

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD: VOCATION AND EVANGELISM

Americans, it has been said, worship their work; work at their play; and play at their worship. Evidence for the truth of this observation seems to be apparent. Robert Kolb¹ defines idolatry as seeking ones' identity, security, and meaning in something other than the Triune God. Using Kolb's definition it is clear that so many of our contemporaries make a god of their work-seeking identity, securing, and meaning in their job. A false god, of course, requires sacrifice of its devotees. And one who worships his work will sacrifice everything to sustain the idol. The time, energy, and money spent in pursue of recreation demonstrates that many Americans work at their play, sparing no labor to achieve the best score on the golf course or perfect serve on the tennis court. Then, when it comes to worship, we are told that churches are to reach out by means of entertainment evangelism. We are warned that the language of repentance and cross-bearing will not be a welcomed message by the seeker. Church ought to be uplifting and celebratory. Worship ought to be fun. Is there any doubt that many Americans play at their worship?

Against such a backdrop, we consider one of the lost treasures of the Lutheran Church, that is, the doctrine of vocation. We call the doctrine of vocation a "lost treasure" not because Lutherans have excised this doctrine from the *Book of Concord*, but because, we have, in large part, ignored what Dr. Martin Luther and our confessional writings have to teach us about vocation and have instead turned to other sources in our search to speak meaningfully about the place of the laity in the church and world. This essay will explore the Lutheran doctrine of vocation in relationship to evangelism.

We have become accustomed to think of vocation only in terms of an occupation or a job². A vocational counselor is one who helps you determine what line of work you should pursue. A vocational school provides you with training to perform a particular job. If you are asked, "What is your vocation?" you are likely to answer "I am an accountant, a farmer, or a pastor." Now such an answer would be partially correct. The work you do with your head and hands to provide others with needed services and earn a

¹ -Robert Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today: A Theology for Evangelism* (St.Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 11.

² -Marc Kolden identifies this as "occupationalism." See Marc Kolden, "Luther on Vocation" *Word & World* (Fall 1983), 385.

wage for yourself is indeed part of your vocation. But it is only part. Vocation means “calling” (*klesis*) and this calling embraces the whole of your life.

It is God Himself who does the calling. The Apostle Peter says that God has “called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9) thus giving you the high and holy status as a member of a chosen generation, a priest in His royal priesthood, a citizen in that holy nation of the elect. This calling is the calling to faith itself. Therefore Paul writes to the Thessalonians “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thessalonians 2:13-14). On the basis of God’s redeeming work in Christ, the Apostle implores the Ephesians “to walk worthy of the calling to which you were called” (Ephesians.4:1). Luther reflects the language and thought of Paul when he has us confess in the explanation to the third article of the Creed that “the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel.” This is the calling to faith in Christ and this calling gives us a new identity and status before God.

Luther’s doctrine of vocation is about “being” before it is about “doing.” In one of his essential treatises, “The Freedom of a Christian” (1520), Luther writes “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works. Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself must be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ says ‘A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit’ (Matt. 7:18). It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree and that the tree does not grow on the fruits, also on the contrary, the trees bear the fruits and the fruits are grown on the trees”³

The Scriptures also speaking of “calling” in connection with our place in creation. For example, in his first letter to the congregation at Corinth, the Apostle reminds these Christians that they were bought with the price of the Lord’s own blood. Then, he continues “Brethren, let each one remain with God in the state in which he was called” (I Corinthians 7:24). Those who are

³- *American Edition: Luther’s Works*, Vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 361. Hereafter abbreviated AE.

married may not use their faith as an excuse for divorce. The slave may not use his freedom in Christ as the grounds for seeking liberation from an earthly master.

The “calling” is a twofold calling. It is a calling both to faith (Third Article) and to a life of love that flows from faith (Decalog/Table of Duties). In this calling, the heavenly and the earthly are joined together. In his classic treatment of Luther’s doctrine of vocation, the Swedish theologian Gustaf Wingren notes that Luther uses two words to describe the duality of the calling, *beruf* and *stand*⁴. Both believers and unbelievers have a *stand* or station in life. That is both Christians and non-Christians are parents, children, governors, citizens, employers and employees. But only believers can be said to have a *beruf* or calling. In other words, the Christian who occupies a particular *stand* or station in life fulfills his *beruf* or spiritual calling in that sphere.

