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Holy Ordination and the Call in the First Hundred Years of Lutheranism and in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

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HOLY ORDINATION AND THE CALL IN THE FIRST SEVENTEEN
YEARS OF LUTHERANISM AND IN THE LUTHERAN
CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Georgia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

Short Title: HOLY ORDINATION AND THE CALL

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There exists among Lutheran synods in the United States a variety of interpretations concerning the doctrines of the call and ordination. Among the various conceptions in this area of theology, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod exhibits and practices a certain way and understanding of ordaining and calling pastors into the office of the sacred ministry. How does the Missouri Synod's doctrine and practice of calling and ordaining pastors compare to the teachings of Martin Luther? How does the Missouri Synod's doctrine and practice in this area of theology fit in with the Lutheran Symbols' teachings? How does the Missouri Synod's doctrine and practice of calling and ordaining pastors compare with the great dogmaticians of the Lutheran Church, Chemnitz, Gerhard and Quenstedt? These are only some of the questions which the contents of this thesis will attempt to answer.

This thesis is primarily a historical, not a systematic study. The contents will attempt to give basic concepts and beliefs of the doctrines and practices as they have appeared in the Lutheran Church from the time of the Reformation.

The second chapter of the thesis attempts to present the teachings of Martin Luther, the Lutheran Symbols (and

therefore Philip Melancthon), Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard and Johann Quensted. These men and their writings were chosen to represent the first hundred years of Lutheranism. By the time this first hundred years of Lutheranism had elapsed, Lutheran doctrine was formulated and set; therefore it is not necessary to treat those dogmaticians who follow this period until the time when the Missouri Synod was founded.

In chapter three, C. F. W. Walther is treated as the person who first established the doctrines of the call and ordination as they are practiced in the Missouri Synod. Francis Pieper is cited as the great dogmatician of the Missouri Synod. The most significant documents of the Missouri Synod are represented, the contents of which form what is most commonly taught in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod concerning ordination and the call.

The intention of this thesis is to give a historical summary of the doctrines of the call and ordination by presenting the significant teachings in this field during the first one hundred years of Lutheranism and in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. By doing this it will be possible for the reader to compare and evaluate in his own mind the teachings of the "early" Lutherans and the Missouri Synod Lutherans. It will be possible for the reader to see where and to what extent these Lutherans, separated by more than three hundred years, agree or do not agree and where each

one's emphases lie. It is hoped that such a comparison will show what relationship exists between the Missouri Synod and the first one hundred years of the Lutheran Church as pertains to the doctrines of the call and ordination.

The Lutheran Symbols are abbreviated throughout this thesis in the following way: The Augsburg Confession (AC), The Apology to the Augsburg Confession (Ap.), The Smalcald Articles (Sm. Art.), Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration (FC, SD), The Tractate on the Power and the Primacy of the Pope (Tractate).

CHAPTER II

ORDINATION AND THE CALL IN THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF LUTHERANISM

Martin Luther

Ewald M. Plass quotes Luther as saying that the acceptance of the call makes a qualified person a minister. Luther says that no bishop is to install anyone without the call of the congregation. The bishop is to confirm such a person called by a congregation but if he does not do this, nevertheless, the person is to be considered confirmed by the call of the congregation. He says that neither Paul nor Titus nor Timothy ever installed a presbyter without the election and call of the congregation. According to Acts 6 Luther says, even the apostles themselves were not allowed to install deacons without the knowledge and will of the congregation. He maintains that the congregation elected and called the seven deacons and then the apostles confirmed them. He reasons thus: if the apostles were not allowed to institute an office by their own authority which would distribute merely temporal sustenance, how could any of them ever have been so bold as to confer upon anyone of his own power the highest office of

preaching?¹ The conclusion which Plass cites from Luther is the following:

Since all things must be done orderly in the church, all may not teach--promiscuously, that is--but only those who have been called to teach. So the difference between clergymen and laymen is solely one of office, not of right.²

Luther says that a minister is to glory in the divinity of his call. A preacher of the Gospel can be sure that he has a divine call. He is to follow the example of St. Paul and "highly praise and exalt his calling before the people (1 Cor. 4:14) so that he may gain the respect of those who hear him, just as a royal ambassador highly commends his embassy."³

According to Luther, the divine call is of two kinds: the one mediate, the other immediate. God calls men into the ministry of the Word now by a mediate call, a call which takes place through means, through man. The apostles were called immediately by Christ Himself as were also the prophets in the Old Testament. The mediate call, after the time of the apostles is the common call in all the world. This type of calling is not to be changed.

¹Ewald M. Plass, compiler, What Luther Says: An Anthology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1959), II, 925.

²Ibid., p. 947.

³Ibid., p. 925.

We should rather highly commend it because of the sectaries, who despise it and boast of another calling whereby they say the Spirit impels them to teach. But the impostors are lying.⁴

Luther goes on to say that this Spirit that impels them is evil and not good. He concludes that he has no permission to leave his appointed place and go to another city and preach. Even if falsehoods are taught there in another city he would not go, but rather commend the matter to God who "in his own time will find occasion lawfully to call ministers and to give the Word."⁵

As far as ordination and its purpose are concerned, Plass gives the following information from Luther:

The matter depends on whether the congregation and the bishop agree, that is, whether the congregation wishes to be taught by the bishop and the bishop is willing to teach the congregation. This settles the matter. The laying on of hands blesses, ratifies, and bears witness to this agreement, as a notary public and witnesses testify to a secular matter and as a pastor in blessing groom and bride ratifies their marriage and testifies that they have previously taken each other and have publicized this fact.⁶

Conrad Bergendoff maintains that in Luther's letter to the Bohemian Christians, it is easy to see just how far Luther was willing to go in discarding the time-honored organization of the church. In this letter of Luther, it must be remembered that the Bohemian situation was highly

⁴Ibid., p. 946.

⁵Ibid., p. 947.

⁶Ibid., p. 949.

abnormal and that Luther's suggestion for these people is held to a state of emergency. Luther envisioned the possibility of small groups of Christians obtaining a minister by selection from their own midst. Most followers of a type of congregationalism can find confirmation of their views in this letter. However, we cannot on account of this one letter assume that apostolic succession in the Roman sense or the indelible character in ordination meant nothing to Luther, but that there may be times when a small band of Christians must establish a ministry based on nothing but the right of the congregation to elect those who shall preach the Word to it. Luther's emphasis is that the foundation of the ministry is in the Word and in the Sacrament of Baptism, not in age-old traditions, or the vote of a majority.⁷

Vajta states that traditionally the right of ordination had rested with the bishop. With this type of arrangement, Luther had no quarrel but it was because all the German bishops remained true to the Roman Church and refused to ordain evangelical preachers that Luther claimed for the congregation the right to call pastors. For Luther, there was no basic difference between a call from the congregation and a call from the bishop for even the latter "could

⁷Martin Luther, "Concerning the Ministry," Luther's Works, edited by Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), XL, X.

function only instead and on behalf of the congregation."⁸
 The congregation alone can issue a valid call and other persons, unless delegated to exercise this right, may not issue a call. All Christians are priests and for the sake of love and order an individual is singled out to exercise the functions of the ministry. Luther's own words in translation read: "Much less is it to be tolerated that a sneaking outsider or layman should dare to preach in a church without a call."⁹

All Christians are priests but they are not all pastors. A man, to be a pastor, must have an office and a parish that he has been commanded to serve. "It is the call and the command which makes the pastor and preacher."¹⁰
 No one person may give the office to himself because all Christians have equal rights and therefore it is only with their consent that a man may assume the authority of the pastorate. Luther goes on to say that every office needs a call, for it is the call which assures a man that he is fulfilling God's will rather than his own.¹¹

⁸Vilmos Vajta, "The Office of the Ministry as Impartation of the Gift of God," Luther On Worship (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1958), p. 114.

⁹Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

The call which the church extends is the call from God. The Holy Spirit always employs externals and calls no person except through the congregation. Luther says:

the congregation is the body of Christ and dare not shrink its responsibility of calling a pastor. Ministers do not fall from the sky but must be chosen from the ranks of the congregation with prayerful consideration and confidence in the promises of God.¹²

The fact that the call of the congregation is a divine call demands that candidates be examined carefully. The majority vote never imparts the validity of the call. It is simply the priesthood of believers in action. This call from the congregation applies to normal conditions. In case of emergency situations such as the Bohemian Christians had at Luther's time, a Christian layman may exercise the function of the ministry even without a proper call but as a priest of God by virtue of his baptism. "When a pastor abandons his office, he terminates his own ministry and another member of the congregation may take his place."¹³ Luther further states:

Nor must the fact be overlooked that the office of the church is not confined to the public services in God's house. It is also exercised by the head of the family. He has the call to teach his family the Word of God. This is not a provision for emergencies; the call to teach his own is given right in and with the estate of head of the household.¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁴Ibid.

