

# The Augsburg Confession 6

## Lesson Six: Articles V, XIV The Office of the Ministry, Ecclesiastical Order

### Introduction

One of the issues that the Lutherans had to grapple with and explain in the Augsburg Confession is how the Word of God and his sacraments work. Several medieval misunderstandings had become entrenched in the Roman Church, and other reformers and non-Lutheran sects and splinter groups were teaching unbiblical notions that the Lutherans needed to distance themselves from. Articles V and XIV address the office of the ministry, the power of God's word and sacraments, and order in the church.

### Article V

So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. <sup>2</sup>Through the word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given [John 20:22]. He works faith, when and where it pleases God [John 3:8], in those who hear the good news <sup>3</sup> that God justifies those who believe that they are received into

grace for Christ's sake. This happens not through our own merits, but for Christ's sake.

<sup>4</sup>Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that through their own preparations and works the Holy Spirit comes to them without the external Word.

### The office of the ministry

- A. Ministry is service – It is not an order, not a special priesthood, not an institution or hierarchy of rulership over the church. **1 Peter 5:2,3.**
- B. This ministry or service of the word consists of the service of preaching, teaching and administering the sacraments. **2 Timothy 4:2;** 1 Corinthians 4:1.
- C. God has ordained this arrangement and confers the office through the divine call. **Hebrews 5:4;** Matthew 28:19; **Ephesians 4:11,12.**

### The power of the gospel

- A. The gospel in word and sacrament is the means of grace. There is only one “means of grace;” it is the gospel.
- B. Word and sacrament are *instruments* through which the Holy Spirit is given. **Romans 10:14,15; John 6:63.**
- C. The Holy Spirit works faith and salvation and brings to life through the gospel. **Titus 3:5;** John 3:5; **1 Peter 1:23; Romans 1:16; Isaiah 55:11,13.**
- D. The gospel is sufficient and all we need for salvation. God may accompany the message with miraculous signs, but these are not necessary to bring someone to faith. **Romans 10:17; Matthew 11:15; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Luke 16:29-31.**

Consider: Why would people seek to bypass (or supplement) the Word of God and find certainty, comfort and solace in other ways apart from the clear words and promises of God?

- E. The Spirit works faith without man's cooperation “where and when it is pleasing to God.” **John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 9:16;** Hebrews 4:7; John 15:16; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; Philippians 2:13.

### The gospel is the message of justification. It is a proclamation and preaching.

- A. We are not saved because of our merits. The law brings us to the terrible realization of our guilt and its well-deserved punishment. The gospel reveals to us God's gift of salvation. **Romans 6:23.**
- B. Those who receive the gift of faith are received into grace.

- C. This is accomplished by the gospel. The Word of God has the power to bring about what it commands. "Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15). Example: Jesus at Lazarus' tomb. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

### **We reject the teaching that the Spirit works without means**

The Anabaptists (and many other groups) teach an "immediate" working of the Holy Spirit (the word "immediate" signifies "without a medium" or "without means.") Anabaptists rejected infant baptism and believed in rebaptism. They believed in a direct/immediate working of the Holy Spirit apart from the means of grace. Certainly God can create faith in a human heart any way he wishes, but he has revealed to us his desire to work using means.

#### A. Examples then and now:

1. Thomas Muenzer, d. 1525 (Peasant revolt); Andreas Carlstadt, originally a friend of Luther d. 1541; Casper Schwenkfeldt, d. 1561. They sought to bypass the means of grace.
2. Others: Zwingli, d. 1531 at Kappel; said that the Holy Spirit does not need a cart and that the Holy Spirit comes to man directly. He taught that limiting God is impossible.
3. The Zwickau prophets: Storch and Stuebner claimed direct revelation from the Holy Spirit. Philip Melanchthon was not sure if they were speaking by the Holy Spirit or not.
4. Quakers: George Fox taught that every human being has an inner light in which the Holy Spirit can speak to us directly. Pentecostals also teach a sort of direct revelation.
5. Reformed (Calvinist) churches hold that there is no grace for those who from eternity have been predestined by God to damnation. If there is no grace for them, then word and sacrament cannot be instruments for conveying it to them. Though they may hear the word and receive the sacraments, they are like a machine running idle.
6. Traditional Presbyterians stress that the Bible was given by inspiration and that it is binding for us in all its parts; yet when anyone asks them how the grace of God is conveyed to the elect, they emphatically deny that word and sacraments are powerful to that end. According to their official doctrine, they teach that the Holy Spirit may use the word to convey God's grace to the elect, but that it is wrong to assume that the word is effective. In other words, it remains a dead instrument until the Holy Spirit takes it up. From the Calvinist/Reformed tradition they teach that Christ only saved the elect.

#### B. General characteristics of those under the same error of the Anabaptists:

1. The Spirit works without the agency of the Word.
2. Faith is obtained through their own devotion (Romans 10:5f.). This can turn the gospel into a law to be obeyed.

For personal reflection: Why is searching one's own feelings and emotions to discern the certainty of God's presence and the will of God a very misguided and dangerous practice?

### **Article XIV**

Our churches teach that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments without a rightly-ordered call.

- A. The gospel in word and sacrament belongs to all Christians. It is the common heritage of the church.
- B. By virtue of his place in the kingdom of God, every Christian serves as a witness for the gospel. Any Christian may baptize in cases of emergency. **Matthew 28:19.**
- C. The divine call confers ecclesiastical office upon certain Christians, authorizing them to function publicly in the body of believers. **Hebrews 5:4; 1 Corinthians 4:1.**