On the other hand, the unbeliever may perform works which are outwardly good in his particular station as a parent, worker, or citizen but as this work is done apart from faith, it may not be said to be a calling. Such work indeed falls under the realm of “civil righteousness.” It has great value before man and is used by God for the good of His creation. The pagan farmer who provides us with food is a *larvae dei*, a mask or covering of God, through which God gives us daily bread. But in the presence of God (*coram deo*) such work is without holiness, indeed this work is altogether sinful. William Lazareth aptly summarizes Luther’s thought: “In comparison with Christian righteousness, of course, this civil righteousness (*iustitia civilis*) comes off a very poor second. Whereas Christian righteousness springs forth from faith and is therefore joyful and willing, civil righteousness is forced out of unbelief and is consequently ‘murmuring’ and ‘involuntary.’ Since ‘all that does not proceed from faith is sin’ (Rom. 14:23), civil righteousness has absolutely no justifying value-no matter how enlightened its self-interest might be. It is ‘reprobate before God’ and ‘inherently vicious’ at its core, however attractive its surface appearance. Luther remains unequivocal in his religious condemnation of all social ethical behavior that is not fired by the loving heart of one who has confessed Christ as his or her Lord and Savior. ‘Now where temporal government or law alone prevails, there sheer hypocrisy is inevitable, even though the commandments be God’s very own.

⁴ -Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 1-2.

Without the Holy Spirit in the heart no one becomes truly righteous, no matter how fine the works he does.”⁵

The dual calling of the Christian is well expressed by Luther in his treatise, “The Freedom of the Christian” (1520): “We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and the neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love.”⁶ The existence of the old Adam is focused on self. The old Adam is curved in on himself to use the imagery of Luther. This existence stands in bold contrast to the life of the new man in Christ. The new man lives outside of himself for his calling is to faith in Christ and love for the neighbor. Again listen to Luther “By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor.”⁷

That which Luther expressed theologically in “The Freedom of the Christian” is expressed liturgically in the post-communion collect that Luther included in his 1526 *Deutsche Messe*: “We give thanks to you, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore you that of your mercy you would strengthen us through the same **in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another**; (emphasis mine) through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.”⁸

Luther’s understanding of vocation is consistent with his liturgical theology. God serves us sacramentally in the Divine Service as we receive His gifts by faith and we serve God sacrificially as we give ourselves to the neighbor in love. In his 1526 essay, “The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ—Against the Fanatics”, Luther writes “For it is necessary for each one to know that Christ has given his body, flesh, and blood on the cross to be our treasure and to help us receive forgiveness of sins, that is, that we may be saved, redeemed from death and hell. That is the first principle of Christian doctrine. It is presented to us in the words, and his body and blood are given to us to be received corporeally as a token and confirmation of this fact. To be sure, he did it only once, carrying it out and achieving it on the cross; but he causes it each day anew to be set before us, distributed and poured out

⁵ -William Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 168.

⁶ -AE 31: 371.

⁷ -Ibid. 371.

⁸ -AE 53:137.

through preaching, and he orders us to remember him always and never forget him. The second principle is love. It demonstrates in the first place that he has left us an example. **As he gives himself to us with his body and blood in order to redeem us from our misery, so ought we too give ourselves with might and mane for our neighbor.**”(emphasis mine)⁹

For Luther, the distinction between faith and love was necessary in both liturgy and vocation. The distinction between faith and love in the doctrine of vocation, parallels the distinction between *beneficium* and *sacrificium* in the liturgy. *Beneficium* is God’s gift or benefit given for the sake of Christ in sermon and sacrament. *Sacrificium* is the response of praise and thanksgiving. This distinction may be diagramed in the following manner:

