

IOWA DISTRICT EAST

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL FOR THE CHURCH

Written for the Laity of our Congregations

VOL. 3, ISSUE 1

JULY 2025

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY MINISTRY

IN THIS ISSUE...

THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY AS DIVINE GIFT AND PREROGATIVE	1
ON REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS OF PASTORS AND SUPPORT FROM HEARERS	5
SPEAKING OF HYMN - LSB 614.....	8
BOOK REVIEW: THE HAMMER OF GOD	10
BOOK REVIEW: LETTERS FROM A PASTOR'S HEART	12
PHILIP'S DAUGHTERS: UNDERSTANDING PROPHETESSES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ..	15

Editor's Introduction

Article IV of the Augsburg Confession has often been called, "The article on which the Church stands or falls." Article IV teaches and confesses how sinners are declared righteous and forgiven, solely because of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, "Our churches teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ, sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight." The article also cites chapters three and four of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans as Scriptural proof of this eternal truth. God be praised that our Lord Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, offered Himself unto death as the atoning sacrifice for all the sins of men and was raised for our justification. St. Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 15:17, "If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"

The question then becomes: How are men to obtain this saving faith? This question is answered in the following article, Article V of the Augsburg Confession, "That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake." Thus, the Office of the Holy Ministry is a gift from God. Pastors are gifts given to congregations by God. Pastors are God's instruments, which He works through, by their faithful preaching of His Word and through their rightful administration of the Sacraments, to create and strengthen faith in individuals.

This issue of Iowa District East's *Theological Journal for the Church* takes up the topic of The Office of the Holy Ministry. Who instituted this holy Office and for what purpose? How are congregations to care for and support their called pastors? Who is he who is rightly called to preach and teach publicly in the congregation? The essayists in this issue answer these questions on the basis of Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, the Church Fathers, as well as the Church's hymnody. Also, in this issue, the reader will also enjoy two relevant book reviews on the topic of the Pastoral Office and pastoral care.

Special thanks is due to President Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders as the general editor of this project, Mr. Daniel Sanchez who serves as the layout editor, and to all my clergy brothers who have spent generous amounts of time writing and researching to make this project happen. We are also extremely grateful to the Rev. Zelwyn Heide, who serves at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Hannover, North Dakota and Zion Lutheran Church in New Salem, North Dakota for allowing us to publish his timely essay titled, "Philip's Daughters: Understanding Prophetesses in the New Testament," which was presented at The Calov Conference last year in 2024.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of IDE's *Theological Journal for the Church* and that you find it edifying.

Rev. Thomas C. Van Hemert
Managing Editor
Pentecost Monday, 2025

Theological Journal for the Church is a publication of Iowa District East of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The articles are written by pastors in the district for the edification and education of our laity. The Executive Editor is Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders, President of Iowa District East. The Managing Editor is Rev. Thomas Van Hemert.

**All correspondence may be directed to:
Theological Journal for the Church
c/o Iowa District East
1100 Blairs Ferry Rd
Marion, IA 52302**

The Office of the Ministry as Divine Gift and Prerogative

Pastor Samuel Beltz, MA. T. L.

Introduction

God has always wanted a people for Himself. God's divine desire and mission for this people are the cornerstone and bedrock of the Christian understanding and practice of The Office of Public Ministry/Preaching Office (heretofore "The Office"). In this article we will develop a right understanding of the Office and the Call to serve in this vocation.

In the first place it is important to note that it is always God who "calls" human beings into vocations and stations in life. This is normal. There is no benefit to arguing that the nature of "the call" is categorically different from any other "call" to a vocation. What is beneficial, and the aim of this article, is believing that the task of The Office *is* [emphasis added] categorically different from other vocations. Within the Church there is no higher office, as Martin Luther acknowledges, "Therefore, we who are in the ministry of the Word have this comfort, that we have a heavenly and holy office; being legitimately called to this, we prevail over all the gates of hell."¹ It is by means of this Office that God is still at work by the power of His Word and Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, sanctify, and keep a people for His own treasured possession. Here we begin to see that this article will be about The Call and about The Office. God has vested special authority in His Church, the Keys, to call Officers to execute the duties and responsibilities of the Office.

Pastor Samuel Beltz, M.A. T. L. is pastor of
St. John Lutheran Church in Oskaloosa, IA

Biblical Origins of the Office of the Ministry

The Lutheran understanding of the Office of the Ministry is grounded in both Old and New Testament assertions. We will briefly discuss Numbers 11:16–30², and a few New Testament passages describing The Office.

Numbers 11:16–30 demonstrates that God Himself establishes the Office of Ministry out of His people. In response to Moses' plea, God commands the selection of seventy elders to assist in governance (v.16). This act of divine appointment underscores that the ministry is not a human construct but a divine institution, a principle central to Christian/Lutheran theology. Just as God chose the elders "to bear the burden" of the people and work of prophecy, He institutes the Office to proclaim His Word and administer His Sacraments (AC V; Ephesians 4:11).³ The Lutheran Confessions affirm that the Pastoral Office exists "by virtue of biblical command, theological necessity, and practical advantage for the body of Christ."⁴

The selection of seventy elders also parallels New Testament patterns, such as Christ's appointment of the apostles (Luke 6:13) and the seventy disciples (Luke 10:1), reinforcing the continuity of God's establishment of a public ministry. For Lutherans, this supports the claim that the Office of the Ministry is a "status ordained by God" for proclaiming His Word and Will.

The process of selecting the seventy elders highlights the importance of a structured, divinely sanctioned call—the process and the man must be trustworthy. God instructs Moses to "gather" the elders, who were already recognized as leaders among the people (v.

16), and to bring them to the tent of meeting, the place of God's presence (v. 24). This formal act of selection and consecration reflects the Lutheran emphasis on a "regular call" *rite vocatus*, mediated through the Church, as articulated in AC XIV. The elders do not assume their roles independently but are appointed through God's command, Moses' instruction, and the congregation of Israel's mediation, ensuring order and legitimacy.

The purpose of the elders' appointment is to "bear the burden of the people," alongside Moses (v. 17), relieving his overwhelming responsibility and ensuring that the people's needs are met (pastoral care). This reflects the evangelical character of the Office of the Ministry as highlighted by Lutheran theology, which exists to deliver God's gracious work by Word and Sacrament. The Lutheran Confessions emphasize that the Ministry is for the sake of justification, as the Gospel and Sacraments are the Holy Spirit's work for faith (AC IV & V). Just as the elders assisted Moses in leading the people toward the Promised Land, preaching, teaching, and maintaining godly order, so present day pastors guide the Church to the nourishing pasture of Christ's Word and Sacraments by proclaiming the Gospel. Moses' wish that "all the Lord's people were prophets" (v. 29) foreshadows the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2), yet Lutheran theology clarifies that this universal gift of the Spirit does not eliminate the divine prerogative for a distinct Pastoral Office. The Spirit works through the people of God (The Church) to call the public minister ensuring the orderly delivery of the Gospel, guarding against false doctrine, and chaos.

In the New Testament, Jesus authorizes the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the means of grace—Word and Sacrament Ministry—and entrusts that preaching and administration to called ministers. Several New Testament passages establish this divine institution by Jesus. In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus commands the Apostles, "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." This Great Commission establishes the tasks of preaching and administering Sacraments as central to the Ministry. Similarly, John 20:21–23 records Jesus commissioning the Apostles: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am

sending you... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them." Here, Christ grants the authority to forgive sins, tying the Ministry to the proclamation of forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:11–12 further clarifies the purpose of the ministry: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."⁵ This passage highlights the Office of the Holy Ministry as a divine gift for the edification and care of the Church. Additionally, Titus 1:5 instructs, "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you," indicating the establishment of an ordered ministry through a proper call. These passages collectively affirm that the Office of the Ministry is divinely instituted to deliver the Gospel and Sacraments to God's chosen people—the Church—creating and sustaining faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Again, Lutherans distinguish this public Office of the Holy Ministry from the Universal Priesthood of all believers, as established in 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." While all Christians are priests with direct access to God by faith, the Office of the Holy Ministry is a specific vocation instituted by God through Jesus Christ for the public preaching and administering Sacraments for the Church. All Christians have a "calling" to sanctity and holiness, not all Christians are called to be Pastors and exercise the public duties of the Office. This Officer requires a Divine Call⁶ mediated by Christ's Church to this elevated divinely inspired ecclesial office. This biblical foundation shapes the Lutheran doctrine, emphasizing the necessity of an ordained ministry formed by a trustworthy and time-tested ecclesial process, ensuring the faithful delivery of God's Word in and among God's Christian people.

