articles gives a solid exposition of this true biblical faith centered in justification. Therefore this confessional writing is for the Christian Church a unique help for the interpretation of the New Testament and the preaching of the whole Bible."²¹

86. There are signs, in the midst of ecumenical pressures, of a resurgence of Lutheran confessionalism, at least of a renewed interest in the Confessions. The current celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Formula of Concord, the accompanying birth of confessional movements like the Concordia Academy, the appearance of numerous books on the Confessions, may possibly mark the beginning of a new period of confessional concern in Lutheranism.

87. The church is crying out for heroes and heroines, for men and women who stand for something, whose faith is champing at the bit for action, whose love of Christ makes them crusaders for truth. The power of the Lutheran laity is a sleeping giant in whose hands may be the future of the church and of its teaching. How grave must the crisis be in the church before the giant awakes and takes up the battle for truth? It happened in the Reformation. A large

company of laymen fired the first shot when they presented to the emperor and to the church the Augsburg Confession. They unloaded their heavy artillery when 80 of them plus numerous city councils gave the church the Book of Concord. And it was to be no museum piece. On the contrary, said they, "we intend to examine all controversies according to this norm and declaration."²² And their heroics were not ended until they had laid their lives on the line with the solemn declaration: "This Confession also, by the help of God we will retain to our last breath, when we shall go forth from this life to the heavenly fatherland, to appear with joyful and undaunted mind and with a pure conscience before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."²³

88. It happened in the Reformation. Could it happen again? The pastors, bishops, and theologians should invite the laymen to make it happen again.

89. In my appeal for lay leadership in the church I trust that no layman will conclude from this paper that his principal role is a negative one, that of being a gadfly and a critic. Let him be a positive and constructive crusader for the truth, a man who loves his church and honors his pastor, his bishop, his theological professors. Let him be a partner with them in the cause of the Gospel of Christ. In supporting them, let him keep them always aware of what St. Paul said to the Corinthian Christians: "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (II Cor. 13, 8).

-- Herman A. Preus

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Reaction to Lecture II - Prof. Theo. J. Hartwig

As in yesterday's lecture, the essayist clearly, and necessarily, approached his subject from a perspective different from our own. Again, we sympathize with and share his concern for developments in his own synod. We are perhaps less troubled with such developments among ourselves, for example, the layman's discovery of his power, the disappearance of parochial schools, the waning emphasis of Biblical and Confessional studies at Lutheran colleges and seminaries, and the implied weakening of doctrinal discipline among theologians. Regarding several of these concerns, and especially regarding parochial school education, God has blessed our own synod with trends in the opposite direction.

I am skeptical about generalizing the statistics gained from a single questionnaire, as mentioned at the beginning of the essay. Undoubtedly, the statistics report an accurate picture of conditions at one place, but the situation may be quite reversed at another place where people have joined a congregation because of how the Word of God was preached at that place. We do find congregations where the ministry of the Word has been a dominant factor in stimulating and building up outward membership. And this must suffice in respect to the value of questionnaires and statistics: they give information about visible, tangible things, and that is all.

On the matter of the laity taking a more active role in managing the responsibilities of the congregation, the essayist is right. We should encourage more of this responsibility for lay people

and set out our priorities according to the example of the apostles in Acts 6. Already in 1914-1915, our synod was urged to pursue this course, namely, to engage members of the congregation not professionally trained in the ministry of the Word for managing the many other affairs of the church and the synod, but with no conspicuous results. The clergy remain dominant in all aspects of our synodical organization and administration.

I found most heart-warming the essayist's comments about using our Lutheran Confessions to reclaim our Lutheran heritage, for if we lose sight of our past, we lose our identity. In these days of religious enthusiasm and misguided Biblical fundamentalism, it cannot be emphasized too often that our Lutheran Confessions serve well in teaching us how to approach the Scriptures properly and where to find the right key to proper interpretation of Scripture.

