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Ordination

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andern Schriftstellern werden so vereinzelt mitgeteilte Tatsachen als geschichtliche Wahrheit angenommen. Ganz abgesehen davon, daß wir bei Lukas inspiriertes Gotteswort vor uns haben, ist es nur billig, einem rechtfähigen Schriftsteller so viel Glauben zu schenken wie einem andern ihm gleichgearteten.

Geben wir nun eine Zusammenfassung des Vorigen, so ist die Geburt Christi in den Herbst des Jahres 7 v. Chr. einzureihen, etwa in die Zeit des Laubhüttenfestes, also in die erste Hälfte des Oktobers. Joh. 1, 14 wird Jesu Geburt also erzählt: „Das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnete“ (eskenosen, hüttete) „unter uns.“ Christi Menschwerdung war wie seine etwa 33½ Jahre dauernde Hütte unter uns Menschenkindern. Auch wir haben hier keine bleibende Stätte, sondern hoffen bald da zu sein, wo er nun ist. —. — or —.

Ordination.

What is ordination? Various answers have been given to this question, as ordination has at different periods and in different church-bodies been made to represent peculiar theories with reference to its character and its effect.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches: “Whereas, by the testimony of Scripture, by apostolic tradition, and the unanimous consent of the Fathers, it is clear that grace is conferred by sacred ordination, which is performed by words and outward signs, no one ought to doubt that Order is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the holy Church. For the apostle says: ‘I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love of sobriety.’ But, forasmuch as in the sacrament of Order, as also in Baptism and Confirmation, a character is imprinted which can neither be effaced nor taken away, the holy Synod with reason condemns the opinion of those who assert that the priests of the New Testament have only a temporary power, and that those who have once been rightly ordained can again become laymen if they do not exercise the ministry of the Word of God. . . . Furthermore, the sacred and holy Synod teaches that in the ordination of bishops, priests, and of the other orders neither the consent nor vocation nor authority, whether of the people or of any civil power or magistrate whatsoever, is required in such wise as that without this the ordination is invalid; yea, rather doth it decree that all those who, being only called and instituted by the people or by the civil power and magistrate, ascend to the exercise of these ministrations and those who of their own rashness assume them to themselves, are not ministers of the Church, but are to be looked

upon as thieves and robbers, who have not entered by the door. . . . If any saith that Order, or sacred ordination, is not truly and properly a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord, or that it is a kind of human figment, devised by men unskilled in ecclesiastical matters, or that it is only a kind of rite for choosing ministers of the Word of God and of the sacraments; let him be anathema. If any one saith that by sacred ordination the Holy Ghost is not given and that vainly therefore do the bishops say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; or that a character is not imprinted by that ordination; or that he who has once been a priest can again become a layman; let him be anathema." (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, translated by the Rev. J. Waterworth, pages 172—174.)

Accordingly the Roman Catholic Church teaches that ordination is a *sacrament*, by which the Holy Spirit, or grace, is conferred, and that ordination imprints a *character indelebilis*, so that those who have been once rightly ordained can never again become laymen, and that *not the consent, vocation, or authority of a Christian congregation can entitle any person to ordination.*

Speaking for the Reformed churches, Strong says: "Ordination is the setting apart of a person divinely called to a work of special ministration in the Church. It does not involve the communication of power; it is simply a recognition of powers previously conferred by God and a consequent formal authorization on the part of the Church to exercise the gifts already bestowed. This recognition and authorization should not only be expressed by the vote in which the candidate is approved by the church, or the council which represents it, but should also be accompanied by a special service of admonition, prayer, and the laying on of hands, Acts 6, 5. 6; 13, 2. 3; 14, 23; 1 Tim. 4, 14; 5, 22. Licensure simply commends a man to the churches as fitted to preach. Ordination recognizes him as set apart to the work of preaching and administering ordinances, in some particular church or in some designated field of labor, as representative of the Church. The imposition of hands is the natural symbol of the communication, not of grace, but of authority. It does not make a man a minister of the Gospel any more than coronation makes Victoria a queen. What it does signify and publish is formal recognition and authorization. Viewed in this light, there not only can be no objection to the imposition of hands upon the ground that it favors sacramentalism, but insistence upon it is the bounden duty of every council of ordination. . . . Ordination is the act of the church, not the act of a privileged class in the church, as the eldership has sometimes wrongly been regarded, nor yet the act of other churches, assembled by their representatives in council. No ecclesiastical authority higher than that of the local church is recognized in the New Testament." (*Systematic Theology*, by A. H. Strong,