The Augsburg Confession and the Doctrine of the Ministry

The Augsburg Confession (1530), drafted by Philipp Melancthon, endorsed by Luther and the Civil Rulers sympathetic to the Reformation, formalizes the Lutheran doctrine of the Ministry in Articles V and XIV. Article V states: "To obtain such faith God instituted

the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the Sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel.” This article establishes the Ministry as God’s instrument for delivering the means of grace to God’s people in congregations of the Church. Hereby, Lutherans condemn views, such as Enthusiasm, which teaches that the Holy Spirit works apart from the Preaching of the Word and administration of Sacrament, such as, the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century.⁷

Article XIV addresses the necessity of a proper call: “Concerning church order they teach that no one should publicly teach or preach or administer the Sacraments in the church without a regular call.” This succinct statement counters accusations, like those of Johannes Eck, that Lutherans rejected ordination or equated all believers with public ministers. The term *rite vocatus* “regularly called” implies a call through proper ecclesiastical or secular authority, though the Confession leaves flexibility in defining this authority, reflecting the varied practices of the 16th century. The Augsburg Confession thus affirms the divine institution and mandate of the ministry while emphasizing order and accountability in its exercise.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531) further defends this doctrine, clarifying that the Lutheran rejection of Roman Catholic ordination does not negate the need for an ordered ministry or Call to the Office. Melancthon argued that the Ministry is essential for the Church’s unity and the faithful administration of the Sacraments, aligning with Luther’s teachings and grounding the doctrine in Scripture.

C.F.W Walther and Missouri Synod Contributions

C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and arguably its most influential theologian, significantly shaped the Lutheran Doctrine of the Ministry in America. His work *Church and Ministry* (1852) remains a definitive text, reaffirmed by the LCMS in 2001 as its official position. Walther utilized Luther’s teachings, emphasizing the distinction between the Universal Priesthood and the public Office of the Ministry: “The holy preaching office [Predigtamt] or pastoral office [Pfarramt] is an office distinct from the office of priest [Priesteramt],

which all believers have.”⁸ This distinction addressed confusion in 19th-century America, where revivalist movements blurred the lines between lay and ordained ministry, a confusion that is very present still today among American “Evangelicals” and many so-called Reformed traditions.

Walther’s theology was forged in the context of the Saxon immigration of 1838–1839, led by Martin Stephan, whose removal for misconduct created a crisis of ecclesiastical authority. Walther’s leadership in the Altenburg Debate (1841) clarified that the Church exists where the Word is rightly preached and Sacraments rightly administered, and that the ministry is divinely instituted to serve this purpose.

Walther insisted on the necessity of a divine call, aligning with Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession. He wrote, “The ministry of the Word is conferred by God through the congregation as the possessor of all ecclesiastical power, or the power of the keys, by means of its call.”⁹ Here Walther rightly affirms that God has vested special authority in the Church rather than a hierarchical structure, reflecting the Christian doctrine that the Church and the pastors are symbiotic. Walther also emphasized the minister’s accountability to Scripture and the Confessions. The pastor is to be held accountable by a well-informed and pious laity within the structure of a local calling congregation but also by the wider ecclesiastical structure, both set in place by God in the Church. In our case, this would include officers of the local congregation, pastors in the circuit, the Circuit Visitor (as elected by those circuit congregations and pastors). This would also include the District Presidium as elected by the whole geographic district of laity and clergy. All these work in harmony and concord for the building up and maintenance of the Kingdom of God.

Contemporary Issues and Applications

The LCMS continues to grapple with the application of this doctrine. We are concerned with answering a few simple questions for our own lives as Christians in our congregations.

Does the Church need pastors?

Answer: Yes. The Church and the Office are symbiotic. You cannot have one without the other. Or we might answer like Martin Luther who said, “It is an

unsufferable blasphemy to reject the public ministry or to say that people can become holy without sermons and Church. This involves a destruction of the Church and rebellion against ecclesiastical order; such upheavals must be warded off and punished like all other revolts.”¹⁰ Luther strongly defends the Public Ministry as essential to the Church’s existence, arguing that rejecting it undermines the means by which God delivers grace through preaching and the Sacraments. He views the ministry as a divine institution that maintains ecclesiastical order.

How do we know we have the right pastor?

Answer: Since God has vested a special authority in His Church—the Keys—whenever the Church calls a pastor to serve, you can be assured, he *is the right Pastor* [emphasis added], unless one does not believe God is Lord over everything. Or, we could answer like Luther, “The sending is done through man, for example, when a city, a prince, or a congregation calls someone into office. But at the same time this person is sent by God.”¹¹ Luther clarifies that while human agents (e.g., congregations or authorities) may issue the call to the Ministry, the ultimate authority and sending comes from God, making the Office of the Holy Ministry divinely ordained, yet mediated through man.



¹Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535 Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 26, in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, vols. 1-30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1976), 20.

²All Biblical references are from ESV, unless otherwise noted.

³Kolb, Robert and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

⁴David Maxwell, Class Lecture: *Lutheran Confessions*, April, 2008.

⁵Author’s translation of Ephesians 4:11-12, which is supported by the KJV and Wycliff translations.

⁶Romans 10:15, “And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”

⁷Modern day Anabaptists would include the Mennonites, the Amish, and the Church of the Brethren, just to name a few.

⁸C.F.W. Walther, *Church and Ministry (Kirche und Amt) Witnesses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the Question of the Church and the Ministry*, tr. J.T. Mueller (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1987), 161.

⁹Walther, *Church and Ministry*, 219.

¹⁰Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, tr. E.M. Lamond (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1915), 126.

¹¹Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535 Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 22, in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, vols. 1-30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1976), 482.

On Reasonable Expectations of Pastors and Support from Hearers

Pastor Aaron Hambleton

In his book on the preaching task, *Telling People What to Think*, the Rev. Heath Curtis gives an apt “Cocktail Party Job-Description” of a pastor, “I get paid to tell people what to think.”¹ An older, but admittedly less snappy, job description exists for the Office of the Holy Ministry: “That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake.”²

What expectations should Christians have of their pastor, who serves in this Office for the purpose of teaching the Gospel, and administering the Sacraments?

In his *Loci Theologici* on the Church, Martin Chemnitz, a sixteenth century Lutheran theologian, lays out five requirements, which we shall consider as reasonable expectations, for a faithful pastor: (1) a call; (2), the ability to teach; (3) faithfulness or constancy in teaching over against the wolves; (4) gifts; (5) piety of life.³ The first two of these requirements shall suffice to determine reasonable expectations of a pastor, as the faithfulness in teaching against adversaries, gifts, and the piety of life can be considered further excursions on aptitude to teach.

Pastor Aaron Hambleton is pastor at St. Paul
Lutheran Church in Eldora, IA.

Concerning the call, the Holy Spirit requires that preachers be sent, condemns those who preach without being sent, and exhorts Christians to hear only those who have been sent. (Romans 10:15; Jeremiah 23:21; Hebrews 5:4) The expectation of a legitimate, rightly-ordered, call is not only for the purpose of good order (1 Corinthians 14:40), but for much weightier considerations: (1) so that the pastor himself can be certain that God wants to use *him* in this holy office; (2) so that the ministry can be carried out properly by trained and qualified individuals; (3) so that the Christian can know that this divine ministry of reconciliation is correctly, legitimately applied to him; and finally (4) that the minister would conduct this ministry in both the fear and confidence that he must give an account. (Hebrews 13:17) This is nothing other than a reflection of Augsburg Confession Article XIV, which states that, “no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called.”⁴

To this end, the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* asks the pastor-elect at both ordination and installation, “Do you acknowledge that the Lord has called you through His Church into the ministry of Word and Sacrament?”⁵ God alone retains the right to call a man into the Office (Jeremiah 23:21) and also to remove a man from that Office (Hosea 4:6; 1 Samuel 2:30). Today, God calls men into the Office through the Church.⁶ However, one thing is certain: God calls a man into the Office. The divine call should be considered the first expectation for a pastor.

Aptitude to teach includes six expectations. First, the man must understand the fundamental points of doc-

trine.⁷ That is, the church ought to set up a regular means by which men aspiring to the Office are trained and then examined,⁸ so that the man and his hearers may be certain that he is speaking the Word of God. (Jeremiah 17:15-16)

Second, the pastor must be faithful in teaching this sound doctrine so that nothing is hidden. He must preach the Law and the Gospel. He must preach the full counsel of God (Acts 20:27) whether he or his hearers like it or not.

Third, he must be so strong and faithful in the Word that he may convince those who contradict him (Titus 1:9); can distinguish the voice of the stranger from the truth (John 10:5); and protect the sheep from the wolves (Acts 20:29). Luther concludes that the two primary duties of a pastor are *instruction and warning*.⁹

Fourth, he must edify his hearers through preaching and application of God's Word, including (1) teaching and explaining the various articles of doctrine; (2) rebuking false doctrine; (3) instructing in holy living toward God and men; (4) correcting the sinning and errant that they return to the way of the Lord; (5) admonishing by examples the pitfalls and punishments for straying from the Word of God; (6) exhorting his hearers to repentance, faith, and new obedience so that what has been well begun may be brought to completion in the day of the Lord Jesus; and (7) consoling or comforting the weak and the distressed. (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16)

Fifth, the pastor ought to be an example to the flock in life, character, faith, and purity (1 Peter 5:3). This expectation includes the lists from the Table of Duties for *Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers*: above reproach, husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, manage his own household well, see that his children obey him with proper respect, and not a recent convert. (1 Timothy 3:2-4, 6; Titus 1:9)¹⁰

Sixth, the pastor ought to be ardent in his prayers that God would be present and give increase by grace and the Holy Spirit. The pastor ought to pray for his congregation as they go to battle against the devil, the world, and their own sinful nature just as Moses held up his hand against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11).

