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George C. Weinman

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THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITY REGARDING ORDINATION
IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--
MISSOURI SYNOD, AND THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday 24 November 1703 Justus Falckner was ordained into the Lutheran ministry.¹ This rite of ordination took place at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church at Wicaco in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gloria Dei Lutheran Church was of Swedish origin. The Rev. Andreas Rudman, who served as suffragan of the Archbishop of Upsala, Sweden, was the ordinator. The Rev. Andras Sandal served as presenter of the candidate for ordination. The Rev. Erick Biörck served as lector.²

This was the first ordination of a Lutheran minister in the New World which can be documented. Because of the circumstances of that ordination and because of the rather unique manner in which this ordination came about there have been many questions raised about the ordination itself. Questions such as: Is a Call necessary? Who issues the Call? Who authorizes the Call? Who authorizes the ordination? Who may officiate at an ordination? Is it necessary

¹Julius Fredrick Sachse, Justice Falckner: Mystic and Scholar (Philadelphia: Printed for the Author, c.1903), p. 60.

²Ibid. For an account of the ordination ceremony see pp. 63-69. See also: Harry J. Kreider, "Justus Falckner," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVII (July 1954), 88-90. For a translation of the ordination certificate see: John C. Glenn, translator, "Justus Falckner's Ordination Certificate," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVII (October 1954), 141-143. Abdel Ross Wentz, "The Ordination Certificate of Justus Falckner," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLI (May 1968), 65-86.

to have a bishop involved in the call procedure and the ordination?

Sachse writes:

It is true that it was only the ordination of an humble Saxon student, a German Pietist of the Halle school, as a missionary pastor to labor in another province, among people of still different nationality and tongue, according to the Swedish ritual, by clergymen owing fealty to the Archbishop of Upsala.³

The questions raised by the ordination of Justus Falckner were only the beginning of many significant questions concerning ordination in the Lutheran Church during the succeeding years of its growth and development in North America. The historical record shows that ordination has been understood in a variety of ways by Lutherans in this country.

Some Lutheran synods and the theologians who speak for them regard ordination as completely nonessential.⁴ The rite of ordination may be observed, but to do so is to bow to the historical tradition of ordination.

Others stress the importance of administering the rite of ordination before the ordinand assumes the functions of the ministerial office.⁵ They consider ordination to be absolutely essential in the life of the Church.

Still others recognize the usefulness of the rite of ordination as a beneficial custom which has roots in the past reaching back

³Ibid., p. 62.

⁴Infra, pp. 43, 46, 48, 66.

⁵Infra, pp. 8-14, 75-78, 89.

to apostolic usage.⁶ In such cases ordination is relegated to the category of an adiaphoron.

The theological understanding of the rite of ordination is closely related to the matter of the church's understanding of what the church is and what the ministry is. The various ways of understanding the significance of the rite of ordination reflect the doctrine of the ministry that each Lutheran synod holds.

Those synods that regard the congregation as the communion of saints trace the origin of the ministerial office to the local congregation.⁷ The call to serve a specific congregation is that which is important. Ordination serves only as a public acknowledgment of the acceptance of that call to serve that specific congregation.

On the other hand, some synods stress the Church as an institution of God. They regard the office of the ministry as a separate class that has self-perpetuating power.⁸ For those who understand the ministry in this way ordination is a very significant rite.

In between these two positions with many shadings of variation is the position that recognizes that the origin of the ministerial office is from God himself. God commits the office of the ministry through the whole Church as His instrument. Hence both the congregation

⁶Infra, pp. 16-18, 26, 28, 31, 50, 63-64, 65-66, 81-82.

⁷Infra, pp. 11, 42.

⁸Infra, pp. 75-78, 88.

and the ministry are actively involved in the call and ordination of a candidate into the office of the ministry.⁹

The scope of this study is to identify the positions of the three major Lutheran synods in America regarding their understanding of ordination. They are the Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, and The American Lutheran Church. An important part of the study is an assessment of the positions held by the antecedent synods that merged to form the present synodical alignments.

American Lutheranism has produced a plethora of material concerning church and ministry. The issue has been approached in terms of exegetical, historical, and theological perspectives. In such studies ordination is a secondary issue. If it is mentioned at all, it comes as an afterthought.

It must be acknowledged that any understanding of ordination must rest upon and grow out of a solid understanding of the doctrine of church and ministry. The way a church or a theologian understands what ordination is and what it means grows out of his understanding of the ministry.

In a study of ordination it is necessary to identify what function the rite of ordination serves in the life of the church. There is a limited amount of biblical material that pertains to the office of the ministry. There is an even more limited amount of biblical material that pertains to ordination. Consequently the

⁹Revere Franklin Weidner, The Doctrine of the Ministry (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, c.1907), p. 120.

different conclusions regarding ordination and the office of the ministry are the result of differing principles of biblical interpretation.

It is not the purpose of this writer to determine how the synods and the theologians involved arrived at their conclusions. Rather his purpose is to identify what conclusions they have arrived at on the basis of their study and how they relate these conclusions to the life of the church in the matter of the ordination of ministers.

It is in order to give the definition of several terms which will appear repeatedly and which are susceptible to misunderstanding or to more than one interpretation. The word Church, with a capital "C," refers to the Church catholic. The word church, with a small "c," refers to the local congregation. The context should provide evidence of how the word is used in each specific case.

The word synod refers to a specific segment of Lutheranism which has a common ecclesiastical headquarters. It must be noted that in the Lutheran Church in America a synod refers to a geographical unit of the church body. The word ministry refers to the ordained ministry, not to the Christian service of the priesthood of believers. The phrase church and ministry refers to the relationship between the church and the ministry in terms of power and authority.

When the writer was a theological student prior to ordination the question of the significance of ordination held a peculiar fascination. In questioning fellow students it became obvious that they were also curious as to the purpose and function of ordination.

Conversations with ordained ministers revealed various understandings of the significance of ordination. Some ministers had firm

convictions about what their ordination meant to them. Others did not believe that their ordination held any special significance. Still others were as confused as this writer concerning this matter. Every pastor questioned had a different emphasis or perspective. Yet ordination was an experience shared by all of them.

The writer has attempted to limit himself to the use of primary sources in documenting the subject matter covered in this thesis. In this manner an accurate reflection of the historical record is most nearly attained.

Hopefully a perusal of this study will enable the reader to understand how the various Lutheran synods understand ordination. The examination of the positions of the antecedent bodies enable the writer and the reader to evaluate the influences which shaped their present positions.

CHAPTER II

ORDINATION IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787) was one of the first Lutheran ministers and theologians who was faced with the problems of serving as a pastor in North America when the structures of the organized Church were nonexistent. There were few organized congregations and fewer if any denominational structures. Ministers came to America from the European churches and served as traveling ministers.

Lacking the structures of the organized Church the ministerial candidates who believed that they had a call from God to serve in the office of the ministry had no official Church to authorize and administer the rite of ordination. Muhlenberg was a man who had given evidence of his pastoral concern and had proven his leadership abilities. Because of his credentials and his other personal attributes, ministerial candidates and congregations turned to him for help and advice.

On several occasions Muhlenberg was asked to ordain men into the ministerial office. He was reluctant to do this for theological and personal reasons. In consultation with other ministers and following examination of the candidate by the assembled clergy, Muhlenberg did

consent to administer the rite of ordination if the ministerial candidate had a call to serve a congregation.¹

In one instance an Episcopalian candidate wanted to be ordained. Muhlenberg stated that even though the customary Episcopal ordination could not be conducted, the congregation could call a man and empower him to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments.²

Muhlenberg did not believe that ordination infused

any natural and supernatural gifts and qualities; otherwise we should not find so many counterfeited ministers, refined hypocrites, and grievous wolves in the Christian Church on earth.³

Muhlenberg believed that the ministerium had the authority to examine a candidate for the ministry and could certify him for ordination, if the candidate had a call to the ministerial office. The ministerium and the local congregation cooperated in the matter of certification, call, and ordination of the candidate.⁴

At the first conventions of the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748, with Muhlenberg presiding, only the ministers had the right to speak and vote on matters that came before the ministerium. Lay delegates of the congregations were welcome to voice their opinions, but had no vote. This was written into the constitution in 1781. However by 1792 the constitution was revised and lay delegates of

¹Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, translated by Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), III, 255-256, 358-361, 494-497, 502-503, 534, 539-540.

²Ibid., III, 495.

³Ibid., III, 255.

⁴Ibid.

the member congregations had both voice and vote in matters that came before the Pennsylvania Ministerium.⁵

The General Synod

The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America was formed in 1820. The General Synod's position concerning ordination is best presented by Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1873).

He says that the office of the ministry is instituted by divine authority. There are no ranks within the ministerial office for by divine appointment all ministers are of equal rank.

All Christians are obligated to give to all faithful ministers of Christ the respect due them as servants of Christ and messengers of God.

A man is not to enter the office of the ministry without a regular call. This call is of two parts. First is the inner call which is from God Himself, whereby the person is convinced that God has chosen him for the office of the ministry. The second part is the external call which is the reason for the induction of the candidate into the ministerial office.

⁵Charles M. Cooper, "The Authority of the Synod in Relation to the Authority of the Congregation, part III," American Lutheran, XLV (February 1962), 16. His source is the Documentary History of the Pennsylvania Ministerium (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1898), pp. 8-23, 165-176, 248-259.

The external call and the related rite of ordination confer upon the candidate the duties of the ministerial office. He is to proclaim the Word of God, conduct public worship, administer the sacraments, admonish men, participate in the government and discipline of the Church, and edify and extend the Church of Christ.

The rite of ordination is administered by a minister or preferably several ministers. The rite includes prayer and the laying on of hands. Before the rite of ordination the candidate is to be examined and considered both intellectually and morally well qualified.⁶

Samuel Sprecker (1810-1906), another theologian of the General Synod, says:

The Church in its original constitution is not a duality, but a unity; it does not consist of two kinds of members, clergy and laity; but is a universal priesthood. The special ministry does not exist before⁷ the Church; it does not produce the Church, but springs out of it. The office of the ministry is conferred by Christ; but it is transferred by the Church. The office is bestowed upon the congregation of believers; to it is given the commission to preach the gospel, to teach and baptize all nations; this it fulfills, partly, through all her members, and, especially, by transferring the exercise of its functions, to men whom she can recognize as qualified, and called by the divine Spirit, to be devoted entirely to this work.⁸

He goes on to say:

But this special ministry, arising as it does, out of the universal priesthood, and existing only along with it, exercises its functions by the authority, and in the name of the universal

⁶Samuel S. Schmucker, Elements of Popular Theology (9th ed.; Philadelphia: Smith, English & Co., 1860), pp. 218-227.

⁷All underlining in direct quotations throughout the paper indicates underlining or italics by the author quoted.

⁸Samuel Sprecker, The Groundwork of a System of Evangelical Lutheran Theology (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1879), p. 296.

priesthood. It must never supercede the latter, nor hinder its activity. It may only be a leader among equals, a helper of all in the one common work of testifying for Christ in word as well as in deed. She does not give any man the authority to preach. This all have. The universal priesthood does not, in the first instance, call any man to the special ministry. This the Spirit does. They only design to call those, whom the Spirit has first called.⁹

For Samuel Sprecker ordination is the means of recognizing the call by which the universal priesthood transfers its ministerial functions to the candidate.

The difference between the points of view of these two significant theologians of the General Synod is apparent. Samuel Schmucker regards the ministerial office and those who fill that office as having their authority and power from the divine institution of the office. Although the ministry is a part of the Church and is not a separate order within the church, nevertheless the ministry does have some autonomy.

On the other hand, Samuel Sprecker regards the ministerial office as growing out of the universal priesthood of believers. As such the ministerial office is not only subject to Christ but also to the universal priesthood. The universal priesthood transfers the functions of the ministerial office to the candidate for ordination.

The General Council

The General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was formed in 1867. In its constitution in the section entitled "Principles of Faith and Church Polity" it says that the

⁹Ibid., p. 299.

structures through which power is normally exercised are the congregations. The congregation consists of both pastor and people, not one without the other.¹⁰

The congregations have the right of electing representatives from their midst. The pastor of the congregation is ex officio a representative. Such representatives, both lay and clerical, can act in accord with the constitution under which they are organized and on the basis of the limits imposed by the congregations. Such a convention, meeting these conditions, is speaking or acting on behalf of the Church.¹¹

There are two important theologians of the General Council who must be considered as the earliest formulators of the General Council's theology and teaching. Charles Porterfield Krauth (1823-1883) was the first of the two. Revere Franklin Weidner (1851-1915) was a colleague of Dr. Krauth and outlines his "Theses on Ordination."¹²

1. No one should publicly preach or administer the sacraments unless he is properly called by the Church.
7. In the early days of the Church the call was given by the Church through the clergy and the people. The act of calling required the approval of both.
8. To commit the vocation to only ministers, or only to the people, gives to a part that which belongs to the whole.
9. The right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers is a divine right of the whole Church.

¹⁰S. E. Ochsenford, Documentary History of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America (Philadelphia: General Council Publication House, 1912), p. 181.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Krauth's theses as presented by Weidner are not quoted directly unless they are enclosed within quotation marks.

10. "Ordination as an ecclesiastical rite is a solemn act wherein the sacred office is formally committed to the candidate for the ministry. . . ."
15. It is of the essence of ordination that the one being ordained have a call or office in the Church.
18. The ordinator would be ordained because the ministry is responsible for all the solemn official acts of the church, . . . , because "no call is ordinarily in force without the consent of the ministry, and the ordination is the most natural form of giving a final expression to that consent. The congregation has no representatives of absolutely divine right and authority except the ministers."
20. "In defining the necessity of ordination, two extremes must be avoided, that of the Romish Church, which makes it a sacrament conferring an indelible character and putting man into an essentially distinct order, and that of the ultra and pseudo-Protestantism, which deprecates it."
21. "Ordination is necessary for good order and for manifold uses, and except in a case of positive inability to receive it, is never to be omitted. Nor is any man to be regarded as presenting proper evidence of the right to exercise the function of the ministry, who has not been rightly ordained, that is, has not been called and furnished with an official testification of the same."¹³

Weidner claims that the position espoused in his book, which is based on the theses of Dr. Krauth, is supported by most of those in the General Council.¹⁴

He states:

The power of the congregation is derived from the power conferred upon the whole Church, not the power of the whole Church from the powers of the congregation, and only so much power belongs to each congregation as is consistent with the highest welfare of the Church Universal.¹⁵

¹³Revere Franklin Weidner, The Doctrine of the Ministry (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c.1907), pp. 107-110.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 126.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 126-127.