BENEFICIUM

SACRIFICIUM

Grace.....	Works
Passive Righteousnes.....	Active Righteousness
Faith.....	Love
Office of the Holy Ministry.....	Royal Priesthood
Divine Service.....	Worship

To confuse *beneficium* and *sacrificium* is to muddle law and Gospel; it is to mix our works with God’s gifts. Luther recognized that this confusion was at the heart of Rome’s insistence that the Mass was a sacrifice that the church offered to God. Thus Rome had turned the testament of the Lord’s body and blood into a human work. Luther’s conservative liturgical revision of the Mass did away with the canon to make it evident that the Lord’s Supper is not a work that we do to obtain merit but rather the gift of Christ’s body and blood given for the forgiveness of our sins. Article XXIV of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* follows Luther in making this distinction, noting that there is a distinction between two kinds of sacrifice: “One is the atoning sacrifice, that is, a work of satisfaction for guilt and punishment that reconciles God, conciliates the wrath of God, or merits the forgiveness of sins for others. The other kind is the eucharistic sacrifice. It does not merit the forgiveness of sins or reconciliation but is rendered by those who have already been reconciled as a way for us to give thanks or express gratitude for having received forgiveness of sins and other benefits.”¹⁰

⁹ -AE 36:352.

¹⁰ -Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV:19, *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 261.

The atoning sacrifice was done once and for all by Christ on the cross. It cannot be repeated or supplemented. In the Lord's Supper we receive the fruits of that sacrifice. The other type of sacrifice is identified as "eucharistic sacrifice" for this sacrifice is one of thanksgiving. According to AP XXIV, eucharistic sacrifices include "the preaching of the gospel, faith, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, the affliction of the saints, indeed all the good works of the saints. These sacrifices are not satisfactions for those who offer them, nor can they be applied to others so as to merit the forgiveness of sins or reconciliation for others *ex opere operato*. They are performed by those who are already reconciled"¹¹

Luther and the early Lutherans did not do away with the category of sacrifice. To paraphrase Carter Lindberg, Luther took sacrifice out of the chancel and relocated it in the world. This is "the liturgy after the liturgy."¹² God's gifts given us sacramentally in the Divine Service now bear fruit sacrificially as we go back into the world to thank, praise, serve, and obey the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Norman Nagel's memorable introduction to *Lutheran Worship* puts it nicely: "Finally his blessing moves us out into our calling, where his gifts have their way with us"¹³ (LW, 6). This is well-reflected in the hymnody of the church:

From "Salvation unto Us Has Come"

*Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone
And rests in him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
For faith alone can justify;
Works serve our neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.¹⁴*

From "I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone"

Confirm in us your Gospel, Lord,

¹¹ - AP XXIV:24, Kolb/Wengert, 262.

¹² -Carter Lindberg, *Beyond Charity: Reformation Initiatives for the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 163-164.

¹³ -Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St.Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 6.

¹⁴ -*Lutheran Worship*, 355:5.

*Your promise of salvation.
And make us keen to trust your Word
And follow our vocation:
To spend our lives in love for you,
To bear each other's burden too.
And then, at last when death shall loom,
O Savior, come and bear your loved ones safely home.¹⁵*

From "Sent Forth By God's Blessing"

*Sent forth by God's blessing,
Our true faith confessing,
The people of God from his dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended.
Oh, now be extended the fruits of this service in all who believe."¹⁶*

This understanding of sacrifice flows from Romans 12 where Paul writes "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). In the ancient world, everyone knew that a sacrifice was dead. The sacrificial victim was slaughtered. To the ears of those who first heard the Epistle to the Romans, the term "living sacrifice" would have struck them as strange, as an oxymoron. Yet the Spirit purposefully inspires Paul to write of "living sacrifice" in Romans 12. The body of the Christian is to be rendered unto God as a living sacrifice for Christ has purchased that body with His own sacrifice for sin (Romans 3:25) and all those who are baptized have been joined to that saving death (Romans 6:1-11). Plunged into His death in Baptism, we now also share in His resurrection from the grave. Baptism is the fountain for the Christian life of sacrifice.