The question remains, what do these expectations look like in visible, practical terms? The most common and public work of the pastor is the Sunday morning Divine Service, where the pastor, at a minimum, reads the Scriptures aloud, preaches, and leads the congregation in prayer.¹¹ He has also made a vow to (1) instruct both young and old, which can be different for each context but minimally includes formal catechesis for the youth and new members and continuing education for members; (2) forgive the sins of those who repent, which includes hearing private confession and the bestowal of the absolution; (3) never divulge sins confessed to him, the confessional seal; and (4) minister to the sick and dying, which includes visits to those who are sick, shut-in, or dying.¹² The pastor also ought to be skilled and involved with the administration of the congregation, namely support the various officers, boards, and committees of the congregation. While attendance of each and every board and committee meeting must not be expected, the pastor should attend all the regular meetings of the Board of Elders.¹³ For the sake of the pastor and of the congregation, all must consider that "the power and authority of the Keys, or of the bishops...is exercised *only* by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, according to their calling, either to many or to individuals."¹⁴ Thus, all expectations ought to be governed by these Scriptural and Confessional mandates and an understanding of how this Office is carried out in the pastor's particular context.

With this understanding of the Pastoral Office, how ought a congregation support such a pastor? These suggestions can also be split in two categories: (1) physical/monetary and (2) spiritual.

To the first, the Scriptures are quite clear, "Those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). That is, a pastor is a man, who has been "set apart" (Acts 13:2) from temporal occupations for long-term service,¹⁵ thus it befits a congregation to provide for the sustenance and welfare of the pastor and his family. Each district of the LCMS provides guidelines to help congregations determine how best to provide for their pastor's physical needs. 1 Corinthians 9 and other passages prove that Paul's example of working in the tent-making trade while serving in the ministry (Acts 18:1-4) ought to be the exception rather than the rule.

Second, the spiritual support of the pastor, is also necessary. “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17) Hearers, support your pastor by gladly hearing his sermons. Converse with him and others after the service about the sermon. Attend Bible class. Encourage him in his work. Pray for him. Be patient with him, forgiving him when he sins and fails, recognizing that “love covers a multitude of sins.”¹⁶

Luther references 1 Timothy 5:17 by asking where those who rule well should see the double honor of which they are worthy. He answers, “Before God. Before the world, however, they are worthy of the sword, of the cross, of hell, or even of something harsher.”¹⁷ While the pastor’s true reward is in heaven, no congregation should be content to see the man who brings them the joy of the gospel suffer want or shame, much less his family.



¹Heath R. Curtis, *Telling People What to Think*, (Independently Published, 2024), 2. To which he adds, “I tell people what to think while they lie on their death beds. I tell them what to think about God and eternity. I tell jilted wives what to think when their husband runs off. I tell failures what to think about their future. I tell the melancholy what to think about being sad. Folks pile into a building once a week and sit on comfortable benches so they can listen to me tell them what to think for 15 minutes. And they put money in a bucket for the privilege.”

²Triglotta, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 45.

³Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici: Part II*, Trans. J.A.O Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2008), 1312.

⁴Triglotta, 49.

⁵The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 165, 178.

⁶A discussion overviewing historical practices and documents from the Scriptures up into modernity on the doctrine of the call can be found in the 2003 CTCR Report *Theology and Practice of “the Divine Call”* and the two minority opinions, which can be found at <https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/ctcr-library-church-and-ministry-lutheran-doctrine-and-practice/>.

⁷One way of defining the fundamental doctrines necessary is by viewing the vows a pastor takes at his ordination or installation, “Do you believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Do you believe and confess the three Ecumenical Creeds... as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all the errors which they condemn? Do you confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to be a true exposition of Holy Scripture and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church? And do you confess that [the symbolical writings contained in the Book of Concord of 1580] are in agreement with this one scriptural faith?” *LSB: Agenda*, 179.

⁸The preferred route—and gold standard—in our Synod is that a man enrolls in residential education at one of our two seminaries. Great effort must continue to be given by Synod and her members to ensure that graduates of any program leading to ordination into the Office of the Ministry are well-versed in the fundamental points of doctrine.

⁹*Loci Theologici*, 1330.

¹⁰Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 33.

¹¹It should also be expected of any man who has made the Book of Concord his own confession that he at the least endeavor to offer the Lord’s Supper according to AP XXIV: “We do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses [the Divine Service with Holy Communion] are celebrated every Lord’s Day [Sunday] and on the other festivals...” *Triglotta*, 383.

¹²*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, 179.

¹³C.F.W. Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 430.

¹⁴*Triglotta*, 85 (AC XXVIII, 8). Compare also Tr 11: “Paul makes ministers equal, and teaches that the Church is above the ministers” (*ibid*, 507).

¹⁵Walther, *Pastoral Theology*, 430.

¹⁶*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, 180.

¹⁷Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 38-44*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 7, in *Luther’s Works, American Edition*, vols. 1-30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955-1976), 63. Luther continues, “What do we care? We who serve the most ungrateful world have the promise and hope of a heavenly kingdom, and so great indeed will be the compensation and remuneration for this wretchedness of our that we will vigorously censure ourselves fore ver letting a little tear or a single groan fall from us on account of this contempt or ingratitude.”

SPEAKING OF HYMN...

LSB 614: "AS SURELY AS I LIVE," GOD SAID

Pastor Nathan Wille

"Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11)

Our Lord has commanded us to not swear falsely. Words are important and meaningful. So it is that He does not take it lightly when He Himself swears, which He does several times throughout the Holy Scriptures. He swears perfectly, we, so often do not. His oath in Ezekiel 33 is that He forgives the sinner, for He does not will that the sinner should die.

This hymn was written by Nikolaus Herman (1500-1561), who was a Master at the Latin School and Kantor/organist at the church. This hymn has appeared in at least three of our English Lutheran hymnals (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, *Lutheran Worship*, and *Lutheran Service Book*) since English became the predominant language in our Synod. It is one of the hidden gems from the era of the Reformation.

This hymn is important, as it shows not only God's promise to forgive sinners, but it also highlights the function of the Office of the Holy Ministry. The first stanza quotes the passage from Ezekiel 33:11, "As surely as I live," God said, 'I would not see the sinner dead. I want him turned from error's ways, repentant, living endless days.'"

Pastor Nathan Wille is pastor at Trinity
Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA.

The second stanza quotes the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel, "Go forth and preach in ev'ry land..."

The third stanza is an indirect quote from our Lord's establishing of the Holy ministry, "All those whose sins you thus remit I truly pardon and acquit, and those whose sins you shall retain, condemned and guilty shall remain."

The fourth stanza summarizes the Fifth Chief Part of the Small Catechism, marrying it beautifully with our Lord's words in John 21, "What you will bind, that bound shall be; what you will loose, that shall be free..." and the Lord's response to Peter's confession, "...to My dear Church the keys are giv'n to open, close, the gates of heav'n."

The fifth stanza calls the pastor of our church Christ's "humble instrument".

The sixth stanza describes the pastor's role as the voice of Christ, "When ministers lay on their hands, absolved by Christ the sinner stands;"

The seventh stanza is a prayer against the false teachings and usage of the rite of individual confession and absolution, "...from false indulgence guard our race."

The eighth stanza is a Trinitarian stanza, a poeticized version of the Gloria Patri, replete with "As was, is now, and so shall be world without end, eternally!"

As one can tell, this hymn has been a bulwark of the Scriptural teaching regarding the Office of the Holy Ministry. It is a sung version of the responsibilities given to the ordained minister. Its beginning reference to the Old Testament shows that the Office of the Minis-

try is not simply a New Testament phenomenon, but that the ministry is how God keeps His Word by forgiving the sins of the penitent, through those men whom He sends “in [His] stead and by [His] command.”

Finally, it would be a mistake to say nothing about the hymn tune, “St. Luke.” It is written in the key of f-minor, a doleful, yet strong key. Some other hymns in this key are “Thy Strong Word” (LSB 578), and “The God of Abraham Praise” (LSB 798). The hymn tune features dramatic intervals that jump up, and then steadily fall.

This hymn is one of the greats from the Reformation Era, which was not penned by one of the Reformers. It is a fair and helpful treatment of the Word of God and the Office of the Holy Ministry, and should be known by all Christians everywhere.



BOOK REIVEW:

THE HAMMER OF GOD

Pastor Dan S. Johnson

"The congregation is the best teacher a pastor can have," is the most revealing statement in the book, *The Hammer of God*, when speaking of its value as a pastoral theology. There is a plethora of pastoral theologies extant, written from a dogmatic perspective; reciting learned responses to situations a pastor may experience within his tenure as a pastor. I was told by a retired pastor that the greatest pastoral theology are the lessons taught to him by his parishioners. Bishop Giertz understood this. This is evident within the pages of his pastoral anthology.

In three stories, beginning in the small eighteenth century Swedish parish of Odesio, spanning a period of over 100 years, the personal and pastoral experiences of three young pastors are told. Each of these stories reflect the human condition, demonstrating the unchanging effect of sin on the soul, manifesting itself in personal and interpersonal relationships. The setting for Giertz's narrative portrays parish life 200-300 years ago but could have easily described a pastor's challenge as recently as yesterday. *The Hammer of God* is a pastoral theology unlike contemporary theologies studied in a seminary curriculum. This pastoral theology places the reader inside the parish, in the mind of the pastor, contemplating the pastoral challenges of three young pastors from different backgrounds and eras. Each pastor arrives in the parish uniquely trapped in his own prejudices of legalism, enthusiasm, and rationalism; while battling against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the subjectivity of Pietism, and the relativism of Liberalism.