On the other hand, I remain skeptical of the essayist's claim that reformation in the church can begin from the grass roots, from the lay membership at large, as if there are historical precedents for this. When he states that Luther and, by implication, the Confessions laid the responsibility for reform squarely on the laity, some documentation to support such a hypothesis would be desirable.

For the sake of stimulating discussion, I would ask whether reformation has ever happened in a manner as the essayist describes. He speaks of the power of the laity as a sleeping giant, and of the strong laical assertion in the sixteenth century Reformation. Though his statements do not intend to by-pass the fact that

reformation in the church is from the Lord, I question the advisability of speaking about a so-called power of the laity (an expression which sets clergy and laity at odds). I also question the credit given to a power of the laity in the sixteenth century. To my mind, the men professionally trained in theology stood behind the laymen and gave them the voice with which they spoke, whether at Augsburg in 1530, or in the Preface to the Book of Concord in 1580, or in the Formula of Concord in 1577, and so on right down the line. On this point of a reformation rising up from the laity, the essayist, to my mind, may be dealing with a will-o-the-wisp, unsupported by evidence and precedent from the past.

Reaction to Lecture II - Prof. Rudolph E. Honsey

Dr. Preus' second presentation, on THE ROLE OF THE LAITY, evoked this reactor's feelings of sympathy for both the clergy and the laity, initially for the former but more profoundly for the latter.

The opening paragraph, in no uncertain terms, told us what we have probably heard before, or at least may have been aware of. Because of its pungency as well as its brevity it is in order to repeat it. We quote:

"We clergymen are being deflated and cut down to size these days. I got a questionnaire recently, asking: 'Why did you join St. John's Church?' A few weeks later I got the results:

1. I was invited by a friend (a layman). 40%
2. I liked the people in the congregation. 20%
3. I liked the location. 20%
4. I liked the church building. 10%
5. I liked the Minister. 3%"

This is quite sobering, isn't it, assuming it represents a fair cross-section of people. Even allowing for an inadequate sampling, and even an unrepresentative sampling, it isn't very flattering to at least that particular pastor. Only if a pastor is strongly convinced that flattery or even a compliment is to be avoided like the plague can he feel other than uneasy about it. Any way you look at it, it does appear to tell us something.

In his lecture Dr. Preus makes a number of statements concerning trends in many churches

today which he feels are very disturbing. We would all, I am sure, share with him his deep concern and strong disappointment with those trends which are also affecting large segments of the Lutheran Church. The spirit of the world has unfortunately rubbed off on the visible church, and is also a constant threat and danger to sincere, believing Christians who strongly desire to retain the truth of God as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. All about us we see the pervading influence of many "isms" that threaten the Christian faith: Secularism, Humanism, Rationalism, Agnosticism, Atheism, Skepticism, Cynicism, Materialism, Relativism, Naturalism, and so forth. Our hearts truly go out to the pious Christians in whatever denomination they may outwardly find themselves, particularly when those who ought to be their spiritual leaders themselves do not believe what the Scriptures say, and in some cases are "blind leaders of the blind," but at worst are even deliberately misleading them. One shudders when one thinks of the denunciations that our Savior spoke out against such. In Matthew chapter 23, He devastatingly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, labeling them as "hypocrites." It is most sobering to read that chapter. In Matthew 7, verses 15-23, He condemned false prophets, calling them "wolves in sheep's clothing." The last three verses, 21-23, ought to make every preacher of God's Word sit up and think. There Jesus pointedly states: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day (Judgment Day), 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.'" (New International Version.)

Our feelings are surely with our lay people, because the world they live in is not an easy place for Christians. That is doubly true in the case of those who have as their spiritual leaders false teachers who do not accept the Word of God as His inspired Word, who deny the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible even though both the Old and New Testaments clearly attest to it, who deny the Isaianic authorship of the Book of Isaiah, who deny the historicity of the creation, the fall, the flood, and many other events related in the Bible as history, who deny miracles in both the Old Testament and the New, including the Virgin Birth of Jesus, His Resurrection from the Dead, and His Ascension into Heaven, who deny our own bodily resurrection on the last day, and so forth.