Elsewhere, Vajta says that Luther maintained that the housefather is fully entitled to administer Holy Communion but he did not list this among the father's duties because he considered this sacrament a public service of the congregation. In emergencies, Luther allowed every Christian to administer Holy Baptism, women included. The ministry of the church is one and the occasional service of lay people does not establish an "emergency ministry" but proves just how wide the one and only ministry of the Word is. According to Vajta, Luther conceived of an episcopal church without "apostolic succession."¹⁵

(The congregational call gives to the pastor the appointment or charge, not the right to minister. The call is not something which establishes a special priesthood but only designates the particular territory where the priesthood common to all may be exercised by the particular individual. The call should be made public so that the people know to whom to go to hear the Word and receive the Sacraments. Vajta says that Luther saw nothing in ordination but a public certification of the call. This is the purpose of ordination.) This is why Luther unconditionally rejected the Roman view of ordination. Luther says:

To ordain is not to consecrate. Thus when we have a devout man, we set him aside, and by virtue of the Word which we have, we confer on him the authority of

¹⁵ibid., p. 118.

preaching the Word and administering the sacraments.
This is to ordain.¹⁶

Ordination for the Church of Rome had become a sacrament. Luther pointed out that as a sacrament it had no legitimacy because it did not carry with it the promise of the forgiveness of sins as did Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (For Luther the call and ordination were synonymous.) In the laying on of hands Luther simply saw this as a call to the ministry of the Word. It provoked Luther no end to see that in the Roman ordination the parish priests were entitled to perform the sacrifice of the mass but they were not appointed to preach the Word of God. He insisted that the Church of Christ has no office or ministry of sacrifice. He also took note of the fact that parish priests who were appointed to preach were called by and installed in their congregations. This rite conformed to Luther's idea of ordination, the public certification of the call with prayer and the laying on of hands. This was the true ordination. There is no indelible character. Ordination does not give any personal qualification to the candidate. If a pastor leaves his charge or is suspended from it and goes into other work, he reverts to the common rank and file of the Church. If later on, this same person desires

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 118f.

to re-enter the ministry, he needs a new call and a new ordination.¹⁷

According to Vajta, Luther knew of only one ministry. His conception of the ministry of the Word did away with the distinction between different orders in the hierarchy. Luther wanted to restore the deacons to their original charitable tasks instead of assistants at mass. Of the entire hierarchy, only the episcopate was left and Luther even here was willing to refer to his brothers in the parish ministry as bishops.¹⁸

To summarize Vajta's presentation the following is quoted:

The preaching of the Word is the dominant function of the ministry. This was the task to which Christ and the apostles attended. With the call to preach goes therefore the call to everything that pertains to it, such as administration of the sacraments, pastoral care, etc., for the ministry rests on the proclamation of the Gospel.¹⁹

In Paul Z. Strodach's introduction to Luther's "Order of Ordination" in his liturgical writings, he has the following to say about Luther's conception of ordination:

Luther's conception of ordination is not a liturgical one but consists essentially in the regular call to the preaching office (Predigtamt), that is, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, and in the transmission of this office to the candidate. Out of

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 119f.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 120f.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 121.

this, out of this alone, the congregational ceremony develops. Four elements make up this "ordination": (1) The examination of the candidate as to his worthiness and fitness; (2) The election to the office; (3) The confirmation and commendation in the presence of the (calling) congregation; (4) The Church's intercession for the chosen candidate. Emptied of such elements as a confession of faith, a vow of faithfulness, and any formal statement of the transmission of the office, such "ordination" carries every characteristic of a formal induction (installation).²⁰

Strodach also summarizes what he thinks Luther's idea of the call and ordination was:

Luther and his co-workers defined "ordination" to be a regular (ordentliche--rite) call to the office of the Ministry (Pfarramt) in a specific congregation and the official (congregational) confirmation (ratification of the same publicly) at a service by the congregation concerned. But the latter was not absolutely required to make the relation effective; the regular call was sufficient.²¹

The Lutheran Symbols

Andrew M. Weyermann says that the Lutheran Symbols have very little to say "explicitly" about the concept of the call into the ministry. In the fourteenth article of the Augsburg Confession we read: "De ordine ecclesiastico docent, quod nemo debeat in ecclesia publice docere aut

²⁰Martin Luther, "Order of Ordination," Works of Martin Luther, introduction and notes by Paul Z. Strodach (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1932), VI, 234.

²¹Ibid.

sacramenta administrare nise rite vocatus."²² Arthur Carl Piepkorn says that the verbs debere and soll are used in the sixth article of the same Confession of the necessity of faith's bringing forth good works. According to Piepkorn the term rite vocatus is a thoroughly technical term.

in Article XIV it includes and implies ordination as may be seen for instance, from the fact that in the sixteenth century this Article was approved by both the authors of the Papalist Confutation and the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II. Strangely enough, (the Patriarch) was satisfied with the Augustana's statement on Holy Orders, i.e. that nobody could administer Sacraments and preach the Word publicly, nisi sit rite vocatus et ordinatus ad hanc functionem.²³

Dr. Piepkorn maintains that ordination is effective by divine right (jure divino).

Since by divine right the grades of bishop and presbyter are not diverse, it is manifest that ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right (jure divino ratam esse) (Tractate, 65).²⁴

Weyermann, in the light of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, maintains that God actually communicates Himself

²²Andrew M. Weyermann, "The Concept Of The Call To The Ministry In Sixteenth And Seventeenth Lutheran Dogmatic Theology" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1956), p. 27.

²³Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The Sacred Ministry And Holy Ordination In The Sacred Scriptures And In The Symbols And Liturgy of the Church Of The Augsburg Confession," Una Sancta, XII (St. Michael's Day, 1955), 8.

²⁴Ibid.

through the office of the ministry.²⁵ In the light of this passage the formulation of Article Five of the Augsburg Confession points up the sacramental character of the ministry. "Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakrament gegeben, dadurch er als Mittel den heiligen Geist gibt. . . ."26

According to Weyermann, the Word and the Sacraments are thought of as the preached Word and the administered Sacraments. "Outside of this action there is no proclamation of the Gospel."²⁷ From this we see that the ministry of the Word is not an abstract concept but a concrete ministry established by God, which ministry acts in His stead for His Church. He goes on to say that this fact is proven by the fact that the ministry is described not only as an office (Amt),²⁸ but an order (Ordo; Stand) as well.²⁹ By divine right, the minister acts in the name and in the stead of Christ. "The minister does not simply proclaim the Gospel. He applies it to the life of the Church in the stead of Christ."³⁰

²⁵Ibid.; Ap. XIII, 9-13.

²⁶Weyermann, op. cit., p. 29.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.; AG, VII, XIV, XXVIII.

²⁹Ibid.; Ap. XXII, 13; XIII, 9-13; Sm. Art. III, XI, I.

³⁰Weyermann, op. cit., p. 30.

Piepkorn argues that the term "sacrament" is applied both to the sacred ministry as well as to ordination, "the distinctive element of which is the imposition of hands by a pastor."³¹ He quotes the following to substantiate the latter statement:

That the Church clearly has the right to elect and ordain Ministers, "a very common custom of the Church testifies. For formerly the people selected the pastors and the bishops. Thereupon either a bishop of that church or a neighboring bishop came over and confirmed the person elected by the laying on of hands, nor did the ordination consist in anything else than such an act of joint recognition. Afterward new ceremonies were added, many kinds of which Dionysius describes (Ap. XIII, 9-13)."³²

Piepkorn goes on to say that it should be noted that the "custom" referred to was no ordination but the post-apostolic Church's mode of electing the pastor or bishop and of ordaining or consecrating him.

The first antithesis is between an election of the pastor by the people of the parish or diocese and an arbitrary selection of the pastor by higher authority; the second antithesis is between the simple rite of Ordination or Consecration by the laying on of hands on the part of the ordinary of the diocese or of a neighboring bishop and the elaborate ceremonies into which Ordinations and Consecrations developed in the late Middle Ages.³³

Dr. Piepkorn maintains that the authority of the Order and the authority of jurisdiction are to be differentiated.

³¹Piepkorn, op. cit., pp. 8f.

³²Ibid., p. 9.

³³Ibid.