Pastor Dan S. Johnson (emeritus) lives in
Marshalltown, IA.

In one of the stories, we find a dying old man screaming in terror as he knows he is a sinner cursed under God's Law, with no hope within himself, or even in his constant state of repentance. Whereas the naïve pastor, thinking he could reason the man to faith by rationalism, resigns from the man's bedside in exasperation and failure. It was a wise, seasoned Christian parishioner who arrives at the dying man's bedside and demonstrates the task of the cure of souls. She reminds the dying man that it is not the man's lack of repentance, which condemns him, but his lack of faith in Christ's atonement. In astute observation of the man's condition, she uses the man's recognition of his sinful heart and state of repentance to understand why he is unable to see his Savior's forgiveness. The dying man was convinced it was because of his sin that he no longer possessed the Holy Spirit and was therefore excluded from salvation. She uses the man's recognition of his sinful condition to teach him that he is indeed a redeemed sinner. She says, "Only he can see his sin who has the Holy Spirit." With that statement she shows the man how his repentance is indeed a sign of "the work of God." "[I]f you had received a clean heart and for that reason had been able to earn salvation... to what end would you then need a Savior? If the Law could save a single one of us, Jesus would surely not have needed to die on the cross." The woman then directs the dying man to see Jesus in the Pastoral Office: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The pastor is summoned back into the room to serve the Holy Sacrament—a reminder that we approach the Sacrament as if we are approaching our death and we approach our death as if we are going to the Sacrament.

In another section within the book, an interchange occurs between the wise, old Curate of the parish,

who is never named, and the young legalistic pastor. The young pastor claims that he had “given his heart” to Jesus. The Curate responds, “One does not choose a Redeemer for oneself, you understand, nor give one’s heart to Him. The heart is a rusty old can on a junk heap. A fine birthday gift, indeed! But a wonderful Lord passes by, and has mercy on the wretched tin can, sticks His walking cane through it and rescues it from the junk pile and takes it home with Him. That is how it is.”

The *tentatio*, or temptations and trials, experienced by all Christians, is a constant theme throughout Giertz’s narrative; a theme that is not commonly presented in traditional pastoral theologies. For this reason, this book serves as an important resource for the parishioner seeking to understand his position in the congregation. The book also serves as a response for the young pastor as he finds his way around his first parish, as well as the seasoned pastor serving his final parish. Moreover, *The Hammer of God* is a resource for anyone seeking to learn more about how God redeems sinners through His Holy Church.



BOOK REIVEW:

LETTERS FROM A PASTOR'S HEART

Pastor Matthias Wollberg

The Church benefits greatly from the kind of letters gathered in this little collection, *Letters From a Pastor's Heart*. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod President Matthew Harrison states in the introduction of this volume, “It has been my deepest goal and desire that the LCMS be evermore a community united in doctrine and mission.” The doctrine of the Church, along with her mission, are under assault in our communities and in the world at large. Just as the early gatherings of Christians in the New Testament met with rejection and scorn, so too does the Church of the twenty-first century. And so, in those days, the apostles wrote letters. They addressed the attacks on Christ’s teachings. Indeed, the history of the Church is filled with examples—all the way up to our modern times—of faithful churchmen writing to the Church to help her against all manner of bombardments on her Lord and His teachings.

Therefore, we find that writing letters to the Church is an old custom. The practice flows most naturally from the New Testament Church. There we find the greatest letters ever delivered to the Bride of Christ. The inspired letters of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, St. Jude, and St. John were written to the Christian congregations and pastors of the first century. Those Spirit-filled words still nourish the Lord’s Church to this day. They also set forth the principle of pastoral care. The care the preacher is called to involves being

at death beds, mediating conflicts between sinners, and presiding over the Divine Service. It also includes directly addressing the lies and deceits of the world in which the Christian congregation lives. *Letters from a Pastor's Heart* is a good example of such care.

In these pastoral letters, President Harrison covers a wide range of topics with succinct addresses. The book is divided up into eleven topics: repentance, forgiveness, the Bible, the Church, congregational life, witness and mission, Church and State, family and vocation, prayer, hope and joy, and finally concludes with a beautiful reflection on the Resurrection. President Harrison shows that he is familiar with the epistolary form which is native to New Testament pastoral care. In a range of topics that the twenty-first century Christian faces, President Harrison demonstrates a proper application of the Holy Scriptures.

Some of the topics taken up are especially helpful in the context of our own church body’s history. The inerrancy of the Scriptures and the need for mission and witness have been matters in which there has been confusion and division in the Missouri Synod over the past several decades. By the grace of God, our Synod has weathered many of these storms, clinging to Christ and His sure Word. Nevertheless, it is still important that our pastors and congregational leadership speak directly to these topics, which may not be settled in every place or every heart. Where President Harrison writes about these things in this collection, he speaks clearly and for the benefit of the whole church.

One particularly helpful example of pastoral care was written in a letter in 2016 entitled, “A Letter to Pas-

Pastor Matthias Wollberg is pastor at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Riceville, IA.

tors during Election Year 2016.” The American political realm is a domain fraught with all kinds of matters which burden Christian consciences. What President Harrison does well in this letter, as he does throughout the collection, is to draw people back to the pertinent passages of Scripture, and also, to the Lutheran confessions. In this letter, he encourages pastors to study and teach what Christ teaches when He says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s,” and so make a biblical distinction between the two kingdoms. Furthermore, he encourages the teaching of Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession. In this way, President Harrison demonstrates his desire for the LCMS to be united in doctrine and mission.

A collection of pastoral letters from a twenty-first century church president is beneficial to the Body of Christ. This collection helps us think through the lies and false teachings of our day which are bandied about so casually. And, most importantly, to do so on the basis of God’s Word. Falsehood has intoxicated the world and the Church. Spiritually informed addresses to the Church are therefore a draft of sobering air. I would recommend *Letters from a Pastor’s Heart* to pastors and laymen alike. The clarity with which such a wide variety of topics are addressed provides edification for any reader.



PHILIP'S DAUGHTERS: UNDERSTANDING PROPHETESSES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Pastor Zelwyn Heide

In a recent interview with Russell Moore, Rick Warren described what he calls a change of mind regarding women in the ministry. The interview came in the wake of his church, Saddleback, being expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention in 2023 for ordaining three women as pastors.¹ Warren argued that several Scriptural passages moved him to reconsider his beliefs on this issue, including Acts 2 and the events at Pentecost. “Women were preaching on the day of Pentecost,” he said. “How do we know that? Because Peter felt obligated to explain it.”² Warren then argued that Peter’s citation of Joel, specifically that men and women shall prophesy, proves that his position is correct. The New Testament says that women prophesied, and this is the reason why they can also preach.

Warren’s arguments reflect a wider debate within the Southern Baptist Convention regarding the role of women in the church. Many in the denomination wish to reaffirm their constitution’s stance regarding women and the ministry, which led to the recent Mike Law Amendment. This amendment proposed changing their definition of a church in “friendly cooperation with the Convention” to be one which “affirms, appoints, or employs only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.”³ However, the amendment was narrowly defeated at their 2024 convention, showing that a sizable minority are pushing for the ordination of women within the SBC, using arguments similar to those of Warren.⁴

Pastor Zelwyn Heide is pastor in North Dakota at St. Peter in Hannover and Zion Lutheran Church in New Salem.

This drastic change in what many consider to be a conservative denomination should lead all to seek clarity on this issue. Warren and others like him claim to be following the lead of Scripture in ordaining women, and they point to the existence of prophetesses in the Scriptures as proof of this. It is undeniable that some women were called prophetesses in the time of the New Testament, including Anna in the temple and the four daughters of Philip. However, this paper will argue that there is a difference between prophets and pastors by examining the New Testament usage of the word “prophet” and its related terms as well as focusing on what Paul has to say about the nature of New Testament prophecy in 1 Corinthians.

The Word “Prophet”

In the Greek New Testament, the word for prophet and all of its related forms occurs in 197 passages. A close examination and comparison of these passages, however, shows that the word is not used in the same way throughout the New Testament, but in fact describes several different things. Sorting through these differences and focusing on those which talk specifically about New Testament prophets will make the difference between pastors and prophets clear.

However, the first step involves asking why the New Testament uses this word, since it is not the only one that could be used. In Acts 16:16, Paul and Silas meet a slave girl who is described as being possessed by an unclean spirit: “And it happened as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl having a pythonic spirit met us, who brought much gain to her masters by ora-

cles.”⁵ A pythonic spirit took possession of someone, typically a woman called a pythoness or a pythia, and used her to speak to those who asked it questions. The most famous of these was the Pythia at Delphi, who was believed to be possessed by the god Apollo and would often answer in cryptic ways. The most important point here, however, is that this kind of divination was essentially mindless. As David Aune puts it, “One very popular ancient view of the origin of the oracular abilities of the Pythia was that a god or demon took possession of her organs of speech to make oracular responses.”⁶ It was no longer the woman speaking, but the god within her.