pp. 512. 513.) This view expressed by Strong is, however, not the view of *all* the Reformed church-bodies; for among the Episcopalians and some other bodies in the Reformed group other views are held.

In the Lutheran Church different views have been expressed at different times. Kliefoth, for instance, says: "As a marriage ceremony under all circumstances has the effect of bringing a marriage into existence (*dass eine Ehe wird*), so under all circumstances does ordination have the effect of making him who is ordained a pastor (*dass ein Pastor wird*); for ordination is the conferring of the office of the ministry (*ist Befehlung des Predigtamts*). Whoever is ordained is a pastor and should function as a pastor whenever the place to do so has been assigned to him. And this is valid. It is valid in the very sight of God, who looks upon him who has been ordained as a person *segregatus a mundo, ad opus propagandi evangelii consecratus Deo, ut servus Iesu Christi perpetuo sit*. . . . Ordination alone does not suffice. It does not make the call superfluous, but presupposes it; but also the call does not make the ordination superfluous, but demands that it be subsequently added; for the call assigns the *person* to the office of the ministry in such wise that the people whom God has empowered to do so have according to the best of their knowledge conscientiously extended the call to a certain person; but ordination assigns the *office of the ministry* to the person in such wise that the Triune God Himself through His Word confers the office with its burdens and its blessings upon the person so called."—Vilmar taught that one who is not ordained cannot preach the Word of God effectively; he made the efficacy of the means of grace depend upon the ordination. Loehe and Grabau held hierarchical views in reference to ordination.

It was not our intention to give a historical sketch of ordination; for to trace its history from the days of the apostles down to the present time would require much space. We merely desire to give some of the principal views that have been held, and are still being held, in the Church in order to bring out by way of contrast and emphasis what our Lutheran Church, in accordance with her Confessions, on the basis of Scripture, teaches on ordination.

In the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Art. XIII ("Of the Number and Use of the Sacraments"), we read: "If we call Sacraments rites which have the command of God, and to which the promise of grace has been added, it is easy to decide what are properly Sacraments. Therefore Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution, which is the Sacrament of Repentance, are truly Sacraments. For these rites have God's command and the promise of grace, which is peculiar to the New Testament. . . . But 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, Rom. 1, 16: 'The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Likewise Is. 55, 11: 'So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please.' If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a Sacrament." The word *sacrament* is not a Biblical term; its content is that which the Church gives it. Therefore it is said that ordination may be called a Sacrament if the term be applied not to sacrifices, as in the Roman Church, but to the ministry of the Word; for this has both God's command and promise. But in our accepted meaning of the term, namely, a rite which has the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added, ordination cannot be called a Sacrament. Therefore our Confessions say: "Wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the Church, which no human power can wrest from the Church, as Paul also testifies to the Ephesians, 4, 8, when he says: 'He ascended, He gave gifts to men.' And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the Church pastors and teachers and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. Just as in a case of necessity even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another; as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after baptism then absolved the baptizer. Here belong the statements of Christ which testify that the keys have been given to the Church and not merely to certain persons, Matt. 18, 20: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name,' etc. Lastly, the statement of Peter also confirms this, 1 Ep. 2, 9: 'Ye are a royal priesthood.' These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood. And this also a most common custom of the Church testifies. For formerly the people elected pastors and bishops. Then came a bishop, either of that church or a neighboring one, who confirmed the one elected by the laying on of hands; and ordination was nothing else than such a ratification." (*Smalcald Articles. Triglot*, pp. 523. 525.)

