

The distinction between Law and Gospel is a hermeneutical touchstone

Introduction

Since 2013 General Synod, Dr. John Kleinig has posted his paper 'Why I changed my mind – the journey of an LCA pastor and theologian.' When commenting on the texts I Cor 14:24, 35 and I Tim 2:11-14, Dr. Kleinig draws attention to a theological concept, namely, the 'law of equivalent retribution'. He argues that Paul couches his command prohibiting the ordination of women within the framework of this 'law of equivalent retribution'. Consequently, the prohibition must apply to all Christendom because Paul refers to a command of Christ.

Dr. Kleinig's view represents an interpretation of these texts which not only is contested amongst many New Testament scholars within the world-wide community of Lutherans but also amongst many of the pastors and laity in our LCA. It is my view that St Paul's prohibition against women speaking in Corinth and Ephesus bears no relevance to ordination in the LCA (CTICR Final Report 2000). Instead, I will develop the view that Augsburg Confession V 'The Ministry of the Church', Apology Article IV 'Justification', as well as, Apology VII and VIII 'The Church', provide us with a sound Confessional basis for a Lutheran understanding of the ministry of Word and sacraments, and for the rite of ordination.

When the Reformers were asked to defend their position and define the true nature of the church, the question: 'What acts of worship are necessary for righteousness before God?' was central to their theological perspective. Their focus was upon justification, that is, the centrality of the cross and the role of the Holy Spirit as the servant of Christ who creates and nurtures the life of the faithful. Such a Trinitarian and Christocentric focus can be likened to a Global Positioning Satellite System whose coordinates are: *crux probat omnia* (The cross probes/tests everything). This theological criterion also guides the Reformers in the way scriptures are to be interpreted. They agreed that:

The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognisable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ. This church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, consecrates, and governs by his Spirit, as Paul testifies when he says (Eph. 1:22, 23), "and he has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness," that is, the whole congregation "of him who fills all in all." Thus those in whom Christ is not active are not members of Christ. But as the different length of day and night does not harm the unity of the church, so we believe that the true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by men, although we like it when universal rites are observed for the sake of tranquillity. Another issue is involved. The question is whether the observance of human traditions is an act of worship necessary for righteousness before God. This must be settled in this controversy. Apology VII and VIII, 'The Church'.

The Reformers refer to the commands of Christ: preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. They do not mention St Paul's command. The verbs which the Reformers use, clearly establish a Trinitarian and Christocentric focus: Christ renews, Christ consecrates and Christ governs by his Spirit.

If our LCA continues to uphold Theses VI par11 as a doctrine binding on all Christendom and believes that ordaining men only is absolutely necessary for the sake of the gospel and the faith of the church, then the LCA will have elevated the gender of an ordained person to the theological status of a third mark identifying the presence of the true Church in Christendom. However:

Paul defined the church...It is made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions or not. (Apology, Article VII and VIII)

On this basis the Reformers distinguished between the essential theological foundations of the church, and those organisational matters which, like other 'civic governments', are desirable for good order and tranquillity. The theological heart and core of Article IV is the Holy Spirit who works in, with and under the ministry of Word and sacraments. This is Trinitarian and Christocentric in its focus. In this ministry, gender is irrelevant except when it is argued that male gender is an essential and indispensable requirement for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the faith of the church, for the sake of the efficacy and validity of the ministry of Word and sacraments: To argue that a gender exclusive doctrine is indispensable for ordination in the LCA means that a sociological and cultural concept (male gender) has been introduced into our theology of ministry. Such a gender-exclusive view diminishes our Trinitarian and Christocentric theology of ministry.

Therefore, when examining Theses VI par11 it is helpful to distinguish between that which constitutes an essential theological foundation and that which is desirable for both order and tranquillity in the church. In the view of some, a particular interpretation of Theses VI par11 binds together the organisational and structural unity of the LCA with a gender exclusive view of ordination. For this reason, in their view, if the LCA decides to ordain women then the organisational unity and framework of the LCA will come under threat.