The call to the ministry is given by the whole Church. This includes both the clergy and the people. Each one possesses power of veto over the other. To act as the Church requires concurrence of both clergy and laity.¹⁶

In calling a man to the ministerial office the local congregation has a representative voice and the clergy has a representative voice. Together they participate in calling a candidate into the ministerial office.

The ministry thus takes part in the call, and gives it its real validity, because the ministry as the executive of the Church contains the proper persons who examine and ordain men into the ministry.¹⁷

Weidner then proceeds to the matter of ordination.

Ordination as an ecclesiastical rite or ceremony is a solemn act wherein the sacred office is formally committed to the candidate for the ministry, who is fitted to teach, and is rightly called by the Church, through the distinctive parts of its organism, by the clergy and the people.

In Ordination the person called is consecrated by the laying on of hands, and by prayer, in the presence of the whole Church, and is thus formally, officially, and solemnly certified of the divine character of his call, and of his fitness for it; and at the same time is publicly admonished concerning the right, proper and faithful administration of the sacred office.

Ordination is a solemn public testification that ministers have been rightly called, and rests on the divine command.

The right of ordaining, like that of calling, belongs to the whole Church, and it is done in its name, by its suffrage, right, authority, and consent.¹⁸

Weidner concludes:

¹⁶Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 127-128.

To ordination rightly given and rightly received belong great and precious benefits, the Holy Spirit in answer to earnest prayer conferring and increasing graces needed for the ministry.¹⁹

The other theologian of the General Council that must be considered is Henry Eyster Jacobs (1844-1932). He states that the ministry is not a hierarchial order, nor is it dependent upon outward succession. The ministry is not identical with the spiritual priesthood but rests upon a divine call which is not immediate, but rather is mediate, coming through the church. The call communicated by the church proceeds not from the ministry alone, nor from the people alone, but from the whole church, both ministry and people.²⁰

The spiritual priesthood and the ministry are entirely distinct institutions. The former has reference to the personal relation of the individual towards God . . . The latter has reference to the public performance of duties that are to be discharged, according to direct instructions in God's name. The spiritual priesthood is the prerogative of the individual; the ministry is found only where there is a congregation . . . There is no scriptural foundation for the idea that, simply for the sake of good order, there is a transfer to one individual the rights that belong to each individual in the congregation. The functions of the ministry belong not to the uncalled, but to the called members of the Church, i. e., those called to this particular office. . . . A man's call as a Christian is one thing; his call as a minister is another.²¹

The laity is to have a voice in the choice of ministers. The clergy are also to have a voice for, if they are excluded from participating in the choice of candidates, the ones whose training and experience best fit them for judging are disqualified.²²

¹⁹Ibid., p. 128.

²⁰Henry Eyster Jacobs, The Doctrine of the Ministry (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1874), pp. 4-33.

²¹Henry Eyster Jacobs, A Summary of the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1905), p. 424.

²²Ibid., p. 428.

The call to the ministerial office must always carry with it the appointment to a distinct work; for the ministry is an office, not an order. Ordination does not permanently invest a person with the ministerial office, but rather confers a specific ministry.²³

Ordination is the formal induction into the office of the ministry to which one has been called, but it is not ordination that makes the candidate a minister, but the call. One who has a call is a minister.

The most important part of the rite of ordination is the prayer that accompanies the laying on of hands. The laying on of hands merely indicates the person upon whom the promises of the Gospel concerning the ministry are addressed to and to whom the office is entrusted.

The rite of ordination, though not necessary, is not to be omitted because of its historical value and because of the value of the prayers and the laying on of hands upon the candidate. The rite of ordination is usually administered by synodical authority.²⁴

Weidner contends that Jacobs regards the congregation as the source of the ministerial office since Jacobs believes that only the call is essential and that where there is no exercise of the ministry there is no minister. In other words, he must have a field of service to be a minister.

²³Ibid., p. 431.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 431-433.

Weidner claims that the position of the General Council is that position in which the source of the ministry is the universal Church in which both the congregation and the ministry take part in the call.²⁵

This writer agrees with Weidner that there is a difference of opinion between Krauth and Jacobs. However, Weidner is harsh in his judgment of Jacobs.

G. H. Gerberding (1847-1927), a theologian of the General Council, says:

We do not forget that God instituted the office, that He selects and inwardly calls men into this holy office. Those thus elected by God are made willing. They offer themselves to prepare for the work. If God has really called them inwardly, there must and will follow an outward call.

This does not come from the ministry alone . . . Neither does it come from the laity alone . . . It must come from the church. But the church is neither the ministry without the people nor the people without the ministry.²⁶

He continues:

Christ then exercises His power to call men into the ministry through the church. The church may exist either in the congregation or in the representative church made up of ministers and lay representatives of congregations. Either the congregation, as defined above, not without a pastor, or the representative body, made up of pastors and people, has the right to extend the outward call.²⁷

Concerning ordination he says:

²⁵Weidner, pp. 124-126.

²⁶G. H. Gerberding, The Lutheran Pastor (2nd edition; Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1902), pp. 85-86.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 86-87.

We conclude then that ordination is an ancient and apostolic rite. It is the public declaration of the legitimacy of the call. But it is also much more.²⁸

The ordination service includes a special sermon addressed particularly to the candidate. There are prayers, Scripture readings, words of commitment to the office, and the consecration, all focused upon the candidate.²⁹

All this is accompanied by the earnest prayers of the whole church, e. e., the officiating ministers and the people. The hands direct and, as it were, focus the prayers upon the kneeling subject. In answer to these earnest prayers the Holy Spirit imparts the "charisma." It is carried by the Word. The Word is here, also, the means of grace. It conveys the special grace needed for the special work of the ministry.³⁰

Ernest M. Grahn, another theologian of the General Council, says that the laity have a right to participate in the call to the ministry. However, the congregation does not possess the sole right to call. Congregations which are united into organic bodies such as synods or councils form a wide and representative congregation which has authority to perform functions beyond the authority of the local congregation.³¹

He presents six theses.

1. The Call is greater than Ordination.
2. Ordination is dependent upon a Call.

²⁸Ibid., p. 119.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 119-120.

³¹Ernest M. Grahn, "Ordination and the Congregation's Call," The Lutheran Church Review, XIX (January 1900), 93.

3. The Call must be specific--to some particular work within the legitimate spiritual sphere of the Church--though not necessarily to the local Congregation of believers.
4. Ordination must invariably follow the Call.
5. Ordination to a general, indefinite ministry lacks the sine qua non of a Call.
6. Ordination preceding a Call as a matter of convenience is both erroneous and vicious, being in direct conflict with the Scriptures and the practice of the pure Church of all time.³²

In both Gerberding and Grahn the strong emphasis upon ordination is evident. Gerberding stresses the rite of ordination more than any theologian or synod has. It is noteworthy that he holds that the rite of ordination through the prayers confers special grace needed to perform the tasks of the ministerial office.

The First General Conference of Lutherans in 1898.

In 1898 the first general conference of Lutherans in America was held. There were papers presented on the issue of ordination into the ministry by men from the General Synod and the General Council. There followed comments and rebuttal.

J. A. W. Haas (1862-1937) of the General Council presented the first paper entitled "Lutheran Estimate of Ordination." He says that ordination is the public approval of the call by the Church. It also includes the separation for the ministry with invocation of blessing and consecration under divine approval.

³²Ibid., XIX, 95.

For this reason ordination is not repeated. To do so does not gravitate toward any conferral of an indelible character, nor does it leave ordination unexplained as does the theory of transference.³³

He continues:

It is evident, then, that ordination, which follows the election, call, and examination, and is followed by installation, ought, in the Lutheran System, be not only the attestation and confirmation of the call by the whole Church, but also the consecration by the divine word and prayer, which consecration consists in the separation from other duties, and the putting of the word of promise upon the ordainand, to whom, in the sight and presence of God, the seal of divine approbation, blessing and the Holy Spirit are given for the office of administering the word and sacraments, committed to him by the voice of the Church.³⁴

J. R. Dimm, a member of the General Synod, states that wherever there is a congregation of believers wherein the gospel is preached and the sacraments properly administered and who are in need of a minister, there exists the conditions which are necessary for a call and ordination.

The call has three factors involved in it. First, there is the internal call which comes to the candidate from God. Second, there is the external or mediate call which comes from the congregation. The congregation has the authority to extend this call because the Church was given the power of the keys and because of the priesthood of believers. And third, ordination is not the call but is the sign and seal of a man's divine call to the ministry and serves as a ratification of that call.

³³J. A. W. Haas, "Lutheran Estimate of Ordination," The First General Lutheran Conference in America in 1898 (Philadelphia: General Council Publication Board & Lutheran Publishing Society, 1899), p. 232.

³⁴Ibid., p. 237.

The ordination includes an examination of the candidate by men who are properly authorized and qualified, a report to the ministerium of the qualifications of the candidate, and consecration by the laying on of hands.³⁵

E. J. Wolf (1840-1905) of the General Synod claimed that the individual congregation had the exclusive right and authority to call a man and thereby make him a minister. Ordination does not convey any special grace for the special functioning of the ministry. He said that sometimes it is necessary for the congregations to assert their sovereign right over against the self-perpetuation ministerium.³⁶

Joseph A. Seiss (1823-1904) of the General Council did not agree with Wolf. He said that the local congregation did not have the divine prerogative to make or unmake a minister. He did not believe that the call must come from a local congregation. The synod, made up of ministerial and lay representatives, has the rights and prerogatives of the Church. The ministerium is to examine, ordain, and inaugurate ministers to the office of the ministry. The synod, as congregations of pastors and people, has the same right as the local congregation to call a man to the ministry.³⁷

G. W. Enders of the General Synod raised the question "Did the congregation first exist and call and ordain the minister, or

³⁵Ibid., pp. 237-241.

³⁶Ibid., p. 246.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 247-248.

did the minister first preach the Gospel and gather and organize the congregation?" The Church in its entirety calls and ordains men who are qualified for the office.³⁸

The United Synod of the South

The third synod that merged to form the United Lutheran Church in America in 1918 was the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South. A. G. Voigt of the United Synod of the South says that the congregation is the basic unit of organization of the synod. The constituency of the synod is both congregations and ministers.

The United Synod of the South is only advisory and recommendatory according to its constitution. The synod does not have power to ordain into the office of the ministry. This is the responsibility of the geographical synods. Even if the United Synod of the South would call a man to be a missionary, he would have to be ordained by a member synod.³⁹

The United Lutheran Church in America

In 1918 the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America, the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, and the United Synod of the Evangelical

³⁸Ibid., p. 248.

³⁹A. G. Voigt, "The United Synod of the South," The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (4th edition; Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, c.1914), pp. 203-204.

Lutheran Church in the South merged to form the United Lutheran Church in America.

In 1938 the United Lutheran Church in America studied a committee report entitled "The Call." In this document a distinction was made

between the gospel call which is the universal invitation of God to all who have sinned and the call of the gospel ministry as the specific invitation of God through the Christian Church to teach in the Church and administer the Sacraments.⁴⁰

A distinction is also made between the universal priesthood of believers as the common vocation shared by all Christians and the office of the ministry.

We, therefore, conceive of the call of the gospel ministry as the inclusive invitation of the triune God, the Church, and the congregation, or authorizing agency of the Church, to a member of the Church to feed the flock of God through teaching the Word and administering the Sacraments.⁴¹

Ordination is an act which bestows formally and publicly the privilege of teaching the Word and administering the Sacraments.

This privilege may be revoked if it is not used or if it is abused.⁴²

In 1952 the United Lutheran Church in America considered the "Report of the Commission on the Doctrine of the Ministry." In this report it is stated that the New Testament lists a number of functions which are carried on within the Church. These functions are ascribed to the Holy Spirit and are essential to the life of the Body of Christ.

⁴⁰The United Lutheran Church in America, Minutes of the Eleventh Biennial Convention, 1938 (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publishing House, n.d.), p. 67.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 71.

They are all functions of the whole body, but are performed by different individuals because the Spirit's endowments are different. The ministry, therefore, cannot be derived from the priesthood of all believers; the individual is not everything the church is.⁴³

In the section entitled "A Definition of the Doctrine of the Ministry for Today" the report reads:

Ordination is an ecclesiastical rite by which the call is ratified and the office of the ministry is publicly committed to the one called. It confers no permanent rank or indelible character.

Although it does not rest upon a divine mandate and is, therefore, not necessary, it is important, for it stands for the dignity of the office and safeguards good order. It is at the time of ordination that the office is actually committed on the basis of the call. . . . A man is a minister because the church has called him, and set him apart to the office of the Word and Sacrament.⁴⁴

"The Ministry is not to be unduly exalted above other callings. . . . [nor is it] to be degraded and made common."⁴⁵ Recognizing the dialectic of the situation it is obvious that the minister does not have an indelible character upon which the laity is dependent for the sacraments. Nor is the minister just another member of the congregation. The minister is the bearer of the office of the Word and Sacraments and because this office is entrusted to him by Christ and the Church by virtue of a call the congregation is dependent upon him. This is to be distinguished from the sacramental view of the ministry by which it is understood that substantial powers are infused.⁴⁶

⁴³The United Lutheran Church in America, Minutes of the Eighteenth Biennial Convention, 1952 (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publishing House, n.d.), p. 545.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 552.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 553.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 554.

The Augustana Synod

In 1860 the Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod in North America, commonly known as the Augustana Synod, was formed. In its earliest constitution the Augustana Synod stated that on matters of doctrine only the ministerium of the synod was permitted to vote. The ministerium was also responsible for examining candidates for the ministry and authorizing their ordination. It stated that no candidate could be ordained without a call from a local congregation.⁴⁷

The Swedish immigrants to America had been influenced by two differing positions within the Swedish National Church. A hierarchial tendency in the church was represented by the faculty at Lund. This group and those they influenced stressed the unity of the ecclesiastical structure and disapproved the pietistic conventicles and free religious activities of many small groups.

The Faculty of Upsala and those whom they influenced favored an evangelical attitude which was rooted in the pietism of the past but still remained strong.