A very sobering picture of the plight of people today is painted in the two opening paragraphs of the last chapter of an excellent book written by our honored lecturer, Dr. Herman Preus. That book, available in our Lutheran Synod Book Store, is entitled A THEOLOGY TO LIVE BY. In that book he draws on the voluminous writings of Dr. Martin Luther, and applies them very well to the life of the Christian. The last chapter is entitled "Immortality and Resurrection." Permit me to quote the two opening paragraphs of that chapter. While we wish it were not so, we shall have to admit that the situation is very much as the author pictures it.

"What a strange world we live in! He who made heaven and earth and created man in His image continues to let the sun shine and the rain fall and the earth provide food and clothing enough for all His creatures. He offers life and love, peace and plenty to all men. But men choose death rather

than life, darkness rather than light. And there is the smell of death all around us. It is like the world at the end of the Thirty Years' War. The very air they breathed reeked with the stench of disease, bloodshed, and death. Now we find ourselves in a generation whose moral sense has been dulled, whose hope for a world of peace and justice has been snuffed out, whose reverence for life has been killed. Here is a generation brought up on two world wars and an endless ongoing slaughter in various parts of the world, a generation breathing an air so polluted that the password has become 'survival,' a generation so dehumanized by technocracy that man has become a slave to his own inventiveness. The language of the media of communication is the language of violence, tregedy, revolution, death. Universi-ties offer seminars on death.

"The church too seems to be catching the plague. During the Passion season we follow the Lord in-differently to Jerusalem. We scoff at the dis-ciples who 'forsook Him and fled.' But we our-selves seem to get bogged down on Holy Saturday. We never seem to reach the empty tomb to hear the angel say, 'He is risen.' We creak out of Jerusalem with the two weary disciples on the road to Emmaus. But we appear to have left them before the Stranger joined them. And so our hearts never burn like theirs. We look around in the church for signs of awakening and life. JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR explodes on Broadway and Jesus People tell us, 'This is it. Christ is breaking down the barriers.' But the curtain goes down and He is still in the grave. A leading church periodical puts out an Easter issue, and the lead article by a theological professor pro-claims that the biggest obstacle to new life in the church is the naive idea of Christians that

Jesus actually rose from the grave in the flesh. Death, not life, is the theme song that is dinned into our ears by the world and too often by the churches." (pp. 174, 175.)

We have all heard about the "GOD IS DEAD" theology. Indirectly at least that theology is being proclaimed from many pulpits in so-called Christian churches today. We need to hear and proclaim from the rooftops the true theology: "GOD IS ALIVE! JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD!" We need to confess, as we sing in the opening stanza of the beautiful hymn by Samuel Medley, No. 200 in THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL:

"I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living Head."

There are so many important observations and statements made by our speaker in his presentation that I shall be very selective and focus on only a few. I am sure that my fellow-reactors and others in the audience will react to those that I omit and probably also to the few that I have selected as well as to some of my reactions.

That formerly conservative publishing houses are issuing publications that deny the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ and other clear Biblical teachings is deplorable. We surely share our lecturer's deep concern over that. It is also very regrettable that the language in new hymnals has been watered down so as to weaken the clear confessions in earlier hymnals. Similarly it is unfortunate that on their own volition pastors will change the rubric "Let us confess our holy Christian faith" to something like "Let us

make a statement of our faith," or "Let us declare our Christian faith," as Dr. Preus also mentioned.

Laymen as well as clergymen ought to discuss seriously and take action against any false teaching that is spread in the midst of the people. A number of such false teachings have been mentioned by the speaker today, including a denial of the divine character of the Bible, of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, and of miracles, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. I would underline Dr. Preus' plea for the laymen to rise up in protest against pastors and professors who mislead them; and there are many such instances in the church today, both inside and outside the Lutheran Church.