In keeping with the Trinitarian and Christocentric focus of the Confessions I believe that we need to recover the Reformer's distinction between the essential theological foundations of the church and other organisational matters, which like 'civic governments' are desirable for good order. In doing so, a Trinitarian and Christocentric theology of ministry is strengthened and protected from any sociological, cultural and gender defining factors, whether they be male or female influences.

I draw your attention to: 'The Plan to Prepare for the 2015 General Convention of synod: The Question of the Ordination of women, par 4, d'. This is very helpful in clarifying the theological coordinates of our compass and assists in maintaining the Reformer's distinction between the essential theological foundations of the church and other organisational matters. The questions below invite the CTICR to provide resources centred around two fundamental questions:

1. How is the gospel at stake in this matter?
2. How does this affect the faith of the church?

Those who advocate the ordination of men only and prohibit the ordination of women throughout all Christendom are arguing that the ordination of men only is a necessary prerequisite for the spiritual health

and well-being of our future LCA because the efficacy of the work of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination. They would say that the gospel is at stake if women are ordained. For reasons outlined below, I propose that the gospel is not at stake if the LCA ordains women; and, that saving faith will not be jeopardized at all. God's judgement will not fall upon the LCA according to a 'law of equivalent retribution'. Theses VI par11 is not necessary for righteousness before God. It does not pass the test: *crux probat omnia*. It places a gender exclusive view of ordination at the centre of the efficacy and validity of the ministry of Word and sacrament, alongside of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In doing so it diminishes a Trinitarian and Christocentric theology of ministry.

The distinction between Law and Gospel: the hermeneutical touchstone and theological compass for the church. What happened when Martin Luther met Hermen?

Introduction

In the essay, 'My Journey with Hermen, The highways and byways of hermeneutics,' Pastor Neil Stiller wrote about his journey with Hermen who enabled him to understand how great an influence our biases and presuppositions have upon the way we think. Pastor Stiller wrote: 'We all need to examine the assumptions, the traditions, the biases, which lie behind every opinion we may reach about what the Bible is telling us. And we need the help of each other to do that.'

Luther himself made that journey with Hermen in another time and place. It was a life-time, perspective-changing encounter with the scriptures. His theological training equipped him to work with the Greek and Hebrew texts in a way which transformed his view of God, the work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Subsequent Reformers followed in his footsteps. But it was not Luther's exegetical skills per se which changed his perspective. It was his experience of the gospel, in particular, a change in his understanding of the righteousness of God: the righteousness of God was not retributory but a donated righteousness, a gift (Rom 1:17). The result was the Augsburg Confession which has at its heart the theological distinction between Law and Gospel, a distinction which places Christ at the centre of the life and work of the Church, a distinction which enables Christians in all their diversity to focus upon unity in Christ.

The distinction between Law and Gospel is not only the hermeneutical touchstone for Lutheran theology but also the theological compass for guiding the LCA in the future. Those who wrote our Lutheran confessions made theological and pastoral judgements about the teachings and practices of the late medieval church by evaluating them in the light of the doctrine of justification by faith alone (Augsburg Confession Article IV). Justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*) in Christ alone (*solus Christus*) was later referred to as the *material principle*. It crystallises the entire Christian truth. The authoritative source for this theology was Scripture (*sola scriptura*) which was later referred to as the *formal principle*.¹

The mission and marks of the church are clear: (i) preach the gospel (ii) baptise people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18-19 and Mark 16:15-16) and, (iii) Do this in remembrance of me - celebrate the Lord's Supper (Matt 25: 26-30, Mark14: 22-26, Luke 22:14-21, 1 Cor

¹ Throughout this essay wherever the terms *material principle* and the *formal principle* are used, they will carry these meanings.

11:23-26). These commands are essential for the Office of the Holy Ministry because through these means of grace, that is, the Word and sacraments, God gives the Holy Spirit who works the gift of saving faith when and where he pleases in those who hear the Gospel (Augsburg Confession Articles IV and V). From this source springs the life of faith, hope and love, the new obedience, the life of the church (Article VI). The focus in Articles IV, V and VI is the salvific work of the Holy Trinity who chooses to work in the ministry of the Word and sacraments. If we introduce a gender exclusive understanding of ordination into the Office of the Ministry then we diminish the Trinitarian and Christological focus of the ministry of Word and sacraments.