The founders of the Augustana Synod were men who had been ordained in the Church in Sweden. They thus tended to stress higher education for the ministry, liturgical worship, the Lutheran Confessions, apostolic succession, and the organization and authority of the synodical structure.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Oscar N. Olson, The Augustana Lutheran Church in America, 1860-1910 (Davenport, Iowa: Arcade Office and Letter Service, 1956), p. 46.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 33.

In 1867 the constitution was changed to permit the Synod as well as the local congregations to issue a call to a minister.⁴⁹

In 1894 a new constitution was adopted that stated that the synod consists of all pastors and congregations that are in regular and organic union with it. Oscar Olson says of this constitutional change:

A troublesome issue had at last been solved. The pastoral office was recognized as in principle independent of the congregation, not as an order, but as existing in and for the congregation in intimate relationship, not created by the congregation but by Christ, the head of the Church.⁵⁰

In 1936 the Ministerium of the Augustana Synod requested the theological faculty to determine what constituted a regular pastoral call. The report of the faculty was submitted and approved.

Ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod signifies a setting apart of one who meets the requirements of the Synod for the work of the Gospel ministry. These requirements include spiritual experiences which imply a divine call, such scholastic and practical preparation as the Synod deems wise, and a specific call issued by a congregation or congregations within the Synod or by Boards of the Synod and Conferences authorized to issue calls for pastoral work.

The call of the congregation or of Synod, Conference, or Board, which is one of the requirements of ordination, implies that the candidate will devote himself to the building up of the Body of Christ by Word and Sacrament, and that this shall be his primary activity. . . . The Ministerium shall determine what in each application for ordination constitutes a proper call.

In the case of men who are ordained but not engaged in parish work the Synod considers a pastor as fulfilling his call by discharging duties to which he has been called.⁵¹

⁴⁹A. D. Mattson, Polity of the Augustana Synod (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, c.1941), p. 52.

⁵⁰Olson, pp. 47-48.

⁵¹Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, Report of the 78th Annual Convention (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1937), p. 43.

In 1940 the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America stated that the Synod consisted of all pastors and congregations that are regularly connected with it.⁵²

A minister must be duly examined, legally called, and vested with the proper authority in order to perform the duties of the sacred office. . . .

A candidate for ordination shall be examined in a colloquy of the Ministerium as to his qualifications for the office.⁵³

To be ordained in the Synod a man must have a regular call from a congregation or mission board, be steadfast in Lutheran doctrine and life, and have satisfactorily completed the prescribed seminary training.⁵⁴

The act of ordination shall be performed by the President or any one appointed by him, and the officient shall be assisted by the pastors selected by the ministerium.⁵⁵

A. D. Mattson, a theologian of the Augustana Synod, says that the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers and the doctrine of the office of the ministry are not to be confused. They are different although they affect one another.

The office of the ministry does not have its basis in the fact of the universal priesthood of all believers. The latter is rather dependent upon the former. Through ministrations of the office of the ministry men attain to the universal priesthood. The Lutheran Church does not emphasize the office of the ministry so as to minimize the significance of the universal priesthood of believers, nor does it emphasize the latter so as to minimize the significance of the former.⁵⁶

⁵²Mattson, p. 96.

⁵³Ibid., p. 105.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 106-107.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 107.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 47-48.

The minister does not belong to a special order endowed with special supernatural powers. But he is a man appointed by the church to perform a special function.

Ordination is considered the official and public confirmation of the call which sets the ministers apart for the function of his ministerial office.

The office of the ministry is given to the church and is the possession of the church. The office is not independent of the church. No one has the right to deprive the local congregation of its right to select men for the office of the ministry.⁵⁷

The American Evangelical Lutheran Church

In 1878 some members of the American Danish Church which was an antecedent body of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church desired to elect or appoint a bishop for the synod. Most of those favoring such a change were ministers. It was voted down. In 1879 the synod did elect an "ordainer" who was to occupy that position for life. The sole function as "ordainer" was to ordain men into the office of the ministry at the annual synod convention. This was done as a compromise in order to avoid naming a bishop to govern the synod. There were some who hoped that the "ordainer" would gradually assume spiritual leadership over the synod and finally become the bishop of synod.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁵⁸Paul C. Nyholm, The Americanization of the Danish Lutheran Churches in America (Copenhagen: Institute for Danish Church History, c.1963), p. 94.

Ordination was regarded primarily as the vows of faithfulness taken by the candidate before the synod in convention.

Each one who desires ordination by the Ordainer of the Church must reside at least a month within the congregation in which he is to serve and a similar period in the home of the Ordainer; thereafter the Ordainer, after counsel with the Synodical Board, may ordain the candidate whenever he deems it fitting.⁵⁹

Nyholm states that the congregations had the power to call and to dismiss a pastor. They could do this against the wishes of the synod.

On a few occasions pastors have tried to maintain that, as the minister was "called by God," the congregation had no right to dismiss him except in case he was proved to have sinned by false teaching or scandalous living. But such claims were not accepted. Ordinarily the constitutions of the various congregations follow the synodical model constitution which gave a congregation the right to dismiss a pastor upon three months notification.⁶⁰

Paul Nyholm has traced the constitutional changes within the history of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church and its antecedent synods. He states that there are several tendencies that become evident. Two of the tendencies he identifies are germane to the discussion at hand. They do not refer to ordination directly but indirectly they influence the understanding of the significance of ordination.

One tendency that he identifies is that the laymen assume more power and authority. This reflects a stress upon the authority of the priesthood of believers.

⁵⁹Enok Mortensen, The Danish Lutheran Church in America (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, c.1967), p. 73.

⁶⁰Nyholm, p. 202.

The other tendency he notes is that congregations insist on their right to call ministers. The Synod or the ministerium was constantly being reminded that it did not have the authority to call, ordain, and specify the field of service for the ministerial candidate or any man already in the ministerial office. The congregations rejected any centralizing of power and authority in the Synod.⁶¹

The Suomi Synod

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, commonly called the Suomi Synod, had a synodical form of church government. The Synod was governed by the annual synodical convention. The synod was administered by the Consistory of four pastors who were elected by the convention. They were the president, the vice president, the secretary, and the notary.

One of the functions of the Consistory was to examine candidates for the ministry and be responsible for the ordination of the candidates.⁶² The rite of ordination for the ministerial candidates took place at the synodical convention.⁶³

⁶¹Ibid., p. 94.

⁶²Alfred Haapanen, Our Church (Hancock, Michigan: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern, c.1945), p. 24.

⁶³John Wargelin, A Highway to America (Hancock, Michigan: The Book Concern, c.1967), pp. 39, 97, and 104.

The Lutheran Church in America

In 1962 the United Lutheran Church in America, the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America merged to form the Lutheran Church in America.

The Lutheran Church in America makes the following statement about the nature of the church in Article IV of its constitution.

Section 1. All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this church are to be carried out under His rule and authority.

Section 2. The Church exists both as an inclusive fellowship and as local congregations gathered for worship and Christian service. Congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. This church, therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful. In length, it acknowledges itself to be in the historic continuity of the communion of the saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in this our day.⁶⁴

Article III, Section 1 states: "This church shall consist at its organization of the congregations and ministers of the [constituent synods]."⁶⁵ Congregations and ministers stand side by side, for the congregations and the ministers comprise the Church.

Article VII entitled "Ministers" says:

⁶⁴Lutheran Church in America, Minutes of the Third Biennial Convention, 1966 (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, n.d.), p. 830.

⁶⁵Ibid.

Section 1. This church shall define the standards of acceptance in its ministry. These standards shall be applied and administered by the synods.

Section 2. Ordination and reception of ministers shall be a function of the synods, acting in behalf of this church. . . . Each applicant for ordination . . . shall appear before the examining committee of the synod . . . and can be ordained . . . only upon recommendation by such committee. . . .

.

Section 5. Each minister of this church shall be in possession of a call from a congregation, this church itself [that is the Lutheran Church in America], a synod, or a board of this church.

Section 6. Each minister who is a member of this church shall be a member of one of its synods and also . . . of one of its congregations.⁶⁶

When a candidate for ordination has a call, he and his fellow candidates are, as a rule, ordained at the convention of the synod. In this way the Church, by determining the standards for acceptance into the ministry, and the synod by the examining, authorizing, and ordaining, both figure significantly in the ordaining of the ministerial candidate. The candidate is not ordained unless he has a call.

The rubrics preceding the order for ordination in The Occasional Service Book indicate that ordination shall be administered by authority of the Church and according to its appointment. The order for ordination shall be conducted by the president of the Synod or by a minister whom he shall appoint.⁶⁷ The latter phrase is added to accommodate The American Lutheran Church which does not ordain at synod or

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 833.

⁶⁷The American Evangelical Lutheran Church, et al., The Occasional Services (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1962), p. 90.

district conventions. Both synods use The Occasional Services, and the Service Book and Hymnal.

The Order for Worship of the Service Book and Hymnal is used with special propers. The Rite of Ordination comes after the prayer of the Church and the hymn "Come, Holy Ghost."

The rubrics indicate that the Secretary of the Synod or other appointed minister shall present the candidates for ordination. He also indicates the name of the authorizing synod, or other authority, with the day and place of meeting.⁶⁸

Following several versicles and prayers the officiating minister says:

Dearly Beloved: According to Apostolic usage you are now to be set apart to the Holy Ministry of the Word and Sacraments by the laying on of hands and prayer.⁶⁹

The rite of ordination continues with prayers, Scripture readings, exhortations, the vows, and the blessing.⁷⁰

For interpretative comment on this matter of ordination and how this relates to the ministry and even to the Church, the third biennial convention of the Lutheran Church in America received a "Report of the Commission on the Comprehensive Study of the Doctrine of the Ministry." This commission of fifteen members submitted a document

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 95-99.

entitled "We Have This Ministry." It carried a subheading, "A Statement on the Doctrine of the Ministry for the Lutheran Church in America."⁷¹

The function of the ordained clergy of the church is one of service--that is, to alert, assist, and exhort the whole church to fulfill its ministry. The clergy does not stand above the laity as superior to the laity, nor does the clergy stand below as mere functionaries. Ordination does not bestow an indelible character, nor does it remove the clergy from the ranks of membership in the body of Christ. Ordination is based on "a call from the church to function within a particular office accompanied and undergirded by the prayer of the church, that the Holy Spirit will guide him in performing his function."⁷²

If the ministry of the people of God is accepted, the ordained ministry will also be acknowledged as important and regarded as a necessary, special ministry that assumes functional forms. The ordained ministry then is one of function. The gospel is normative for the functioning of the ministry. Three categories have been delineated into which the ministerial actions of the ordained can be classified: (a) Ministry of the Word, (b) administration, and (c) supervision.⁷³

A man may be ordained into any ministerial function which the church may consider appropriate to its ordained clergy. To limit

⁷¹Lutheran Church in America, Minutes, 1966, pp. 442-443.

⁷²Ibid., p. 443.

⁷³Ibid.

the ordained clergy to the ministry of the Word in the parish ministry is to fail to recognize that legitimate ministerial functions and offices extend beyond any single form of ministry.⁷⁴

Ordination in this church is properly contingent upon a call from a congregation, synod, board, or executive council of this church to fulfill one or more of the three general categories of function.⁷⁵

One of these categories is not superior to another for Christ is present and is able to minister through all of them.

It [ordination] is, however, the action by which the people of God acknowledges that one of its members has received certain gifts which ought appropriately to be exercised through the regularly constituted office of the ministry. . . . there is also a bestowal inherent in this acknowledgment--the bestowal of an office commensurate with the ordinand's gifts, and the authority which the community wishes to delegate in and through that office. When the subtle interrelationships and rich symbolism of acknowledgment and bestowal are fully appreciated, then the role of ordination into the church's ministry becomes clear.⁷⁶

When the ordained person no longer has the church's authorization because of a new field of activity, he forfeits that which was conferred upon him by ordination.⁷⁷

The authority of the ordained minister is derived from the Lord whose reconciliation he extends and from the people of God. God's ministry has been entrusted to the people of God and it is they who ordain the minister. Nevertheless, there is an authority inherent within the ministry because of the functions which are performed. These

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 444.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 443.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 443-444.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 444.

functions give to the minister an authority which sustains him and those to whom he ministers.⁷⁸

the office shares in the self-authenticating authority of the reconciling Word of Christ, which is recognized by the faithful who hear and see the ordained servants truly performing the functions for which they were ordained.⁷⁹

Although certain segments of the Christian Church consider episcopal succession necessary to true apostolicity in the church, it is the supremacy of the ministry of Christ that has maintained the fundamental continuity of the church through the ages. Because of the nature and the fact of this ministry it is to be regarded as fully valid.⁸⁰

Where does the office of the ministry originate? This influences the understanding of the ministry and what the rite of ordination confers in relation to the congregation. If the authority of the ministry is established by Christ and given to the Church, the role of the minister will be one of power and his voice will be authoritative. On the other hand, if the power of the minister is regarded as coming from the power given to the priesthood of believers and delegated to the minister by the call and ordination, then the authority of the minister is delegated to him by the congregation and he is submissive to the congregation.⁸¹

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 445.

⁸¹Lowell Green, "Change in Luther's Doctrine of the Ministry," The Lutheran Quarterly, XVIII (May 1966), 173.

The writings of individual writers concur with the voice of the Lutheran Church in America. Wayne Arland Ewing writes that the office of the ministry is not derived from the priesthood of believers. However, he says, it is essential to recognize that God has chosen certain means or vehicles to accomplish his purposes and to convey his Word to the world. The divine institution and the element of human appointment dare not be confused or separated in the act of ordination as the rite shows a response to God's command.⁸²

Martin Heinecken contends that the ministry is a functional office, not an order.

The function is the public proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Such a functional office is constitutive of the church, because it is the office of the divine Word which is constitutive of the church. One must be called to this office by the church. Ordination is "the public confirmation and attestation of the call together with the commission of the office of the ministry . . . through the laying on of hands and through prayer, in accordance with ancient usage."⁸³ It confers no permanent rank or indelible character. Distinctions in position and work exist by human right and not by divine right.⁸⁴

Heinecken goes on to maintain that ordination confers the authority publicly to proclaim the Gospel and administer the sacraments in behalf of those who call the candidate to the office of the ministry. The privilege and responsibility can only be bestowed. It is not the right or obligation of every man. The distinction between the

⁸²Wayne Arland Ewing, "What Is Ordination into the Ministry," The Lutheran Quarterly, XVI (August 1964), 218.

⁸³Martin J. Heinecken, "The Ministry, a Functional Office," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XX (October 1947), 440.

