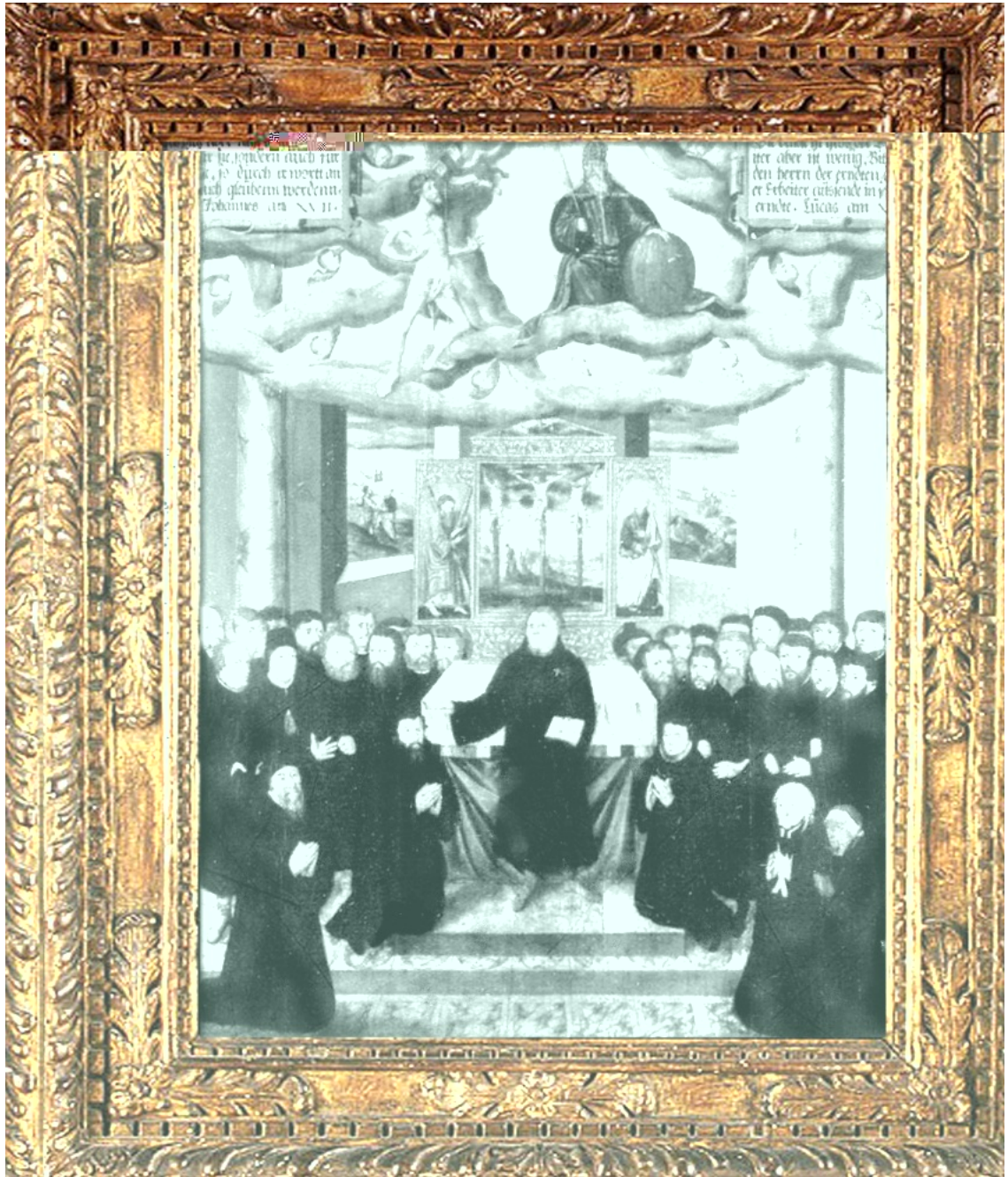


Officiating at the Lord's Supper in the Lutheran Confessions and in the Lutheran Church: Education and Examination, Call and Ordination, Pastoral Responsibility and Emergency Situations



The last ordination service at which Martin Luther officiated, at St. Andrew's Church in Eisleben in 1546

An Anthology Compiled and Edited by David Jay Webber

Education and Examination in the Lutheran Confessions

...we have desired to direct and earnestly to exhort our churches and schools first of all to the Holy Scripture and the Creeds and then to the aforementioned Augsburg Confession, in order that especially *the youth who are being trained for service in the church and for the holy ministry may be instructed faithfully and diligently*, so that among our descendants the pure teaching and confession of the faith may be kept and spread through the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit until the glorious return of our only redeemer and savior, Jesus Christ. (Preface 21, in *The Book of Concord*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], p. 14. Emphasis added.)