As we reflect on the development and formulation of the Confessions it becomes clear everything previously known and experienced in the spiritual and social life of the late medieval church was consistently drawn and coherently evaluated in the light of what we now call *the material principle* and *the formal principle*. These principles are not doctrines per se. They are theological means, or auxiliary theological tools, a theological compass which enables exegetes to distinguish between Law and Gospel and rightly apply the meaning of a text to the life of the church because they help us answer the question: What is necessary for righteousness before God?

The revolution in church life

With this theological compass the Reformers made radical pastoral decisions. Seven sacraments were reduced to two: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The notion of theocracy, that is, the inseparable unity of church and state as expressed in the Holy Roman Empire was rejected, leaving us with the legacy of the doctrine of the two-kingdoms which differentiates the way God works through the state and the church. Hierarchical distinctions between clergy and laity disappeared. Distinctions which formed the very foundations for the structure and wealth distribution in late medieval society were rejected. Fasting, liturgical practices, images in church buildings, marriage of the clergy, the question whether nuns could marry, plus other long established traditions were evaluated by drawing them (*ducere* – Latin: to lead or guide) under the guiding light of the distinction between Law and Gospel.

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Christ was the hermeneutical touchstone, the theological compass which gave the Reformers such clarity of insight, that it enabled them to make discerning judgements about the meaning and application of the very words of Scripture for the life of the church. They were able to exercise pastoral judgments which shaped the future life of the church. When examining any issue they could conclude: this is necessary for salvation while this is not necessary for salvation. The background to their pastoral considerations was: What is necessary for righteousness before God? This process finally gave us our Confessions, documents which were the result of energetic dialogue between the emerging Lutheran movement and the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire.

The importance of Scripture

The late medieval church read, studied, interpreted and meditated upon the Scriptures as did Luther with his fellow Augustinian monks. Scripture was regarded as the inspired Word of God. Yet, when he read the Scriptures, Luther was terrified because in the inspired Word of God he encountered a God of judgement and retribution, an angry and terrible Judge, who caused him to despair. Luther's view of the Scriptures was radically changed through the inner work of the Holy Spirit. He was led to see, with joyful certainty, that in the same divinely inspired text there was what he called the heart of Scripture, the doctrine of justification,

the cross of Christ, the heart of God. This gave Scripture its authority. In his *Bondage of the Will* Luther would say: “Take Christ from the Scriptures and what more will you find in them?” In 1534 Luther audaciously said: “If our adversaries argue the Scriptures against Christ, then we will argue Christ against the Scriptures.”

The importance of the work of the Holy Trinity

In his *Large Catechism* Luther outlined the true purpose of the salvific work of the Holy Trinity in the Creeds:

In these three articles God himself has revealed and opened to us the utmost profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love. He has created us for this very purpose, to redeem and sanctify us. Moreover, having bestowed upon us everything in heaven and on earth, he has given us his Son and his Holy Spirit, through whom he brings us to himself. As we explained before, we could never come to recognise the Father’s favour and grace were it not for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a mirror of the Father’s heart. Apart from him we see nothing but an angry and terrible judge. But neither could we know anything of Christ, had it not been revealed by the Holy Spirit. (The *Large Catechism: Creed Book of Concord* {Tappert} 419: 63-65)

The primary purpose of including the three articles of the Creed was to establish a theological connection between the doctrine of justification by faith alone (Article IV) and the way God himself has revealed and opened to us the utmost profound depths of his fatherly heart, his sheer, unutterable love, thereby establishing a further connection between redemption and sanctification, based upon the Father’s favour and grace in Christ who is a mirror of the Father’s heart. There is a theological coherence in the way the Reformers have organised the structure of the *Augsburg Confession* around this theological compass, namely, the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It can be anticipated that this theme will also be the central focus of Article V. This is the theological compass for the ordained ministry rather than a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination.