⁸⁴Idem, "What Does Ordination Confer?" The Lutheran Quarterly, XVIII (May 1966), 122-123.

priesthood of all believers and the office of the Word must be made. In the former a man serves his neighbor in fulfilling his Christian vocation. In the latter the Word is proclaimed to the end that justifying faith may be aroused and nurtured. Those of the priesthood of believers select one who has both the knowledge of the Gospel and a way of life that reflects his knowledge. This does not give him special authority or power. "The authority and the power lie in the Word he is authorized to proclaim. To this Word he is subject along with all to whom he preaches the Word."⁸⁵

In the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination the Holy Spirit is not permanently bestowed or is the ordinand given a unique gift of power. Yet the laying on of hands is not an empty form. It is "a matter of faith in the power of God's Word and of faith in the God who answers prayer."⁸⁶ The man who holds the office of the ministry is in constant need of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The congregation must pray daily for its ministry.

And what is done each day and on Sundays in particular is done on the day of ordination in a particular way: God is prayed upon to bestow his gracious gift. And if we believe in the God who answers prayer, then we cannot say that nothing happens. God bestows his gift graciously.⁸⁷

Heineken continues that there are some points that must be clearly understood concerning the ministry and ordination into the ministry. First, the ministry is not a self-sustaining or

⁸⁵Ibid., XVIII, 131-132.

⁸⁶Ibid., XVIII, 133.

⁸⁷Ibid.

self-perpetuating order. Secondly, the ministry is distinct from the priesthood of believers. Third, the office of the ministry must be distinguished from those who hold that office. Fourth, the seat of authority for the office of the ministry is God's Word. And finally, the man and his personal qualifications cannot be separated from the office he holds.⁸⁸

In answering the question that he raises in the title of his article, "What Does Ordination Confer?," Heineken maintains that ordination confers three things: (1) the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, (b) the committing of the office of the ministry, and (c) the handing over of authority.⁸⁹

When the Lutheran Church in America was in the process of being formed, the constituent synods worked through many of the issues that would lead to a smooth transition of the various synods into a new, united, smoothly-functioning body. In 1958 they published a Report of the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity. In this report the matter of the relationship between the Church and the ministry and the congregations is expressed in agreement with the constitution as it was approved.⁹⁰ This material will not be covered but the reader is referred to the constitutional material.⁹¹

⁸⁸Ibid., XVIII, 134.

⁸⁹Ibid., XVIII, 135.

⁹⁰Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1966), p. 561. His source is: The 1958 Report of the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, n.d.), pp. 4-21.

⁹¹Supra, pp. 31-32.

Summary

Many strands and traditions have been brought together within the Lutheran Church in America. The relationship between the universal priesthood and the ministerial office has been closely defined in the current documents of the Lutheran Church in America.

It might be presumptuous to try to trace a strand through the historical development. However, a dominating strand can be traced from Henry Melchior Muhlenberg through the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and finally into the Lutheran Church in America. This strand being that ordination is the attestation of the call to the ministerial office. The rite of ordination is not absolutely essential, but it is not to be omitted.

The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South contributed the idea that every candidate for the ministerial office is ordained by a synod of the Lutheran Church in America not by the Lutheran Church in America itself.

All of the traditions that merged into the Lutheran Church in America made a significant contribution to the theology, life, and practice of the Lutheran Church in America. The matter of ordination was similarly understood by the constituent bodies with minor variations rather than differing teachings.

CHAPTER III

ORDINATION IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

To understand the position of the Missouri Synod on the teaching of Church and Ministry it is necessary to begin with the writings of C. F. W. Walther (1811-1887).

Karl Wyneken says that there are four primary factors which must be considered in the development and formulation of Walther's doctrine of the ministry.

1. The Saxon settlement in Missouri of 1839 and the aftermath of the expulsion of Bishop Martin Stephan.
2. The organization of the Missouri Synod and the formation of its polity.
3. The controversy with Pastor J. A. A. Grabau and the Buffalo Synod from the early 1840's to 1866.
4. The corresponding controversy on church and ministry in the German homeland following about 1848.¹

Walther admitted that the conditions under which the church found itself in America did have a deciding influence upon

our vividly apprehending the doctrine of the Church and Ministry . . . we must nevertheless just as positively reject the accusation that we have modified and molded the holy, pure doctrine of our Church to suit our conditions.²

¹Karl Wyneken, "Selected Aspects of C. F. W. Walther's Doctrine of the Ministry," Concordia Seminary, Studies in Church and Ministry (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1963), III, 18-74. An excellent treatment of the development of Walther's views.

²D. H. Steffens, "The Doctrine of the Church and the Ministry," Ebenzer, edited by W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 154. Translated from C. F. W. Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Erge von Kirche und Amt (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. ix-x.

Walther's thinking on the ministry is revealed in his Theses on the Ministry in Kirche und Amt.

Thesis I. The holy ministry, or the pastoral office is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.³

Thesis II. The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.⁴

Thesis III. The ministry of preaching is not an ordinary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of days.⁵

Thesis IV. The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the latter . . . but it is an office of service.⁶

Thesis V. The ministry of preaching has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a spiritual tribunal.⁷

Thesis VI. A. The ministry of preaching is conferred [übertragen] by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the Keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God.⁸

In an elaboration of this sixth thesis Walther says, that because the church or congregation possesses the keys and the office of the ministry immediately, it is only the congregation that can call and

³"Theses on Church and Ministry," translated by W. H. T. Dau. Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Th. Engelder, editors, Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 71. Translated from C. F. W. Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt (Erlangen: Andreas Delchert, 1856), p. 178.

⁴Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, p. 71; Walther (1856), p. 197.

⁵Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, p. 73; Walther (1856), p. 216.

⁶Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder; Walther (1856), p. 227.

⁷Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, p. 74; Walther (1856), p. 243.

⁸Dallmann, Dau, and Engelder, p. 74; Walther (1856), p. 250.

commission the ministry of preaching, which publicly administers the office of the keys and all priestly offices in the congregation by its election and can confer this office on the one so qualified and elected.

Several points need consideration in the matter of issuing a call. First, there must be love and unity present. Second, there must be the honor which believers owe to faithful incumbents of the ministerial office. and third, there must be sanctity and importance accorded to the matter itself.⁹

Hence congregations which have a minister and are calling another pastor or congregations which have no minister should consult the present minister and/or other men who already are in the office of the ministry. The congregation should allow other ministers to examine the candidate and properly, publicly, and solemnly install the person the congregation has called.¹⁰

Thesis VI. B. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.¹¹

Walther says that Scripture does not say that ordination was instituted by God. Nevertheless, the apostles used a form of ordination with the laying on of hands.

Even now ordination, when it is joined with a prayer of the church, based on the glorious promises that have been specially

⁹Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, pp. 74-75.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 75.

¹¹Ibid., p. 76; Walther (1856), p. 250.

given to the ministry of preaching, is not an empty ceremony but is accomplished by an outpouring of heavenly gifts on the person ordained.¹²

Thesis VII. The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.¹³

The priesthood of believers is not to be identified with the office of the ministry. A Christian is not a minister because he is a spiritual priest. The minister is not a spiritual priest because he holds the public office of a minister. The spiritual priesthood is not a public office nor is the public office of the ministry an order that is different from that of all Christians. It is a ministry of service ordained by Christ when He established the apostolic office.¹⁴

Thesis VIII. The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.¹⁵

Thesis IX. A. Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God.

B. The preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has accordingly no right to make new laws and to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily.

C. The preacher has no right to impose and execute excommunication alone, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.¹⁶

¹²Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, p. 76.

¹³Ibid.; Walther (1856), p. 321.

¹⁴Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, p. 76.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 78; Walther (1856), p. 349.

¹⁶Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, pp. 79-80; Walther (1856), p. 368.

Thesis X. According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.¹⁷

In his book on pastoral theology Walther writes concerning ordination:

The ordination, with the laying on of hands, of those called to the office of the ministry is not a divine institution; it is only an apostolic, ecclesiastical order. This needs no proof, since it is mentioned in the Scriptures; the Scriptures, however, are silent concerning any divine institution of its use. . . . Ordination is an adiaphoron, a thing indifferent. It does not constitute the call and office. It only confirms both the call and the office. . . .¹⁸

Francis Pieper (1852-1931), a ranking theologian of the Missouri Synod, says that all Christians are spiritual priests and as such have the right to preach the Gospel. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the spiritual priesthood and the public ministry. All Christians are called to proclaim the Word, but they are not all called into the office of the public ministry. The congregation selects and calls one individual to this office and commits the office to him. The one who

¹⁷Dallmann, Dau and Engelder, p. 85; Walther (1856), p. 407.

¹⁸C. F. W. Walther, Pastoraltheologie (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. Staaten, 1872), p. 65.

Dass die Ordination der zum Amt Berufenen mit Handauflegung nicht goettlicher Einsetzung, sondern allein eine apostolisch kirchliche Ordnung sei, bedarf keines Beweises da ihr Gebrauch zwar in der Schrift erwaeht wird, die Schrift aber von einer goettlichen Einsetzung dieses Gebrauches schweigt. . . . Die Ordination ist ein Adiaphoron, ein Mittelding macht die Vocation un das Amt nicht, sondern bestaetigt beides nur . . .

holds this office is now, because of it, not a priest (like all the rest), [sic] but a servant, or minister, of all the others. . . . For this office is nothing more than a public service, which is delegated to one by the whole congregation, though all of them are priests together.^{19/8}

He also wrote:

The proper answer to the question whether it is the universal or the local Church that is entrusted with the right of calling ministers, is that Christ clearly ascribes "the keys of the kingdom," and, consequently, the right to appoint ministers, to the local Church.^{20/9}

The congregation of believers may transfer the exercise of its rights to call a minister to one or more persons. Hence individual persons or boards of the church can extend a valid call but only when they are commissioned to do so by those who have the power originally and who have given either their silent or their verbal consent.²¹

Pieper states that ordination is not a divine ordinance but an apostolic-ecclesiastical institution. Ordination does not confer the ministry but is only a public testimony and confirmation of the call. Ordination is therefore not essential to the validity of the ministerial office.²² A candidate for the ministry assumes the ministerial office by the call and its acceptance. Ordination to the ministry by the laying on of hands and prayers is merely a church

¹⁸ 19 Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by J. T. Mueller, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 440-442.

¹⁹ 20 Francis Pieper, "The Synodical Conference," The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1893), p. 133.

²⁰ 21 Pieper, Dogmatics, III, 451.

²¹ 22 Pieper, Distinctive Doctrines, p. 133.

ceremony that follows the call and its acceptance. The authority to ordain is a power that is delegated by the congregation to the ordinator.²³

A. L. Graebner (1849-1904), another prominent theologian of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod says in his Outlines of Doctrinal Theology that each local congregation of believers is endowed with the spiritual rights, privileges, and powers of the invisible Church of Christ. For the public performance of the privileges and duties of the Church in preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, Christ has instituted the ministerial office in the Church. This office is conferred upon the incumbents by God through the congregation which extends a call that delegates or transfers to the man thus called the public exercise of the functions of the priesthood of believers. By virtue of the call the minister performs in the name of Christ and of the congregation.²⁴

The ecclesiastical rite of ordination is a public acknowledgment of the call and its acceptance by which the ministerial office has been conferred. Ordination is also an acknowledgment of the fitness of the person called for the proper performance of the duties of the office conferred upon him.²⁵

John H. C. Fritz (1874-1953) says in his Pastoral Theology that the Christian congregation is a divine institution. The Synod

²³ Pieper, Dogmatics, III, 454-455.

²⁴ A. L. Graebner, Outlines of Doctrinal Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), pp. 210-213.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

is not a divine institution but is a human organization. It is formed to carry out the work which can be done more effectively by a larger group, but this work is none the less the work of each congregation.

The office of the ministry is also a divine institution. It was instituted by Christ in order that not everybody in the local congregation attempt to preach or administer the sacraments. The office of the ministry was instituted so that the proper persons would be chosen for this work.

To fill the ministerial office a candidate must have received a call to the ministerial office that is both valid, that is, it must be extended by those who have the God-given authority to extend a call, and it must be legitimate, that is, it has to come to the individual in the proper manner. The candidate must then make formal acceptance of the call.²⁶

Fritz says:

The installation ceremony is essentially a public declaration on the part of the pastor and the congregation of the new relationship into which they have entered. When a candidate for the ministry is installed the first time, such installation is called ordination. There is no essential difference between the installation and the ordination.²⁷

A man assumes the ministerial office through the call and its acceptance, not by the ceremony of ordination. "A man is not ordained to the ministry, but ordained to enter upon his work as pastor of

²⁶John H. C. Fritz, Pastoral Theology (1st edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1932), pp. 24-35.

²⁷Ibid., p. 61.

a certain congregation." Ordination signifies that a man has chosen the ministry as his life's calling, but it does not impress upon him an indelible character. As soon as the pastor is without a call he ceases to be a minister.²⁸

Since ordination is an adiaphron it is not necessary that it is always defined in the same manner. Nor is it necessary that there be any hard and fast rules concerning the rite or ceremony. This does not, however, permit complete liberty in such liturgical matters.

Since ordination is a public ratification of the call it stands to reason that all those who serve with a regular call in the ministerial office should be ordained. In connection with ordination there are the invoking of the divine blessing and a public testimony of the great importance and sacredness of the ministerial office.

The candidate should be ordained in the congregation which has called him, since it is the congregation that made his ordination possible. To do otherwise makes it appear that ordination has a significance of its own apart from the call which made the ordination possible.²⁹

In 1932 The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod adopted A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod at its thirty-fifth regular convention. The major writer of this document was Francis Pieper.

①①²⁸ Ibid., p. 62.

②²⁹ John H. C. Fritz, "Ordination," Concordia Theological Monthly, III (October 1932), 742-745.

In the section entitled "Of the Church" it states that Christians are the Church and they alone possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church.

Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as originally vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope, or the bishops, or the order of the ministry . . . The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by virtue of delegated powers, conferred on them by the original possessors of such powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter . . .³⁰

In the section entitled "Of the Public Ministry" it states that public ministry means the office by which the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered by order and in the name of a Christian congregation. Through this divinely instituted office the Word and Sacraments are delegated to persons qualified for such work; these qualifications and official functions are defined in Scripture.