The chapters and monasteries which in former times had been founded with good intentions *for the education of learned men* and decent women should be restored to such purposes *in order that we may have pastors, preachers, and other ministers in the church*, others who are necessary for secular government in cities and states, and also well trained girls to become mothers, housekeepers, etc. (Smalcald Articles II:3:1, in *The Book of Concord*, edited by Theodore G. Tappert [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959], pp. 297-98. Emphases added.)

Call and Ordination in the Lutheran Confessions

Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call. (Augsburg Confession XIV [German], Kolb/Wengert p. 46)

Concerning church order they [the churches among us] teach that no one should teach publicly in the church or administer the sacraments unless properly called. (Augsburg Confession XIV [Latin], Kolb/Wengert p. 47)

Thus *priests* are not called to offer sacrifices for the people as in Old Testament law so that through them they might merit the forgiveness of sins for the people; instead *they are called to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments to the people*. We do not have another priesthood like the Levitical priesthood – as the Epistle to the Hebrews [chaps. 7-9] more than sufficiently teaches. But if ordination is understood with reference to the ministry of the Word, we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. For the ministry of the Word has the command of God and has magnificent promises like Romans 1[:16]: the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.” Likewise, Isaiah 55[:11], “...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose. ...” If ordination is understood in this way, we will not object to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament. For the church has the mandate to appoint ministers, which ought to please us greatly because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XIII:9-12, Kolb/Wengert p. 220. Emphases added.)

Article fourteen [of the Augsburg Confession], in which we say that no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the sacraments unless they are duly called, they [our opponents] accept with the proviso that we use canonical ordination. Concerning this subject we have frequently testified

in the assembly that it is our greatest desire to retain the order of the church and the various ranks in the church – even though they were established by human authority. We know that church discipline in the manner described by the ancient canons was instituted by the Fathers for a good and useful purpose. However, the [papal] bishops compel our priests either to reject and to condemn the kind of doctrine that we have confessed, or by new and unheard cruelty they kill the unfortunate and innocent people. This prevents our priests from acknowledging such bishops. Thus the cruelty of the bishops is the reason for the abolition of canonical order in some places despite our earnest desire to retain it. Let the bishops ask themselves how they will give an answer to God for breaking up the church. We have clear consciences on this matter since we know that our confession is true, godly, and catholic. ... Moreover, we want to point out again that we would willingly retain ecclesiastical and canonical order as long as the bishops desisted from their cruelty against our churches. This willingness will be our defense, both before God and among all nations, present and future, against the charge that we have undermined the authority of the bishops. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XIV:1-3, 5, Kolb/Wengert pp. 222-23)

If the bishops wanted to be true bishops and to attend to the church and the gospel, then a person might – for the sake of love and unity but not out of necessity – give them leave to ordain and confirm us and our preachers, provided all the pretense and fraud of unchristian ceremony and pomp were set aside. However, they are not now and do not want to be true bishops. Rather, they are political lords and princes who do not want to preach, teach, baptize, commune, or perform any proper work or office of the church. In addition, they persecute and condemn those who do take up a call to such an office. Despite this, the church must not remain without servants on their account. Therefore, as the ancient examples of the church and the Fathers teach us, we should and will ordain suitable persons to this office ourselves. ...St. Jerome writes about the church at Alexandria that it had originally been ruled by the priests and preachers together, without bishops. (Smalcald Articles III:10:1-3, Kolb/Wengert pp. 323-24)

According to the gospel *the power of the keys or of the bishops is a power and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sin, and to administer and distribute the sacraments.* For Christ sent out the apostles with this command (John 20[:21-23]): “As the Father has sent me, so I send you. ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” *The same power of the keys or of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God’s Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals, depending on one’s calling.* (Augsburg Confession XXVIII:5-8 [German], Kolb/Wengert p. 92. Emphases added.)