One question that Dr. Preus raises is a very serious one that laymen and clergymen alike ought to consider soberly, because it is pertinent to most church bodies today, in sharp contrast to conditions a generation or more ago. Today everyone knows that divorce is a very common thing. With every year that passes it seems as if the number of marriages that end in divorce is rising. In every case it is unfortunate, whether the fault lies largely with one of the divorced people or equally with both. But it really becomes a very serious matter when a pastor is divorced. Dr. Preus frankly and correctly states: "I look around the Lutheran Church and see much theological confusion. I wonder why divorced pastors are permitted to continue as shepherds of the flock." (Para. 44) There is a clear Scripture passage that speaks to this issue. Paul tells Timothy, and also us: "Now a pastor must be blameless, the husband of one wife, not drinking too much wine, a man of good judgment and fine behavior, kind to guests, able to teach, no

drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not one who loves money. He should manage his own family well and have his children obey him as he treats them very seriously. If anyone doesn't know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:2-5, in Beck's AN AMERICAN TRANSLATION)

One part of Dr. Preus' presentation that I appreciated in particular was the section on the everyday life of the Christian. A statement that was brief and to the point, but full of meaning, was: "The Christian has a unique life-style." Let's give that some thought. How true is it in your case? Mine? Perhaps it can give all of us some uneasy moments when we examine our own lives. Yet it ought to be true. Jesus speaks of His believers as "the salt of the earth and the light of the world." Matt. 5:14,16. In his aforementioned book, A THEOLOGY TO LIVE BY, Dr. Preus gives considerable emphasis to this important subject. In Chapter 7, entitled "Righteous but Still a Sinner," he describes the paradoxical situation in which a believer finds himself, and the great struggle that every child of God experiences, being a sinner from his birth and committing sins daily, yet striving by the grace and help of God to live a God-pleasing life. The author draws largely from Romans, chapter 7, in which Paul describes his own situation. Then, in the last of the three major sections of the book, entitled "The Christian Life -- Its Dynamic and Destiny," Dr. Preus devotes over sixty pages to the following three subjects: "The Life We Live -- Under the Cross," "The Life We Receive -- The Means of Grace," and "Immortality and Resurrection," from which we have already quoted the two opening paragraphs.

In both the book and this second lecture Dr. Preus gives attention to the Means of Grace: the Gospel and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. That is very important. One of the teachings that sharply differentiate true Lutheranism from other Protestant religions is the emphasis on the Sacraments as Means of Grace. If we are to continue as spiritual heirs of Martin Luther and true children of the Reformation, we, like Luther, must go back to our Baptism for assurance of life and forgiveness, as our lecturer put it. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, we have no special Sacrament of Penance. We don't need it, for we have our Baptism. As my colleague Prof. Glenn E. Reichwald stated in a conference paper a year ago last January, "Lutherans must not only say, 'I was baptized,' but they must also say, 'I am baptized.' Luther never thought of his Baptism in the past tense only, but he saw continued blessing." (THE LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY, Vol. XVII, No. 2, Winter 1976-77, pp. 45,46) We therefore do not re-baptize unless the first baptism was not in the name of the Triune God or was otherwise not valid.

On the other hand, we do use the Sacrament of the Altar repeatedly. Jesus commanded His disciples, and by clear inference, all other believers, to partake of His body and blood not only once, or even once in a while, but "often." We are therefore invited and urged to do so. However, we must also keep in mind the words of St. Paul urging us to examine ourselves carefully so that we do not eat and drink damnation to ourselves, for it is His very body and blood and not a mere snack of bread and wine that we receive in the Sacrament. When we worthily receive His sacrament as it is properly administered, we receive great spiritual benefit. We must, of course,

remember that worthiness is not the same as sinlessness, but consists of a true repentance over our sin and true faith in the word of promise. For examining ourselves, the Great Reformer has given us a good guide in his Twenty Christian Questions.

Some of the tasks of laymen are very formidable when there is a lack of proper leadership in the clergy, particularly in doctrinal matters. Our essayist expresses that very well in Paragraph 68, which provides food for serious thought.