Thus Vilmos Vajta writes "The Christian brings his sacrifice as he renders the obedience, offers the service, and proves the love which his work and calling require of him. The old man dies as he spends himself for his fellow-men. But in this surrender of self, he is joined to Christ and obtains a new life. The work of the Christian in his calling becomes a function of his priesthood, his bodily sacrifice. His work in the calling is a work of faith, the

¹⁵ -LW 357:3.

¹⁶ -LW 247:1.

worship of the kingdom of the world.”¹⁷ The sacrifices offered by the royal priesthood are the “spiritual sacrifices” noted by Peter in I Peter 2:5, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” These spiritual sacrifices are what the Apology calls “eucharistic sacrifices” and they embrace all that the believer does in faith toward Christ and love toward the neighbor.

In other words, spiritual sacrifices are rendered in the bodily life of the believer as his life is a channel of God’s love and care for the neighbor in need. These sacrifices do not merit salvation or make a man good, but rather express love for the neighbor. God does not need our good works, but the neighbor does. Freed from the notion that he must make himself good and so earn eternal life, the Christian is directed toward the neighbor’s well-being. Luther captures this thought in “The Freedom of a Christian” as he states “Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him.”¹⁸

Here the Christian is the *larvae dei* (the mask of God) by which God gives daily bread to the inhabitants of His world. In this sense, Luther could speak of the Christian as being a “little Christ” to his neighbor. Christ sacrificed Himself for us on the cross. As we live under the sign of His cross, we give ourselves sacrificially to the neighbor in love.

Luther’s teaching on the dual existence of the Christian in faith and love leads us to observe a connection with the teaching of the two governments or two kingdoms. Leif Grane notes that for Luther “the place where the two kingdoms are held together is the calling.”¹⁹ As we have already observed, the Christian’s calling is twofold; it is the call to faith and the call to a particular station in life. This calling is lived within the structures of creation. Luther identified these structures as the three “hierarchies” of “the ministry, marriage, and government.” It is within these structures of congregation, political order, and family life (which for Luther included the

¹⁷ -Vilmos Vajta, *Luther on Worship*, trans. U.S.Leupold (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 169.

¹⁸ -AE 31:366.

¹⁹ -Leif Grane, *The Augsburg Confession: A Commentary*, trans. John Rasmussen (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 174.

economic realm) that one exercises love toward the neighbor. The Christian does not seek to escape the world as in monasticism but rather lives out his calling in the particular place where God has located him.

Article XVI of the *Augsburg Confession* reflects Luther's thought. After affirming the fact that "lawful civil ordinances are good works of God" and that Christians are permitted to engage in civil affairs, the confession goes on to condemn the Anabaptist who hold to a contrary teaching. Then it is confessed that "because the gospel transmits an eternal righteousness of the heart," evangelical perfection is to be found in the fear of God and faith, not in the abandonment of earthly responsibilities. The Gospel does not undercut secular government, marriage, or occupations within the world "but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works according to each person's calling."²⁰

The two governments have different aims. In his 1534 commentary on Psalm 101, Luther asserts "The spiritual government, or office should direct the people vertically toward God that they may do right and be saved; just so the worldly government should direct the people horizontally toward one another, seeing to it that body, property, honor, wife, child, house, home, and all manner of goods remain in peace and security and are blessed on earth."²¹ Luther's teaching on these "two governments" may be charted in the following manner:

GOD

GOD'S LEFT HAND RULE

Creation
Law
Reason
Works
Retribution
Preservation
Secular
Temporal

GOD'S RIGHT HAND RULE

Redemption/Sanctification
Gospel
Holy Scriptures
Faith
Forgiveness of Sins
Salvation
Spiritual
Eternal

²⁰ -AC XVI:5, Kolb/Wengert, 50.

²¹ - AE 13:197.