Pastoral Responsibility and Emergency Situations in the Lutheran Confessions

The gospel bestows upon those who preside over the churches the commission to proclaim the gospel, forgive sins, and administer the sacraments. In addition, it bestows legal authority, that is, the charge to excommunicate those whose crimes are public knowledge and to absolve those who repent. It is universally acknowledged, even by our opponents, that *this power is shared by divine right by all who preside in the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops.* For that reason Jerome plainly teaches that in the apostolic letters all who preside over churches are both bishops and presbyters. He quotes Titus [1:5-6]: “I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should...appoint presbyters in every town,” which then continues, “It is necessary for a bishop

to be the husband of one wife” [v. 6]. Again, Peter and John call themselves presbyters. Jerome goes on to say: “One person was chosen thereafter to oversee the rest as a remedy for schism, lest some individuals draw a following around themselves and divide the church of Christ. For in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the evangelist until that of bishops Esdras and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of their number, elevated him to a higher status, and called him bishop. Moreover, in the same way that an army provides a commander for itself, the deacons may choose one of their own, whom they know to be diligent, and name him archdeacon. What, after all, does a bishop do, with the exception of ordaining, that a presbyter does not?”

Jerome, then, teaches that the distinctions of degree between bishop and presbyter or pastor are established by human authority. That is clear from the way it works, for, as I stated above, the power is the same. One thing subsequently created a distinction between bishops and pastors, and that was ordination, for it was arranged that one bishop would ordain the ministers in a number of churches. However, since the distinction of rank between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is clear that an ordination performed by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right. As a result, when the regular bishops become enemies of the gospel or are unwilling to ordain, the churches retain their right to do so. For wherever the church exists, there also is the right to administer the gospel. Therefore, it is necessary for the church to retain the right to call, choose, and ordain ministers. This right is a gift bestowed exclusively on the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church, as Paul testifies to the Ephesians [4:8, 11, 12] when he says: “When he ascended on high...he gave gifts to his people.” Among those gifts belonging to the church he lists pastors and teachers and adds that such are given for serving and building up the body of Christ. Therefore, where the true church is, there must also be the right of choosing and ordaining ministers, just as in an emergency even a layperson grants absolution and becomes the minister or pastor of another. So Augustine tells the story of two Christians in a boat, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen) and then the latter, having been baptized, absolved the former. Pertinent here are the words of Christ that assert that the keys were given to the church, not just to particular persons: “For where two or three are gathered in my name...” [Matt. 18:20].

Finally this is also confirmed by Peter’s declaration [1 Peter 2:9]: “You are a...royal priesthood.” These words apply to the true church, which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of choosing and ordaining ministers. The most common practice of the church also testifies to this, for in times past the people chose pastors and bishops. Then the bishop of either that church or a neighboring one came and confirmed the candidate by the laying on of hands. Ordination was nothing other than such confirmation. ... All this evidence makes clear that the church retains the right to choose and ordain ministers. Consequently, when bishops either become heretical or are unwilling to ordain, the churches are compelled by divine right to ordain pastors and ministers for themselves. (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 60-70, 72, Kolb/Wengert pp. 340-41. Emphases added.)

But let us talk about the term “liturgy.” It does not really mean a sacrifice but a public service. Thus it squares with our position that a minister who consecrates shows forth the body and blood of the Lord to the people, just as a minister who preaches shows forth the gospel to the people, as Paul says (1 Cor. 4:1), “This is how one should regard us, as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the sacraments of God,” that is, of the Word and sacraments; and 2 Cor. 5:20, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” Thus the term “liturgy” squares well with the ministry. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV:80-81, Tappert p. 264)

NOTE: In the original Latin of this text, St. Paul’s words as quoted from 1 Corinthians 4:1 appear as follows: *Sic nos existimet homo tamquam ministros Christi dispensatores sacramentorum Dei*. This was Philip Melanchthon’s own rendering from the Greek. He did not

here employ the standard Vulgate translation of this verse: *sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei*. This suggests that he was not satisfied with the Vulgate translation. The most noticeable difference between Melanchthon's rendering and the Vulgate rendering is that the Vulgate had simply transliterated the Greek term *μυστηρίων* [*mystēriōn*] or "mysteries," while Melanchthon translated that term, as *sacramentorum* or "sacraments." In view of this deliberate added precision in translation, we can conclude that the Apology is presenting this verse to us as an inspired statement specifically concerning the public administration of the New Testament means of grace, with the understanding that this is the definitive task that God entrusts to his called stewards.