All of us present here today ought to appreciate the high goals that our speaker has set for laymen. None of us should underestimate the potential that we have in a group of dedicated Christian lay people. Decades ago, before countless magazines flooded the market, before T V and even radio, consecrated Christian laymen and women would devote considerable time to studying their Bible, hymn book, and even the Book of Concord. There were those among the laity who did know the issues, and could discuss them even though they may have been reluctant to speak publicly. If it was important then, shouldn't it be important now? Fortunately, there appears to be an upsurge in interest in the Confessions now as we are observing the Quadricentennial of that monumental work, THE BOOK OF CONCORD. The official publications of the many Lutheran church bodies from time to time have presented articles dealing with the background, history, and basic doctrines of portions of THE BOOK OF CONCORD. In our own midst Prof. B. W. Teigen has so far written three study guides on portions of THE BOOK OF CONCORD. These are being used extensively in congregations of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Books by Dr. N. S. Tjernagel, Dr. Robert Preus, Dr. David

Scaer, and Dr. Eugene Klug, all of whom have participated in previous Reformation lectures, are available in our Lutheran Synod Book Store.

We also appreciate what Dr. Preus has said today regarding the value of the Confessions to a Christian. We need to be anchored in the solid ground of the Scriptures, and the Confessions are a great help to us in studying the Scriptures and becoming more soundly indoctrinated. Our speaker has in a practical manner summarized the value of the Lutheran Confessions for one who would be a true Lutheran Christian. We refer specifically to Paragraph 78 of his second lecture.

It is very important that we stand for something, and do not cave in to the spirit of unionism and ecumenism that is all around us. Just this past week the newspapers carried a report of serious thoughts of a union between a branch of the Lutheran Church in this country and the Roman Catholic Church. This has the support of some laymen as well as clergymen, according to certain quotations in those reports. Has the Roman Catholic Church departed from the position it took at the Council of Trent just after the death of Martin Luther? No doubt in external matters it has made changes, some of them fairly substantial; but has it changed in the essential doctrines? We would say "No." There remains then only one possibility if such a merger is ever to be effected: that the Lutheran Church which contemplates such a merger make the change, and enter into the fold of the Roman Catholic Church. And what does that mean? It means, for that Lutheran denomination, that the work of the Reformation in its doctrinal aspect is undone, and that the church is back where it was over 460 year ago, except for the improvement

that has been made in the character of the Pope and a few other non-doctrinal considerations.

Such a recent movement ought to have a sobering influence on all who would be true Lutherans. As Lutherans, we want to be ecumenical in the good sense, for the Gospel is for all people. But we dare never compromise the teachings of the Bible. To do so would be to ignore the warning of God in Deut. 4:2 and 12:32 and in Rev. 22:18,19. And if we would claim to maintain our own teachings and yet outwardly declare to be in doctrinal fellowship with those who diametrically oppose those teachings, we would be dishonest and hypocritical. Without any quotations from Luther, we can be sure of what he would say in that regard.

It has happened before, as our speaker clearly has shown us, that at a time when the clergy proved to be weak, the laity was strong, and asserted itself. It is a fact that in any church body, when error enters, it is generally first through the theological faculty, then through the clergy in the parish ministry, and finally it moves to the laity. We have seen it in our own lifetime. Let the lay people, then, on the basis of the sure Word of God, not hesitate to assert themselves when true doctrine is at stake. For, as Luther asserted, a layman with his Bible is much stronger than the Pope without it. I feel that Dr. Preus has led us to the same conclusion. For that, as well as whatever else he has said to help us, we are indebted to him, and thank him.

Reaction to Lecture II - Dr. Milton Zagel

HOW THE UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD IS TO DEAL
WITH THE ECCLESIASTICAL PITFALLS OF THE PRESENT

In my former comments, while enumerating an assortment of "abschreckende Beispiele" (perturbing examples) of former derilections, misapprehensions, and weaknesses, which were allowed to stand in the way of the Church's number-one assignment, I mentioned, in connection with the manifestation of spiritual life on the nation's secular campuses, that things have changed drastically in recent years -- and not only on campuses. Something new has been added, and it has to be taken into account. The emphasis has shifted from "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Ps. 14, 1) to ". . . whose God is their belly, . . ." (Phil. 3, 19). There have been two developments:

1. The authority of Scripture has been discredited and ruled out as never before by the narcissistic me-generation.

2. The Church, having now lost its moorings (Scriptural authority) and its former base of operations (the me-generation having moved onto the premises formerly occupied by the Universal Priesthood), has lost its reason for existence and is groveling before its new master with the hope of maintaining itself intact -- for reasons which defy the imagination.