In his article he states:

We are pleased with the ancient division of authority into the authority of the Order (potestas ordinis) and the authority of jurisdiction (potestas jurisdictionis). So a bishop has the authority of his Order, that is, the Ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments. He also has the authority of jurisdiction, that is, the authority of excommunicating those scandalously guilty of public crimes and again of absolving them if after conversion they seek Absolution (Ad. XXVIII, 13).³⁴

Piepkorn explains that the "bishop" receives the authority of his Order when he is admitted to the Order, that is, ordained; he has the authority of jurisdiction by virtue of his assignment to a specific area of responsibility, usually territorial.³⁵

To substantiate "the authority of the Order" and "the authority of jurisdiction," as Dr. Piepkorn differentiates them, he quotes extensively from the Lutheran Symbols.³⁶

Dr. Piepkorn maintains that the ordinary administrant of any Sacrament is an ordained clergyman. In the administration of Sacraments "the Ministers function in Christ's stead."³⁷ Also, the ordinary Confessor is "reverend and dear sir."³⁸ The celebrant at Holy Communion is an ordained clergyman. "The Mass . . . is to be a Communion, at which

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 10; Tractate 60-61, 74; Ad. XXVIII, 8, 21.

³⁷Piepkorn, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁸Ibid.

the priest and others receive the Sacrament for their own persons (AC XXIV, 34, German).³⁹ Also, in the Sacrament of the Altar Christ's "Body and Blood are orally eaten and drunk, even though the priests who administer it or the recipients did not believe or otherwise misused it (FC, SD, VII, 32)."⁴⁰

Piepkorn cites an instance when, in a case of emergency, laymen may absolve or baptize each other:

In a case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes a minister and pastor of the other, as St. Augustine recounts the episode about the two Christians in a boat, the second of whom baptized the first, a katechoumenon, and he, after being baptized, absolved the other (Tractate, 67).⁴¹

Dr. Piepkorn comes to the conclusion that the bishops are the successors of the apostles in the government of the Church by citing the following from the Lutheran Symbols:

As St. Jerome writes, that the priests at Alexandria ruled the churches together and in common, as the Apostles also did, and afterward all bishops throughout Christendom, until the Pope raised his head over all of them (Sm. Art. Part II, IV, 8).⁴²

Martin Chemnitz

Chemnitz, in his Examen, according to Weyermann, says that while it is true that all Christians are a part of and

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

belong to the spiritual priesthood, not all Christians have the right to exercise the public office of the ministry. It is true that all Christians have the call to speak the Word of God to each other but not all have the call to preach as ministers.⁴³

Concerning the necessity of the call, Weyermann says that Chemnitz states the necessity of the call as not being only for reasons of good church order but there are more serious reasons for demanding a legitimate call: "Non autem existimandum est, hoc fieri ex humana aliqua constitutione aut ordinis tantum gratia; sed causae sunt gravissimae."⁴⁴ The four reasons cited from Chemnitz by Weyermann why a rite vocatus to the ministry is necessary are as follows: in the first place, God Himself has established the ministry. Not all are called into the ministry. Because God is a God of order, it is necessary that ministers are called in an orderly way. In the second place, the ministry of the Church demands certain special gifts. Only those persons whom God Himself has called in an orderly way can rely on the promise of God's gifts that enable persons to be competent ministers. Thirdly, God does bless those who are legitimately called and gives them His Spirit to grow in grace. Finally, the call is a reminder to the

⁴³Weyermann, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 43.

minister that God has set him in this office. He is thereby guarded from falling into temptation and error. The congregation is reminded that the minister is a called servant of God and renders him due honor. It is not sinful for a person to desire the office of the ministry but it is sinful if a man takes it upon himself without a legitimate call.⁴⁵

Chemnitz, as Luther, defines two ways in which God calls men into the ministry. The one is immediate such as was the case with the prophets and the apostles. The other, mediate, usually employed by the Church today. This means that God uses, in calling men into the ministry, an instrument or a medius besides Himself. Concerning these two types of calls, Chemnitz says there is no difference unless the one considers the apostles as having special gifts. In other words, no qualitative difference but in a sense, a quantitative difference.⁴⁶

Weyermann points out the fact that Chemnitz speaks of the right to call as belonging to the whole Church, that is, to all the members of the Body of Christ. The whole Church is defined as being made up of Lehrstand, Wehrstand and Naehrstand. The Lehrstand have the right to call inasmuch as they are members of the Church. They have no right

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 43f.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 51f.

to mediate the call by themselves excluding the other members. The Wehrstand or magistracy of the province is also a part of the Church and as such has the right to call, but no absolute rights in this matter. The Naehrstand have a right to call inasmuch as they are pious and faithful Christians, but they do not have any exclusive right to call. Under normal circumstances, a rite vocatus includes the operation of all three of these orders of the Church, however, there have been times when the people alone have called because of perversion of the church by the prelates and there have been times when the ministers have acted on their own in this matter in the early church.⁴⁷

Chemnitz, according to Weyermann, describes the function of the three orders of the Church with regard to the call and election of ministers in this way: he describes the practice of the New Testament Church as seen in Acts 1:5 and 6:2. He saw as their order the chief members of the Church in the name and in the stead of the entire Church electing and calling men. According to Acts 1, Peter gave the description of the person chosen and afterwards the apostles and the entire Church voted on the candidates. In Acts 6, he says that the apostles proposed the election of the deacons, and the Church then elected the Seven. Afterwards they are submitted to the judgment of the apostles

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 55-60.

who confirm the election by their approval. Chemnitz admits that the order of the early Church is not always uniform. For instance, in Acts 14, the apostles were more able to judge who was suitable for the ministry and the Church merely gave assent to their selection.⁴⁸

Weyermann continues to report the view of Chemnitz when he says that the Church cannot simply call a man arbitrarily because it does not have an independent power by which it can appoint ministers. The Church has been given a form by which it is governed in the selection and calling of a minister. Chemnitz cites the pastoral letters of Paul to Titus and the first epistle to Timothy. The Church must call competent persons only. This means that he must have a sound personal faith and possess the gift of wisdom to teach and expound the Word; he must be able to refute those who preach against the Word. He must display a life of good morals.⁴⁹

As far as the episcopal system is concerned, it was never rejected per se. A democratic form is not even thought of since it was not used by any except the Enthusiasts for whom the dogmaticians had little respect.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 64-66.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 68.

Concerning ordination, Chemnitz rejects the idea that ordination and the laying on of hands is a sacrament which conveys power to teach and administer the Sacraments without any relation to the call. However, ordination does have this promise of God that He will bless the work of His ministry but not the promise of the forgiveness of sins. He goes on to say that ordination does not have the explicit command of Christ. He speaks of ordination as the public testimony to the legitimacy of the call. Inasmuch as the call is necessary so also the public affirmation of it is necessary. The rite of ordination is God's means of approving the call. For Chemnitz, ordination is the rite of the laying on of hands. A legitimate call for him is one that has passed through the proper channels and therefore:

theoretically, he is able to say that the legitimacy of a call is not determined by ordination. . . . Inasmuch as the legitimacy of the call cannot be publicly affirmed without the rite of ordination, it is from a practical standpoint impossible to divorce the legitimate call from ordination.⁵¹

Weyermann says that Chemnitz maintains that ordination is the public affirmation of the call and establishes the candidate in the office of the ministry. He receives from God the authority publicly to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. He is commended by the Church into the office of the ministry. Chemnitz also holds that this rite is

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 84f.

instrumental in bringing into reality the promises of God regarding His ministry. The grace of God is extended to the candidate that he might have the gifts to be an able minister. Therefore, ordination is both the confirmation of the call and the consecration of the candidate. Chemnitz could not conceive of a person being rite vocatus who was not ordained and so approved by the Church and consecrated by God.⁵²

Ordination for Chemnitz, according to Weyermann, is never referred to as a sacrament. Ordination does not bestow an indelible character or the forgiveness of sins. Chemnitz equates ordination with the rite of the laying on of hands. Since this is not necessary, the necessity of ordination is lessened in theory at least. Ordination for Chemnitz is seen primarily as the public confirmation of the call.⁵³

John Gerhard

Weyermann states that Gerhard, from Eph. 4:11 and 1 Cor. 12:28 insists that God has established the ministry. 1 Tim. 3:1 shows that no man should take this office to himself unless sent by God. He interprets 1 Peter 2:9 in a way so as to show that the royal priesthood is not the same

⁵²Ibid., pp. 95f.