It goes on to say "regarding ordination we teach that it is not divine, but a commendable ecclesiastical ordinance."³¹

In a two-volume work edited by Theodore Laetsch entitled The Abiding Word there are several essays by different writers and theologians of the Missouri Synod that state their position regarding the ministry and ordination.³²

³⁰The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), pp. 14-15.

³¹Ibid., pp. 31-33.

³²Theodore Laetsch, editor, The Abiding Word (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1946-1947), 2 vols.

George Perlich says that the local congregation is the working unit of the Church. Christ has given the Church the Office of the Keys which includes the power to preach the Gospel, to administer the Sacraments, and to remit and retain sins. The local congregation, as a part of the Church, has the authority to act for Christ and to represent Him. These rights do not come to the Church mediately through ordained ministers, but come directly to each believer as a member of the congregation. It is then his responsibility and the congregation's to see that these rights are properly exercised.

The congregation does not need to be associated with any larger segment of the Church in order to have and exercise its rights. It does not derive its authority from the Church at large. Nor does it receive its power from the ministerial office and its incumbents. Rather the ministry receives its authority from the local congregation.³³

L. W. Spitz, Sr., says that God in His wisdom has established the office of the ministry for the public administration of the priestly rites belonging to all believers, since preaching and administration of the Sacraments cannot be carried out by the congregation as a body. Through the pastor the congregation and all its members are represented in the minister's preaching, teaching, baptizing, and administration of the Sacrament of the Altar. Thus in calling a pastor the congregation does not give up its rights as kings and

³⁰33 Geo [rge] H. Perlich, "The Lutheran Congregation," The Abiding Word, II, 450-451.

priests. The minister is the servant of Christ through whom Christ bestows His blessings on the congregation.³⁴

E. E. Foelber presents four theses with discussion in his essay entitled "The Office of the Public Ministry." Thesis I says, "The Office of the Public Ministry is a position of trust conferred by a Christian congregation for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ publicly." Inherent in this position of trust is a dependence upon the will and instructions of the congregation. The minister is a servant of the congregation.

"There is no deviation from the view that the rights and powers of the Office of the Public Ministry are and remain in the possession of the congregation that has acted."³⁵ This position of trust is conferred by the congregation. Nevertheless, the conferring of this office upon an individual in the midst of the congregation does not mean that the rest of the congregation has thereby forfeited the possession of its power.

Thesis II says, "The Office of the Public Ministry was instituted by God and the believers in Christ are obligated to establish and maintain it." The office is a continuation of the ministerial office of the apostles. It is necessary that all those who are being served by the office render it obedience. The office of the ministry is

③³⁴L. W. Spitz, Sr., "The Universal Priesthood of Believers," The Abiding Word, I, 332-334.

³⁵E. E. Foelber, "The Office of the Public Ministry," The Abiding Word, II, 475.

maintained by training servants of the Word. Congregations are wise to work together to train men for the public ministry of the Church.³⁶

Thesis III says, "The Christian congregation fills the Office of the Public Ministry by electing and calling into it men adjudged worthy." The office of the ministry is filled in a congregation when it has elected to call a qualified individual, when the call has been rightly issued, and when the candidate accepts the call. Hence ordination is not a divine ordinance nor a sacrament, but a rite or ceremony that has come down from the days of the apostles. It is nothing more than an ecclesiastical form that denotes the public and solemn confirmation of the call.³⁷

Thesis IV says, "The Office of the Public Ministry is, strictly speaking, the only divinely instituted office in the church." This does not mean that the office of the ministry is the highest office in the Church. It indicates only that God has instituted various offices in the Church and some are higher and some lower in authority and efficacy. Among incumbents in the ministerial office there is equality. Any apparent superiority of station exists only by human origin.³⁸

Koehneke says that the call to the ministerial office is the act of God by which he sends, separates, and chooses men to perform

³⁶Ibid., II, 483-484.

³⁷Ibid., II, 487-489.

³⁸Ibid., II, 490-492.

the work necessary for the proper functioning of the ministry either in its pastoral or missionary function. All incumbents of the ministerial office have been called immediately by God and mediate through the congregation. The call to the ministerial office is a call to a specific service of ministry in the Church. This special ministry can exist only where there is a congregation because the office can exist only where there are those who have the right and authority to call.³⁹

Stephan states that the word "office signifies a set of duties which one has to perform. . . . The keys signify the power which enables a person or an institution to perform certain tasks. . . ." Christ has given the power of the keys to his Church on earth. The congregation, regardless of its size, possesses this office. As Christians gather together in congregations it is for the common good to delegate this authority to one in their midst. The office of the keys belongs to all believers, but is exercised publicly by the minister to whom the congregation has delegated and transferred its rights, powers, duties, and privileges of the spiritual priesthood by means of a divine call.

The office of the ministry is of divine institution but it does not make a special class of ministers over and above other Christians. By its divine institution it is the highest office in the Church and all other offices in the church are subject to it.⁴⁰

³⁹ P. F. Koehnke, "The Call into the Holy Ministry," The Abiding Word, I, 366-368.

⁴⁰ Curtis C. Stephan, "The Office of the Keys," The Abiding Word, I, 342-344.

He continues by saying that the ordination of called ministers with the laying on of hands is not a divine institution, and does not qualify men for office, but it is a good custom of the Church which gives public confirmation of the call.⁴¹

William F. Arndt states that all Christians are priests and have both the right and duty to spread the gospel. Gathered together to form a congregation they have the right and authority to call a minister.⁴²

In addition to the external call which the local congregation extends to the candidate it is necessary that he have an inner call from God to serve in the public ministry.⁴³

He does not believe that it is necessary for synodical officers, administrators, or professors to be considered subsidiary to the local parish pastor.

Christians, being spiritual priests, have the right to establish offices which will be helpful in the great cause in which they are jointly engaged, if only good order and the law of love are not violated.⁴⁴

He says that ordination and the laying on of hands is simply a solemn ceremony indicating the deep interest felt for those on whom the hands are laid. Together with the prayer it indicates the concern for and blessing of the one involved.⁴⁵

③④ ⁴¹Ibid., I, 358.

③⑤ ⁴²William F. Arndt, "The Doctrine of the Call into the Holy Ministry," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXV (May 1954), 344-345.

③⑥ ⁴³Ibid., XXV, 350.

③⑦ ⁴⁴Ibid., XXV, 352.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Caemmerer,⁴⁶ Brueggemann,⁴⁷ and Mueller⁴⁸ are basically in agreement with the Missouri Synod stance on ministry and ordination.

Beginning in 1963 the School for Graduate Studies of Concordia Seminary through a Committee on Church and Ministry from the faculty of Concordia Seminary, under the chairmanship of Carl S. Meyer and Erwin Leuker as secretary, made an intensive and exhaustive study of the matter of church and ministry.⁴⁹

At the plenary session of 26 July 1963 E. P. Weber said that each minister is a minister by virtue of the call that he receives from an authorized group of Christians. This call may be extended by and received from a local congregation or from one of the boards which have been selected by a group of local congregations.

The sanctity of the local congregation can no longer be upheld over against the secular concept or indirect concept of the board. The ministry belongs to the assembly of all believers and these believers are not only in a local congregation, but elsewhere.⁵⁰

"In calling pastors the congregation does not transfer its responsibilities to the special ministry, that is the office of the ministry."

⁴⁶ Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Office of Overseer in the Church," The Lutheran Quarterly, VIII (February 1956), 15 and "The Universal Priesthood and the Pastor," Concordia Theological Monthly, XIX (August 1948), 561-582.

⁴⁷ H. G. Brueggemann, "The Public Ministry in the Apostolic Age," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (February 1951), 81-109.

⁴⁸ J. Theodore Mueller, "The Significance of the Church and the Ministry," Concordia Theological Monthly, XI (January 1940), 19-36.

⁴⁹ Concordia Seminary School for Graduate Studies, Studies in Church and Ministry, (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1963), 6 vols.

⁵⁰ Ibid., I, 209.

He makes this statement to clarify "the misconception which this view invariably implies within our circles." He states that the congregation calls a minister to equip it for more effective service in the Lord's kingdom. However the laity of the congregation does not lose what it delegates. The Ministry is a servant of the laity.⁵¹

With Biblical and confessional precedence and because of good order, the body of believers here designated as The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod may well adopt ordination, meaning the setting aside of certain people for the ministry of the church.⁵²

He goes on to say that in addition to ordination the church should also install, which he defines as "the setting aside of an ordained minister for a specific office within the church."⁵³

In the Constitution of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Part IV (Pastors and Teachers) Section B ("Ordinations and Installations,") sets down the requirements for ordination. The candidate for the office of the pastoral ministry must meet the following requirements. He must have completed the prescribed course of study and received a diploma from one of the Synod's seminaries or have fulfilled the requirements for colloquy. He must have received endorsement by the proper faculty or the Committee on Colloquies and have been declared qualified by them for the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the church. He must have indicated complete dedication to the ministry and be ready to accept a call extended to him by the Board of Assignments.

⁵¹Ibid., I, 210.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

He must have received and accepted a call to a position. This call must have been extended through the proper channels to assume full-time work in the church. And he shall have made application for membership in the Synod and have submitted a request for ordination to the respective District President or to the proper official of the board through which the call was extended. There are some special regulations concerning graduate students who wish to continue to study and be ordained and serve on a limited basis.

The District President shall be responsible for the ordination of candidates for the ministry. He may delegate these duties to another. If possible the officiating pastor should be assisted by one or more pastors.

The ordination of a candidate shall as a rule, for the sake of good order in the church, take place in the presence of the congregation to which he has been called. However, the President of the District in which the calling congregation is located may permit the ordination to take place in the home congregation of the candidate and accordingly, with the permission of the calling congregation, authorize the ordination of the candidate in his home congregation. The President of the District in which the calling congregation is located shall issue a diploma of ordination.⁵⁴

The rubrics for the order for the ordination of a minister state that the rite is to follow the General Prayer in the morning service or the hymn after the sermon in the Vesper service. The rubrics also state that ordination is to be administered under the authorization of the President of the Synod and according to its appointment.

⁵⁴The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Handbook of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (1969 edition; n.p.: c.1970), cited by no. 4.15, pp. 95-96.

They further state that ordination properly takes place within the congregation to which the candidate has been called.⁵⁵

Following Scripture readings, admonitions, and the vows of ordination the ordinator places his hand upon the ordinand and says:

I now commit unto thee the holy office of the Word and Sacraments; I ordain and consecrate thee a minister of the Church and install thee as pastor of this congregation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Lord pour out upon thee His Holy Spirit for the office and the work committed unto thee by the call, that thou mayest be a faithful dispenser of the means of grace. Amen.⁵⁶

Then follows the blessings and prayers of the participating clergy and the congregation. A concluding rubric states that the called pastor of the flock shall take charge of the remainder of the service.⁵⁷

Another order for the ordination of a minister may be used. Following the General Prayer in the Service the words of Scripture are read with the exhortations and vows repeated. Then the ordinator places his hand upon the head of the candidate and says:

I herewith acknowledge and ordain thee a called and able Minister of the Gospel, a herald of the kingdom of God, and a steward of His mysteries [and install thee as Pastor of this Congregation]. The Lord pour out upon thee the Holy Spirit for the office and work committed unto thee by thy call, that thou mayest be a faithful dispenser of the means of grace: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.⁵⁸

⁵⁵The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 104.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 109.

⁵⁸The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Liturgy and Agenda (3rd edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1936), p. 389.

Then follows the prayers and blessing. And again the closing rubric states that if the newly ordained minister has also been installed, he shall close the service with the benediction.⁵⁹

The Commission on Worship, Liturgics, and Hymnology of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has submitted a "Proposed Order for the Ordination of a Minister."

In this order the rubrics state that the Ordination shall be conducted by the President of the District into which the candidate has been called or by his appointed representative. It is desirable that two other ministers participate in the service and the laying on of hands. It is preferable that the Order of the Holy Communion be used. Either the regular propers for the day may be used or special propers for the rite of ordination which are included in the proposed rite.⁶⁰

Following prayers, Scripture readings, and the vows the ordinator and the other participating ministers lay their hands on the head of the candidate and the ordinator says:

Receive the Holy Spirit for the office and work of a Minister in the church of God. I now commit to you through the laying on of hands the sacred ministry of the Word of God and of the Holy Sacraments, and I ordain and consecrate you a minister of Christ's holy church, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The candidate responds "Amen."⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 390.

⁶⁰The Commission on Worship, Liturgics, and Hymnology of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proposed Rites for Holy Baptism and the Ordination of a Minister (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 8.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 14.

Following the blessing, prayers, and Scripture, the service continues with the order for Holy Communion.⁶²

The proposed Rite for Ordination contains what this writer considers a significant change of thrust in the import of what ordination is. The phrasing of the first sentence "Receive the Holy Spirit for the office and work of a Minister of the Church of God," indicates an objective declaration of the reality of the reception of the Holy Spirit and an enabling power for carrying out the functions of the ministerial office.

The second sentence, "I now commit to you through the laying on of hands the sacred ministry of the Word of God and of the Holy Sacraments . . ." indicates that it is through the laying on of hands that the office is committed to the candidate. This varies significantly from the stance of the Missouri Synod that regards the call and its acceptance as that which commits the ministerial office.

The two accepted rites for ordination state that the rite is merely recognizing what has already happened in the call and its acceptance.

Summary

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has a strong congregational polity. The members of the universal priesthood possess all the rights of the office of the ministry. When a congregation issues a call and it is accepted the public office of the ministry is transferred

⁶²Ibid., p. 15.

to the minister. The rite of ordination is a public affirmation of the transaction which has already been consummated in the call and its acceptance. Ordination itself is an adiaphron, but it is not omitted.

The Synod declares the candidate eligible, authorizes the ordination, and has a representative when the call is issued.

The Missouri Synod's teaching concerning ordination has varied very little since Walther stated his position. However the new proposed rite for ordination indicates that a significant change has already or may take place in the Missouri Synod's understanding and teaching concerning ordination.

CHAPTER IV

ORDINATION IN THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Ohio Synod

To understand ordination in The American Lutheran Church it is necessary to examine the synods that merged to form that church body. The place to begin is the Ohio Synod which was organized in 1818. This synod was organized primarily because of the geographical distances involved in traveling to the meetings of the Pennsylvania Ministerium and other ministerial conferences.

The teaching in the Ohio Synod concerning the ministerial office is influenced by Muhlenberg who stressed the importance of this office, examination of candidates for ordination by the ministerium, and the rite of ordination itself.¹

In 1870 the Ohio Synod adopted seven theses on the ministry to clarify its position on the ministry to satisfy questions by the Missouri Synod with whom they had agreed to enter into fellowship.