...as Chrysostom says in his Sermon on the Passion, "Christ prepares this table himself and blesses it; for no human being makes the bread and wine, which are set before us, the body and blood of Christ. Rather Christ himself, who was crucified for us, does that. *The words are spoken by the mouth of the priest*, but when he says, 'This is my body,' the elements that have been presented in the Supper are consecrated by God's power and grace through the Word. Just as the saying 'be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' [Gen. 1:28] was said only once and yet is continually effective in nature, causing it to grow and multiply, so these words were said once. But they are powerful and do their work in our day and until his return, so that in the Supper as celebrated in the church his true body and blood are present."

And Luther says: "This command and institution of his have the power to accomplish this, that we do not distribute and receive simply bread and wine but his body and blood, as his words indicate: 'This is my body, this is my blood.' So it is not our work or speaking but the command and ordinance of Christ that make the bread the body and the wine the blood, beginning with the first Lord's Supper and continuing to the end of the world, and *it is administered daily through our ministry or office*." Likewise, "Here, too, if I were to say over all the bread there is, 'This is the body of Christ,' nothing would happen, but when we follow his institution and command in the Supper and say, 'This is my body,' then it is his body, not because of our speaking or our declarative word, but because of his command in which he has told us to speak and to do and has attached his own command and deed to our speaking."

Indeed, *in the administration of the Holy Supper the Words of Institution are to be clearly and plainly spoken or sung publicly in the congregation*, and in no case are they to be omitted. This is done, first, so that Christ's command, "Do this," may be obeyed. Second, *it is done so that Christ's words will arouse, strengthen, and confirm the hearers' faith in the nature and benefits of this sacrament* (that is, the presence of Christ's body and blood and the forgiveness of sins, and all the benefits that have been won for us by Christ's death and the shedding of his blood, *which are given to us in his testament*). Third, it is done so that the elements of bread and wine are sanctified and consecrated in this holy practice, whereby *Christ's body and blood are offered to us to eat and to drink*, as Paul says [1 Cor. 10:16], "The cup of blessing that we bless..." This of course takes place in no other way than through the repetition and recitation of the Words of Institution. (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration VII:76-82, Kolb/Wengert pp. 606-07. Emphases added.)

[Those who] hold office in the church...represent the person of Christ on account of the call of the church and do not represent their own persons, as Christ himself testifies [Luke 10:16], "Whoever listens to you listens to me." When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ. (Apology VII/VIII:28, Kolb/Wengert p. 178)

On holy days and at other times when communicants are present, Mass is celebrated, and those who desire it receive the sacrament. Thus, the Mass remains among us in its proper use, as it was observed formerly in the church. This can be demonstrated from St. Paul (1 Cor. 11[:23-33]) and from

many writings of the Fathers. For Chrysostom tells how *the priest stands every day and invites some to receive the sacrament, but forbids others to approach*. The ancient canons also indicate that *one priest officiated and gave the sacrament to the other priests and deacons*. For the words of the Nicene canon read: “After the priests, the deacons shall receive the sacrament from the bishop or priest in order.” No novelty has been introduced that did not exist in the church in days of old. No noticeable change has occurred in the public liturgy of the Mass... (Augsburg Confession XXIV:34-40 [German], Kolb/Wengert pp. 70, 72. Emphases added.)

O you bishops! How are you going to answer to Christ, now that you have so shamefully neglected the people and have not exercised your office for even a single second? ... Therefore, my dear sirs and brothers, *who are either pastors or preachers*, I beg all of you for God’s sake to *take up your office boldly*, to have pity on your people who are entrusted to you, and to help us bring the catechism to the people, especially to the young. ... To begin with, teach them these parts: the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, etc., following the text word for word, so that they can also repeat it back to you and learn it by heart. *Those who do not want to learn these things* – who must be told how they deny Christ and are not Christians – *should also not be admitted to the sacrament*, should not be sponsors for children at baptism, and should not exercise any aspect of Christian freedom, but instead should simply be sent back home to the pope and his officials... (Small Catechism, Preface: 4, 6, 10-11, Kolb/Wengert pp. 348-49. Emphases added.)