⁵³Ibid.

as the office of the ministry. In opposition to the Papists, Gerhard claims that the right to call belongs to the whole Church but that one cannot come to the conclusion that anyone may publicly minister in the Church. Only those who are called may undertake such a task.⁵⁴

God has given to the Church the office of the ministry for dispensing the means of grace. Weyermann says:

It is only from this basic premise of the Lutheran dogmaticians that one can properly interpret the phrase nisi rite vocatus. The ministry does not originate or receive its right to exist from anyone save God Himself.⁵⁵

He goes on to say that because God has chosen to operate through ministers the ministry of the Church can never be thought of as an "arbitrary element of the make-up of the Church."⁵⁶

Weyermann lists Gerhard as giving three limitations to the necessity of the call. When a Christian is with ignorant men and he is called upon to promote the glory of God, when the order of the Church has not been fully realized, when those who are regularly called degenerate into wolves and neglect their duty, it is necessary to establish another order. The preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 39f.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁶Ibid.

ordinarily pertain to the legitimate ministry of the Church called by God for that purpose. Only in the case of emergency is this function to be taken over by anyone other than a called minister.⁵⁷

Gerhard believes that God is the subject of the vocatio, the missio, the electio sive separatio of men into the ministry. He employs Jeremiah 1:5 to show that the election to the office of the ministry is made from eternity. Also, according to Gerhard, whomever God chooses is also called and sent by Him. "Thus the call has God as its Author even when speaking of the call of the Church."⁵⁸

Gerhard makes the same distinction between a call, immediately and mediately as did Chemnitz. He says that the mediate call is as legitimate as the immediate call, and that it does not differ from the mediate call in that the mediate call bestowed the power of performing miracles and the power to teach and preach and the immediate did not.⁵⁹

Weyermann continues to point out from Gerhard that there must be an outward confirmation of the call and he exhorts those who are compelled inwardly to enter the ministry and receive the external and solemn call of the Church.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 46.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 49f.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 51f.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 53.

Against Bellarmine, Gerhard asserts that the election of the people would not lead to confusion and the election of incompetent men but, on the contrary, would increase harmony between hearer and pastor and remove dissension. "The practice of the Church shows this method can be employed without confusion."⁶¹ He states that he rightly opposes any position which would grant the power of election to the laity alone and exclude the magistracy and presbytery but if the prelates of the Church have become perverted, then the people may select true pastors by themselves. Gerhard gives the following summary concerning the functions of the three orders described earlier in this thesis under Chemnitz (Lehrstand, Wehrstand and Naehrstand):

Presbyterio competit examen, ordination et inauguratio; magistratui Christiano nominatio, praesentatio, confirmatio, populo, consensus, suffragium, approbatio: vel etiam pro ratione circumstantiarum postulatio.⁶²

According to Weyermann, Gerhard employs an axiom implied in the earlier dogmaticians: "Ordinatio sit a presbyterio, sed electio ac vocatio ministrorum pertinet ad omnes ecclesiae ordines."⁶³ Furthermore, Gerhard says that the person must be a male if desiring to take the office of the ministry.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁶²Ibid., p. 63.

⁶³Ibid., p. 65.

He ought to be engaged in the work of the Church full time and not become involved in other conflicting positions. He ought not to be a neophyte. There is no objection to his being married.⁶⁴

Weyermann states that Gerhard defines ordination as a public and solemn declaration through which the ministry of the Church is committed by the Church to a qualified and competent person called for this purpose.) It is by the prayers of the Church and the laying on of hands, that a candidate is consecrated and made more certain of his call. He, according to Weyermann, uses the same arguments as did Chemnitz in proving that ordination is a rite and not a sacrament. He also says that ordination is not absolutely necessary nor does it give an indelible character. He does admit that God gives His grace through the laying on of hands but not the grace of reconciliation. The laying on of hands is not a separate ceremony but is in union with the whole rite of ordination.⁶⁵

The following might well summarize the position of Gerhard according to Weyermann. The rite of ordination with the prayers of the Church is a sign that God will fulfill His promise to give His gifts to the Church and especially to the candidate. The ordinatio always presupposes the vocatio. The ministry is usually not separated from an

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 65f.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 89f.

area of jurisdiction. The ordinatio testifies to the validity of the call, and for this reason the vocatio always precedes it. There is no absolute ordination apart from a vocatio to a certain place. Gerhard sees that the difference between ordination and installation is the following: ordination takes place only once while installation as often as a person is called to another parish or administrative office.⁶⁶

Johann Quenstedt

Weyermann points out that Quenstedt is most forceful in his discussion of the necessity of the call. In opposition to the Anabaptists who require a peculiar call but say it is not necessary, Quenstedt maintains the legitimacy of the use of necessitas because of the divine institution of the ministry. The legitimate call for Quenstedt belonged to the forma ministerii, and except in cases of extreme need it was necessary. "Only in cases of extreme necessity may any Christian baptize because of the nearness of the person's death and need for baptism."⁶⁷

Quenstedt, no less than all the early Lutheran dogmaticians, stresses that the right to call belongs to all the orders of the Church (Lehrstand, Wehrstand, and

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 90f.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 47.

Nachstand) and not to any one in exclusion of another.⁶⁸

For Quenstedt, according to Weyermann, ordination is the following:

Ordinatio, qua in conspectu Dei et coram tota Ecclesia per manuum impositionem persona legitime vocata precibus Deo commendatur, ad officium S. inauguratur et vocatione antecessae publicum testimonium defer- tur.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 93.

⁶⁸W. F. G. Walker, "The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry," translated by Wm. Bellamy in Walker and Wm. H. W. H. W., edited by W. G. W. (St. Louis: Methodist Publishing House, 1918), p. 74.

CHAPTER III

ORDINATION AND THE CALL IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

G. F. W. Walther

Walther, in his sixth thesis has the following to say concerning the ministry of preaching conferred by God:

The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not a divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public solemn confirmation of the call.¹

Walther's first division under this thesis is: "The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys and by its call, as prescribed by God."² He cites proof passages for the doctrine that the congregation, or church of Christ possess the keys and the priestly office immediately (Matt. 18:15-20 and 1 Pet. 2:5-10). It can only be the congregation by its election, call, and commission, the ministry of preaching, which publicly administers the office

¹C. F. W. Walther, "The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry," translated by Wm. Dallmann in Walther and the Church, edited by Th. Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 74.

²Ibid.

of the keys and all priestly offices in the congregation, conferred on certain persons who are qualified for such office. The example of the Apostle Matthias shows that he was elected to his office by the entire assembled believers, not by only eleven apostles (Acts 1:15-26). It is also stated that the deacons were elected by "the whole multitude" (Acts 6:1-6). Walther says that if the congregation doing the calling has among its members also pastors in active service, these also "before all" belong to the parties issuing the call. If their co-operation due to their office is denied them, the "call of the multitude" has no validity because of the simple fact that the call is issued not by the congregation in such a case but by individuals in the congregation which consist of preachers and hearers. If there are no pastors belonging to such a congregation issuing the call, the call of the multitude is indeed valid without the co-operation of pastors. Walther then lists three points of consideration required in such a case: in the first place, that love and unity exist and be manifested by all members of the Body of Christ; secondly, that honor be shown by believers to faithful incumbents of the office; lastly, that the sanctity and importance of the matter itself be considered. For these reasons Walther suggests that an isolated congregation should not act according to its own understanding only but should secure the help of ministers of the Church already in this office and avail

themselves of such counseling and instruction and leave to them the public and solemn installation of the person it has called.³

"The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands is not by divine institution but it is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call."⁴ All doctrines of the Church must be proved from the Word of God. What cannot be proven from this Word, cannot "without idolatry be declared to be and accepted as, an establishment of God Himself."⁵ Walther says that Holy Scripture is silent concerning a divine institution of ordination. All Scripture says is that the apostles made use of it and "at that time the communication of glorious gifts was connected with the laying on of hands."⁶ He goes on to say that even at the present there is no doubt but that ordination when joined with a prayer of the Church

based on the glorious promises that have been specially given to the ministry of preaching, is not an empty ceremony but is accompanied by an outpouring of heavenly gifts on the person ordained.⁷

In the seventh thesis of Walther, he speaks further concerning the authority conferred by God through the

³Ibid., pp. 74f.

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

congregation.

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 right of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.⁸

Walther states that the holy ministry or the pastoral office and the spiritual priesthood which all truly believing Christians possess are not the same thing. An ordinary Christian is not a pastor because he is a spiritual priest, nor is a pastor a priest for the reason that he holds the public office of a preacher nor is the spiritual priesthood a public office in the Church nor is the public ministry an order different from that of Christians. The holy ministry is a ministry of service ordained by Christ when He established the apostolic office. "Ministers discharge publicly, in behalf of all, the very offices which the Church as the royal, priestly race, and therefore every truly believing Christian possesses originally."⁹ Ministers have their office and their authority by God through the congregation which in turn, by God's will, has issued the call. From these facts, Walther comes to the conclusion that the essence of the ministry is what he has stated it to be in his seventh thesis treated above.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., pp. 76f.