The Christian has a life under both the government of God's left hand and His right hand. The Christian lives with a foot in both kingdoms. By faith in the Gospel we have life under God's "right hand rule" but our callings in this earthly life also locate us under His "left hand rule." We are not evacuated from life in the world but to paraphrase the words of our Lord we are "in the world, but not of the world."

We have attempted to sketch out the fundamental contours of the Lutheran doctrine of vocation. Now we come to the point of asking what this doctrine means for evangelism and missions. This issue has, in fact, already been perceptively addressed by the report of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Church Growth Study Committee, *For the Sake of Christ's Commission*. The report notes that it is spiritually harmful:

- When Christians ignore their responsibilities to serve their neighbors and apply God's moral law in the cultures in which God has placed them.
- When Christians believe that only 'church work' is a valid way of serving God, so that they neglect their earthly vocations.
- When the church is operated as a purely secular corporation, with the pastor functioning as the "C.E.O.," the elders being reduced to a Board of Directors, and the congregation treated as workers, all organized according to a business plan to market a product.
- When the "Priesthood of All Believers" is taken to mean "every member a minister." This view denigrates the secular vocations (in implying that everyone ought to be engaged in ministerial functions to serve God, as if their existing callings were not equally spiritual in God's sight). It also can be used to denigrate the pastoral vocation (in implying that everyone can do what the pastor has personally been called to do).²²

How might the Lutheran doctrine of vocation help us avoid these four spiritually harmful errors?

Critics of Lutheranism have often leveled the charge that the "two kingdoms" concept has led to a withdrawal from the world, a pronounced political quietism on the part of Lutherans. Such a charge is unfounded. Luther recognized that God has established two governments among mankind, one is spiritual and the other is temporal. The Christian lives in

²² -Church Growth Study Committee, *For the Sake of Christ's Commission* (St.Louis: Office of the President LCMS, 2000), 19.

both. In his tract of 1526 entitled “Whether Soldiers, Too, Can be Saved,” Luther writes: “For God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but the word, by means of which we are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness, they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he committed to preachers. The other kind is world government, which works through the sword. And although God will not reward this kind of righteousness with eternal life, he still wishes peace to be maintained among men and rewards them with temporal blessings.”²³

Luther’s distinction between the two governments is rooted in his distinction between the two kinds of righteousness. Only the righteousness of faith saves. However, civic righteousness may be attained by believer and unbeliever alike and it is to be valued as a creaturely gift of the God who causes His rain and sunshine to fall on the fields of the unfaithful as well as the faithful. Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession echoes Luther: “Consequently, the powers of the church and the civil government must not be mixed. The power of the church possesses its own commandment to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. It should not usurp the other’s duty, transfer earthly kingdoms, abrogate the laws of magistrates, abolish civil ordinances or contracts, prescribe to magistrates laws concerning forms of government that should be established....In this way our people distinguish the duties of the two powers, and they command that both be held in honor and acknowledged as a gift and blessing of God.”²⁴

The Christian does not retreat from life in the secular sphere. He has responsibilities here as Paul testifies in Romans 13 as he bids the Christian to recognize Caesar as God’s servant, show him honor, and pay taxes. Rather the Christian understands that he lives within the home as a parent or child, within the government as a magistrate or citizen, and within the work place as an employer or employee, he is a life of love that is born of faith in Christ. It was for this reason that Luther included the “Table of Duties” at the conclusion of the Small Catechism. The Christian recognizes that good parenting, loyal citizenship, and honest labor practices are not the cause of his salvation. Freed from the burden of the law, faith is now active in love. The shape of this life of love is to be found in God’s will for the well-being of the neighbor as revealed in the Scriptures

²³ -AE 46:99-100.

²⁴ -AC XXVIII:12-13,18, Kolb/Wengert, 93.