Ordination dates back to the days of the apostles, who by prayer and the laying on of hands separated, or set apart (ordained), men, not only for the work of the ministry, but also for other special work in the Church. When seven men were chosen for the office of deaconship, whose special duty it was to care for the poor, we are told that

the congregation chose these men, "whom they set before the apostles; and when they had *prayed*, they *laid their hands on them*," Acts 6, 5, 6. When Paul and Barnabas were by the church at Antioch sent out as missionaries, we read: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had *fasted* and *prayed* and *laid their hands on them*, they sent them away," Acts 13, 2, 3.

The laying on, or imposition, of hands, together with prayer, was a feature of ordination. (See also 1 Tim. 4, 14; 5, 22; 2 Tim. 1, 6.) The imposition of hands (*ἡ ἐπιθεσις τῶν χειρῶν*) was an Old Testament custom. When, for instance, the sin-offerings were made to the Lord, they were accompanied by the imposition of hands, Lev. 1, 4; 3, 2; 8, 14. 18. 22; 16, 21 f, likely signifying the transmission of sin and its curse. Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, accompanying this blessing by the imposition of hands: "And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born. And he blessed them that day," Gen. 48, 9. 14. 20a. When Joshua was ordained in the room of Moses, we read: "The Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him," Num. 27, 18. It is not said in these words that the Spirit was given to Joshua through the imposition of hands, but that hands were laid on him in whom the Spirit already was. When Aaron pronounced the divine blessing upon the people of God, he "lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them," Lev. 9, 22. — The Old Testament custom of the imposition of hands was continued in the New Testament. When the Lord Jesus blessed little children, He laid His hands upon them, Mark 10, 13—16. When He healed the blind man of Bethsaida, He "spit on his eyes and put His hands upon him," Mark 8, 22—26. Jesus promised His followers that the sick on whom they would lay their hands would recover, Mark 16, 17. 18. This custom of the imposition of hands was also observed by the apostles, not only when they healed the sick, Acts 28, 8, but especially when they *separated*, or *ordained*, persons for special work in the Church, invoking at the same time a divine blessing, 1 Tim. 4, 14; 2 Tim. 1, 6. That nothing is imparted by the imposition of hands, but that it is merely a symbolic act is seen from a comparison of Acts 8, 14—17 and Acts 10, 44—46. While it might at first reading of Acts 8 seem that the gift of the Holy Ghost was given by the imposition of hands, it is very clear from Acts 10 that the imposition of hands was not at all essential, but rather accidental, not a medium, but merely a symbolic act; for we are told that, "*while Peter yet*

spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word" (special gifts of the Holy Ghost are here referred to, as can clearly be seen from vv. 45. 46).

From all these passages of the Old and the New Testament we learn that nowhere in the Bible is there given a *divine command* for the imposition of hands; the imposition of hands was a mere custom. Nor do we read in the Bible that through the imposition of hands any gift of grace was imparted; the imposition of hands was merely a *symbolic act*. Therefore the imposition of hands of which the Bible speaks cannot be used in proof of the assertion that ordination is a divine institution. (To those who know Greek it will be superfluous to say that the use of the word *ordain* in our English version of the Bible in such passages as Acts 14, 23; 1 Tim. 2, 7; Titus 1, 5 is not the use which we now make of the word when we speak of ordination.)