Those who enter into the public ministry are not only servants and stewards of God but also servants and stewards of the Church, or congregation and are persons who administer the rights, authorities, possessions, treasures and offices of the Church, hence are acting, not only in the name of Christ "but also in the name and in the place of His bride, the Church of the believers."¹⁰

A few further remarks of Walther concerning the holy ministry are here given. When the minister is ministering the Word of God, reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching. The preacher may not dominate over the Church and he has no right to make new laws

and to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication alone, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.¹¹

In the act of ministering the Word of God to people, the minister speaks in the stead and name of Jesus Christ and Christians owe their obedience to a person acting in such wise. A Christian congregation can remove a pastor from office only when it is obvious that he has already been removed from his office by God Himself, that is, when his message is not in accord with God's Word. Walther cites

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 77f.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 79f.

Scripture passages which command obedience to pastors ministering the Word of God correctly (Luke 10:16; Hebr. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12,13; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; Matt. 10:12-15). Concerning matters of adiaphora and the public ministry, Walther cites passages from the sacred Scriptures to prove that a pastor has no right to dominate over the church or make new laws arbitrarily (1 Pet. 5:1-3; 2 Cor. 8:8; 1 Cor. 7:35; 1 Cor. 11:34). Concerning matters of excommunication, Walther cites the following passages to prove that the pastor alone may not excommunicate (1 Cor. 5:4; Matt. 18:15-20; 3 John 9,10; 2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Tim. 5:20). The function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs to the ministry of preaching but laymen also have this right and for this reason have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.¹²

Besides Walther's teaching on the call by the congregation, he has the following belief concerning the office of the holy ministry. He states that the holy ministry is an office distinct from the priestly office which belongs to all true believers. It is an office of divine origin, not human; it is an office established by God Himself. It is not a peculiar order, set over and against the common estate of Christians and holier than the latter like the priesthood of the Levites but it is primarily an office of

¹²Ibid., pp. 80-85, passim.

service. According to the Word of God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6) all believing Christians and only these are priests. There is no difference of order among these but as was the case in the Old Testament, there were among the children of Israel and there are today in the Christian Church ministering persons among a priestly people (2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 1:24, 25). This ministry of preaching among priests has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a "spiritual tribunal" (Matt. 28:19; John 21:15,16; 1 Cor. 4:1).¹³

Walther, in his Pastoraltheologie gives the following definition for ordination:

Dass die Ordination der zum Amt Berufenen mit Handauflegung nicht göttlicher Einsetzung, sondern allein eine apostolisch kirchliche Ordnung sei, bedarf keines Beweises da ihr Gebrauch zwar in der Schrift erwähnt wird, die Schrift aber von einer göttlichen Einsetzung dieses Gebrauches schweigt. . . . Die Ordination ist ein Adiaphoron, ein Mittelding, macht die Vocation und das Amt nicht, sondern bestätigt beides nur, wie die kirchliche Copulation die Ehe nicht macht, sondern die bereits geschlossene Ehe nur kirchlich bestätigt.¹⁴

Numerous quotes from Luther are offered by Walther to further substantiate his view on ordination. He continues his discussion on ordination thus:

Dass dies aber die Lehre aller rechtgläubigen Lehrer unserer Kirche immer gewesen sei, darüber mag man die angeführten Zeugnisse derselben vergleichen in der

¹³Ibid., pp. 73f.

¹⁴C. F. W. Walther, "Ordination," Pastoraltheologie (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897), p. 65.

Schrift: "Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt." Dasselbst wird zugleich belegt, dass dies auch die Lehre der alten Kirche war, daher dieselbe denn auch, wie die lutherische Kirche, die absolute Ordination verwarf, das heisst, eine Ordination ohne vorgängige von derselben zu bestätigende Vocation und die in der Meinung geschieht, dass eine Person durch die Ordination in den s. g. geistlichen Stand aufgenommen und so, als ein geweihter Priester erst wahlfähig werde.¹⁵

Francis Pieper

The ministry in the narrow sense of the term, is for Pieper, the office by which the means of grace, given originally to the Christians as their inalienable possession, are re-administered by order and on behalf of Christians. In this sense of the term ministry, a Christian congregation is presupposed. It is only a Christian congregation that can establish the public ministry. Pieper, to prove this statement turns to Scripture (Titus 1:5) and relates that it was only after mission work on Crete brought forth a congregation that Paul commanded Titus to ordain elders in every city. Scripture mentions entire congregations as coming under the office of the ministry (1 Tim. 3:5; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3). The office itself is called "public" because it is performed for the good and by the command of the congregation, not because it is necessarily performed in public. He goes on to state that "where there

¹⁵Ibid.

are no Christian congregations, as in a pagan country, there can be no public ministry, no service in the name of a congregation.¹⁶ It is only after missionaries have succeeded in establishing a congregation that the public ministry can be established. To show that a special call is necessary to make a person a minister among Christians, Pieper cites a quotation from Martin Luther:

This is the call to a public office among Christians, but if one lands among people who are no Christians, one might do as did the Apostles and not wait for a call; for there (where there are no Christians) the public office of preaching does not exist, and one might say: Here there are no Christians, I will preach and instruct them in Christianity. And if a group formed, chose and called me to be their bishop, I would have a call.¹⁷

Pieper goes on to say that the public ministry is not a human institution but rather a divine institution. It is a divine regulation that Christians living in a certain place should appoint men who are equipped properly to preach God's Word in the name of that particular congregation. As Scripture proof Pieper cites Acts 14:23 when the apostles "ordained them elders in every church." It is not left up to Christians whether they so desire or do not desire to establish and support the public ministry among themselves, but it is their duty according to God's order.

¹⁶Francis Pieper, "The Public Ministry," Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1953), III, 439f.

¹⁷Ibid.

As confessional proof for this, Pieper cites a quotation from the Smalcald Articles:

Wherever the Church is (irrespective of age, size, place, or time), there is the authority (command) to administer the Gospel. There it is necessary for the Church (the churches) to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers.¹⁸

He also quotes a section from the Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

If ordination be understood as applying to the ministry of the Word, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises.¹⁹

Pieper declares that the idea that the office of the public ministry is not conferred by the call of the congregation as the original possessor of all spiritual power, but is a divine institution in the sense that it was transmitted immediately from the apostles to their pupils and is considered as a separate "ministerial order" or caste, and that this order perpetuates itself by means of the ordination, is a Romanizing doctrine of the ministry. To say that the means of grace exert their full power and efficacy only when administered by men of this "order" is to make the officiant a "means of grace" alongside Word and Sacrament. The fact that the ministry has God's command does not make His public servants "means of grace" any more than that all

¹⁸Ibid., p. 443.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 443f.

Christians become "means of grace" by the fact that their teaching also is done in obedience to God's command.²⁰

Pieper states that the public ministry is necessary but not absolutely necessary. The public ministry is a divine ordinance which the congregation confers mediately by a call but no absolute necessity must be ascribed to it. The Holy Ghost is just as active when lay Christians preach the Gospel from inner necessity as well as according to God's command. By making the office of the public ministry absolutely necessary, there would be a co-ordination of the ministry with the Word and the Sacraments. On the other hand, the truth that the public ministry is not absolutely necessary dare not be a reason for despising this office.²¹

Pieper makes the same distinction between a mediate call and an immediate call as does Luther and the Lutheran dogmaticians. He says that the mediate call is no less divine than the immediate call. Neither Pope nor the bishops nor the clergy as an order have any right to confer the public office of the Word, but "solely the people to whom is given all spiritual power on earth and to whom Word and Sacrament in particular have been entrusted originally."²² The believers possess all things (1 Cor. 2:21). It is the

²⁰Ibid., pp. 447f.

²¹Ibid., pp. 449f.

²²Ibid., p. 451.

Church which possesses all things, not of course referring to the universal church but to the congregation of believers gathered in a local area. "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them."²³

There have been three main arguments against the election of a pastor by the local congregation, all of which arguments Pieper answers. The first one pertains to the Scripture passages of Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 in which nothing is said of a calling by the congregation but rather speak only of what Paul and Barnabas did and what Titus was to do by Paul's command. But Pieper says that it does not follow that Titus appointed them independently but rather that he ordained them by the example of the apostles, by the vote of the people. Pieper maintains that the very word used in Acts 14:23 clearly states that in ordaining the elders a vote or election by the congregation took place. He also states that even history shows us that for a long time in the first centuries of the Church public ministers were appointed by the congregational vote.²⁴

The second objection has to do with Matt. 16:18,19. It is claimed that the keys of the kingdom were originally given to Peter only as a special privilege. But Pieper says that this gift is given to Peter only in so far as he is a

²³Ibid., p. 452.