The importance of the Office of the Holy Ministry

All throughout the *Confessions* we see how reliant and respectful the Reformers were towards the Scriptures. In their Christological perspective, the Holy Trinity works through the means of grace, that is, the Word and sacraments in order to create saving faith.

To obtain such saving faith God instituted the office of the holy ministry that is, provided the Gospel and sacraments. Through these, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merits of Christ, when we believe this. (*Augsburg Confession Article V*)

The wisdom required in knowing what is essential for salvation

Thereafter the Reformers were confident in evaluating the inspired text by examining the meaning of various scriptural passages (*formal principle*) in the light of the gospel (*material principle*). The Scriptures must not be interpreted in ways which disregard the gospel thereby burdening consciences with fear. The gospel must not be understood and used to divorce the work of the Holy Trinity from the Scriptures.

Hermeneutics exists in the tension created by this distinction between the formal and material principle. In the midst of this tension the Holy Spirit maintains the focus upon Christ and the cross. This enabled the Reformers to conclude: this is essential for salvation because it is necessary for the proclamation of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone; or, this church tradition is necessary for good order in the church but not necessary for righteousness before God. In our context this means a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination is not necessary for righteousness before God.

For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere (Augsburg Confession Article VII).

The connection between the hermeneutical touchstone and preaching

For these Reformers it was a matter of seeing clearly how a God of judgement and grace revealed himself and spoke a Word of Law and Gospel. The Holy Spirit is not only the author of the Word, the divinely inspired, inerrant sacred text (*formal principle*), but is also the witness to the cross of Christ in the Word (*material principle*). When the doctrine of justification for Christ's sake through faith resonated in the proclamation of those ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry; or, when a clear distinction was made between Law and Gospel, this indicated that God was at work in Christ through the Holy Spirit creating saving faith and producing good fruit and good works. When the distinction between Law and Gospel did not resonate in the proclamation of those ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry, then no matter how much reference was made to God and the inspired word, the end result was: another Christ was being preached. (2 Cor 11. 14)²

The hermeneutical compass

The reformer Melancthon would show how the doctrine of justification worked as a theological compass for the reform movement in The Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IV Justification. On that basis he writes:

All Scripture should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the law and the promises. In some places it presents the law. In others it presents the gospel of Christ: this it does either when it promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life for his sake or when in the New Testament, the Christ who came promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life. By Law, in this discussion we mean the commandments of the Decalogue. (Apology IV 5, 6)

The two schools of thought in the LCA regarding ordination: the male-only interpretation of Article V (Interpretation A); and, the gender inclusive interpretation of Article V (Interpretation B)

Diverse ways of interpreting and applying the same texts can result from a common affirmation that Scripture is the 'divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God and the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life' (Article II, LCA Constitution). Clearly, affirming the *formal principle*, does not guarantee consensus, as is all too clear in our LCA when we think of the two schools of thought

² The wisdom and capacity to make this distinction does not reside in the gender of the pastor.

regarding the ordination of women. When both the Reformers and the theologians representing the Holy Roman Empire quoted scripture in support of their arguments, the way ahead for the Reformers was clarified in light of the question: 'What is necessary for righteousness before God?' Our question is essentially the same, yet formulated in the following manner: 'How is the gospel at stake in this matter?' 'How does this affect the faith of the church?'

The two schools of thought in our LCA do not result from a fundamental difference about the divine inspiration of the written and inerrant Word of God as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life. This is evidenced in the written material produced over the past thirty years. We can see a mutual, abiding love and deep respect for the Word. The diligence and humility that has marked our exegetical journey through the Word examining this matter has been extraordinary in its depth, detail and scope. In both schools of thought, Christ is the centre. Even so, there are differences in the way the texts 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14 are interpreted and applied in the life of the LCA.