Further, the word translated as “by oracles” in Acts 16:16 in Greek is related to words like mania or mantis. Mania in Greek means madness or being out of one’s mind. It describes one who is possessed by a god and thus can no longer act in a rational way. Likewise, a mantis is a pagan prophet who claimed to speak for a god, and mantises often wandered from place to place, offering their services for any who wanted to inquire about the future. Like a pythia, however, they were no longer in control of themselves.

These two concepts were clearly unsuitable for describing Biblical prophets, since prophecy in the Bible is never described as a mindless activity. As Peter says in 2 Peter 1:21: “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but carried by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.” They were carried by the Holy Spirit, not extinguished by Him. Further, Paul can recognize a difference between his own thoughts and those from the Lord in 1 Corinthians 7, showing that he remained in control of himself even as God spoke through him. Self-control is also listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. For this reason, the mindless activity of a pythia or a mantis is clearly at odds with how we should understand Biblical prophecy.

Thus, the word “prophet” was the best choice in Greek to describe what was happening in the Bible. However, it was also the best choice for other reasons. In ancient Greek, the word “prophet” had a much wider range of meaning than it does today. Its most basic meaning was religious: a prophet speaks for a god. However, it could also be used to describe those who

explained the incomprehensible statements of a mantis. Plato in his work *Timaeus* says “wherefore also it is customary to set the tribe of prophets to pass judgment upon these inspired divinations; and they, indeed, themselves are named ‘diviners’ [*mantises*] by certain who are wholly ignorant of the truth that they are not diviners but interpreters of the mysterious voice and apparition, for whom the most fitting name would be ‘prophets of things divined.’”⁷ In other words, Plato argues that prophets are not mantises. Mantises speak for a god, but prophets explain what mantises are saying to those who are listening.

“Prophet” also did not always have a religious meaning. Bacchylides, a Greek poet who lived from roughly 518 to 451 B.C., wrote a victory song for an athlete named Aglaus of Athens. In it, he says about the runner: “Twice did the spokesmen [prophets] of the wise umpires proclaim him victor at [the] Isthmus [games], and twice also have they proclaimed him beside the holy altar of Zeus Son of Cronus at [the games at] Nemea.”⁸ Prophets could therefore be little more than sports announcers, declaring the decision of the umpires to the crowd.

A prophet in Greek is therefore a spokesman, one who speaks on behalf of another, whether human or divine. Paul even uses prophet in this sense in Titus 1:12 when he says “one of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’” Paul is quoting Epimenides of Crete as a spokesman for Cretans in general, and Paul uses what he says to describe the false teachers among them who resisted the truth of the Gospel. As Wayne Grudem puts it, “Certainly Epimenides was not someone who spoke the very words of God! But Paul nonetheless calls him a ‘prophet.’”⁹

For all these reasons, the word “prophet” is the best choice to describe what is happening in the New Testament. A prophet speaks for someone else without losing control of themselves in the process. He (or she) is thus a kind of messenger, bringing word from someone else for the benefit of those who hear.

Old Testament Prophets and Jesus

Most of the passages which use the word “prophet” in

the New Testament refer to the prophets of the Old Testament. Most of these are also citations of Old Testament books. Matthew 1:22 sets a familiar pattern: "And all this happened so that the saying from the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled." What the prophets before the time of Christ said would happen is now coming to its completion in Jesus Christ. God spoke through them in previous years, and God is now bringing it to pass.

Whenever the New Testament points to the Old Testament prophets in this way, it shows that they speak with authority from God, even if those who hear do not listen. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:31, Jesus says: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded if someone rose from the dead." Refusing to listen to the prophets of old is the same as refusing to listen to God. Their words came from above, not from themselves. Likewise, Jesus rebukes the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:25 by saying "O foolish ones and slow in heart to believe all which the prophets have spoken!" Old Testament prophets had their authority from God, and that meant that those who heard them had an obligation to accept them. Failing to listen to them was a sin.

Several passages also refer to Jesus Himself as a prophet. It is true that many of these examples come from a misunderstanding of who Jesus is and what He came to do. The apostles in Matthew 16:13-20 tell Jesus that the crowds say that the Son of Man is a prophet, among other things. It is only when Peter confesses Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, that Jesus praises him for speaking the full truth. Nevertheless, Jesus is indeed the Prophet, the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophets as well as the One who exceeds them all. Jesus refers to Himself as a prophet in Luke 13:33 when He says, "Nevertheless, it is necessary that I go today and tomorrow and the following, because it is not possible that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem."

Calling Jesus a prophet helps clarify what the New Testament means by a prophet. Three passages in particular, taken together, are helpful here. The first of these is Matthew 26. After delivering the sentence of death upon Christ, those at the court of Caiaphas begin

to strike Him and mock Him. Some of them even go so far as to say in verse 68: "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is it that hit you?" Jesus may have been blindfolded, or they may have struck Him so close together that it would be impossible to tell. The assumption, however, is that a prophet would be able to tell and point out who had done it without being otherwise told. He would know what normal people did not or could not know.

The second passage is from Luke 7. Jesus is invited into the home of a Pharisee to eat with him. When a sinful woman comes into meet Jesus, she begins to pour ointment on His feet and to wet His feet with her tears. The Pharisee takes offense at this and says to himself in verse 39: "If this one were a prophet, he would have also known what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Again, a prophet would know the truth about this woman without being told. Since Jesus has not done what the Pharisee would do in this situation, he assumes that Jesus cannot actually be a prophet.

The last passage here is from John 4. When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman to call her husband, she hesitates and says that she has no husband. Jesus reveals to her what she had been trying to hide. She spoke the truth, He says, because she had five husbands and now lives with a sixth apart from marriage. Marveling that Jesus knew this about her, she says to Him in verse 19: "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."

All three of these passages show that a prophet in the Biblical sense not only speaks for God, but also reveals things which would not otherwise be known. God has given them something which they have not learned in any other way, revealing even the secrets of the heart, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:25.

Old Testament versus New

However, a distinction should be made between the prophets of the Old Testament and the prophets of the New Testament, even though the same word is used for both. It is true that there is overlap between them. Prophets in both testaments speak for God while staying in control of themselves. Both reveal things which would not be otherwise known. Nevertheless, New

Testament prophets are different because they do not have the same absolute authority as those in the Old. There are two reasons for this.

First, Luke talks about a prophet named Agabus in two passages in Acts. In Acts 11:28, Agabus reveals through the Holy Spirit that a famine would come over the world, and Luke says this happened in the days of Claudius. Armed with this knowledge, the disciples make preparations to provide for those who would be the most in need.

More importantly, Luke talks about Agabus again in Acts 21. As Paul is on his way to Jerusalem, Agabus takes Paul's belt from him, wraps himself up in it, and says to Paul in verse 11: "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'The man whose belt this is, thus the Jews will bind him in Jerusalem and hand him over into the hands of the Gentiles.'" Agabus clearly states that Paul will be bound and handed over, much in the same way that Jesus had been handed over to Pilate. However, as Luke goes on to show in Acts, things did not happen in exactly the way that Agabus said they would. When Paul is arrested later in the same chapter, the Romans take him away in order to *save* him from the Jews who were threatening to beat him to death. Thus, while Paul was arrested as Agabus said that he would be, he was not quite correct on the specifics of how it would happen.

In Old Testament terms, this difference would normally label Agabus as a false prophet. Moses says in Deuteronomy 18:22: "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, and the matter does not happen and does not come, it is a word which the LORD has not spoken. In presumption the prophet has spoken it. You do not need to fear him." The sign of a true Old Testament prophet was the absolute accuracy of everything that he said. Anything less than that made him a false prophet who had not brought a word from the Lord.

Yet Agabus is never rebuked for what he said, nor does Luke ever present him as a false prophet. In fact, Paul in Acts 21 hears multiple times from various prophets that he should not go up to Jerusalem, yet he does not listen to what they say. These prophets, including Agabus, speak for God, yet Paul chooses to not listen to

what they are saying and proceeds to Jerusalem anyway. This detail by itself shows a stark difference between the Old Testament prophets and the New.

Second, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 exhorts the Christians in Thessalonica: "Do not despise prophecies, but test everything, hold fast to the good." Paul is hardly rebuking them for unbelief by saying this. While the Thessalonians struggled with some issues, ignoring God's Word was not one of them. Therefore, his command here is to test prophecies against the written Word of God, and to accept what is true, but reject what is false.

The very act of subjecting prophecy to a test again sets it in contrast with the Old Testament. The frequent statement "Thus says the Lord" in the Old Testament is not an invitation to test it, but a command to receive it as the authoritative word of God. Paul calling for them to subject New Testament prophecies to a test at least shows that they are held on a different level, while at the same time recognizing that these revelations still come from above. If there is a difference, who has the same kind of authority as the Old Testament prophets in the New Testament? The apostles themselves are their New Testament counterpart. Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 14:37: "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him recognize that what I write to you is a command of the Lord." Likewise John says in 1 John 4:6: "We are from God. The one who knows God hears us. The one who does not hear us is not from God." When the apostles speak in their God-given office, their words are the very words of God, just like the prophets of the Old Testament. To go against what they say is to go against the Lord Himself. Grudem again says: "Yet it is significant that Paul never appeals to a gift of prophecy to establish his authority—something that would have been very natural and very easy if New Testament prophets had been commonly thought to speak words with absolute divine authority. Rather, when Paul wants to establish his authority, he appeals to his status as an 'apostle.'"¹⁰

For all of these reasons, there is a distinction between prophets in the Old Testament and prophets in the New. The former spoke the very words of God in a way which could not be questioned. The latter spoke

for God in a way which needed to be tested and examined.