²⁴Ibid., p. 453.

believer, not that he is an apostle or a privileged person. The keys of the kingdom refer to the Gospel, the means of grace and since the believers are the people to whom Christ has entrusted the means of grace, they have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven.²⁵

The third argument makes use of the Smalcald Articles and says that "the office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the apostles."²⁶ Pieper answers that this statement does not deny that the ministry is conferred through the call of the local congregation. "The office of the apostles and the office of the later teachers of the Church is identical in content and power."²⁷ The difference between the apostles and their "pupils" lies in the fact that the apostles wrote the Word of God infallibly while their pupils must take the Word of the apostles which they wrote and not depart from it. In both cases, however, it is the same office. Peter says, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder" (1 Pet. 5:1ff.). Pieper quotes the Smalcald Articles to clarify his position and also explain the "misquotation" of those who present this third objection. "Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 454.

²⁷Ibid.

ministers."²⁸

Pieper's definition of ordination is this: "Ordination to the ministry by the laying on of hands and prayers is not a divine ordinance, but a church custom or ceremony. . . ." ²⁹ He argues that although ordination is mentioned in the Scriptures, it is not commanded (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6). Hence, ordination belongs to the adiaphorous practices. Pieper goes on to say that a candidate for the holy ministry does not become a pastor by his ordination, but rather by his call and his acceptance of the call. Pieper says that ordination, according to the Smalcald Articles, is a public ratification of the call received from the congregation. It is for this reason that absolute ordination is not practiced in the Missouri Synod, that is, ordination of a person before he has received and accepted a call because it is apt to give the impression that by ordination a man is received into a so-called "order of the ministry" and that only as an ordained priest he is eligible for a charge. The authority to ordain is a power delegated by the congregation because the true Church alone has the priesthood. Pieper refutes the Romish idea of the indelible character, that power by which a person may celebrate Mass and thereby produce the body and blood of Christ. He also refutes the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 455.

Episcopalians because of their insistence on uninterrupted Apostolic Succession and Romanizing Lutherans who conceive of the ministry as a "distinct Christian order" and conceive of it as a divine ordinance.³⁰

Pieper is quite outspoken about the fact that the ministry is no special spiritual order superior to that of Christians. The Word and Sacraments in which ministers of the Word minister are and remain the immediate property of the congregation and "merely administration of them in the name of all is delegated to these certain persons by the congregation."³¹ He maintains that the Church is above the ministers and that the Church and its ministers have the same relation to each other as employer and employee or owner and steward. He says that evangelical teaching makes the congregation the source of all authority in the Church. According to Lutheran doctrine, the congregation passes judgment and pronounces the excommunication while the pastor as the public servant of the congregation declares or proclaims the excommunication. As far as the ministry proclaims the Word of God, obedience is due it. Matters of adiaphora are settled by the entire congregation by mutual agreement. To obey pastors beyond God's Word is never

³⁰Ibid., pp. 455f.

³¹Ibid., p. 456.

commanded in Scripture, in fact, "it is forbidden."³²

Handbook

The Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is cited here to state the Missouri Synod's position as to the manner of calling, commissioning, and ordaining pastors of this synod. "The local congregation is advised to seek the advice of the respective District officials when the congregation so desires to call a pastor or a teacher."³³ Congregations who are Lutheran but not members of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod have the privilege of making application to Synod for pastors or teachers and "shall also have the benefit of such official advice."³⁴ Those congregations who are not Lutheran in faith but who do make application to Synod for pastors or teachers shall not be denied their request provided:

- a. That the congregation making application declare its unconditional acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God.
- b. That the congregation declare its willingness to permit its pastor to minister to it in accordance with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.
- c. That the congregation after due instruction declare its willingness to sever its connection with

³²Ibid., pp. 456f.

³³Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (revised and printed in 1951), section 4.01.

³⁴Ibid., 4.03.

any heterodox body with which it may be affiliated.³⁵

If a pastor of the Missouri Synod is asked by a non-Lutheran congregation which is without a pastor, to "fill its pulpit," he may do so in order that that congregation might hear God's Word proclaimed in all its truth and purity. Under such a circumstance the pastor involved may not celebrate the Lord's Supper publicly. If such a congregation desires to extend a regular call to one of our pastors, the conditions previously stated must be obeyed.³⁶

Concerning the assignment of calls to candidates, the District Presidents shall yearly assign the calls for pastors which congregations and mission boards have sent them. When this type of assignment is made, "the faculties of the respective institution shall be consulted."³⁷

In the Handbook, ordination is combined with the installation of a pastor. Not all candidates or graduates from the seminaries of the Missouri Synod may be ordained. Only those may be ordained who have received a legitimate call from and to a certain congregation and after previous examination has been found

to be sound in doctrine, apt to teach, blameless in life, and has made application for membership in Synod

³⁵Ibid., 4.05.

³⁶Ibid., 4.07.

³⁷Ibid., 4.09.

and has submitted a request for ordination to the respective District President.³⁸

The responsibility for the ordination of candidates for the public office of the ministry in congregations within The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is in the hands of the District President. If the President is not able to perform this ordination in person, he may so delegate this function to another pastor "who is a member in good standing of an orthodox Lutheran body."³⁹ If it is possible, an ordination or installation shall include one or more pastors assisting the pastor officiating.

(Concerning the place where a candidate is to be ordained, the Handbook says that an ordination (or installation) shall take place before the congregation which has called the candidate or the pastor. The pastor who is being ordained (or installed) is done so in accordance with Lutheran forms so that he might pledge himself and his ministry to the Scriptures "as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and to the Symbolical books of the Lutheran Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures."⁴⁰ The diploma of ordination is issued by the District President.)

This last section deals with the procedure of synod taken when sending out itinerant preachers and missionaries

³⁸Ibid., 4.15.

³⁹Ibid., 4.17.

⁴⁰Ibid., 4.19.

who are not called by a particular congregation. Such candidates

shall be commissioned according to accepted Lutheran forms and shall be pledged to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God and to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church as a true exposition of the Scriptures.⁴¹

Missionaries who are called into the foreign field are commissioned by the respective Mission Board.

The order for the commissioning of missionaries for service within a given District of Synod shall be issued by the respective District President.⁴²

Brief Statement

The Brief Statement is the doctrinal position of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, drawn up by order of Synod by a committee. It was submitted to the members of synod through the Concordia Theological Monthly (May and June, 1931) and a separate pamphlet was given to the clergy of the church. Synod, in 1932 had a committee thoroughly examine the Brief Statement at its sessions of the same year, and adopted it in its present form "as a brief Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod" on the points it sets forth.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid., 4.41.

⁴²Ibid., 4.43.

⁴³Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), p. 2.

The Brief Statement defines the public ministry in the following way: It is "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."⁴⁴ The statement goes on to say that the public ministry is a divine ordinance with this meaning attached: Christians of a particular locality must apply the means of grace publicly, not only in the family circle and in common fellowship with fellow-Christians (John 5:39; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:16). This application of the means of grace publicly means that the Word of God be preached in the midst of Christians in a certain locality and that the Sacraments be administered according to the institution of Christ by persons who qualify for such work. The following Scripture passages are cited to show just what the qualifications and official functions of persons should be who will publicly preach God's Word and rightly administer the Sacraments (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 20:28; 2 Tim. 2:2).⁴⁵

The Brief Statement further states that though this public office of preaching God's Word and administering the Sacraments is of divine ordinance, this office does not possess any other power except the power of the Word of God (1 Peter 4:11). This means that Christians are duty-bound

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁵Ibid.

to yield obedience to the office of the ministry "whenever, and as long as, the minister proclaims to them the Word of God" (Hebr. 13:17; Luke 10:16).⁴⁶ If the admonitions and teachings of a minister "go beyond" God's Word, it is the duty of Christians not to obey him, "but to disobey him," and so remain true to Christ (Matt. 23:8). In such matters which Christ has not commanded, the office of the ministry has no right to demand obedience and submission. Such persons who teach this, teach false doctrine, which false doctrine is rejected by the Missouri Synod.⁴⁷

Concerning ordination, "We teach that it is not a divine, but a commendable ecclesiastical ordinance."⁴⁸

The Abiding Word

In his first thesis, Koehneke maintains that all incumbents of the ministerial office are called by the Lord. This act of God operates either immediately or mediately. As an example of an immediate call, he cites, "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, neither by man but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead" (Gal. 1:1). The mediate call refers to the call by and through the congregation. As an example of this type of call the