Inseparable from the *formal principle*, yet in clear distinction from it, is the central message of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins, the cross of Christ, the joyful certainty of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone. Augsburg Confession Article V tells us God instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry thereby providing the gospel and the sacraments in order that we may obtain this saving faith. It is agreed that the Office of the Holy Ministry is a gift from God for the purpose of proclaiming the Word and administering the sacraments in order to obtain justifying faith. While there is mutual consensus about the centrality of the cross in the two schools of thought, nevertheless there is no consensus about Theses VI par11 with its gender exclusive doctrine of ordination and its operative concept of the 'law of equivalent retribution'.

The Augsburg Confession Article V and Theses VI paragraph 11

In addition to Augsburg Confession Article V, 'Office of the Holy Ministry', Theses VI par11 quotes the texts 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14. These are interpreted in support of a male-only view on ordination.³ The texts are not referred to by the Reformers throughout the Lutheran Confessions: The Augsburg Confession (1530) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531) The Smaldcald Articles (1537) The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537) The Small Catechism (1529) The Large Catechism (1529) The Formula of Concord 1577). This is significant. Their central concern was not a gender issue in relation to the Office of the Holy Ministry.⁴ It was a pastoral-theological issue: 'What is necessary for righteousness before God?' 'How does a person obtain this righteousness, this justifying faith which they so eloquently described in Article IV, the kind of faith that brings forth the good fruit and good works which they so eloquently praised in Article VI?' 'How is the gospel at stake in this matter?' Their answer is to be found in Article V. The focus

³ In 1966, prior to the formation of the LCA, there were two interpretations of 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14 amongst pastors and laity in both the UELCA and ELCA. One interpretation held that male only ordination was a doctrine necessary for the life of the church and binding on all Christendom. (I represent this view as **Interpretation A**) The other interpretation held that male only ordination was a theological opinion, a matter of practice and not a binding doctrine upon the whole of Christendom. (I represent this view as **Interpretation B**) While it is accurate to say that Theses VI par 11 represents the historic position of the LCA, nevertheless it did not represent the view of all pastors and laity. The current dialogue in the LCA presents us with a new opportunity to reassess and evaluate the status of Theses VI par 11.

⁴ The gender issues confronting the Reformers were significantly different and quite radical: celibacy in the priesthood and monastic orders, marriage and the priesthood, and, whether or not monks and nuns from the various monastic orders could marry.

of Article V is the salvific work of the Holy Trinity, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the Word and sacraments. Christ renews, consecrates and governs his flock by the Holy Spirit through these means of grace. This is necessary for righteousness before God, nothing else.

In **Interpretation A**, the *formal principle* is deeply respected in the way these texts, along with other passages, are quoted (Summary of arguments for the ordination of men only CTICR Final Report 2000). The *formal principle* leads to the conclusion that St Paul's command required women to be silent in Corinth and in all the churches at that time. However, **Interpretation A** now requires all of us in the LCA to accept that this command is relevant and essential for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of the efficacy and validity of the Office of the Ministry in our LCA. It follows theologically that Augsburg Confession Article V can no longer be properly understood apart from Theses VI par11. Consequently, **Interpretation A** believes that those who violate St Paul's command by ordaining women will be judged by God according to a 'law of equivalent retribution'.

Implications for the parish life of the LCA: the male-only school of thought: Interpretation A

In **Interpretation A**, there is neither room for compromise nor could there be theological unity and organisational unity together with diversity of practice because: if a female is ordained then the LCA has acted in disobedience to St Paul's command. Furthermore, in this view a female pastor will desecrate the body and blood of Christ when she attempts to consecrate the bread and wine; and, a female pastor cannot properly or validly nurture the faith of the faithful because her ministry is invalid. The Holy Trinity cannot condone the ordination of a female pastor and will not work in a salvific manner through her ministry of Word and sacrament. Her ministry of Word and sacrament is under the judgement of God both here and now as well as the future judgement. This conclusion is consistent when it is believed that the 'law of equivalent retribution' stands behind 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and I Tim 2: 11-14. It follows from this approach that the good fruit and good works so eloquently described in Article VI cannot be nurtured by the Spirit of God.