As we heard about Holy Baptism, so we must speak about the second sacrament in the same way, under three headings, stating what it is, what its benefits are, and who is to receive it. All this is established from the words Christ used to institute it. So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and to go to the sacrament should know them. *For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament, and administer it to, those who do not know what they seek or why they come*. (Large Catechism V:1-2, Kolb/Wengert p. 467. Emphasis added.)

...public, obstinate sinners should not be admitted to the sacrament or other fellowship in the church until they improve their behavior and avoid sin. The preachers should not mix civil punishments together with this spiritual penalty or excommunication. (Smalcald Articles III:9, Kolb/Wengert p. 323. Emphasis added.)

Confession has not been abolished by the preachers on our side. *For the custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved*. At the same time, the people are diligently instructed how comforting the word of absolution is and how highly and dearly absolution is to be esteemed. For it is not the voice or word of the person speaking it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin. For it is spoken in God’s stead and by God’s command. (Augsburg Confession XXV:1-4 [German], Kolb/Wengert p. 72. Emphasis added.)

Our enemies falsely accuse us of abolishing good ordinances and church discipline. We can truthfully claim that in our churches the public liturgy is more decent than in theirs, and if you look at it correctly we are more faithful to the canons than our opponents are. Among our opponents, unwilling celebrants and hirelings perform Mass, and they often do so only for the money. When they chant the Psalms, it is not to learn or pray but for the sake of the rite, as if this work were an act of worship or at least worth some reward. Every Lord’s Day many in our circles use the Lord’s Supper, but only after they have been instructed, examined, and absolved. The children chant the Psalms in order to learn; the people sing, too, in order to learn or to worship. Among our opponents there is no catechization of the children at all, though even the canons give prescriptions about it. In our

circles the pastors and ministers of the churches are required to instruct and examine the youth publicly, a custom that produces very good results. Among our opponents, there are many regions where no sermons are preached during the whole year, except in Lent. But the chief worship of God is the preaching of the Gospel.

When our opponents do preach, they talk about human traditions, the worship of the saints, and similar trifles. This the people rightly despise and walk out on them after the reading of the Gospel. A few of the better ones are now beginning to talk about good works, but they say nothing about the righteousness of faith or about faith in Christ or about comfort for the conscience. In their polemics they even attack this most salutary part of the Gospel. In our churches, on the other hand, all sermons deal with topics like these: penitence, the fear of God, faith in Christ, the righteousness of faith, comfort for the conscience through faith, the exercise of faith, prayer and our assurance that it is efficacious and is heard, the cross, respect for rulers and for all civil ordinances, the distinction between the kingdom of Christ (or the spiritual kingdom) and political affairs, marriage, the education and instruction of children, chastity, and all the works of love. (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XV:39-44, Tappert pp. 220-21)

Education and Examination in the Lutheran Church

Now the Holy Spirit, through Paul, His chosen instrument, in many words and accurately describes the qualities which God requires in a bishop in order that the dignity, importance, and sanctity of the ministry may be retained, equipped, and aided.

First, so far as his teaching is concerned, that a bishop be *didaktikos* [“an apt teacher,” 1 Tim. 3:2], that is, as He Himself explains, that he “hold the mystery of the faith” (1 Tim. 3:9) and embrace sound doctrine (Titus 1:9), be studied in and “nourished on the words of the faith and of...good doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6), that he be capable also of teaching others, avoid wordy battles of words and empty strife, rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15 [KJV]), “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9), “be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2), continue in what he has learned (2 Tim. 3:14), “follow the pattern of...sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), “guard what has been entrusted” to him, and “keep the commandments unstained and free from reproach” (1 Tim. 6:20,14), attend to reading, not neglect his gift, but stir it up by meditation and exercise, in order that his progress may be apparent to all (1 Tim. 4:13-15), pray for himself and for the church (1 Tim. 2:1-2). This is how Paul explains what *didaktikos* means.