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

following is used: "As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). In both types, Koehneke insists that these are divine calls. By either of these types of calls, God "sends, separates and chooses men to perform the work necessary for the proper functioning of the ministry of the New Testament, either in its pastoral or in its missionary function."⁴⁹

Koehneke says that the ministerial office differs from the call of the spiritual priests. "It is a call to a specific service or ministry in the Church."⁵⁰ He says that the fathers of the Missouri Synod insisted on distinguishing the office of the missionary from that of the pastor. "This pastoral office can exist only after a congregation has come into existence, because no call can be issued before there are persons who may call."⁵¹

The doctrine of the divine call gives joy and willingness to pastors in their work and also makes the congregations realize that their pastor is the pastor the Lord wants them to hear. They will honor him and provide for his

⁴⁹P. F. Koehneke, "The Call Into The Holy Ministry," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1946), I, 366f.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 367.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 368.

physical needs.⁵²

In his second thesis, Koehneke says that the Lord requires the congregation to establish and maintain the office of the ministry in its midst and that the right to call workers in the congregation is inherent in the congregation. The authority to establish auxiliary offices in the congregation is proven by the well-known passage: "All things are yours," etc. (1 Cor. 3:21). Not all people who assist the pastor need a call but only those where "separation to the Lord" is involved, such as teachers in parochial schools. The Christian congregation has the right to call workers in the congregation, not the Pope, not bishops, not the clergy, not the head of the government (Acts 13:2-3; 14:27).⁵³

Koehneke maintains that all Bible passages "accordingly" give the keys of heaven to the congregation of believers and this proves that they are required to establish the ministry through which the keys are administered publicly. The office of the keys is given to all believers (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). According to Koehneke, Scripture shows that the royal priesthood is to show forth the praises of God, that is, "to preach the Gospel" (1 Pet. 2:9).⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 372f.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 373f.

As far as mission congregations are concerned where they are subsidized by a mission board, "it is only right and proper that they consult with the mission board before issuing a call."⁵⁵ He says that they need the advice of the board which fellow Christians have elected for the supervision of this work and which is responsible for the proper administration of the funds which they contribute.

In his third thesis, Koehneke states that because Christians are the original possessors of the office of teaching they are obligated to let the light of the Gospel shine in as many places as possible. Christians are therefore obligated to establish the office of teaching at such places of missionary interest.⁵⁶

In thesis four Koehneke points out that a congregation may not call a pastor or a teacher or dismiss him on the basis of a contract. Not every call for a "fixed time" is to be condemned as the call of a supply pastor, in case of sickness of the regular pastor, lasts until the regular returns to his pastorate. When human beings want to limit a call as to time, that is, when they want to determine how long a pastor is to be active at a certain place, this is contrary to the divinity of the call. If a congregation issues a "temporary call" arbitrarily and decides that a

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 376f.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 377f.

man is to leave his place after so many years, that congregation becomes guilty of "encroaching upon God's office and work."⁵⁷ The call for temporary help because of sickness, weakness, being overburdened with business is in agreement with the Missouri Synod's position concerning the call.

Koehneke lists the following reasons which may terminate a call:

- a. by a call to another field of activity;
- b. by deposing from office for persistence in false doctrine or refusal to repent or loss of good reputation;
- c. by dismissal from office or resignation if the ability to serve in a certain field has ceased;
- d. if the need for the services has ceased.⁵⁸

In his last thesis, Koehneke says that

all persons concerned in the matter of a call should be conscious of the fact that the Lord of the Church is using them as His instruments and should consider this their one objective--to do the will of the Lord.⁵⁹

He asks the question, "What are congregations and pastors to do in order that God's will and not their own be done?"⁶⁰ The divine instructions which are given in God's Word must be observed. The congregation has the right to call and God describes the persons who are to be placed in the ministry. The congregation may call only orthodox pastors.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 379-382, passim.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 382.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 385.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 386.

The man to be called must not only know the correct doctrine but must be able to teach and have a good reputation. If a congregation desires to call a candidate, it will follow the synodical rule to call only a candidate who has "successfully" passed his examination. "God has given the congregations the right to call with the expectation that they will act in a God-pleasing manner in matters of a call."⁶¹

A definition of the office of the ministry offered by Foelber is this: "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."⁶² To defend this definition, he cites St. Paul's conception of the public ministry, that the preaching of the Christ is committed or entrusted to Titus (Titus 1:3). The minister is not the owner, but a trustee, an agent. The minister is the manager of a congregation who can do no more than the congregation itself can do. There are many Bible passages which use this idea of trustee as referring to the minister. The following one is cited as a good example of such: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²E. E. Foelber, "The Office of the Public Ministry," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1947), II, 475.

God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1-2).⁶³

To clarify the idea of the office of the public ministry, two aberrations which have appeared from time to time are reviewed. The one aberration refers to the idea that the ministry is magnified into a means of grace. This would also mean that the ministrations of the minister would depend upon their personal faith and worthiness. But St. Paul wrote: "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" (1 Cor. 3:5). The second aberration went in the opposite direction. It changed the position of trust into a mere job. The pastor is a common employee who can be hired and fired as is done in any secular business. This extreme resulted from a misunderstanding of the term "servant" in the Scriptures. The following Scripture passage is cited to offset this false interpretation: "Be not ye the servants of men"; the meaning here is slaves or hirelings (1 Cor. 7:23).⁶⁴

The position of trust, which, according to this article is the office of the ministry, is conferred to a qualified person by the Christian congregation. It must be stressed here that when a Christian congregation does this, she in no way gives up or limits her possessions or powers.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 476.

This conferring is explained as indicating "the giving of a mandate or the placing into the hands of another the Office of the Public Ministry."⁶⁵ In this explanation, it must be made clear that the Church speaks the absolution, that the Church forgives sins, not the clergy by virtue of a call or a mandate given only to them.

As far as a definition of the congregation which is conferring this position of trust, the following gives the Missouri Synod's position:

It is the local church, but in a metaphorical sense, for since it is visible, being made up of a number of persons, it may have within it not only believers, but also unbelievers. And unbelievers can not rightfully act in this matter; Strictly speaking it is only the true believers who do the conferring, for they really possess all the treasures procured by the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the children and heirs of God. They are royal priests.⁶⁶

As surely as the Gospel is preached in the local congregation, so surely are in it true believers who possess the office of the keys, thus true believers have acted, and the conferring of the office of the public ministry is valid.

The second thesis of Foelber states that an express command from God is not lacking concerning the divine command to establish the ministry. This command is given to the apostles. They were called and told to go out and preach (Matt. 10); also, the Seventy as is recorded (Luke 10).

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 477.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 478.

The office of the public ministry is a continuation of the ministerial office of the apostles which will last until the end of the world (Matt. 28:19-28). Scripture shows us that those whom the apostles named were "fellow-servants" and "fellow-soldiers." Therefore we can conclude that "the office of the ministry proceeds from the general call of the Apostles."⁶⁷

Foelber's third thesis states: "The Christian congregation fills the Office of the Public Ministry by electing and calling into it men adjudged worthy."⁶⁸ The first congregations had the following method as recorded (Acts 1). In the case of Matthias, a list of two candidates was presented and "by giving forth their lots (the disciples) chose Matthias." The congregation at Jerusalem elected Stephen (Acts 6). An election by the congregation accompanied Paul's and Barnabas' ordaining acts as the Greek word cheirotonesantes denotes (Acts 14:23). It seems as though this method of filling the office of the public ministry was continued for several centuries as is seen from Cyprian's letter to Cornelius. And this is precisely the method which the Missouri Synod has used from the time of its organization. A list of candidates is set up by the congregation and then the congregation, through its voting members,

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 483.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 487.

will elect one of the group accepted by it as candidate. When the election has been made, the congregation next issues a solemn call or divine call to the pastor-elect. The office is filled when he accepts it. Foelber asks the question and gives his immediate answer: "Is there any other method by which the Office of the Public Ministry can be filled? None at all."⁶⁹ Scripture nowhere suggests any other method.

It is a false notion according to Foelber, that as Loehe states: "The Office transplants itself. . . . Only he who has the Office can transfer it to another."⁷⁰ Further stated is that this error expresses itself very impressively in the "sacrament of ordination, so-called." Foelber's definition of ordination is: "It is an ecclesiastical form denoting the public and solemn confirmation of the call."⁷¹ The article goes on to give C. C. Schmidt's opinion of ordination as explaining Foelber's:

Sometimes our Confessional Writings use the word "ordain" in a double sense, occasionally for the word "call" by the congregation; again for the public confirmation of the call through the servants of the Church. Both usages, however, indicate that always the congregation is the body or authority that makes the act valid. The ordination, therefore, is dependent

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 488.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 489.

