

Explaining the PMW Statement: Response to Circuit 8

I've pointed out already that while there is a valid, subservient role for human reason in the household of theology, we must be careful how we use it to support our claims about scriptural doctrine. Another word for "reason" is *logic*. In general, there are two ways to construct a logical proposition. One can use *inductive* logic, which takes a collection of observations and concludes that there are certain trends or probabilities in the context of those observations. One can also use *deductive* logic, which can provide conclusions aimed at truth and falsehood (a binary concept) rather than at probabilities and trends.

Deductive logic follows the pattern: "Since A, B, C, ... and D are true, therefore E must inevitably also be true."

Inductive logic may follow the pattern: "In cases A, B, C, ... and D, we have noticed that proposition E generally applies. Therefore E must also apply for cases F, G, H, etc."

A related, but different, process is the "scientific method," in which someone makes a hypothesis out of pure conjecture, which then may (or may not) be tested to see if it can be disproven. If it can not be tested, the hypothesis doesn't have much value for the scientific method. If it is tested and disproven, then we know it doesn't match reality. If it is tested and not disproven, then we know that it *may* match reality. Nothing is ever *proven* by the scientific method, but some things are eventually accepted as useful. The scientific method is completely inappropriate for theology, because as Martin Luther wrote to Erasmus, "The Holy Ghost is not a skeptic." God deals only in truth, and is not subject to a human standard of usefulness.

The purpose of theology is to repeat what God has revealed in His Word. It ought to be a somewhat boring discipline for those who wish to invent things on their own. The nature of theology is truth, not probability, likelihood, trends, or usefulness.

If you can understand and accept the summary above, then let's apply this to *A Response from the ELS Presidium to Circuit #8 Concerning the Circuit's Memorial to the 2005 Convention*, published on October 11, 2005. This document illustrates the reasoning used in the PMW document, showing how it arrives at its conclusions from the scripture passages it cites. Note that I don't necessarily agree with the main conclusions as summarized in this *Response*, as I have also explained previously.

The following paragraph contains several intermediate arguments meant to support the notion that God has instituted the public ministerial office of Christian day school teachers and the like.

What do passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:5 & 28, Philippians 1:1, and 1 Timothy 3:8 teach?

These passages are now set forth as scriptural proof of the *Response's* point of view.

The 1 Corinthian verses show that God has indicated teachers as one of the offices he has given to the church;

Here is the authors' conclusion from reading 1 Corinthians 12:5 and 28, which say: "There are differences of

ministries, but the same Lord." (12:5) and "And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues." (12:28)

the Greek term (DIDASKALOUS) used here appears wider than the expression "pastors," especially when considered with other terms in close proximity, e.g., helpers and leaders.

Here is the authors' support for the conclusion. Is it deductive, inductive, or scientific method? It does not seem deductive to me. The sentence hinges upon the word "appears," which is subjective. It might be appropriate in an inductive argument, but it does not make a valid deductive argument. (I'm not addressing the truth of this observation at this time, though that could also be addressed.)

The passage from Philippians shows that presbyters and deacons are addressed in similar fashion as being the recipients of Paul's letter;

Here's the authors' support for a conclusion based upon the Philippians passage.

this implies strongly that the deacons also were spiritual helpers for the Philippian church.

This is the conclusion. Is the logic deductive and valid? Not with the only support depending on the words "implies strongly." While such words might be useful as secondary support for a deductive conclusion, it is not adequate as the main argument.

In I Timothy 3 we find reference made of deacons who were to be tested or examined in order to serve;

Here's the authors' supporting observation from another passage.

this testing appears to have been of a spiritual nature (vv. 9 & 10) in light of the duties they were called to perform.

And here's the intermediate conclusion from that passage. Again, the language shows that it is not a valid deductive argument: "appears to have been." That does not convey the certainty we need in the house of theology.

The 1 Timothy 5:17 reference ascribes double honor to those laboring in connection with Word and teaching,

Here's the supporting observation from 1 Timothy 5.

while implying at the same time that there are other elders with different responsibilities, all part of the one

public ministry of the church.

And here is the conclusion *implied* by the observation. Is this implication inevitable? Yes, up to the comma. But what about the last words, "all part of the one public ministry of the church?" That part of the conclusion is not supported at all.

Martin Chemnitz, the chief author of the Formula of Concord, states: "And in 1 Timothy [5]:17 [Paul] mentions two kinds of presbyters, of whom some labored in preaching and teaching, while others had been placed in charge of ecclesiastical discipline. . . This about completes the list of ranks into which we read that the ecclesiastical ministry was divided at the time of the apostles" (Chemnitz, Examen Part 2, p. 684).

The parts of this quotation included in the *Response* have Chemnitz asserting the role of the "other elders" without scriptural support. Maybe Chemnitz was guilty of a little logical laxity here, or maybe he was unfairly quoted.

Do the intermediate conclusions above provide the support of God's Word for the general conclusion that God has instituted the public ministerial office of Christian day school teachers and the like? Unfortunately, the intermediate conclusion can't support anything in the household of theology, because as deductive logic they disintegrate under their own weight.

The adopted statement says with certainty that God allows offices that have a limited public use of the Means of Grace.

This sentence deserves a brief excursus. It is the clearest expression I have found in the *Response* showing what is meant by the so-called divine institution of offices having a limited public use of the Keys. The divine institution is that *He allows them*. This is not the same idea of divine institution used in the *Circuit 8 Revision* to which the *Response* is responding. No wonder there has been so much misunderstanding.