In the second place He seeks in a bishop the gift of governing the church, and describes how he “ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church,” that is, how he ought to care for or govern the church (1 Tim. 3:1 ff., 15), how he is to set up the ministries and have supervision over them (1 Tim. 3:8 ff.; Titus 1:5 ff.), how he ought to deal with adversaries of the doctrine (1 Tim. 1:13 ff.; 2 Tim. 2:14 ff.; Titus 3:9-11), how ecclesiastical judgments are to be set up and exercised in the case of those who sin, the fallen, or the accused (1 Tim. 5:19 ff.; 2 Tim. 2:23-26), how supplications or public prayers are to be instituted (1 Tim. 2:1 ff.), how godly duties are to be prescribed to all orders of classes in the church and how things which are amiss in them are to be corrected (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 5:1-18; 6:1-2,17-19; Titus 2:2-10; 3:1-2), how the care for the poor is to be exercised. These things, according to Paul, belong to the bishop’s governing.

Third. Because the presence, guidance, and strengthening of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the right performance of the ministry, Paul demands in a bishop such holiness, lest he drive out the Holy Spirit through sins against conscience. Therefore, he says, he should “hold the

mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9), “in accordance with the prophetic utterances...wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience,” which some have rejected and “made shipwreck of their faith” (1 Tim. 1:18-19). He should train himself “in godliness...in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:7,12), shun greed, which has drowned many in perdition, “aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness, fight the good fight...take hold of eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:11-12). He is to work “as a good soldier of Christ,” for “no soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him”; he is to do his best to present himself “to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed.” Anyone who purifies himself from what is ignoble “will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work.” He should “shun youthful passions and aim at...peace, along with those who call upon the Lord” (2 Tim. 2:3-4,15,21-22). He is to avoid the vices which make one unfit for faith (2 Tim. 3:1-5), imitate “my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings” (2 Tim. 3:10-11), “be steady, endure suffering...fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5), “keep yourself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

In the fourth place, Paul requires in a bishop such holiness of life, such uprightness of morals and dignity of behavior, in order that he may also be an example for the flock, or the believers (1 Peter 5:3), “in speech and conduct, in love,” in spirit, “in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12), showing himself “in all respects a model of good deeds,” in “teaching,” in “integrity,” in “gravity,” that the adversaries “may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say” of him (Titus 2:7-8), with no one able to accuse him (1 Tim. 3:2). Thus he enumerates and describes these virtues (1 Tim. 3:2 ff.; Titus 1:6 ff.). These are the good qualities which the Holy Spirit demands in a minister of the Word, and He shows that by them the dignity, gravity, reverence for, and holiness of the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the New Testament is established, equipped, and aided. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III, trans. by Fred Kramer [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], pp. 124-25)

...those among us who shall minister in the church are, from an early age first, not only reared toward piety, but are also educated in the important languages (namely Latin, Greek and Hebrew). They also study the liberal arts and sciences. But above all, they are taught holy theology, and it is presented to them accurately, according to the Holy Scriptures by the teachers of theology. And when the time comes, following their schooling, to enter into the ministry of the church, they are called by the theologians and counselors, who have been appointed for this purpose by our most illustrious and most pious prince. They bring from their teachers written testimonies of their conduct of life. Then they are carefully examined whether they understand the pure content of the Christian faith and whether they possess the necessary gifts to teach the multitudes. When they are judged worthy, if they will be engaged [as ministers], they pledge under oath to teach the church piously and correctly, and to lead a blameless life so that to no one is given occasion for scandal [cf. Rom 14:13]. Following this they are sent to the church which they are to be assigned, where in one or two sermons they give a sample of those gifts which they have received from God. When they are approved by the church, then in a full assembly of the people (after a sermon has been preached and a number of prayers said relating to this matter), they are ordained by the superintendent of the locality in the presence of one or more ministers. And from then on, he takes care of the church which has been entrusted to him. (The Tübingen Theologians [including Jacob Andreae], *Correspondence with the Patriarch of Constantinople [1577]*, in George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople* [Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982], pp. 130-31)

Should someone be considered sufficiently equipped with the talents necessary for the ministry if he has learned Latin to some extent and can recite from memory a sermon taken from someone else’s writings? By no means. For the entire Word of God should be thoroughly familiar to a true

minister of the divine Word (Mal. 2:7; Matt. 13:52; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:14, 15-17). *Second*, a minister of the divine Word should also be so conversant with Holy Scripture that he knows how to apply it to his hearers wisely, with regard for time, place, differing circumstances, according to that statement of Paul in 2 Tim. 2:15: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” *Third*, whoever wants to be considered worthy of the holy ministry must have made such progress in God’s Word that he can give an account of what he teaches if it is demanded of him and silence those who contradict, as Paul reminds [us] in Titus 1:9. ...