New Testament Prophets

New Testament prophecy may be further defined by the purposes which it serves. The first of these is that it is a sign of the possession of the Spirit. Even in the Old Testament, prophecy often showed that the Holy Spirit was present. Before he is crowned as king in Israel, Saul leaves Samuel and finds a group of prophets in 1 Samuel 10:10: "And they came there to Gibeah, and behold, a band of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied in their midst." The Holy Spirit entered Saul in this powerful way, and Saul prophesied because of it. However, if the Spirit left, prophecy also ceased, as seen in the elders appointed by Moses in Numbers 11:25: "And the LORD came down in a cloud, and He spoke with him, and He took from the Spirit which was on him and put it on the seventy elders, and it was when the Spirit rested on them they prophesied, but they did not continue." Without the Spirit of the Lord, no one could be a prophet, whether in the Old or New Testament.

This, then, is the reason why Peter cites the prophecy of Joel at Pentecost. In the Old Testament, the Spirit was given only to a few, but on that day, the Spirit was poured out upon all believers. As he says in Acts 2:17: "And it will be in those days, God says, I will pour out from my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy." No longer would the old distinctions apply when it came to salvation. All are one in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives within every believing heart.

Prophecy was only one sign of the presence of the Spirit, as will be seen also in 1 Corinthians. Even at Pentecost, they also spoke in tongues. Nevertheless, prophecy continued to be one sign of the Spirit and a sign that the long-promised New Testament had come. Since He is given to women no less than to men in these last days, women too could be called to prophecy, just as the New Testament indicates.

The second purpose of New Testament prophecy was to present a message from God which then required a decision to be made. Agabus has already been men-

tioned above as one example. When he prophesied that a famine would come, the disciples were moved to make preparations to provide for those that would be most affected by it. It was not strictly a command, because they did what they thought was best based on the message they had received.

There are other examples of this in the New Testament, including passages which do not use the word "prophet." One occurs in Acts 13:2 when Barnabas and Paul are sent out on their first missionary journey: "And while they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul to the work for which I have called them.'" Luke does not say how this was revealed, but he does say in the same passages that there were prophets at Antioch. Thus, it seems best to say that these prophets received this message from the Spirit and presented it to the congregation. The church then laid hands upon them and sent them on their way.

As mentioned earlier, Paul on his last journey to Jerusalem meets disciples who attempt to prevent him from going there. As Luke says in Acts 21:4: "And seeking out the disciples, we remained there seven days, [and they] were saying to Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem." Nevertheless, Paul does not heed this message, nor does Luke suggest that these disciples were false prophets. Rather, Paul decides to go on to Jerusalem anyway, knowing full well that it would mean his imprisonment. Paul is not chastised for going on to Jerusalem, nor are the prophets who spoke to him chastised for saying that he should stay. He is simply moved to act in a different way, leading those who were opposed to finally say in Acts 21:14: "Since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent and said: 'The will of the Lord be done.'"

A third purpose of New Testament prophecy is encouragement and consolation. As Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 14:3: "For the one prophesying speaks to men edification and encouragement and consolation." Likewise, following the council at Jerusalem, Judas and Silas carry the letter of the council to the church in Antioch. As they are delivering the letter, Luke tells us in Acts 15:32 that "both Judas and Silas, being also themselves prophets, through many words encouraged and strengthened the brothers." They use the oppor-

tunity to strengthen the brothers in faith and build them up, especially since the controversy regarding circumcision in Antioch had caused so much trouble.

Distinction from Teachers

It is this last point, however, that is the source of confusion regarding the difference between prophets and pastors. As seen in the examples above, the New Testament clearly states that prophecy involves, at least some of the time, edification and consolation. Yet the New Testament also clearly states that these same activities are exercised by the pastoral office. Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2, for example, calls on Timothy to “preach the word, be ready in season [and] out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort [or console], in all patience and teaching.” While most of these words do not appear directly in conjunction with prophets, there is clearly overlap in the common use of the word for exhort or console. Both pastors and prophets console the brothers while they carry out their calling from God.

It is this overlap that leads some to conclude that there is no difference between prophets and pastors at all. David Hill in his study of New Testament prophecy argues that “a functional approach is the most appropriate for the study of the phenomenon of Christian prophecy. A prophet is defined then in terms of his essential function, the function which constitutes him a prophet.” This approach is understandable. It is easier to define something on the basis of what it is doing than by anything else, especially when there is no straightforward definition otherwise. Nevertheless, because there is overlap in the activities or functions of pastors and prophets, Hill concludes that they are more or less the same. He states later in his book that “the prophetic ministry has the characteristics of pastoral preaching.”¹² Hill is willing to maintain a distinction between the two, but the reason for doing so is purely because the New Testament uses the two words. Functionally, there is little to separate them in his mind.

Likewise, as mentioned in the introduction, Rick Warren and others like him argue in a similar way regarding prophets and pastors. Women were prophesying at Pentecost, Warren says. Since prophesy has at least some overlap with the pastoral office in terms of func-

tion, these women were effectively “preaching” the Gospel to the crowds in Warren’s mind. Therefore, since women are doing similar things as men in the New Testament, there is nothing to prohibit them from becoming pastors, despite the words of Paul in several places. It is a similar argument as saying that Mary Magdalene announced that Jesus is alive to the disciples, and therefore women can preach, an argument which Warren also makes.

All of this shows that a purely functional definition is inadequate for defining the nature of New Testament prophecy. Aune, critiquing Hill’s approach, says: “this definition will make it very difficult for Hill to distinguish among a prophet, an apostle, a preacher, and a teacher later on in his study.”¹³ Aune’s own solution is inadequate, since he draws on a wide range of sources in his effort to define prophecy, including paganism. Nevertheless, his point is well made. If we want a clear picture of New Testament prophecy in contrast to the pastoral office, then we must also consider what separates the two while fully recognizing that they have some things in common.

It is clear that such a distinction should and must be made, since the New Testament always distinguishes between them, especially when they appear in the same context. The most common term for the pastoral office in the New Testament is “teacher.” This may be seen even in connection with other terms such as “overseer,” since Paul in his list of qualifications for an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:2 says that he must be “skillful in teaching.” Therefore, when we look at passages which use both words, we can see that the two do not refer to the same thing. The best example of this is Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:28, when he says: “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” Saying first, second, and third would be very odd if Paul assumed that prophets and teachers were more or less the same thing. He clearly draws a line between them, arguing in the following verses that not all are prophets, nor are all teachers. These particular gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to each differently.

This distinction can also be seen in 1 Timothy 2:12: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.” Paul’s command is clear: a woman

may not teach. Yet Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 11:5: "But every woman praying or prophesying with an uncovered head dishonors her head." Paul's assumption is that a woman may indeed prophesy, provided that her head has been covered. If Paul wanted to forbid women prophesying, he would have said so clearly, just as he does on the issue of teaching.

Therefore, the New Testament clearly distinguishes between prophets and teachers. Even if they have some things in common in terms of function, they are not the same thing. Similar functions do not mean that they were given for the same reasons. Each is a gift of the Holy Spirit, given for different purposes, but both for the good of the Church.

Teachers

How then should teaching in the New Testament sense be understood? Perhaps the easiest way to show how a teacher differs from a prophet is to first make a few more brief observations about prophecy. In the examples listed above, the prophets brought a message from God which demanded some kind of response. Agabus prophesied of a coming famine, Barnabas and Paul were set apart for their missionary work, and Paul was warned of the danger which he would face in Jerusalem. Yet in all of these examples, the prophet pointed to something immediate and immanent. The famine would come in a few short years. Barnabas and Paul immediately set off on their journey. Paul knew that the danger would come once he reached the city. Beyond those points, however, these prophecies had no more relevance for the church. Even Judas and Silas building up the church after the council in Jerusalem spoke to an immediate need. Once that need had passed, the need for the prophecy ceased.

The entire book of Revelation also points to this immediacy. John writes in the opening verses of the book: "Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep the things written in it, for the time is near." Of course, Revelation is an exception to this argument. God deemed the words of this prophecy to be so important for the future of the Church that He caused John to write it down. Revelation has a continuing relevance for Christians even today for that reason. Nevertheless, there is

an urgency to the whole book that is true for New Testament prophecy in general. The end of all things is near, the present evil age will soon come to an end, and therefore we must be ready for it, remaining steadfast in the truth.

Teaching, on the other hand, hands down from generation to generation those things which apply to every age. Teachers in the New Testament instruct God's people in the ways of righteousness and show them what it means to live as Christians in any particular situation. As Grudem puts it, "Teaching provided normative doctrinal and ethical guidance for the church. Those who publicly taught in churches spoke not with authority equal to Scripture itself but with authority that, in practical terms, provided the doctrinal and ethical summaries of scriptural teachings and the practical applications of Scripture by which the church was directed."¹⁴ If prophecy brought an immediate word to a particular situation, teaching hands down the Scriptures which speak to every situation.