⁷¹Ibid.

upon the election and call. What the marriage rite is to the engagement, the ordination is to the call.⁷²

The rite of ordination is not just a mere empty ceremony but it is "a good ecclesiastical ordinance and should be retained."⁷³ Also it is pointed out that as this rite is connected with prayers and the glorious promises of the Gospel, "spiritual gifts are outpoured."⁷⁴

The last thesis in this article says: "The Office of the Public Ministry, is, strictly speaking, the only divinely instituted office in the Church."⁷⁵ The office of the public ministry involves many and varied functions. The Scriptures speak of apostles, evangelists, teachers, bishops, pastors, elders, deacons. In the Missouri Synod we find pastors, assistant pastors, associate pastors, vicars, professors, presidents, executive secretaries, superintendents, visitors, and other synodical officials. The question arises as to which are divinely instituted? Inasmuch as through all of them the Gospel is preached and through them the congregation acts, each one has divine sanction. Missouri Synod writings liken the office of the public ministry to a tree. The preaching of the Word by the pastor of a congregation is the trunk of the tree. The

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p. 490.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

other preaching is described as "branches" of the tree.

The principle of equality has received much emphasis within the Missouri Synod.⁷⁶

The existence of holy orders by divine right or institution has been consistently denied. All the incumbents of the ministerial office, either in one congregation or in different congregations are held to be equal in rank and station among themselves since no degrees in the ministry have been established by the Head of the Church. Whatever superiority of station there may be among the officers of any church or federation of churches is, like the forms of church polity, which may involve or condition such gradations, merely of human origin and dignity.⁷⁷

The article closes by stating that all members of the office of the public ministry in the Missouri Synod are "fellows and brethren, with only one Master above them, the Lord Jesus Christ."⁷⁸

The "Common Confession"

The "Common Confession," Part I, was adopted by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and by the American Lutheran Church in 1950. The "Common Confession" as one document comprised of two parts is recognized as a statement in harmony with the sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in 1956, but not to be regarded or used as a functioning basic document toward the

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 491.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 492.

⁷⁸Ibid.

establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship with other church bodies.⁷⁹

In Part I of this "Common Confession," there is only a very short article on the ministry. In Part II, no such article is given. The article in Part I says that The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod believes and teaches that "The ministry of the Word and Sacraments exists by divine ordinance."⁸⁰ God continues to call men into the office of the public ministry and entrusts the spiritual welfare of His congregations to these pastors as His gifts to the Church. The article says that it is God's will that these local congregations choose as their pastors only those men who qualify which qualifications the Scriptures outline. God expects His pastors to be faithful to their respective congregations and show them love and respect. The article cites Scripture proof for its statement on the office of the ministry (Acts 20:28; Romans 10:12-18; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 4; Eph. 4:11-15; 1 Tim. 3; 5:17; Hebr. 13:7-17).⁸¹

The Lutheran Agenda

"The Order for the Ordination of a Minister" has four rubrics preceding the Order itself which read as follows:

⁷⁹"Common Confession," Part I in Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 71.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 76.

⁸¹Ibid.

1. This Order shall follow the General Prayer in the Morning Service; in the Vespers, the Hymn after the Sermon.
2. Ordination shall be administered under the authorization of the President of Synod and according to its appointment.
3. Ordination properly takes place within the congregation to which a candidate has been called.
4. The Ordinator and his assistants shall turn to the Ordained who has presented himself before the altar and the Ordinator shall say:⁸²

Then follows a short address mentioning the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that He gave to His Church, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, etc. for the edifying of the Body of Christ.

After having mentioned the fact that the candidate has been examined and found to have the necessary qualifications for the holy ministry, he is told of the solemn responsibilities of his sacred office. The most pertinent passages of Scriptures from the epistles of St. Paul are quoted, for example, "Let a man account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." "A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God, not self-willed," etc. "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."⁸³

⁸²"The Order for the Ordination of a Minister," The Lutheran Agenda, authorized by the Synods constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 104.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 104f.

The candidate, having accepted the call, is asked "in the presence of God and this congregation" if he believes that the canonical books of the Old and New Testament are the inspired Word of God, if he accepts the three Ecumenical Creeds, if he believes that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God, also the other five books in the Book of Concord and that he promise to perform his duties in accordance with these Confessions and his administering of the Sacraments (in his office). Finally if he will adorn the doctrine of our Savior with a holy life and conversation.⁸⁴

Next, the ordinand kneels and the ordinator laying his right hand on him may say:

I now commit unto thee the holy office of the Word and the 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.⁸⁵

The following rubric says:

Then the assisting Ministers, in turn, may lay their right hand on the head of the newly ordained and pronounce some benediction (such as Josh. 1:7-8; Ps. 20: 1-2. . . .)⁸⁶

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 106f.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 107.

The ordinator, facing the altar prays one of the two prayers offered him in the Agenda followed by the "Our Father" (together with the other ministers with him).⁸⁷

The ordinand then rises and the ordinator giving him his right hand shall say:

Go, then, take heed unto thyself and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. Feed the flock of Christ taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither being lord over God's heritage, but being an ensample to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, thou shalt receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The Lord bless thee from on high and make thee a blessing unto many, that thou mayest bring forth fruit and that thy fruit may remain unto eternal life. Amen.⁸⁸

"The Ordinand, as the called pastor of the flock shall take charge of the remainder of the Service."⁸⁹

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 108.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The historical survey of ordination and the call in the first hundred years of Lutheranism and in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, has given the following information upon which certain conclusions may be deduced and yet there will be one important, pertinent question remaining.

In so many words Martin Luther has said that the acceptance of the call makes a qualified person a minister. This might be expected from Luther because he labored during very difficult times when the doctrines of ordination and the call were abused to a great extent by the Church of Rome and the Anabaptists.

According to the Lutheran Symbols, the technical term used rite vocatus, seems to imply ordination. The symbols testify that the sacred ministry is not only an Amt, but also a Stand (ordo). The symbols do not say that an ordained pastor is better than a layman but most emphatically differentiate between the functions of an ordained clergyman and a lay-Christian. (It appears as though the Lutheran Symbols understand rite vocatus as a term which includes ordination as well as a call from God through His Church. In ordination, a person receives the authority of his Stand and in the call, a candidate receives the "authority of jurisdiction.")

The term "sacrament" is never applied to ordination by Chemnitz, Gerhard or Quenstedt. With these dogmaticians it seems as though the ordinatio always presupposes the vocatio. The ministry is usually not separated from an area of jurisdiction. (Ordination publicly testifies to the validity of the call. Ordination establishes a candidate in the office of the ministry and certainly promises the grace and blessing of God by the laying on of hands and the prayers of the Church.)

The third chapter emphasizes the call of God through the local congregation which is the all-important aspect of the office of the public ministry in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The most significant documents of the Missouri Synod as well as Walther and Pieper agree that the acceptance of a call from a local congregation makes a qualified person a pastor. The Missouri Synod does not deny that by ordination with the laying on of hands and the prayers of the Church in ordaining a candidate, God's grace and blessing are given.

A few points of certain agreement between "early" Lutherans and contemporary Missouri Synod Lutherans are here stated: Both of these groups of Lutherans deny that an indelible character is given at the time of ordaining a candidate. The importance of being rightly called by God through His Church is emphasized by both groups. The divine institution of the public ministry is affirmed by both

groups and certainly ordination is considered to be a fine Christian custom.

While the Lutherans of the first hundred years of Lutheranism (with the possible exception of Martin Luther himself) stressed the call of God "through His Church," the Missouri Synod has always emphasized the call of God "through a local congregation." While "early" Lutherans maintain that ordination is taken to be a part of a person's vocatio, the Missouri Synod seems to be quite clear that it is only a ratification of the call and therefore not necessary but only a desirable custom to retain for good order in the Church.

The democratic church government of the Missouri Synod explains why the call from the local congregation is so greatly stressed. The episcopal form of government of the Lutheran Church in Germany at the time of the Reformation stressed the call of God "through His Church" whether that be through a bishop or the local congregation. Ordination was taken for granted as part of a person's vocation, that by the laying on of hands and the prayers of the Church, the grace and blessing of God is given to the candidate entering the Stand (ordo) of the sacred ministry.

With the seeming reluctance to include ordination as a necessary part of the vocatus as well as a call through the congregation the following question still needs to be asked: "Does the Missouri Synod recognize and admit a technical

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