Can those who are found during the examination not to be equipped with knowledge of the articles of faith and the Holy Scriptures that is necessary and sufficient for the holy ministry nevertheless be ordained and admitted into the holy ministry, but on the condition that they solemnly promise diligence and rigor in learning? Absolutely not. For, *first*, Paul does not permit someone to be entrusted with the holy ministry who is not fit to teach and able to silence those who contradict the truth (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9). *Second*, the Spirit of God reminds [us] explicitly that someone who lays hands on a person who is insufficiently fit participates in the sins of others (1 Tim. 5:22). *Third*, experience only too often shows that those who are admitted to the holy ministry without an education remain in their uneducated state, even if they had promised to be diligent in learning. *Fourth*, how would we answer God if many of the hearers are lost before the pastor has learned what he should impress on others? (Ezek. 33:1 ff). (Jesper Rasmussen [Caspar Erasmus] Brochmand, *Systematis Universae Theologiae* [Leipzig: Hallervord & Moltken, 1638], loc. 30, ch. 3, vol. 2, fol. 372, 375; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, trans. by Christian C. Tiews [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017], p. 77)

NOTE: Immediately after quoting the above text, Walther adds this comment: “From this can be seen what an unbiblical, unconscionable, and spiritually corrupting matter the so-called *licensing system* is that is still observed by some synods here [in America], according to which those whom one does not dare to ordain because they are untried or insufficiently fit for the ministry are given only a so-called license on the basis of which they are to work on a trial basis in a congregation” (pp. 77-78).

There are two things which we say must be required of every minister of the divine Word who is to be called: *ability* and *intention*.

By the word “ability” we mean three things: (1) The *συνεσις* or knowledge of the entire Christian doctrine contained in the catechism and in the commonplaces or theological topics and the foundations or chief testimonies of the Scripture on which the chief articles are based. For whoever does not understand what he is saying or claiming is not suited for teaching others, in accordance with the testimony of the apostle (1 Tim. 1:7). (2) The *δυναμις ερμηνευτικη* or the gift and skill for teaching others as well (2 Tim. 2:2), which the one to be called should have to such a degree that he not only personally clings to the Word, which is certain and able to teach, but that he also is able to admonish by means of salutary doctrine and to reprove those who contradict (Titus 1:9) – that is, to present the true doctrine of the faith; to undertake the improvement of morals in righteousness, the rebuke of false doctrinal statements, and the discipline of vices (according to the four goals of Scripture, 2 Tim. 3:16); and to provide comfort for those beset by afflictions and sorrows (Rom. 15:4). (3) A *ανεπιληπτος και ανεγκητος βιος* (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6), that is, a blameless and irreproachable life that is free of crimes and shameful acts – which are not to be tolerated in the life of a minister of the Word – free and adorned with all the virtues necessary to present himself as a Christian (Gal. 5:6; 2 Pet. 1:5-7) and to edify others.

By the word “intention” we mean two things: (1) The desire to serve the Church (1 Tim. 3:1) – and not one that is coerced or is extorted by need, but one that is voluntary and arises out of fervor

for promoting the honor of God and the salvation of people, not for the sake of profit or out of desire for authority (1 Pet. 5:2-3). (2) Perseverance in faithfully administering the office and all its parts once it is assumed (1 Cor. 4:2). This includes diligence in awakening and increasing the gift of God through the proper means (2 Tim. 1:6; also depicted in other passages, such as 1 Tim. 4:12-13) and patience in hardships and sorrows, which is most necessary for a pastor as a good warrior (2 Tim. 2:1). (Paul Tarnow; quoted in Johann Ludwig Hartmann, *Pastorale evangelicum seu instructio plenior ministrorum verbi*, 2nd edition [Nürnberg: Wolfgang Moritz Endter, 1697], bk. 1, ch. 8, pp. 130f.; quoted in turn in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, pp. 76-77)

The universality of this [New Testament] priesthood is also shown by the characteristic functions of these priests, which are: to offer sacrifices to God; to approach Him, i.e. to pray for oneself and others; to confess and teach God's Word; to pass judgment on all doctrines and spirits; to baptize and administer the Eucharist; to bind and loose sins; etc. ...