Luther abhorred self-chosen works both in worship and daily life. In his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, he writes “Reason is the devil’s bride, which plans some particular course because it does not know what may please God....The best and highest station in life is to love God and one’s neighbor. Indeed that station is filled by the ordinary manservant or maidservant who cleans the meanest pot.”²⁵ So the Christian will not ignore the responsibilities that are his in ordinary life. He will understand these responsibilities to be given by God. They form the context in which the Christian lives in faith and love. It is within this arena that the Christian bears witness to the truth of the First Commandment over against the idolatries of this evil age, confesses his faith in Christ as the only Savior, and displays His love in a life of compassionate service.

Medieval Roman Catholicism presupposed a dichotomy between the life in religious orders and life in ordinary callings. It was assumed that the monastic life guided by the evangelical counsels (i.e. the Sermon on the Mount) provided a more certain path to salvation than secular life regulated by the Ten Commandments. It was precisely this issue that Luther attacked in the Smalcald Articles: “For those who vow to live a monastic life believe that they lead a better life than the ordinary Christian, and though their works they intend to help not only themselves but others get to heaven.”²⁶

American Evangelicalism has spawned what may be referred to as a “neo-monasticism.” Neo-monasticism like its medieval counterpart gives the impression that church work is more God-pleasing than the tasks and duties associated with life in the secular realm. According to this mindset, the believer who makes evangelism calls, serves on a stewardship committee, or reads a lesson in the church service is performing a higher work than the believer who stays at home to tend to her children or the believer who puts in a honest day’s labor on the job. Well-meaning pastors offend against sound doctrine when they urge involvement in the work of the congregation in such a way that makes it appear that such use of the Christian’s time is superior to anything else that he might do in day to day life. For the believer in Jesus Christ, all work is holy because he is holy and righteous in the blood of his Savior.

For the Sake of Christ’s Commission points to a confusion of the two governments when it speaks of how some churches are operated a secular

²⁵ -Quoted in Wingren, 88.

²⁶ -SA III:XIV:2, Kolb/Wengert,325.

corporations with the pastor as the C.E.O, the elders as the board of directors, and members as workers. Such a view of the church misses the biblical truth that the church is not a human organization but the body of Christ. Businesses function in the kingdom of the left hand according to the principles of economics. The church, however, is not an institution of the kingdom of the left hand but the creation of Christ's Gospel located in the kingdom of the right hand. Here it is not the power of human governance that applies but the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. The church is the bride of the heavenly bridegroom, the creature of His own flesh and blood. Attempts to define, organize, and administer the church according to the ways of management or human wisdom miss the fact that the church's vocation is different from that of the marketplace.

We do well to note a fourth item that *For the Sake of Christ's Commission* identifies as spiritually harmful. This item is the widespread confusion that has resulted from the equation of "the priesthood of all believers" with the false teaching that "everyone is a minister." The ideology of "Everyone a Minister" is a most blatant form of clericalism for it implies that work is worthwhile only insofar as it resembles the work done by pastors. Others have given sufficient attention to the exegetical fallacies set forth by Feucht²⁷. For our purposes in this paper we may simply note that this teaching does not exalt the doctrine of the royal priesthood of believers but rather detracts from it.

Both the Office of the Holy Ministry and the royal priesthood of believers are gifts from God. We may not play off one gift against the other. Neither may attempt to fuse the two together, refusing to distinguish between them. Jobst Schoene, bishop emeritus of our sister church in Germany (SELK) describes the gift-character of both the royal priesthood and the Office of the Holy Ministry: "The royal priesthood needs the support of the office of the holy ministry and vice versa. The two do not exclude each other. Tensions between the two will arise if the ministry is no longer understood as serving the royal priesthood, but ruling over it; and on the other hand, if the royal priesthood is understood as a bunch of rights and privileges to be exercised at the cost of the office of the holy ministry. This is not the idea of the New Testament. Instead, both have been given to support and strengthen each

²⁷ -See Oscar Feucht, *Everyone a Minister* (St.Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974). For an insightful analysis of the path that this erroneous notion took as it made its way from Pietism through the World Council of Churches into the LCMS, see Brent Kuhlman, "Oscar Feucht's *Everyone a Minister*: Pietismus Redivivus" *Logia* (Reformation 1999), 31-36.