In accordance with our Confessions our Lutheran Church therefore holds that ordination is merely a custom of the Church and that its purpose is the *public ratification of the call to a Christian congregation*. Hollaz: "Ordination is a solemn act by which in the sight of God and of the church a qualified person is *declared* to have been examined and legitimately called (*examinata et legitime vocata declaratur*), is separated from worldly occupations (*a profanis negotiis segregatur*), and is entrusted with the administration of a *certain office* in the church, into which office such a person is installed by a bishop or a pastor with the imposition of hands and solemn prayers and is earnestly admonished properly to perform his official duties." Chemnitz: "Ordination is a declaration and public ratification that the call, which must first have been extended, is a legitimate one." Balduin: "Ordination is nothing else than the public and solemn ratification of a call legitimately extended. . . . Ordination is not absolutely necessary; . . . for it is neither commanded by God, . . . nor does the efficiency of the administration of the divine office depend upon it. . . . It is a custom of the Church." Balduin therefore correctly answers the question, May he be ordained who has not yet been called to a certain office in the Church? He answers: "Never; for ordination is a ratification of the call; if, therefore there is no call, there can be no ordination." See Walther, *Kirche und Amt*, pp. 289—314; Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, III, pp. 519. 520; Walther, *Pastorale*, p. 65 f.; Baier, *Comp. Theol. Pos.*, III, p. 699.

After a careful study of the subject-matter in reference to ordination we arrive at the following conclusions and practical applications:—

1. Ordination is not commanded in Scripture. It is an *adiaphoron*. It is therefore not absolutely necessary. Neither can we insist that all must define it alike. But Lutherans should adhere to the definition in the Lutheran Confessions.

2. Ordination is a good custom of the Church, dating back to the days of the apostles.

3. The purpose of ordination is *not*: a) to impart any grace or divine blessing, for it is not a Sacrament; b) nor thereby to make a man a minister or a pastor, for he is made such only by the call extended by a Christian congregation, and there is no such thing as *ordination to the ministry as such*, no absolute ordination, no imprinting of a *character indelebilis*; c) nor to make a man eligible for the work of the ministry, for, for such eligibility one needs such necessary qualifications as a Christian character, aptness to teach, etc.; d) nor to make the efficacy of the means of grace dependent upon ordination.

4. The purpose of ordination is nothing else than a ratification of the call, received and accepted, to a Christian congregation (*Smalcald Articles; Triglot*, p. 525) and in connection therewith the invoking of the divine blessing, as also a public testimony of the great importance and sacredness of the pastoral office. Keeping this purpose in mind, ordination should not without good reason be omitted, but be observed as a *good custom of the Church*, like, e. g., confirmation.

5. Since ordination is a public ratification of the call, a candidate for the ministry should be ordained in the midst of the congregation which has extended that call and which by this call has made his ordination possible. This ought to be self-evident. Otherwise it might appear that ordination is given a *significance of its own* aside from the call which has been issued and which has made ordination possible.

6. Since ordination is the public ratification of the call, that is, the call to a certain Christian congregation, a man who is sent by the Church at large, directly or through its official boards, as a missionary to home or foreign fields, is, according to our use of the terms, *commissioned*, not ordained.

7. Candidates who are called as assistant pastors should be ordained, for they have received and accepted a call to a certain Christian congregation. Such candidates, recently graduated from one of our theological seminaries, as are only temporarily engaged to do certain work—teach school, do the pastor's clerical work, canvass, preach occasionally, etc.—*had better not be ordained*, for it is not customary in our Church to ordain such men as are under certain circumstances engaged merely for a time and have not yet been definitely, and more or less permanently, located. It does not quite agree with our idea of ordination. Such men might nevertheless, if the congregation so decides, assist the pastor in the administration of the Lord's Supper. (Our College of District Presi-

dents adopted the rule at Milwaukee last June that candidates who are not yet definitely and permanently located should not be ordained.)

8. Since a "temporary call" should not be extended, a congregation should not so engage a candidate of the ministry, unless it be to serve during a vacancy, while a congregation is calling a pastor, or during a pastor's illness, absence, etc. If a candidate is so called, he may be ordained. — If a congregation cannot, for financial reasons, call a pastor who is married and has a family, that is not in itself a good reason why it should temporarily engage a candidate. The candidate should not be so engaged, but should be called as the pastor of that church and then, of course, ordained. Money may have to be the deciding factor as far as the *person* to be called is concerned; for if, for instance, a congregation cannot support a pastor with a wife and six children, it ought not to call him; but money can never be the deciding factor as far as *the call itself* is concerned.