Thesis 1 states that in the Christian Church there is a universal priesthood that has the right and duty to proclaim the virtues of Christ.

Thesis 2 states that in the Church there is also a public office of the ministry. This office was instituted by God in order that

¹Supra, pp. 7-8.

the gospel might be proclaimed, the sacraments administered, and Christian discipline and order maintained.

Thesis 3 states that there is a distinction between the evangelical pastoral office and the universal priesthood. The distinction rests in the public administration of word, baptism, absolution, and eucharist which the ministerial office possesses. However all Christians have the right and duty to make use of God's Word, and, in cases of necessity, also to baptize and to absolve.

Thesis 4 states that the Church, that is, all Christians, has the power to absolve as a right and power originally and immediately through Christ. This does not mean, however, that each Christian is a minister.

Thesis 5 states that the ministerial office is not a human arrangement but a divine institution. The external call to this institution comes through the work of the spiritual priesthood.

Thesis 6 states that the call to the ministerial office comes from God, not immediately, but mediately through the Christian congregation.

Thesis 7. Ordination, in its narrow sense, is not a divine command, although it has been the practice of the Church since the time of the Apostles; there is no absolute necessity for it, and yet it is necessary from a churchly point of view; it is not a bestowal of talents for the office, and yet it is a salutary confirmation of the call that has proceeded from the Church . . . and, in the regularly organized condition of the Church, is only to be administered by those who are already in the ministerial office.²

²Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, c.1966), pp. 184-185. His source: Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Eighteenth Regular Meeting of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, 1870 (Columbus, Ohio: n.p., 1871), pp. 25-26.

Matthius Loy (1828-1915) of the Joint Synod of Ohio writes in his book The Ministerial Office that salvation is ordinarily dependent upon the means of grace and the administration of the means of grace is the necessary work of the ministry.³ All Christians are called to engage in this work because they are all priests in the priesthood of believers and because they have been given the office of the keys.⁴

There exists in the Church a special ministerial calling which is a public office that functions in the name of the Church. This special office of the ministry was instituted for the sake of order in the Church and the activity of those engaged in this special ministry is done in the name of all in the Church by divine appointment. This public office of the ministry is distinct from the universal priesthood of believers but is not to be regarded as a superior order, but simply as a ministry.⁵

It is necessary to have a call in order to be eligible to serve in this special ministry. This call is given mediately through the congregation because it has the priesthood and the Keys. Those called to this special office of ministry are ministers of the Church and are involved in the practice of the apostles. It is wrong to maintain that the call to the ministry can come through civil authorities

³Matthius A. Loy, The Ministerial Office (Columbus; Ohio: Schulze & Glassmann, 1870), pp. 11-20.

⁴Ibid., pp. 21-74.

⁵Ibid., pp. 74-105.

or that it can come through the ministry itself, thus making this special office a self-perpetuating office.⁶

The call which is given by the congregation is limited as to the place wherein the minister exercises his special office, but it is not limited in time.⁷

Ordination is not essential to the ministry. It is not a sacrament and cannot produce the effects of a sacrament. It cannot be proven on the basis of the Word of God that ordination is necessary. There is not a divine command for it; and there is no proof from apostolic authority.

Scriptures, the Symbols and the best [sic] writers of the Lutheran Church deny that ordination is necessary for a person to accept the call to the special ministry and validly fulfill its functions.⁸

Ordination is to serve as a confirmation of the vocation or call to the special ministry which was previously given by the Church. Although ordination is not necessary, it is not to be regarded as useless or meaningless and should not be unnecessarily omitted.

It is to be highly esteemed, as having apostolic examples to recommend it; as being a ceremony of general use in the Church from the beginning; as bearing testimony of our reverence for the divine institution of the ministry; as affording opportunity to remind the pastor of his solemn duty and grave responsibility; as bearing public testimony to his qualifications and the regularity of his vocation; as being a solemn declaration to the people that he is to be honored as God's ambassador; and as, by the use of the word and prayer, conferring great blessing upon him through faith.⁹

⁶Ibid., pp. 106-163.

⁷Ibid., pp. 163-194.

⁸Ibid., pp. 195-230.

⁹Ibid., p. 243.

In another place Loy says:

The Lord requires that ministers be rightly called by the Church, to which He has entrusted the means of grace, but does not command the rite of ordination to make the call valid, and least of all does He make the efficacy of the Word and sacrament dependent on ecclesiastical rites.¹⁰

R. C. H. Lenski (1864-1936), a theologian of the Joint Synod of Ohio, writes in his book Kings and Priests that the universal priesthood that is shared by all Christians is exercised only in a private way. The ministerial office is exercised only in a public way. The factor that makes the difference is the call of the congregation to serve in the office of the public ministry. The one who has the call of a congregation does his work by authority of this call and hence it is public ministry. Others in the Church do not have such a call and the work that they do is done on the authority of their individual priesthood and this is private.¹¹

The minister carries out the functions of his office because the congregation has called him to do them. He serves as their representative, by virtue of the authority that they have conferred upon him.¹²

The Lord has combined the public proclamation of his Word which he committed to us as a royal priesthood, with the gift of the Christian ministry. Through this ministry the royal priesthood carries out the Lord's bidding concerning all that belongs to the

¹⁰Matthias Loy, "The Joint Synod of Ohio," The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1893), p. 21.

¹¹R[ichard] C. H. Lenski, Kings and Priests (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, c.1927), pp. 38-39.

¹²Ibid., p. 40.

public use of the Word. Each congregation is to call and maintain a minister in its midst and allot to him the public work of the Word. This Christian ministry is a divine institution arranged by the Lord himself. This office of the ministry is a gift to the universal priesthood. The office belongs to the priesthood as one of the high prerogatives which God has entrusted to the universal priesthood.¹³

The universal priesthood has the right to call a minister for the congregation. The congregation elects one who is a member of the universal priesthood and has the necessary qualifications and thereby confers upon him the office which the Lord has instituted for his church and entrusted to its care.

It [the call] does not entrust to him any of the rights of the royal priesthood. All of us remain priests as before, all of us rest under the same obligations as before. Our prerogatives and duties inhere in our very nature as spiritual priests, hence they cannot possibly be transferred, either to the pastor or to anyone else.¹⁴

It makes no difference for the universal priesthood of each member in a congregation whether the ministerial office is filled or vacant. As far as the universal priesthood is concerned the ministerial office takes nothing from it nor adds anything to it. All priests own the pastoral office and the powers that belong to it whether the office is filled or vacant.

The call to the candidate or incumbent entrusts to the minister the public functioning of the ministerial office and all the rights

¹³Ibid., pp. 45-47.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 50.

and duties that go with it. In accord with the proper functioning of this office all the affairs of the congregation and the lives of its members are to be directed. Hence the call includes the direction that the minister is to guide the congregation and the individuals of the congregation according to the Word.

The minister who accepts the call remains a member of the universal priesthood just as he was before. His priesthood differs in no way from that of any person in the congregation. The call transfers to him the ministerial office and the work that belongs solely to that office. He then has two sets of rights and duties, those of the priesthood and those of the ministerial office. The former he exercises as a Christian believer, the latter he exercises as a minister. The former he exercises on his own behalf; the latter he exercises on behalf of the congregation.¹⁵

Lenski would permit a man or a woman, if she were the only Christian present, to baptize in case of the imminent danger of death. This power is included in the priesthood of believers. However, the priesthood does not entitle a Christian to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion to a dying adult. The adult has had the Word and Holy Communion in the past. His friends as Christians may bring him the consolation of the Word, but the church has decided that only competent ministers may administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 50-52.

Lenski considers ordination the acknowledgment of the call and its acceptance. When the candidate has received his seminary training and has been authorized for a call he is considered qualified to assume the office of the ministry. Ordination with the laying on of hands is beneficial for the ordinand and the congregation for understanding the new relationship into which they enter as minister and congregation.¹⁶

The Iowa Synod

Wilhelm Loehe (1808-1872), a German pastor and theologian, was the strong theological influence guiding and shaping the theological stance of the Iowa Synod.¹⁷

The Iowa Synod was organized because of the Missouri Synod's controversy with the Buffalo Synod concerning the teaching of church and ministry. The Missouri Synod would not permit any minister or candidate who was sent to this country by Loehe to become a member of the Missouri Synod, if he did not forsake Loehe's view of the ministry and accept the view of the Missouri Synod. These men who had been sent by Loehe who could accept neither the position of the

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹⁷For a thorough study of this interrelationship see: James Lewis Schaaf, "Wilhelm Loehe's Relation to the American Church: A Study in the History of Lutheran Mission," inaugural dissertation (Heidelberg, Germany: Ruprecht-Karl-Universität, n.d.).

Buffalo Synod¹⁸ on the one side or the Missouri Synod¹⁹ on the other side formed their own synod, the Iowa Synod.²⁰

Loehe states that throughout the New Testament it is the holy office of the ministry that creates the congregations. Nowhere does it say that the office is but a transfer of congregational right and authority or even that the congregation gives the office. "The office stands in the midst of the congregation like a tree that has its seed within itself; its vacancies are filled by itself."²¹

In 1851 Loehe said that the ministry is derived from the means of grace. Christ has chosen to distribute His grace to men through men. The Word and Sacrament do not administer themselves nor are they administered by the Holy Spirit. Christ instituted the office of the means of grace, that is, the ministry, for the means of grace. The divine call is necessary for the minister for the office is a gift and office from the Lord. The minister must have both an inner call from the Lord and an outer call from a congregation.²²

¹⁸Infra, pp. 75-78.

¹⁹Supra, pp. 41-45.

²⁰S [igmund] Fritschel, "The German Iowa Synod," Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1893), p. 68.

²¹William Schaller, "Gottlieb Schaller," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XVI (October 1943), 73. His source: Wilhelm Loehe, Aphorismen über die neutestamentlichen Aemter und ihr Verhaeltnis zur Gemeinde (Nuremberg: n.p., 1849).

²²Wilhelm Loehe, Neue Aphorismen, from Loehe's Gesammelte Werke, edited by Klaus Ganzert. (Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1954), pp. 537-544.

Concerning ordination Loehe says that the candidate must present himself to the Lord with a willing spirit when the Lord calls and so separate himself from other matters of life. This separation, the conveying of the office, and the necessary grace and authority for the office is called ordination. Gift, call, office, and ordination are from God; He does it all. The one who is called through ordination is certain of his gift, his ability, and his calling. The congregation receives an open witness of this testimony in the rite of ordination.²³

The purpose of ordination is the conferring of the office, authority, and grace for the office. Through ordination the gifts for the holy office can be purified, elevated, strengthened, and multiplied. However, the grace which is given at ordination is not a sacramental grace which forgives sins.²⁴

God gives the office of the ministry through the service of the whole congregation which is His instrument. The congregation includes both laity and ministry. The two form the complete congregation and through this congregation God continues His ministry.

In calling a candidate for the ministry or to fill a vacant ministerial office in a congregation the laity participates in selecting the candidate whom it will call. The ministerium judges the gifts and the abilities of the candidate and conducts the ordination. In this manner all have rightly participated in the call and the congregation

²³Ibid., p. 545.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 545-546.

has truly called, ordained, and installed the candidate into his ministerial office.²⁵

In 1855 the Iowa Synod drew up a constitution for congregations on the basis of one which Loehe had prepared for the Frankenhilf, Michigan, congregation. It stated that the congregation and the ministerium would act together in calling a new minister for the congregation. The congregation would request the ministerium through either the church administration or a neighboring minister to assist them in selecting and calling another minister.

The call is to be signed by the ministerium or by a neighboring minister. It is not a proper call if it stipulates a time limit within the call.

The candidate for the ministry is to be ordained by the ministerium in the presence of the calling congregation. The candidate is asked to take an oath of allegiance to the confessions of the Lutheran Church at his ordination. The minister is also installed through the ministerium in the presence of the congregation.²⁶

In 1873 the Iowa Synod adopted the Davenport Theses. In these theses the issue of the doctrine of the ministry is presented.

Thesis IV. On the doctrine of the Ministry, we cannot concede that, according to the confessions of our Church, the ministry originates through the transfer of the rights of the spiritual priesthood possessed by the individual Christian.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 552-558.

²⁶Geo[rge] J. Fritschel, Quellen und Dokumente zur Geschichte und Lehrstellung der ev. luth. Synode von Iowa u. a. Staaten (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 133-134.

Thesis V. In opposition to this view, we maintain that the public office of the Ministry is transmitted by God through the congregation of believers in its entirety and essence by means of the regular call, because the "mandatum de constituendis ministris," i. e., the command to ordain preachers, is not given to the individual members, but to the Church as such.²⁷

The Iowa Synod and the Missouri Synod engaged in a long, heated disputation concerning the office of the ministry. They both agreed that the office of the ministry was originally and directly given by God. The Iowa Synod maintained that the office of the ministry was given to the Church in its totality, not to the individual members, as the Missouri Synod believed. The Iowa Synod also believed that the Church possessed the office of the ministry in and with the means of grace, not in the spiritual priesthood, as the Missouri Synod believed.²⁸

The Iowa Synod simply was not able to accept the Missouri Synod's transfer theory, that is, übertragungslehre, concerning the ministry. The Iowa Synod believed that the minister receives the rights for his office from the Lord of the Church through His Word. This takes place through the call wherein the Lord uses His Church as an instrument. The Church or a congregation of the Church calls a candidate who is recognized as fitted for the office of the ministry and so serves as an

²⁷Wolf, p. 210. From: Iowa: Synodal-Bericht, 1873 quoted in J. Deindoefer, Geschichte der Evangel.-Luth. Synode von Iowa und Anderen Staaten (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1897), pp. 132-136. Translated in Fredrick W. Meuser, The Formation of the American Lutheran Church (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, c. 1958), pp. 281-284.

²⁸S[igmund] Fritschel, "The German Iowa Synod," Distinctive Doctrines, p. 69.

instrument of the Lord for providing ministers and teachers for the Church at all times.