other, linked together by the bond of love. Everything that the ministry does must be determined by love. The same is true for the royal priesthood. Both the pastor who is in the office of the holy ministry and the members of the royal priesthood are priests who share the same intention and goal to represent Christ's love and care for others."²⁸

The pastor serves the royal priesthood by preaching Christ's Word and administered His sacraments. The royal priesthood, in turns, serves the neighbor just as Christ has served us. This service is not only in the Christian congregation where the royal priesthood prays for and supports the pastor but most especially in the world where God has placed His people in a variety of vocations. Here the royal priesthood passes on the Gospel that it has received in the divine service as Christ is confessed and His people give reason for the hope that is within them (I Peter 3:15). It is within the various stations of life where God's priests live that they do what priests are called to do as they speak the word of God to others, speak to God on behalf of others in prayer, and offer themselves as living sacrifices on behalf of the neighbor.

The doctrine of vocation locates the dignity and honor of the royal priesthood in baptism. The Lutheran Confessions never pit the royal priesthood against the pastoral office as though the one is derived from the other. The Triune God has anointed all believers as priests in baptism. God puts a man into the office by call and ordination (AC XIV). He is there to distribute Christ's gifts in sermon and sacrament so that the royal priesthood might be enlivened with the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This distinction is especially well-stated in the 1997 statement, "The Office of the Church: An Orientation" by our German brethren: "The epistles of the New Testament and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church explicate how the office of the church and the congregation belong inseparably together and at the same time our to be clearly distinguished. *They belong together* because the congregation cannot lack the office through which the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered to her; and because the office is connected to the congregation, for whose service it was instituted. *Yet they are to be distinguished* because word and sacrament are not offered to the

²⁸ -Jobst Schoene, *The Christological Character of the Office of the Ministry and the Royal Priesthood* (Northville, SD: Logia Books, 1996), 17.

congregation in its own name, but in the name of God; and because the office of the church in its ministry is directed toward the congregation."²⁹

The SELK statement goes on to define the place of the royal priesthood: "All people whom the Holy Spirit has called through the gospel, enlightened with his gifts, and maintained in the true faith are priests and kings before God by the power of their baptism (see I Peter 2:9ff; Rev.1:6). Thus they shall proclaim the great deeds of God and be witnesses of the gospel. *They are priests* because in faith they have unhindered access to God through prayer and because they exercise the service in which they must also suffer as witnesses of the gospel (see Rom. 5:1ff; 15,16; Phil. 1:27ff; Jn. 16:2-4). *They are kings* because they also bring to people the blessings of God which Christ, their king and lord, makes them partakers. Thus they are identified with titles of honor that first applied to Christ: 'elect of God, holy, beloved' (Col.3:12; Christ in Mk.1:11; 9:7 and parallels). The people of God, made up of priests and kings, has its spiritual origin in the people of God of the Old Testament (see Ex. 19:5ff)."³⁰ The royal priesthood proclaims the riches of Christ's atoning work not in the public preaching of the church but according to each member's station in life. It is within the context of one's vocation that every man, woman, and child confesses Jesus Christ and proclaims His saving work.

Here we may note that the *Small Catechism* is the handbook for the royal priesthood as it was prepared so that the head of the household might teach his family the chief articles of the Christian faith. Luther envisioned the *Small Catechism* as not only a handbook for Christian doctrine but as a prayer book and a guide to the life of repentance, faith, and holy living. The *Small Catechism* is the road map for the Christian's vocation as a member of the royal priesthood. It provides a "pattern of sound words" so that the believer is enabled to speak truthfully of Christ to his neighbor and serve the neighbor according to the will of God.

Rather than fostering the unbiblical and inadequate notion that everyone is a minister, our church would do well to recover Luther's vibrant understanding of vocation as the context for the life of the royal priesthood.

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²⁹ -Theological Commission of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church, "The Office and the Church: An Orientation" *Logia* (Holy Trinity, 2001), 21.

³⁰ -Ibid., 21.

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