NOTE. — We should also not speak of a *lifelong* call, a call *for life* (*lebenslaenglicher Beruf*). God, not *we*, determines the time limit. Exceptionally a pastor remains with the same congregation for life; as a rule, this is not the case.

9. Ordination may be repeated; as a rule, it is not. There is no *essential* difference between ordination and installation. We, however, make a distinction in the use of the two terms. Not only do we call a pastor's first installation his ordination, but in using this term and in not repeating his ordination, we mean to say that he who submitted to ordination thereby also declared it to be his *intention* that the work of the ministry should be his vocation throughout his life here upon earth and that in this sense he has by his ordination been *separated* from worldly occupations for the special work of a minister of the Gospel. We wish to have it distinctly understood that a man who has been ordained and is qualified for the ministry, but is *without a call* is not *because of his ordination* still a pastor; strictly speaking, he should not be addressed as such. If such a one has not chosen some secular occupation, his name may be carried on the clerical list as a *candidatus reverendi ministerii*.

10. Finally, it may be argued that since ordination is an adiaphoron, no hard and fast rules that are binding upon the conscience can be made in reference to it. We agree. Nevertheless this does not mean that every one is at liberty to do as he pleases. Though confirmation is an adiaphoron, we do not confirm such as have not been instructed in the Christian doctrine and have not declared their acceptance thereof; for *our very idea of confirmation presupposes that*. We should be very much shocked to hear that one who has never learned the Christian doctrine and is unacquainted with what our Lutheran Church teaches has been confirmed in one of our churches. Even so, though ordination is an adiaphoron, we are not

free to use it contrary to the accepted usage of our Church. Our Church has declared in its Confessions that ordination is a public ratification of a call to a Christian congregation; we should therefore not ordain such as have no such call. — Again, if a person has by instruction been prepared for confirmation by a pastor of a church in St. Louis and intends to become a member of that church, we are sure that it has never entered anybody's mind that such a person should be confirmed in one of our churches in Philadelphia, merely in order that the home folks there may witness his confirmation; we have, however, often heard of home folks and relatives and friends coming to the confirmation service of that church with which the person who is being confirmed is affiliating. Even so it is improper that a candidate who has been called to some congregation in South Dakota and has accepted that call should be ordained in one of our congregations somewhere in Michigan, simply because the home folks are there and would like to witness his ordination.

Our Church has declared in its Confessions that ordination is a public ratification of a call to a Christian congregation, and therefore our practise ought in every respect to conform to this *accepted usage of the term*. Only in this sense can our Church lay down certain rules in reference to ordination, which should by us be observed although they are *per se* not binding upon the conscience. We should be careful that we do not turn liberty into license; we should not by a careless practise *confuse* the minds of our people or even instil into their minds *wrong* ideas.

JOHN H. C. FITZ.

Die Spendeformel im heiligen Abendmahl.¹⁾

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1) Außer den betreffenden Artikeln in Herzog-Plitt, Schaff-Herzog und in Meusel wurden besonders benutzt: Augusti, Handbuch der Christlichen Archäologie; Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, Book XV; Kauterau, Zur Geschichte der in der lutherischen Kirche üblichen Spendeformeln, in „Zeitschrift für die gesamte lutherische Theologie und Kirche — Rudelbach und Guericke —“, Jahrgang 31 (1870); Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* (ed. Preuss); Buddeus, *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae*. Die Zitate aus den griechischen und lateinischen Vätern sind fast ausschließlich nach der Talhofer-Ausgabe angegeben, die Zitate für die Liturgien der Reformationszeit nach Fendt, *Der lutherische Gottesdienst des 16. Jahrhunderts*.