

Because Christ Did It All, We Are Free

ELCA leaders say that Luther and the Reformers really wanted the historic episcopate, therefore adopting CCM is no big deal. They say that their view is one of many legitimate views of the Reformation. But is it? What do the Lutheran Confessions in fact say?

Satis Est: It is Enough. This phrase – from the Augsburg Confession, Article 7 – means **we are certain** that the gospel and the sacraments **are enough** for true unity, thus we are free from added requirements.

Times have changed but the problem is still with us. Did Christ do it all, or is something more needed? Many Christians insist that more is needed: faith+church, faith+historic episcopate, faith+works, faith+Mary. We never know: Have we done enough? Is it done right? Do the clergy have the proper ordination pedigree? When more is required, **the certainty** of salvation is lost.

The ELCA has undermined the certainty of salvation by requiring the historic episcopate. This change affects the whole church, all seminaries and congregations; all must participate in the historic episcopate.

In time only episcopally ordained priests will preside at ELCA altars. All preaching will be tainted. No matter what is said about the promises of God, what matters above all is the ordination pedigree of the clergy.

Pastors=Bishops=Pastors. CCM contradicts our Confessions by giving bishops exclusive power to ordain. *The Book of Concord* in *The Treatise* says that: “Since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that ordination by a pastor in his own congregation is valid by divine right” (#65, p.331). Is this an isolated proof text out of sync with the rest of the Lutheran Confessions? No. Five times in the Lutheran Confessions pastors and bishops are referred to as equally sharing the one office of ministry:

- AC 28:30; BC 85.
- AC 28:53; BC 90.
- AC 28:55; BC 90.
- Treatise 61; BC 330.
- Smalcald Articles 10:1-3; BC 314.

Bernhard Lohse, the leading Reformation historian of the last 30 years, has written about these statements in his essay, “The Place of the Office of Bishop in the Augsburg Confession.” Lohse states:

When one speaks of bishops or pastors, this expresses the Reformation understanding that there is basically no difference between the offices of bishop and pastor.¹

Why do ELCA leaders always ignore this fact? Do they think Bernhard Lohse doesn't know what he is saying in this basic assertion?

The Reformers Did Not Want The Historic Episcopate. Because the Historic Episcopate did not exist in 1530, it is naïve to say the Lutherans wanted it. Georg Kretschmar, a major Lutheran professor from Munich, writes that at the time (1530-1531) the notion of Episcopal apostolic succession or historic episcopate did not exist in fact; it was in a sense rediscovered between 1538-40 partly to respond to the Reformation and partly to reform the Roman Church from within.²

ELCA leaders have incorrectly claimed that Apology 14:1 refers to the historic episcopate when it speaks of: “our deep desire to maintain the church polity and various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.” But the “church polity and ranks” at the time included the papacy! Do CCM supporters think that the Reformers wanted the papacy?

Apology 14:1 (adopted in 1537 at same time as the Treatise) is a veiled polemic. It ends with the phrase “although they (the polity and ranks) were created by human authority.” Based on their rediscovery of the gospel, the Reformers knew that all church structures were merely human inventions, and that wherever a special priesthood is required, as in CCM, the gospel is undermined and perverted.

For this reason the Reformers state in AC 28:77 (cp. Ap. 14:5) that “[W]e ask for this one thing, that they [the bishops] allow the gospel to be taught **purely**...” which echoes AC 7, “the church is the assembly of saints where the gospel is taught **purely**....” To preach the gospel purely is to preach against the requirement that something more than Christ in his Word and sacrament is necessary for true unity.

¹ *Evangelium-Sakramente-Amt und die Einheit der Kirche*, eds, K. Lehmann and E. Schlink, 1982, pp. 80-108, here 86.

² “Die Wiederentdeckung des Konzeptes der ‘Apostolischen Sukzession’ im Umkreis der Reformation.” *Kirche in der Schule Luthers*, 1995, pp. 248-53.