In October 1943 (35 years ago) an issue of the Alumni Bulletin of the University of Iowa

contained a number of synopses of lectures delivered for the University's so-called "unique course," "The World Today." One of these synopses distressed me deeply. Speaking on the subject, "An Ethics* for Today," Professor Everett Hall suggested the postulate: "Anything freely chosen by an individual is, by the fact of being freely chosen, good, and . . . any such good is equal to any other."

I assumed at the time -- Existentialism** was still very new in this country -- that it was just another of those aberrations that one encounters frequently among spiritually mooringless intellectuals and hoped that it would fade away quickly. What I did not know at the time, but have observed often since then, is that if a prestigious school comes up with a new gimmick, the sluice gates of me-tooism across the country immediately open wide. Nobody wants to be found wanting. I could have taken for granted then, as I should now, that by the time Iowa got it, the academic system had already been permeated with it, and soon the general public would adopt it.

*Random House Dictionary defines ethics as follows: "Ethics (usually construed as sing.) is that branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions."

**Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary defines Existentialism as: "A philosophy that stresses the active role of the will rather than of reason in confronting problems posed by a hostile universe."

I thought at the time that if this diabolical ethics should gain credence, it would do away with all authority, Scriptural and otherwise, and with that authority, all conception of sin, guilt, responsibility, accountability, etc., in the thinking of the Western world and foster an anarchical attitude generally. It took a few years coming, but it arrived, as you know. In the Church, even the third use of the Law was challenged. In yesterday's comment I offered Voltaire's observation that if homo sapiens does not have a god, he creates one -- an agreeable one -- because he creates his new god in his own image, a god that will always approve and never interfere. The narcissistic me-generation was being ushered in, but we were unaware of it. Ego became god, and the words "I feel" replaced the "thou shalt" of the decalogue.

Oddly enough, the resulting erosion of standards taking place in society (church, family, school, government, the courts, professions such as journalism, the armed services, entertainment, language usage, etc.) was obscured and went largely unobserved because, from my point of view, simultaneously the high standards in the exact and applied sciences (anything involving computation) were growing ever higher. An astronaut in space could not give vent to his feelings as to what buttons he pushed and dials he turned if he hoped to return to terra firma -- in the navigational computations he had absolutes -- but in his personal life he could have complete freedom of choice, without regard for any absolute prescription. Rationalism, which drove our forebears to this country, has now given way to something so irrational that it defies description.

Instead of growing faint-hearted in the face of

this development, we must realize that the Holy Spirit can cut through the new layer of egocentricity as easily as through preceding ones. The Gospel has not lost its cutting edge.

So then, coming back to the Divine Commission given to the Universal Priesthood, we are dealing with three verbs: 1) κηρυσσω -- announce (not argue, not defend, not reason, but proclaim after the manner of a herald, "always with a suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed" -- Thayer); 2) μαθητευω -- make a disciple; and 3) διδασκω -- just plain "teach" them everything (no selectivity here) that Jesus had taught the twelve and others.

In the Apology (Triglotta, p. 400) we have: "There is nothing that keeps people with the Church more effectively than the good sermon." I emphasize "good." It has occurred to me while reading Professors Metzger, Stöckhardt, Fuerbringer, et al. in the Homiletic Mag. /perennial church shoppers must sometimes, between churches, depend on the Homiletic Mag. for spiritual sustenance/that the traditional structured sermon leaves one flat when compared with the sermon studies which are interesting all the way. The more I listen to sermons, the more I believe that the topical theme-and-parts sermon has just about run its course and should give way to a more exegetical exposition. The topical sermon suggests speech, rhetoric, oratory, even some spell-binding, the preacher saying what he has to say. It offers too much opportunity to burble gobbledegook. The exegetical sermon suggests teaching, saying what is in Scripture, verse by verse, where the Universal Priesthood can get hold of it without contending with a ballast of verbiage.