Our synod does not believe that the office propagates itself . . . but that the Lord of the Church propagates the holy office through the instrumentality of the Church. Evidently there is here a difference of conviction on what is only a subtle point in the doctrine of the ministerial office, which by no means affects our salvation.²⁹

The Iowa Synod did not regard this divergence of opinion as divisive of church fellowship, but the Missouri Synod regarded this teaching as an article of faith.³⁰

The Buffalo Synod

J. A. A. Grabau (1804-1879) was the theological influence who guided the Buffalo Synod in its formulation of doctrine and teaching on the church and ministry. Grabau was confronted with the matter of conventicles which were being held by certain groups in the congregations under his leadership. The Lutheran congregations in Milwaukee under his guidance asked Grabau if they could choose a man from among them who would be authorized to administer the sacraments and perform other ministerial functions, but who would not be ordained. In

²⁹Kirchliche Zeitschrift, "Why the Lutheran Synod of Missouri (and Its Allies) Refuses Church Fellowship with the Synod of Iowa," translated by Joseph Stump, The Lutheran Church Review, XXIII (April 1904), 350.

³⁰Ibid., XXIII, 350. For other articles that give further details of the controversy and present the issues from both sides see: S[igmund] Fritschel, "The German Iowa Synod," Distinctive Doctrines, pp. 62-86. John H. C. Fritz, "Missouri and Iowa," Ebenzer, edited by W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 160-173. J. Buenger, Missouri, Iowa, and Ohio: The Old and the New Differences (n.p.: n.d.) pamphlet. Meuser, pp. 56-62.

response Grabau issued his Hirtenbrief or pastoral letter asserting the power and authority of the ministerial office.³¹

Graubau issued his Hirtenbrief on 1 December 1840. It was sent to all the congregations which were associated with Grabau and also to the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, with whom there had been correspondence concerning cooperation and fellowship. These favorable relations were mutual feelings because of the strong confessional stance of both the Saxon Lutherans of Missouri and the Prussian Lutherans of Buffalo and Milwaukee.

The Saxon Lutherans had deposed Bishop Martin Stephan. After this C. F. W. Walther and Adolph Marback debated the matter of the nature of the church. In this debate Walther outlined his premises for the strong congregational polity which was to characterize his views on church and ministry. Walther confronted the issue of Stephan's hierarchial stance by asserting the authority of the congregation.

Walther and the Saxon Lutherans received Grabau's Hirtenbrief with the request that it be examined and comments on any errors that might be found be made known to Grabau. In this manner the controversy concerning the church and ministry between the Missouri Synod and the Buffalo Synod began and continued for many years.³²

The Buffalo Synod or Die Synode der aus Preussen eingewanderten lutherischen Gemeinden, that is, The Synod of the Lutheran Church which emigrated from Prussia, was not yet formed when Grabau wrote

³¹Schaaf, p. 122.

³²Ibid., p. 123.

his Hirtenbrief in 1840. It was formed in 1845. However, the synodical organization and teaching was patterned after Grabau's views as stated in the Hirtenbrief.

Graubau stated that to be properly or divinely called, a minister must be a sincere Christian who has a thorough understanding of the Word of God and understands and must be able to defend the important doctrines of the Church. The candidate for the ministerial office must also have the gifts of the Spirit which equip him for the ministry.

He must be examined by the ministers in order to determine if he has the necessary qualifications for the ministry. The candidate also had to appear before the congregation which he was to serve, so that it might examine him in order to be assured that he would perform the duties of the ministry.

The ordination itself is to take place with the laying on of hands according to the old agenda of the church. After this the new pastor promises the congregation faithfulness in doctrine and life and the congregation, in turn, promises obedience to the pastor in all things which are not contrary to the Word of God.³³

In order for the minister to have a valid call he must be called in the proper manner. If the call is not a valid one, the person does not have the right or authority to exercise the duties of the pastoral office. To issue a proper call the congregation acts with

³³J. A. A. Grabau, Der Hirtenbrief from Der Hirtenbrief des Herrn Pastors Grabau zu Buffalo vom Jahre 1840. Nebst den zwischen ihn und mehreren lutherischen Pastoren von Missouri gewechselten Schriften. Der Oeffentlichkeit uebergeben als eine Protestation gegen Geltendmachung Heirarchischer Grundsätze innerhalb der lutherischen Kirchen, edited by G[ott]hold H. Loeber, (New York: H. Ludwig & Co., 1849), pp. 12-13.

the permission and authorization of the Synod. The ordination, too, is authorized by the Synod.³⁴

The ministerium and the Synod are the source of power and authority for Grabau and the Buffalo Synod. The local congregation had very limited power. The congregation was duty bound to follow the leading of the minister in all matters that were not contrary to the Word of God. In any event when a question arose, the Synod was the final authority.

The Synod had almost absolute power over both the candidate because the Synod had to approve his call and authorize his ordination and over the congregation, because the congregation had to yield to the decisions of the pastor and of the Synod.³⁵

Grabau was in every sense of the word a bishop. However, he did not use that title, but rather "senior minister." As head of the ministerium he exercised almost complete authority over both the ministerium and the synod.

The American Lutheran Church

The American Lutheran Church was formed in 1930 by a merger of the Buffalo Synod, the Iowa Synod, and the Ohio Synod. In the constitution that was adopted in 1930 Article V, Section 1, stated that the membership of the synod shall be composed of the pastors and

³⁴Ibid., p. 14.

³⁵Ibid.

of the congregations regularly received as members of the synod.³⁶

There is no mention made of ordination in the constitution or by-laws.

Michal Reu (1869-1943) was a theologian of The American Lutheran Church who was formerly a member of the Iowa Synod. In his book of Lutheran Dogmatics he states that the Church requires an office of public administration of the means of grace to carry out her mission and also for its own edification. This office was instituted by God and given to the Church, that is, all Christians, not just some individuals. The public administration of the means of grace is found in the midst of the individual Christian congregation. This ministry is based upon explicit divine appointment.

God Himself not only gives to His church such persons that are especially endowed for the administration of this office so that the minister of the Church should be regarded as a gift of divine grace . . . it is the Holy Ghost who appoints them by the congregation . . .³⁷

Later he says:

In the individual congregation the office of the public administration of the means of grace is established in this manner that the Church or individual congregation which has received this office from Christ, transfers it to the individual minister to the end that he might in her midst and in her stead perform the function pertaining to the public administration of the means of grace.³⁸

³⁶The American Lutheran Church, Constitution and By-Laws for the American Lutheran Church (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1930), p. 8.

³⁷M[ichal] Reu, Lutheran Dogmatics (Dubuque, Iowa: Wartburg Seminary, 1941-1942, mimeographed by La Verne R. Meinecke), II, 192-194.

³⁸Ibid., II, 195.

The Church has the right to establish the office of the ministry since it has been given by Christ. The local congregation as a part of the Church has the same right. The congregation exercises this right by calling a man that it believes is fit for the office and has the qualities that are needed to fulfill the ministry. In doing this the congregation transfers this right and privilege to the minister. When the minister is rightly called he administers the means of grace in the name of and in the place of the congregation; for God Himself has appointed him through the congregation. He works in a double capacity, as a minister of the congregation and as a minister of God.³⁹

What is the relation of the Church at large to the local congregation in establishing the New Testament office in her midst? As far as the right and validity of the call is concerned by which this office is established, the Church at large can neither add nor subtract anything. The local congregation acts here in her own right. But the local congregation should not forget that she is only a part in a larger group and that she, therefore, in the interest of good order and in her own interest as in that of her future minister should not disregard the order that exists in this respect in the Church at large of which she is a member.⁴⁰

Thus the congregation will not call as its minister one who is not examined by the Church. The congregation will want to have a representative of the Church at large present when it extends the call so that the call will have been issued in the proper manner.

She [the congregation] is very willing to have the man whom she called ordained or installed through a representative of the Church at large, although she knows that also the ordination and installation is a mere human institution . . . Since

³⁹Ibid., II, 196.

⁴⁰Ibid., II, 197.

it [ordination] is the confirmation of the call of the individual congregation and presupposes the examination through the Church at large it is a churchly order that ought to be willingly respected by the congregation and requested on the part of the one who is called, all the more so by the latter since in the act of ordination the Word of God is proclaimed to him especially and the Church offers her prayers in his behalf.⁴¹

In another writing Reu says that the call is not necessarily followed by ordination, but it is a valuable custom dating back to the days of the apostles. The congregation as part of a larger body will wish that larger body to perform the ordination in the interest of the congregation and the church as a whole.

But without a preceding call no ordination can take place, since ordination is nothing else than the confirmation of the call done with prayer and the laying on of hands.⁴²

Another writer of the American Lutheran Church, Glenn E. Seamon, has set forth the doctrine of the ministry in the form of theses.

Thesis I. The means of grace are given to the Church, for the proper administration of which she is held accountable.

Thesis II. The office of the Ministry was established by the Lord Jesus Christ and is, therefore, a divine institution.

Thesis III. The office of the minister is distinct from the universal priesthood and is conferred upon the individual by the call through the congregation.

Thesis IV. To the office of the ministry belongs the power to administer publicly the means of grace, which power is conferred upon the individual by Christ through the Church.

Thesis V. The rite of ordination, wholly and purely a human ordinance, is of value and is to be retained among us.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid., II, 198.

⁴²M[ichael] Reu, "The Office of the Ministry," The Augustana Quarterly, XVI (July 1937), 213.

⁴³Glenn E. Seamon, "The Doctrine of the Holy Ministry," The Pastor's Monthly, XIII (September 1935), 517-529.

In commenting on this thesis Seamon says that ordination is the formal induction into the ministerial office. It solemnly and publicly ratifies and attests to the call of the one being ordained. It is an old church rite which, although not commanded by Scripture, is valuable and useful. There is no special gift or grace connected with the rite. It is not essential to the office of the ministry, but the call is. Only the call is necessary for a man to be a minister of the church. No one is ordained unless he has a regular call.

The rite of ordination consists of laying on of hands, prayers for the one being ordained, and prayers for the Church. The prayers are the most important part of the rite and this is connected with the Word preached and read. The laying on of hands designates that the candidate is rightly called and is set apart by the church for the office of the ministry in a certain place.

The rite of ordination may be administered by any incumbent of that office who is a regularly called minister. The proper place for the ordination is in the church to which the candidate has been called, nevertheless this is not necessary and essential.⁴⁴

In 1938 the American Lutheran Church adopted the Sandusky Declaration. This document was drawn up as a result of discussions with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Sandusky Declaration stated, "Ordination is the confirmation of the call; it is not a divine but a commendable human ordinance."⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid., XIII, 530-532.

⁴⁵The American Lutheran Church, Minutes of the Fifth Convention of the American Lutheran Church, 1938 (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), p. 9.

In 1940 the American Lutheran Church in convention examined a statement entitled "The Call." The statement was discussed but was not formally adopted. The document does not speak to the issue of ordination. It deals with the call and the service of the ordained. One item that does have some far-reaching implications is the statement that in terms of church polity either congregational or episcopal forms are valid.⁴⁶

By 1950 Section 1 of the By-laws of the constitution read:

Candidates from the theological seminaries of the Church, recommended for ordination, shall be eligible for call and ordination at any time within two years of their graduation. A candidate's ordination and installation shall be authorized by the district president in whose district he has accepted a call. Upon his installation he shall be provisionally received and considered a clerical member of the Church, pending formal reception at the next meeting of the district.⁴⁷

In 1954 the American Lutheran Church in convention said that a person could only assume a spiritual office on the basis of a valid call. One of the criteria for a valid call is that the person be ordained or a candidate for ordination.⁴⁸

⁴⁶The American Lutheran Church, Official Minutes of the Sixth Convention of the American Lutheran Church, 1940 (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, n.d.), pp. 253-258 and 318.

⁴⁷The American Lutheran Church, Official Reports of the Eleventh Convention of the American Lutheran Church, 1950 (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, n.d.), p. 428.

⁴⁸The American Lutheran Church, Minutes of the Thirteenth Convention of the American Lutheran Church, 1954 (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, n.d.), pp. 51-53.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church

In 1890 the Anti-Missouri Brotherhood, the Conference of the Norwegian-Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church, and The Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod, usually known as the Norwegian Augustana Synod, merged into the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America.

Its Constitution states in Chapter IV;

1. The ordination of a candidate shall be determined by the annual meeting of the church or by an ordination committee elected for this purpose.
2. Before anyone can be ordained to the holy ministry the church shall assure itself that he is properly called and examined and has good testimonials for true and living Christianity.⁴⁹

After this merger the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America tried to act as a mediator between the Norwegian Synod and the Hauge Synod.

The Norwegian Synod reflected the high church stance of the Church of Norway. In matters of liturgy, church polity, ministry, and ordination the Norwegian Synod favored an episcopal-oriented, high church position. It did not have a bishop however.

The Hauge Synod, under the strong influence of Hans Neilson Hauge, favored low church, lay-oriented activities within the church.⁵⁰

⁴⁹E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church among the Norwegian-Americans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1960), II, 336.

⁵⁰Wolf, p. 92. For a thorough history of Norwegian-American see: E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, The Lutheran Church among the Norwegian-Americans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1960), 2 vols. See also J. Magnus Rohne, Norwegian American Lutheranism up to 1872 (New York: The Macmillian Company, c.1926).

Between 1906 and 1912 the articles of doctrinal agreement were written, discussed, and agreed upon. Representatives of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Norwegian Synod, and the Hauge Synod participated.

The section entitled "Lay Ministries in the Church" was an important agreement for the differing traditions within the Norwegian synods.

It stated that the Church, the individual congregation, and the individual Christian possess the means of grace, the power of the keys, the office of the ministry, and the gifts of grace. The congregation calls one to the public office of the ministry, which was instituted by God to administer the means of grace in its midst.

The universal priesthood of believers remains as an office for all Christian believers. Those who have special gifts are to use them for the edification of the church and the congregation even though they do not occupy the ministerial office.

In order to avoid any and all misunderstandings in this matter, the conferring bodies declare that they recognize the Christian lay activity as set forth in the theses on lay activity and that they will cherish it. Consequently, it shall not be considered unchurchly practice or religious fanaticism for people to come together for prayer and earnest promotion of spiritual awakening and spiritual life.⁵¹

The theses were reported by the Union Committee on 20 October 1906, except Thesis 8, which is quoted above, which was added on 5 May 1915. The report was approved by the conventions of all

⁵¹The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Union Documents of The Evangelical Lutheran Church, translated by G. M. Bruce. Examined and approved for publication by the Church Council of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis: n.p., 1948), pp. 28-30. Also quoted in Wolf, pp. 229-230.

three bodies in 1912. Thesis 8 was approved by the United Church in 1915 and by the Norwegian Synod and the Hauge Synod in 1916.⁵²

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which was adopted in 1917, reads:

6. The Church shall consist of congregations which unreservedly subscribe to this constitution and are accepted as members.