In **Interpretation A** the parishioners of a female pastor will not obtain the faith so eloquently described in Article V. They will not be freely justified for Christ's sake through faith. They will not be received into favour with God. Their sins will not be forgiven on account of Christ, and their faith in Christ will not be imputed as righteousness in the sight of God. God will not give her parishioners the gift of the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the sacraments. In this view, if an ordained female pastor baptises a child, then the baptism of that child will be invalid because her Word and sacrament ministry are invalid. In this view of the Office of the Ministry, Christ, the Lord of the Church and the Holy Spirit will only work through male gender. The gospel is at stake as is the faith of the LCA.

Implications for the parish life of the LCA: the gender inclusive school of thought: Interpretation B

The *formal principle* is also significant for that school of thought in our LCA which supports the ordination of both men and women (**Interpretation B**). The same respect, diligence and care for the meaning of the Scriptures are evident. (Summary of arguments for the ordination of women CTICR Final Report 2000 and, The Case for the Ordination of women - A Summary adopted by CTICR 26 May 2006. In this 2006 document, Paragraphs 4-7 specifically deal with the foundational texts referred to in Theses VI par 11.)

What then is the difference between **Interpretation A** and **Interpretation B**? While it is clear that the two schools of thought both confess the ‘divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God ... as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life’ (Article II, LCA Constitution) nevertheless, the difference between the two schools of thought can be seen in their understanding of Theses VI par11. In **Interpretation B**, St Paul’s command is interpreted as having relevance for a particular context. It is not understood as a command for all times and places (CTICR2006 par5) because a gender exclusive view of ordination is not necessary for righteousness before God.

These two texts are to be interpreted in the light of the whole Scripture, which is the inspired Word of God. Christ and the gospel he proclaimed are the heart and centre of the Scriptures. Their purpose and goal is that sinners be justified. For that reason Christ instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry and calls people to serve as pastors in the church. To argue in this way is not to reduce Scripture to gospel alone, but to make the gospel and its proclamation the basis for the church’s practice (CTICR 2006 par 7).

Consequently, the validity and efficacy of the ministry of Word and sacrament in the LCA, is not dependent upon a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination. It is solely dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit who works where and when he wills in those who hear the Law and the Gospel proclaimed. The message of justification by grace through faith in Christ is not conditional or dependent upon a gender exclusive interpretation of Theses VI par11. When all Scripture is interpreted within the compass of the formal principle and the material principle, it is seen by **Interpretation B** that the salvific work of the Holy Trinity is conditional only upon: (i) preaching the gospel (ii) baptising people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and, (iii) celebrating the Lord’s Supper – “Do this in remembrance of me”. That is because the application of all exegesis in the life of the LCA is to be tested by the question: ‘What is necessary for righteousness before God?’

In **Interpretation B**, the weight therefore falls upon those things which are essential to the Office of the Holy Ministry: the means of grace, the Word and sacraments, through which God gives the Holy Spirit who works the gift of saving faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel (Augsburg Confession Article IV and V). To make it quite clear: the work of the Holy Spirit is not conditional upon obedience to this particular command of St Paul (1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14) because obeying this command is not a necessary prerequisite for righteousness before God. Theses VI par11 is not necessary for righteousness before God because it is not regarded as expressing an indispensable and essential condition for the validity and efficacy of the Office of the Holy Ministry. Augsburg Confession Article V can stand alone as a complete and sufficient theology of the ministry of Word and sacraments and has no need at all for Theses VI par11 to provide additional detail about which gender is necessary for the efficacy of the ministry of Word and sacraments. If a female is ordained then the Church remains faithful to its Lord because the Holy Spirit works through Word and sacrament. In this view a female pastor will not desecrate the body and blood of Christ when she consecrates the bread and wine. In this view, a female pastor properly and validly nurtures the faith of the faithful. The good fruit and good works so eloquently described by the Reformers in Article VI will be nurtured by the Spirit of God because the Spirit of God acts in conformity to the command of Christ to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. The Office of the Holy Ministry of an ordained woman does not lose its validity and efficacy.

