

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

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D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

The status of the teacher in the church

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The New Testament, the Augsburg Confession, and the Theses of Agreement know only of one office instituted by Christ for His Church, the office of the public ministry, instituted 'for the public administration of the means of grace, that is, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments' (Theses of Agreement VI, 1.)

Paragraphs 9 and 10 of Section VI of the Theses of Agreement mention the right of congregations or the Church at large to establish various auxiliary offices as circumstances make desirable. All these offices are purely of human right. Some of these offices are more closely related to the office of the public ministry than others, although all of them are auxiliary offices of the public ministry, and to that extent are churchly or ecclesiastical offices.

The office of teacher in primary, secondary, or tertiary schools conducted by congregations or by the Church at large also belongs in the category of an auxiliary office. It is true that the nature of the work of a teacher has its roots in the office of a parent. However, the Church is rightly concerned about the Christian nurture of those who are joined to it by Baptism, and it is the teacher's part in this aspect of the public ministry that constitutes his office an auxiliary office of the public ministry. A difficulty exists as to the proper term by which to describe the special service of a teacher.

Teachers who devote their lives to this auxiliary office and who faithfully perform the tasks of their office should be regarded by Church and congregations with honour and treated with the same concern as is shown the bearers of the office of the public ministry.

However, the Church should at all times clearly preserve the difference between the office Christ has instituted and those which the Church creates. If this is not done, it will be impossible to preserve the distinction between the office of the public ministry and the universal priesthood of all believers.