The object of good preaching is 1) the winning of souls, and 2) the development of an informed Universal Priesthood that grows in grace and learns to differentiate between shepherds and hirelings, as Luther suggested in his Recht der Gemeinde (title abridged).

The underpinning of an informed Universal Priesthood is a sound confirmation instruction. What has become of catecheses and the memorization of proof texts? At first hearing, those little essays on doctrinal points that we hear indifferently read on Passion Sunday by the confirmands as a substitute for catechetical examination sound as if we may be rearing a new generation of Melancthons, but after a while they all sound alike, and one wonders who is trying to impress or fool whom. Memorized proof texts, however, are the "whole armour of God," complete with helmet and sword (Eph. 6, 13ff), with which the Universal Priesthood "may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

And if a catechumen is held to memorizing, which translation is he to memorize? Luther's translation, especially his final approved version of 1545 was a natural in German, because Luther was a linguistic genius as well as a believing theologian and scholar. The only person who did not use Luther's German translation was Luther. When he quoted, he translated the Hebrew and Greek texts, which he knew from memory, as he went along. The most rewarding paper I ever heard at a Modern Language Association convention was one by a Yale professor entitled "Luther's Unpublished Bible." His thesis was that if you were to put together all of Luther's off-the-cuff Biblical quotations, you would have practically a whole Bible -- and a

Since standards in general are losing altitude, there is a very discernible effort to bring all church practices to the level of the hoi polloi. You find the lowering of standards in sermons, where a kind of folksy show-and-tell palaver takes over; you find it in the so-called special music, where the yang-yang and rhythms of what passes for popular music are much in evidence -- even bongo drums; you find it in what used to be liturgical prayers, where the Agenda prayers (faulty, in spots, to be sure) are replaced by harangues in which God is given amazing instructions, the chief one seemingly being not to allow anything to obstruct the steady flow of creature comforts; you find it in the capricious observance of the ecclesiastical year, where the monotonous "30 days hath September" checkerboard of the Julian calendar is preferred to the rich, meaningful church year calendar -- minus superstitions and saints' days, of course -- where Sundays and seasons are spiritually significant /Super Sunday is hardly a worthy substitute for a Sunday after Epiphany/; you find it in the frenzied eagerness of the local divine to be "one of the boys" by insisting that he be called by his first name; and you find it in the liberties taken with the worship rubrics, hymns, and chorales, where the suggestions for the revision of the Lutheran Hymnal speak volumes -- revisionism* at its worst.

*Revisionism: A carefully orchestrated effort to recast any generally accepted doctrine or practice in order to make it fit a desired ideology. (In the spiritual realm it always starts with: "Yea, hath God said. . .?" -- and then the adjustments are soon forthcoming.)

In connection with our church heritage, let me add the following: Just as those mighty hymns "The Bridegroom soon will call us" and "Wake, awake, for night is flying," together with their melodies, set the stage and create the mood for the Advent season, in the same way many other hymns and chorales are inextricably associated with aspects of our spiritual life in the church year. I should like to suggest that the hymns and chorales, tunes as well as texts, are as much a heritage as the Confessions themselves. For one thing, they are much closer to the Universal Priesthood, and, for another, thanks to Gutenberg's enterprise, they make their writers and composers of long ago and far away places our contemporaries and neighbors, with whom we can commune at any time or place, in church or in a foxhole, because they almost regularly express what is in our hearts so much better than we can, and, therefore, under God, have become towers of strength to posterity.