In **Interpretation B**, the LCA can be confident that the parishioners of a female pastor will obtain the faith the Reformers so eloquently describe in Article IV. They will be freely justified for Christ's sake through faith. They will be received into favour with God. Their sins will be forgiven on account of Christ and their faith in Christ will be imputed as righteousness in the sight of God. God will give her parishioners the gift of the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the sacraments. If an ordained female pastor baptises a child, then the baptism of that child remains valid because her Word and sacrament ministry is validated by Christ, and the Holy Spirit works through the command of Christ to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Augsburg Confession Articles IV, V and VI are understood to be theologically coherent and consonant, not because of a teaching about ordination arrived at through a particular interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14, but because of the focus upon the salvific work of the Holy Trinity who chooses to work through the Word and sacraments freely justifying parishioners for Christ's sake in those who hear the Gospel. There is a substantial theological and pastoral difference at this point between **Interpretation A** and **Interpretation B**.

Some conclusions

Theses VI par11 was important for the union of the two Lutheran Churches in 1966. It has always been a contentious paragraph. The CTICR2000 Final Report and subsequent Synods have now revealed to what degree these two schools of thought have remained in the LCA since 1966. Current dialogue now reveals there are significantly different pastoral implications for the future life of the LCA. These pastoral implications are concerned with the questions 'How is the gospel at stake?' or, 'How does this affect the faith of the church?' and, 'What is necessary for righteousness before God?' **Interpretation B** provides the LCA with unequivocal answers to those fundamental questions because a Trinitarian and Christocentric focus is maintained rather than a gender exclusive doctrine.

Finally, those who formulated the Resolutions put forward to the 2013 General Synod by the congregations of St Peters Indooroopilly and St Stephens Adelaide believe that these Resolutions are consistent with making a distinction between the formal principle and the material principle for Lutheran hermeneutics. They represent a valid interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14, one which is supported by many New Testament scholars within the global Lutheran community and by many pastors and laity in the LCA. They are also consistent and in harmony with Augsburg Confession Articles IV and V which emphasise the connection between the work of the Holy Trinity and the Office of the Holy Ministry.

These Resolutions do not bind this Trinitarian and Christocentric understanding of the Office of the Ministry and the means of grace to a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination and its operative law of equivalent retribution. The Resolutions distinguish between Law and Gospel when applying 1 Cor 14:33b-38 and 1 Tim 2: 11-14 to the life of the LCA and do so in the light of the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. They propose nothing at all that is contrary to the Lutheran Confessions because they have a Trinitarian and Christocentric focus. They are also respectful of LCA Constitutional processes which are synodical.

Consequently, a change can be implemented with regard to the practice of ordination in the LCA which can be mindful and respectful of the importance which 1 Cor 14: 33b-38 and I Tim 2: 11-14 have had, not only for church order in the 1st century, but also throughout the history of Christendom. The Resolutions are particularly mindful of the importance these texts had for those synodical discussions which led to the formation of the LCA in 1966. It is envisaged that the unity of the LCA can remain intact because a pastoral

respect for and sensitivity to the views of those who do not wish to call an ordained female pastor would accord those congregations and parishes the right and freedom to call an ordained male pastor to serve their parishioners. A gender inclusive view of ordination necessarily presupposes a period for transition and change. The Resolutions from St Peters and St Stephens are not formulated on the basis of any feminist philosophy or sociological factors inherent in contemporary culture such as a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination. They do not advocate a gender exclusive doctrine of ordination as a necessary addendum to Augsburg Confession V 'The Ministry of the Church', Apology Article IV 'Justification', as well as, VII and VIII 'The Church'.

The Resolutions presuppose the centrality of the doctrine of justification for the life of the church which always requires us, as it did the Reformers before us, to answer the fundamental question 'What is necessary for salvation?' In our time the same question appears in the form:

Is the gender exclusive view of ordination expressed in Theses VI par11 necessary for the validity and efficacy of the ministry of salvation, that is, necessary for righteousness before God?

Neal Nuske

2nd May 2014