For example, in 2 Timothy 4:2, cited above, Paul exhorts Timothy to "preach the Word." Timothy as a pastor was commanded to teach the Scriptures to those entrusted to his care, leading them in the ways of truth. Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:35 "remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming with many others the Word of the Lord." Likewise, Paul again tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And what you have heard from me among many witnesses, set these things before faithful men, who are competent and can teach others." Teachers are thus called to hand down the faith once delivered to the saints, remaining faithful to that Word which has been entrusted to them.

This is why James warns the church in James 3:1 that "not many should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will be received with greater judgment." James does not say "not many should become prophets." In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul even calls for the Christians at Corinth to eagerly desire to prophesy. Teachers are held to a stricter standard because they are commanded to pass on the teaching of the Lord. It is one thing to speak a message which may even be disregarded, as Paul did with the prophets who tried to dissuade him. It is another thing entirely to teach falsely and lead others into destruction. A

greater responsibility is laid upon the New Testament teacher, because he is pointing the way for all to follow based on the preaching of the Scriptures.

Not Exclusive

None of this means that pastors and prophets are mutually exclusive, as if one can only be one or the other. The two gifts of the Spirit are distinct from one another, but that does not mean that they could not be both given to the same man. Paul insists in 1 Corinthians 12 that the various gifts are different from one another and that no one person has them all. Nevertheless, they depend on one another, so that together they build up the church. Similarly, Paul's call for them to "strive for the greater gifts" in 1 Corinthians 12:31 would make little sense if someone could only possess a single gift in exclusion to all others. God in His wisdom may very well choose to give multiple gifts to one person, but He always does it for the benefit of the whole body and not for the glorification of the one who possesses them.

Revelation gives another example of this. John in Revelation 22:18 gives a solemn warning: "I testify to all who hear the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book." Revelation is a prophecy by its own description, but it is a prophecy which carries an absolute authority. Based on the argument laid out above, this appears to be a blending of prophecy with the apostolic authority of John. John is a prophet, but he is also an apostle. The two gifts are distinct from one another, but they work together here in the writing of this book.

Therefore, New Testament prophecy brings revelations from God which have an immediate relevance for those who hear it. These prophecies should be tested and may even be disregarded. For this reason, it is distinct from teaching, even if they have some things in common. Teaching hands down the Scriptures and instructs what it means to be a Christian in every circumstance. Likewise, though the gifts are distinct, they may be given to the same person, so that one man may be both a prophet and a teacher. How then do prophetesses fit into this picture? This paper now turns to 1 Corinthians 12-14 and what it says about proph-

cy, especially in connection to prophetesses.

1 Corinthians 12-14

Among the many problems at Corinth was a debate about spiritual gifts. When Paul begins to give specific instructions on this issue in chapter 14, it is clear that the debate centered around two gifts in particular: speaking in tongues and prophecy. At least some of the Corinthians considered the first to be superior to the second, and likewise held those who could speak in tongues in higher esteem. As Dale Martin notes in his article: "In the first place, comparative analysis shows that in most cases speaking in tongues is taken *within* the practicing Christian groups as a high status indicator linked unproblematically with leadership roles."¹⁵ This attitude exalted those who could speak in tongues and regarded those who could not as inferior, even leading those who had it to think that they had no need of anyone else. They were spiritual in a way that others were not, so what use did they have for others in the congregation?

Paul seeks to correct this attitude. All of the various gifts come from the Holy Spirit, he tells them. One gift is not evidence of a greater share in the Holy Spirit than another. Likewise, the gifts are not given for the glorification of the one who possesses it. Rather, all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit build up the church. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 12:7: "But to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common benefit." If a gift is causing division, that is abusing what God has given. All of His gifts should bring them closer together and bring them to greater spiritual maturity in all things, not drive them apart.

Paul then uses a metaphor common in his own time to describe the nature of the church. All of them were members of one body, joined together through the Holy Spirit into Christ. This reality had two important implications. First, some who could not speak in tongues regarded themselves as inferior, not even a part of the body at all. In Paul's metaphor, they thought that they were not a part of the body because they were not a particular member, whether a hand or an eye. Yet the reality of being one body meant that this conclusion was false. God has arranged the body so that there is unity and variety. A lack of such variety

would produce a monster, not a functioning body. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:19, "And if all were one member, where [is] the body?" There is no reason to think that one is excluded simply for not having a particular gift.

Second, those who thought of themselves as superior were equally wrong. Anthony Thistelton in his commentary notes: "Not only does the rhetoric of the body reassure those with supposedly 'inferior' or 'dispensable' gifts that they do indeed belong fully to the body as essential limbs and organs, but this rhetoric now explicitly rebukes those who think that they and their 'superior' gifts are self-sufficient for the whole body, or that others are scarcely 'authentic' parts of the body, as they themselves are."¹⁶ One member cannot say to another that it can function without it. A hand may not be able to see, but an eye cannot lay hold of what it sees. It is only by working together and for the benefit of one another that both will be able to survive.

On the other hand, Paul does not argue for an absolute equality of the gifts. Some gifts are indeed greater than others. He hints at this reality when he encourages them to seek after the higher gifts. Nor does his critique mean that speaking in tongues had no value. Paul will later hold it up in its proper light and also show that it was a gift that he had. Rather, in their self-seeking attitude, they had failed to exercise these gifts in love. Even the greatest spiritual gift used in a loveless way is nothing at all. They abused these gifts because they did not understand their purpose. They thought of them as eternal, something which would set them apart even in eternity. In reality, they were all temporary, meant for this present age. When Christ returns, their purpose will pass away. When these gifts are set back into their proper perspective, they are all seen for what they really are: a benefit for one's neighbor rather than a reason for boasting.

All of this leads into 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul now speaks in concrete and practical terms. Focusing primarily on tongues and prophecy, Paul demonstrates that prophecy, despite its unimpressive appearance, is in fact the *greater* gift precisely because it is meant for the benefit of another. Tongues are certainly more attractive, but they really only benefit the one who is

speaking. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 14:17, "for you on the one hand may give thanks well [when speaking in a tongue], but the other one is not built up." It is better, then, to prophesy, because then someone hears a revelation from God in a way that can be understood. Through such understanding, they are either built up in faith or led to repentance. The whole church will profit rather than just one.

Further, tongues may in fact be a stumbling block for those who are not Christians. Paul tells them in verse 22 that "tongues are a sign not for the ones who believe, but for unbelievers, but prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for believers." Paul uses the word "sign" in two different ways here. Signs from God lead people either to repentance and faith or to judgment and condemnation. The sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:39 hardened unbelieving Israel in their rejection of Jesus and became something which would be held against them on the Last Day. It is a negative sign, leading to judgment. The sign of the infant Christ in Luke 2:12 would be the proof to the shepherds that the long-promised salvation of the Lord had come. It is a positive sign, leading to salvation. Here in 1 Corinthians, Paul argues that tongues are a *negative* sign for unbelievers, but prophecy is a *positive* one which leads to faith. An outsider who hears Christians speaking in tongues will assume that they are out of their minds, since the Greek word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 14:23 is related to mania, described earlier. It will confirm them in their unbelief and drive them further away from the Lord, simply because they cannot understand what is being said. On the other hand, the outsider who hears all prophesying will be led to repentance, so that, as Paul says in verse 25, "the hidden things of his heart are revealed, and thus falling on his face he will worship God, declaring that, 'Truly, God is among you.'"

Paul's specific directions at the end of this chapter thus become clear. Order, not chaos, should define their common assembly. If tongues are to be exercised, they must be interpreted. Otherwise, Paul commands silence. Tongues without interpretation invite confusion and hardening, but tongues with interpretation build up the church. Likewise, as he says in verse 29, "let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge." Judging prophecies is certainly in line with the rest of

what the New Testament says about prophecy, since one must decide how to act upon what has been revealed for that moment. Further, if something is given to another while one is speaking, Paul commands that the first prophet be silent. This implies, again in line with the remainder of the New Testament, that prophecy is rational. Interrupting the prophet, even with the possibility of never having another chance to speak again, shows that they are in full control of themselves at all times. Limiting their number also shows that their words are not to be regarded on the same authoritative level as the apostles or the Old Testament prophets.

The act of judging prophecies, however, means that they must be compared to a standard. One cannot make a judgment as to what is true or what is false without referring to something already judged to be true. In terms of prophecies, such a standard can only be provided by the Word of God. Weighing what is said against the Scriptures will enable Christians to test the spirits to see whether they are of God.

However, as seen earlier, the work of explaining the Scriptures is the act of teaching. Warning against what is false in a specific prophecy would necessarily involve setting out specific doctrines and ethical directions, both of which God has given to the pastoral ministry in His church. Therefore, Paul's inclusion of a specific command for women to be silent here makes perfect sense. The act of judging prophecies and explaining them involves teaching, something which the Scripture limits to men. While women could be prophetesses and even speak their prophecies in the worship service in Corinth, prophets are not the same thing as teachers, and therefore boundaries must be established. God is, after all, a god of peace and not of confusion.

Prophetesses

Before making some final observations, the three specific examples of women called prophetesses in the New Testament should be considered. The first of these women is Anna in Luke 2. Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to the temple as part of the purification required for women who have given birth under the Old Testament. While there, they meet Simeon who prophesies about the child and gives thanks to God for

sending His salvation into the world. Anna, being a prophetess and filled with the Spirit, also speaks of Jesus to the crowds. As Luke says in Luke 2:38, "And standing near in that hour, she began to praise God and to speak of Him to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem." Anna's specific words are not recorded. Her message bore an immediate relevance, since she was praising God and speaking of Jesus to that particular crowd. Beyond that day, however, her specific words were no longer needed.