We continue in the next paragraph of the *Response*.

There are indications in Scripture of other offices of public ministry existing than simply that of the office of overseer/bishop/presbyter.

These offices (deacons, teachers, evangelists, etc.) included certain spiritual duties that involved public ministry (e.g., using the Word to minister to souls on behalf of the church; 1 Timothy 3:8f).

Here's another major conclusion. We'll want to be sure that these "indications" are cited and beyond question. We'll also look for unquestionable scriptural evidence that: (1) deacons (as in 1 Timothy 3:8f) were responsible to God's Word to minister to souls, and (2) teachers and evangelists are distinct offices from that of overseer/bishop/presbyter. This is the minimum requirement of deductive logic for the conclusion above.

Ephesians 4 includes a list of offices not confined only to the pastoral office: "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers"

Here's the first support, an intermediate conclusion citing an "indication."

We should be careful to understand what is meant by the term "pastoral office." In the *Response*, it must be used the same way it's used in the [PMW](#) document itself, which says 'The term "pastoral office" has been used historically according to a more restrictive meaning (referring only to those men who are called to the pastorate of a local congregation), and according to a less restrictive meaning (referring to all those men who are called to a ministry of pastoral oversight in local congregations, as well as in other specialized fields of labor). In this document the term is being used according to its less restrictive meaning.'

This agrees completely with the way the [Circuit 8 Revision](#) uses the same term. It explains: 'The office to which God has entrusted the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments is called the pastoral office. Usually the term "pastoral office" refers to the pastorate of the local congregation, but incumbents of this office may be serving in specialized fields of labor in which they do not regularly carry out all the duties of the office. The pastoral office is called the Public Ministry in the Strict Sense because it is specifically instituted by God and is therefore necessary for the church.'

Now, the support offered for the intermediate conclusion above:

Chemnitz gives this interpretation of the Ephesians passage regarding the forms, or ranks, of the public ministry where he describes "pastors as those placed over a certain flock, as Peter shows (I Peter 5:2-3) and who not only taught but administered the sacraments and had the oversight over their hearers." Chemnitz goes on to describe the teachers as "teachers, to whom the chief governance or oversight of the church was not entrusted but who only set the doctrine before the people in a simple manner, such as catechists were later: thus Paul (Rom. 2:20) speaks of "a teacher of children," and the word "teach" is expressly used in this sense in Hebrews 5:12" (Chemnitz, *Examen*, Part 2, p. 684).

This seems to support the intermediate conclusion adequately. However, one must wonder again whether Chemnitz was being fairly quoted, because the very next sentence on p. 684 reads, 'All these ranks the apostles include under the terms "presbytery" and "episcopacy."' This changes the entire quotation, so that it no longer supports the intermediate conclusion at all, but weighs against it instead. Furthermore, it also weighs against the greater conclusion from the previous paragraph of the *Response*.

[More has been written exegetically](#) about this passage of scripture, showing that the terms "pastors" and "teachers" should be taken grammatically as synonymous, based upon all the other occurrences of this grammatical construction in the Bible. However, our purpose here is only to examine the support in the *Response*.

It is also worthy of note that the Ephesians citation lists "evangelists" as a separate office/form, even if one were to call into question the separate terms of "pastors" and "teachers." Clearly not only the pastoral office is mentioned.

This additional note and the restatement of the intermediate conclusion strangely argue against one another, especially in light of the Chemnitz quotation (properly understood) immediately before. Contrary to what the note asserts, "evangelists" are most definitely *included* in the "pastoral office" as defined in both the PMW and the *Circuit 8 Revision*, as shown above in the explanatory footnotes from each document. Contrary to the restated conclusion, Chemnitz affirms that all of the titles mentioned are part of the office of overseer/bishop/presbyter, here called the pastoral office.

The revision document of Circuit #8 uses the logic that, since God has not commanded such offices with a limited public use of the keys, therefore none of these "allowed or permitted" offices can be classified as instituted or established by God. This reasoning does not follow.

At this point, we should be able to see the disconnect between the authors of the *Response* and the authors of the *Circuit 8 Revision*. The former consider anything that God allows or permits as being "divinely instituted." The latter consider only what God expressly establishes in His Word as being "divinely instituted." No wonder there has been such lamentable controversy! We did not begin with an agreement upon what constitutes a divine institution! Failing to do our homework was a golden invitation for a separatistic or unionistic spirit to come among us.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in PMW at 12:35

Pastor: I am one of your regular readers. Are there other ELS blogs/posts that might be accessed? Thank you for all you write.

Response from J.J.

Thank you for taking the time to read this blog! There are several other ELS-related blogs that I'm aware of, all updated at different frequencies. Here are some of them, and several include links to others.

[Norman's Demesne](#)

[The Abrahamsons](#)

[Be Strong In The Grace](#)

[ÅžÅ´ÅžÅ¹ÅžÅ±ÅžÅ, ÅžÅ.ÅžÅ°ÅžÅ.](#) - Currently anonymous

[Trouble in Paradise](#) - Also anonymous, and updated only sporadically. It's entirely focused on recent controversy.

[The Fireside](#) - also includes much related to the LCMS

Anonymous on Jan 26 2007, 10:10

Thanks for mentioning my blog, Norman's Demesne. I will be looking up the other references here.

Cheers,

Norman Teigen

Anonymous on Jan 29 2007, 17:36