Luther promoted lay scrutiny of pastors to keep the ship on an even keel. How much clout does the Universal Priesthood have? According to Luther, who was 40 years old when he wrote on the subject, the Universal Priesthood has a great deal. After a pastor has been called and installed, the Universal Priesthood sits in judgment upon his ministry. Ideally, it is a simple system. A God-fearing congregation calls a God-fearing pastor, who teaches the God-fearing members what to look out for in his ministrations. If, however, the congregation draws a hireling -- and according to Affirm we may have many of them -- you can be sure that the members will not be taught what to look out for, and the resulting disintegration sets in fast -- unbelievably fast, as we have seen.

good one -- because these were spur-of-the-moment offerings that captured the substance of the text.

It would be fine if each member of the Universal Priesthood were so familiar with the original text that he could make up his own translation, as Luther did, but that is hardly feasible. In English we now have a situation reminiscent of the German before Luther, when there were at least fourteen translations in High German dialects and five in Low (or however you may wish to count them), but not one of which ever got off the ground. The same situation obtained in Latin, I understand, before St. Jerome.

One can afford a plethora of translations, if there is one standard anchor text, a cynosure rendition, which all have in common, which serves as home base, even if certain renderings are fearfully archaic or even ill-advised. It is precisely the unexpected or archaic word, as we of the failing-memory set know, that we remember and look up in our concordances. I refer to such words as "conversation," "unprofitable servants," or even "gospel," which, having been explained many times, have come to have distinctive meanings. Other expressions, at the mere hearing, conjure up entire scenes and situations. E.g., "Be of good cheer" brings to mind the comforting words of Jesus and not a Pepsi-Cola commercial.

The idea is often suggested in this pseudo-egalitarian age that a translation in the vernacular, possibly even in lowbrow, makes everything "crystal clear." That is consummate nonsense -- as if the deep things of God, which St. Paul himself could see only "through a glass, darkly" could ever be crystal clear to the sin-bound, limited mental capacity of man. It is the

Holy Spirit that causes it to make sense. Without the Holy Spirit's indwelling, the Gospel remains utter foolishness to the Greek -- and St. Paul is not singling out a stupid nationality but an ethnic contingency that had developed quite a reputation for its ability to think in the abstract. It was not the *κολυνη* that bothered them. I do not think that the Ethiopian eunuch had language problems either.

New efforts at translation are fine -- the more the merrier -- in that they point up study, meditation, and an eagerness to grasp and comprehend, as God gives us the light. But for memorization, why not stay with what Time recently called the "matchless pith and vigor of the King James"? (Spet. 18, 1978) In an egalitarian age it sets the Word of God apart from the language of the crowd.

Language usage itself has undergone a transformation in recent years, as if to keep up with the deterioration of our other standards. Words have not only lost their dictionary meanings but are used irresponsibly in a kind of hit-and-run, rabbit-punch fashion, to create effects. This is serious because God has elected to communicate with us through meaningful words, through His Word, which makes it possible for us to commune with Him. We have already noted the liberties taken with the traditional meanings of words by liberal teachers and preachers. In our communication with them we are back to Humpty Dumpty in Alice in Wonderland: "'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less.'"

The basic unit of energy in the Universal Priesthood is not the congregation or a pressure group but the individual believer. Believers, in turn, band together to form congregations and synods. These larger groups have little choice but to adopt the democratic method, with majority rule depending on individual votes. In ecclesiastical circles, as well as in secular, the democratic chain is no stronger than its weakest links. In a democracy, Santa Claus, a fictional character who does not take responsibility for the long haul, is a very persuasive vote-getter among the uninformed and gullible. Voting is an extremely unreliable procedure in the Church, as we have seen repeatedly in recent years. The strength and vitality of the "visible church" depends, under God, on the motivation, dedication, and information of the individual believing member who will stand alone, if need be, as so many martyrs have in the past. He does not need to be a theologian, but he needs the six chief parts plus proof texts in order to "try the spirits, whether they be of God." We are back to Luther's Preface to the Small Catechism. The "called and ordained servants of the Word" come and go, but the Universal Priesthood goes on and on as long as it has the definitive word, "It is written," as its authority, and heeds the advice of Jesus as a daily reminder: "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13, 37)