Second, Philip, who is one of the Seven appointed in Acts 6, eventually takes up residence in Caesarea. When Paul and those with him arrive there on his way to Jerusalem for the last time, they stay at his house. Luke says in Acts 21:9 that he had "four virgin daughters who prophesied." There is no indication of anything that these four women said. It seems reasonable to say that they were among those who tried to stop Paul from going to Jerusalem, like the other prophets in the chapter. Regardless, Philip's daughters all possessed this spiritual gift, which they doubtlessly exercised for the benefit of the church.

Finally, John in his letter to the church in Thyatira describes a woman named Jezebel and rebukes the church in that city for tolerating her. "But I have this against you," he says in Revelation 2:20, "that you permit the woman Jezebel, who says that she is a prophetess and teaches and leads my servants astray to commit adultery and to eat idol-foods." Unlike Anna and the four daughters of Philip, Jezebel is clearly a false prophetess, one who claims to speak for God even while leading Christians into compromise and sin. Note that John holds her teaching against her. She usurped this activity for herself, and her violation of God's prohibition led her into further error. It is not true prophecy if it leads into sin, whether in the Old Testament or the New.

Reflections

Two final questions remain. First, does the gift of prophecy continue today? Could there be prophets or prophetesses among us in the New Testament sense? The answer to this depends largely on one's assumptions. Those who deny that prophecy continues often do so either by arguing that there is no essential differ-

ence between the Old Testament and the New Testament prophets, or by arguing that prophecy existed only as a means for legitimizing the Gospel. Benjamin Warfield in his influential work *Counterfeit Miracles* argues that miracles like prophecy were given as a way to prove the God-given authority of the apostles. As he says: "These gifts were not the possession of the primitive Christian as such; nor for that matter of the Apostolic Church or the Apostolic age for themselves; they were distinctively the authentication of the Apostles. They were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church, and they necessarily passed away with it."¹⁷ Miracles were needed to show that the Gospel was indeed from God, but once it was firmly established, there was no further need for them. Prophecy therefore ceased with the death of the last apostle. Warfield spends most of his book debunking claims to miracles throughout the age of the Church, especially those close to his own time.

Douglas Judisch, following a similar argument as Warfield, goes a step further and argues that prophecy throughout the Scriptures is essentially the same in every case. For example, he states that "the classic description of prophecy provided by the apostle Peter makes it clear that the New Testament concept of propheteia [prophecy] is the same as the Old Testament concept of nebu'ah [prophecy]."¹⁸ For this reason, there cannot be true prophets today. Since they served a similar purpose as the Old Testament prophets, there is no longer any need for them. Judisch does recognize that there is a difference between teaching and prophecy, and he likewise argues, as this paper has done, that women may be prophets.¹⁹ However, since prophecy showed that the apostles were truly from God, there is no need for any further prophecy. The gift has entirely ceased.

Behind this kind of argument is a legitimate concern about those who claim for themselves an authority which God has not given to them. Self-proclaimed prophets have existed in every age, but they seem to have especially increased in number in more recent times. John MacArthur, who firmly denies the possibility of continuing prophecy, cites a charismatic author and then reacts by saying: "That is tantamount to

saying that current instances of charismatic prophecy are divine revelation equal to Scripture. Such a claim is disturbing because the possibilities of fraud and error by present-day 'prophets' are obvious."²⁰ In this sense, MacArthur is right. Examples of abuse and fraud coming from those claiming to have a direct revelation from God are all too easy to find.

A genuine gift of the Holy Spirit will not be vague or hard to define. So many who claim to have a spiritual gift like prophecy or speaking in tongues barely resemble what appears in the New Testament. MacArthur is quite right to criticize claims of working miracles which are "partial, gradual, or temporary."²¹ Genuine spiritual gifts in the New Testament are never ambiguous or so intentionally vague that they are impossible to prove. Peter could not fake raising Dorcas from the dead in Acts 9. Calling any kind of vague impression or thought a word from the Lord does not make it so. As D.A. Carson, who is otherwise open to the possibility of these things continuing today, puts it: "Calling an inanity a prophecy does not stop it from being an inanity."²²

Nevertheless, if the argument laid out above holds true, there is nothing to prevent the gift from being given today. God is free to give or not to give a gift like prophecy as He pleases. This is not to say that prophets and prophetesses do exist today, only that it is possible. History seems to show that genuine prophecy in the New Testament sense has been taken away. Already by the year 392, Chrysostom could confess in his sermons on 1 Corinthians 12-14 that "this whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place."²³ If he, just a few hundred years after the New Testament, no longer saw this in the Church, it would be presumptuous to claim such a gift without a legitimate reason to do so today. Nevertheless, the possibility remains open until the Last Day.

What is needed above all is clarity, which leads into the final point. A lack of clarity in these issues leads both to a blurring of New Testament distinctions between prophecy and teaching as well as unjustified claims to such a gift today. In confessional Lutheran circles, there is a tendency to identify the pastoral of-

fice in terms of its function or activities. Pastors preach and teach the Bible. In order to safeguard the office, these functions are often narrowly defined. So long as duly ordained men are carrying out these activities according to that narrow definition, it is argued that we are following the Lord's command. The trouble with such a narrow and functional approach to the ministry is that it cannot effectively deal with the ambiguities present in the New Testament itself. Prophets and pastors do have some things in common, such as exhortation or consolation. A failure to account for this, whether intentionally or unintentionally, will only continue to perpetuate the problem. Those who want to bypass what Scripture clearly says about who can be pastors will continue to point to prophetesses in the New Testament if they are considered only in functional terms.

The solution is therefore to seek clarity, as this paper has attempted to do. The New Testament clearly and consistently distinguishes between pastors and prophets. This distinction includes more than just their functions, though those are certainly included. While a single man may indeed be both a pastor and a prophet in the New Testament sense, there is no threat to the pastoral office in recognizing that one may be a prophet without also being a pastor. Likewise, if a woman were a genuine prophetess, that would not make her a pastor or give her the right to teach. Prophecy and teaching are distinct gifts of the Holy Spirit given for the common good. If a true gift of prophecy were given again today, it would be a benefit for the Church and not a way to ignore the clear Word of God.



Bibliography

Aune, David. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983.

Bacchylides. *Lyra Graeca, Volume III*. Edited and translated by J.M. Edmonds. Loeb Classical Library 461. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922.

Barkley, Scott. "Law Amendment falls short in Indy." Baptist Press. June 12, 2024. <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/law-amendment-falls-short-in-indy/>.

Carson, D. A. *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987.

Grudem, Wayne. *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.

Gryboski, Michael. "SBC expels Saddleback, 4 other churches that have female pastors." The Christian Post. February 22, 2023. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/sbc-decides-to-expel-saddleback-church-over-female-pastors.html>.

Hill, David. *New Testament Prophecy*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979.

Judisch, Douglas. *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978.

Law, Mike. "What is the proposed amendment?" SBC Amendment. Accessed July 29, 2024. <https://sbcamendment.org/home-2/frequently-asked-questions/>.

MacArthur, John. *Charismatic Chaos*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

Martin, Dale B. "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 3 (1991): 547–589.

Moore, Russell and Rick Warren. "Rick Warren Reflects on his Legacy." Christianity Today. *The Russell Moore Show*. March 8, 2023. Podcast, 53:05. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evxKe5E4TNA>.

Plato. *Timaeus. Critias. Cleitophon. Menexenus. Epistles*. Translated by R. G. Bury. Loeb Classical Library 234. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929.

Schaff, Philip, ed. *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*. Vol. 12. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Warfield, Benjamin B. *Counterfeit Miracles*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918.

¹Michael Gryboski, "SBC expels Saddleback, 4 other churches that have female pastors," The Christian Post, February 22, 2023, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/sbc-decides-to-expel-saddleback-church-over-female-pastors.html>.

²Russell Moore and Rick Warren, "Rick Warren Reflects on his Legacy," March 8, 2023 in *The Russell Moore Show*, published by Christianity Today, podcast, 53:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evxKe5E4TNA>, beginning at 13:44.

³Mike Law, "What is the proposed amendment," SBC Amendment, accessed July 29, 2024, <https://sbcamendment.org/home-2/frequently-asked-questions/>.

⁴Scott Barkley, "Law Amendment falls short in Indy," Baptist Press, June 12, 2024, <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/law-amendment-falls-short-in-indy/>.

⁵Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁶David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 33.

⁷Plato, *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 187-189.

⁸Bacchylides, *Lyra Graeca, Volume III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), 173.

⁹Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000), 39.

¹⁰Grudem, 43.

¹¹David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 4.

¹²*Ibid*, 104.

¹³Aune, 10.

¹⁴Grudem, 121.

¹⁵Dale Martin, "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 3 (1991): 552.

¹⁶Anthony Thistelton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000), 1005. Emphasis removed.

¹⁷Benjamin Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 5-6.

¹⁸Douglas Judisch, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 53.

¹⁹*Ibid*, 53-54.

²⁰John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 55.

²¹*Ibid*, 110.

²²D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Examination of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 172.

²³Philip Schaff, ed., *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 168.