7. Pastors, professors, and missionaries, who by ordination or admission are accepted by the Church, shall be considered as belonging to the Church . . .⁵³

The United Evangelical Lutheran Church

In 1884 The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association in America was formed. In the constitution, which was published in 1885, Chapter II, entitled "Membership and Aim," stated that the church would consist of the evangelical Lutheran congregations, pastors, and theological professors who subscribe to the constitution.

Chapter IV, entitled "Officers and Church Council," said that the duties of the president were to preside at the meetings of convention, ordain candidates, and install pastors.⁵⁴

When the Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church Association in America was formed, a model constitution was drawn up for approval by the congregations. It was drafted in 1886 and was generally used by the congregations but was never officially adopted. It was revised in 1893.

⁵³Nelson, II, 360.

⁵⁴John M. Jensen, The United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1964), pp. 76-78.

Chapter IV, entitled "The Teaching Office," reads:

1. The holy office of preaching and teaching and the administration of the Sacraments in this congregation is to be entrusted only to an evangelical Lutheran pastor, who has been duly examined, rightly called, and ordained in the church for this office.
2. Before the pastor takes charge of the office in the congregation, he is to subscribe to the constitution, and he must also be a member of the church to which the congregation belongs.⁵⁵

In 1896 the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was formed. Chapter VII of the constitution required that candidates for ordination must first secure the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, the Church Council, and the ordination committee, which consists of seven members elected at the annual convention. It was also necessary for the candidate for the ministry to present two recommendations from pastors who were members of The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.⁵⁶

Concerning ministers in the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jensen makes the observation that even though the ministers were inheritors of the Indre Mission, or inner mission, which emphasized lay work so strongly, yet they held the pastoral office in high esteem.

He says:

The Pastor's authority could not be questioned. Every candidate was ordained to "the holy teaching and preaching office." The watchful eye on the candidates before they passed the ministerium had something to do with it. In these meetings of the ministerium the pastors truly felt themselves set apart as a unique group. Before any meeting began, the pastors present were reminded by the president that what took place at the meeting had to be kept secret. The pastors of the early days emphasized

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 229-230.

their pastoral authority a great deal, perhaps because their meager training compelled them to rely more on the authority of the office. To some extent they considered the president of the synod a bishop, since only he could ordain a candidate and officiate at a church dedication.⁵⁷

The American Lutheran Church

In 1960 the American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church merged to form The American Lutheran Church. In the constitution adopted in 1960 Article VII, entitled "The Clergy of the Church," stipulates:

The call of a congregation, of the Church or its boards acting for all the congregations, provides the authority for ordination. The ordained ministers of The American Lutheran Church constitute its clergy, to whom is committed the public administration of the Means of Grace. The pastor and laity constitute the membership of the congregation, the pastor's status differing only as to function.⁵⁸

In 1964 The American Lutheran Church considered a "Statement on Ordination and Clergy Roster." It posited that the "regular call" to the ministry is one of the oldest traditions of the church and is publicly recognized by the rite of ordination.

The Lutheran Church has not set forth a clearly defined doctrine of ordination, but it does have a tradition of ordination which has certain theological foundations. The theological basis for ordination is found in the Gospel. The Gospel reveals three aspects of the office of the ministry: the call, the sending, and the blessing.

Since calling, sending, and blessing are always connected with the ordaining activity of the church, these three aspects of the ministry are properly regarded as the basic elements of ordination. Therefore since ordination is derived from the

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 234-235.

⁵⁸Wolf, pp. 535-536.

Gospel itself, it cannot be regarded as a liturgical adiaphoron, but rather as an essential feature of the ministerial office.⁵⁹

It admits that there is not complete agreement on this matter, however. Many believe that, since all Christians are priests, they may act as priests to transfer this responsibility to an authorized person, who is to carry out the public ministry. For them ordination is accepted as the public recognition of the regular call.

It is Christ who is the real ordinator for the church and He performs His work of calling and ordaining through the church. The church places this authority for ordaining with its duly elected officers who in turn may delegate this responsibility to any ordained minister in the church. The ordinator is acting on behalf of the whole church.⁶⁰

The qualifications for ordination are a living faith, consecration, proper gifts, theological training, and a letter of call. In addition to these qualifications the candidate must be certified by the faculty of the seminary from which he graduates.

The authority for ordination is the call of Christ through his church. The Constitution of The American Lutheran Church places authority for ordination on the call from one of its constituent congregations or a call from the Church Council or one of its designated official boards.

⁵⁹The American Lutheran Church, "Statement on Ordination and Clergy Roster," Reports and Actions of the Second General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, 1964 (Minneapolis: Office of the Secretary, n.d.), p. 138.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 138-139.

Authorization for ordination and installation of a candidate to the parish ministry must be made by the president of the district from which the call originates.⁶¹

Alfred Ewald of The American Lutheran Church says that the Lord did not indicate to the church how it was to carry on the ministry after the first apostles. He only commanded that it be done. In response to Christ's command the church insists on its right to choose its ministers. It also has the right to set the standards for those who are charged with ministerial duties. For this reason only those who are regularly called should publicly preach, teach, and administer the Sacraments.

The authority of the ministry is a delegated authority. Neither minister or layman has any authority of his own, but it has been delegated to him by Christ as a member of the priesthood of believers. The church then selects those qualified for the public ministry. The call to the public ministry is valid as long as the minister maintains the qualifications set by the church.

The church considers the ministerial office so important that it has a special rite called Ordination which is conducted or authorized by an official of the Church who bears responsibility in a wider area than one parish. This is to signify that the qualifications of the person ordained are recognized by the whole Church and not only the congregation which has called him. Ordination which includes the traditional laying on of hands conveys no special grace, no spiritual gift. It publicly recognizes a person as one qualified to serve the Church as a pastor.⁶²

⁶¹Ibid., p. 140.

⁶²Alfred H. Ewald, "The Authority of the Ministry in Relation to the Laity," American Lutheran, XLVI (February 1963), 14-25.

Fredrik A. Schiotz, President Emeritus of The American Lutheran Church, says that the Church exercises its responsibility for maintaining the teaching of the apostles by training and ordaining men for the ministerial office and by setting standards for continuing in the ministerial office. When the Church does not supervise theological training the emphasis in training gravitates toward theology as a science rather than a course of study that prepares men for the parish ministry.

The Church prescribes the service for ordination and officers of the Church make arrangements for the service. This responsibility may be delegated to another pastor who will be the ordinator, but the responsibility rests primarily in the hands of the elected Church official.

It is the privilege of the congregation to proclaim the Gospel and administer the sacraments. In order that this be done regularly and in the proper manner the congregation calls a minister to serve in this capacity. This authority to call belongs to the congregation.

The congregation is restricted to calling a minister who is on the clergy roster of the Church. This assures that the pastor is qualified to serve.

Sometimes the right of the congregation to call has been so deified to the extent that pastors who serve the Church in administrative work or in teaching positions are required to be called by a congregation. . . . If the Church is an inclusive fellowship of local congregations united for Christian service, then surely the call of the Church through one of its

properly authorized boards is as valid a call as the call to serve as pastor of the congregation.⁶³

The American Lutheran Church uses the "Order for Ordination" in The Occasional Services in conjunction with the worship service in the Service Book and Hymnal. The rubrics state that the rite for ordination be administered by the authority of the Church and according to its appointment. It is to be conducted by the district president or by a minister whom he shall appoint. One or more other ministers shall participate in the laying on of hands. Special propers are used for the ordination service and the rite itself follows the Prayer of the Church and the hymn "Come, Holy Ghost."⁶⁴

Following the presentation of the candidate, prayers, and versicles, the ordinator says:

Dearly, Beloved: According to Apostolic usage you are now to be set apart to the Holy Ministry of the Word and Sacraments by the laying on of hands and prayer.

Then after Scripture readings and the reciting of the vows, the ordinator lays his hands on the head of the candidate and says:

The Lord bestow upon thee the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Minister in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the authority of the Church through the imposition of our hands: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And the ordinand says, "Amen."

⁶³Fredrik A. Schlotz, "Authority of the Synod in Relation to the Authority of the Congregation," American Lutheran, XLV (February 1962), 11-12.

⁶⁴The Occasional Services (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1962), pp. 90-93.

After the blessing and prayer the service continues with the service of Holy Communion.⁶⁵

Summary

In The American Lutheran Church and in its antecedent bodies there have been some differences concerning the meaning of ordination and its function. However, as the church has worked with the question of ministry and ordination there has grown a common understanding of the purpose of ordination.

It is the rite that publicly attests to the qualifications of the candidate and to the call to the office of the ministry which the candidate has accepted. Participating in extending this call to the candidate is the congregation that is in need of the services of a minister to serve in its midst with the Word and Sacraments.

The synod is also involved in the issuing of the call. The elected district official works with the congregation to select a man on the clergy roster or a candidate for the ministry from one of the synod's seminaries. With the assistance of the synod the congregation knows that the man they select has the proper qualifications to serve as the minister of that congregation.

Ordination serves to set apart the candidate for the office of the ministry. It serves to recognize his call and his qualifications. It serves to focus the prayers of the people upon the candidate

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 93-99.

that the Holy Spirit would bless him and the congregation and the Church in the calling to which each has been called.

On the basis of the evidence that can be said about ordination, the Lutheran Church in America regards ordination as important as an attestation of the call which has been extended by the congregation or authorized calling agent and its acceptance by the candidate. In the issuing of the call both the congregation and the Synod have participated in maintaining the public ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Each has recognized the importance and validity of the other as an important functionary in the work of the Church. In the rite of ordination which takes place at the synodical convention in worship this relationship between congregations and the Synod are reaffirmed. But more important the candidates for the ministerial office are set apart for the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The prayers of the Church are focused upon each candidate asking God that the newly ordained minister would be effective in his ministry.

In The Lutheran Church in America a strong congregational polity obtains. The importance of the call of the congregation is affirmed again and again. When this call of the congregation is accepted and accepted by the Synod, the candidate is ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Nevertheless, the Synod participates in ordination. The ministerial office is not to be exercised in isolation from the Synod. The Synod also is instrumental in authorizing the call of the candidate.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

On the basis of the evidence what can be said about ordination?

The Lutheran Church in America regards ordination as important as an attestation of the call which has been extended by the congregation or authorized calling agent and its acceptance by the candidate. In the issuing of the call both the congregation and the Synod have participated in maintaining the public ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Each has recognized the importance and validity of the other as an important functionary in the work of the Church. In the rite of ordination which takes place at the synodical convention in worship this relationship between congregations and the Synod are reaffirmed. But more important the candidates for the ministerial office are set apart for the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The prayers of the Church are focused upon each candidate asking God that the newly ordained minister would be effective in his ministerial calling.

In The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod a strong congregational polity obtains. The importance of the call of the congregation is affirmed again and again. When this call of the congregation is issued and accepted by the ministerial candidate, the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament is filled.

Nevertheless, the Synod participates by authorizing the candidate as fit and prepared to assume the ministerial office in a congregation. Synod also is instrumental in authorizing the rite of ordination.

And although the rite of ordination is an adiaphron it is not omitted. The calling congregation witnesses the ordination of the candidate by authorization of the Synod and District. The rite is a public affirmation of that transaction which has already been consummated in the call and its acceptance, wherein the congregation has transferred to the candidate the office of the public ministry of Word and Sacrament. In the rite of ordination the congregation hears the vows of the ordinand and prays for the candidate who is now the minister of Word and Sacrament in its midst.

In The American Lutheran Church ordination is accepted as a part of entering into the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Although it is not absolutely essential that the candidate be ordained, it is a foregone conclusion that it will be done.

The congregation exercises the ministry that it has by extending to the candidate a call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in its midst. But the congregation seeks the assistance of the Synod and its district officials in selecting a candidate to call. The Synod is responsible for the training, examination, and approval of the candidates for the office of the ministry.

The rite of ordination is authorized by the Synod and the district president of the district to which the candidate has been called. The rite of ordination usually takes place in the candidate's home congregation. The Church, both in its local expression of the congregation and its greater expression of synodical structures, carries out the responsibility of maintaining the ministry of Word and Sacrament in and for the Church.

An examination of the evidence reveals that each of the synods understands the church and ministry in differing ways, yet the synods arrive at the same conclusions in regard to ordination.

What are these conclusions? Is ordination necessary? Each synod says no, yet without fail each candidate for the public ministry is ordained. Why are they ordained? They are ordained because it is an ancient custom of the Church; because ordination is a public attestation of the call which the candidate has received and accepted; because it witnesses to the training, examination, and approval by the synod; because of the significance of the vows which are made by the candidate; and because of the opportunity for the congregation to pray for the Holy Spirit's blessing of the candidate, the congregation, and the Church.

Is the call necessary? Yes. Each church body requires that the candidate for ordination have a call from a congregation or from the synod or from one of the official boards of the synod authorized to extend a call. The call outlines the ministerial office which the candidate will fill. Whether it be a call to serve in a parish and publicly administer the Word and Sacraments or a call to serve in a specialized ministry of the Gospel, the congregation and the Church recognize the validity of the call to minister in a certain place in a specific manner.

Who authorizes the call? The call is authorized by both the congregation and the synod. The congregation recognizes that there is a specific need for ministry of the Word and Sacrament in its midst and authorizes the call which it extends. The synod also

authorizes the call as the legitimate agent for many congregations which have joined together for meeting common needs, such as training, examining, and approving candidates for the ministerial office, and carrying out common efforts, such as missionary work, social service activities, and other types of ministry.

What about the rite of ordination? In the Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church the rite of ordination is identical. In The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod the rite is not identical with that of the Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church, but the similarities far outweigh the differences. In every case there are Scripture readings, admonitions, the vows of faithfulness, the laying on of hands, the public pronouncement of entering the ministerial office, and the prayers for the candidate.

The matter of ordination by a bishop is not a present reality within American Lutheranism. However, with the action of The American Lutheran Church in convention in 1970 and perhaps subsequent action it may become a reality. This raises the question of the validity, need, and importance of apostolic succession.

The Lutheran Church in America and The American Lutheran Church regard episcopacy as a viable way of Lutheran church polity. It is apparent that the present polity under which each of the synods operates is also viable. Whether this will change or whether it needs to be changed will be left for history to answer.

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