Now although the New Testament priesthood is universal, no one in the public assembly of the church should appropriate or discharge on his own authority this right which is the common property of all. Rather, some men who are particularly fitted for the task are to be chosen and called by general vote to carry out publicly – in the name of all who have the same right – the functions of teaching, binding and loosing, and administering the sacraments. *For necessary to the public execution of the priestly office of instructing, consoling, exhorting, denouncing sins, judging controversies over doctrine, etc., is a thorough knowledge of Christian theology, a faculty for teaching, skill in languages, speaking ability, and other gifts, and these are not equally manifest in all whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated; therefore those who lack these talents rightly yield their privileges to others better endowed than themselves.*

For God is not the author of disorder and ἀκαταστασία [confusion] but of order and peace. Therefore, so that all things might be done εὐσχημονῶς [decently] and in order and to prevent barbaric confusion and a Cyclopean ἀγορὰ ἐν ἣ ἀκούει οὐδείς οὐδέν οὐδενός [assembly where nobody heeds anybody in anything] from existing in the church, Paul himself established a particular order of vocation and commands that this ministry be committed to suitable and faithful men who should teach others. In Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim. 3:1-7, he sets forth at length the qualifications of the bishop or minister of the Gospel who has the duty of performing and administering sacerdotal functions in the public assemblies of the church. Paul does not differentiate bishops, presbyters, and pastors; he assigns precisely equal dignity of rank and the same office to presbyters and to bishops – and it is in fact clear that there were many such in individual towns. In Acts 20[:28], Paul says to the presbyters of the church at Ephesus whom he has called to him: “Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the church of God.” Note also Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1, 2; etc. (David Chytraeus, *On Sacrifice*, trans. by John Warwick Montgomery [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962], pp. 95, 98-99. Emphasis added.)

...the *Predigtamt*...is the office which exercises the keys on the public behalf, *which administers word and sacrament in the place of Christ*. One is called to this *Amt* (Rom 10:15), mediately by the royal priesthood, but is set in the office by God (Acts 20:28) and has the specific appointment by Christ (Jn 20:21) along with the promise of Christ, “He who hears you hears Me” (Lk 10:16). The incumbents of this office hold an apostolic ministry and are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor 4:1). There are specific qualifications for the office, e.g. 1 Tim 2:12, 3:1-7, 1 Cor 14:34; the office holders are to have their livelihood by that work (1 Tim 5:17) and *they are to be seminary graduates, i.e. not in form, but in substance, properly trained* (2 Tim 2:2, 1 Tim 3:8-17, Ti 1:9). All of this is distinct from the *Pfarramt*, the congregational ministry, the specific office which has

developed and may continue to develop. A missionary, a seminary professor, a college or hospital chaplain, may not have the *Pfarramt*, but they certainly have the *Predigtamt* as much as does the pastor in a local congregation. Luther was not the pastor of a local congregation in today's sense, but he was certain that as a Doctor of Theology he had God's call to the Gospel ministry, and he would then point to his call to the university as his call to preach and teach the Gospel, not only as a royal priest, but as one called to the *Amt*. (Erling T. Teigen, "The Universal Priesthood in the Lutheran Confessions," *Logia*, Vol. 1, No. 1 [Reformation/October 1992], pp. 13-14. Emphases added.)

Call and Ordination in the Lutheran Church

They shout loudly that those who do not approve the priesthood of the papalists take away all order out of the church, that with infinite confusion they prostitute the ministry to any one of the common people and (something which Tertullian ascribes to the heretics) *make laymen out of priests and enjoin priestly functions to laymen, with the result that there is neither any authority nor dignity of the ministry, etc. Therefore this slander must first of all be removed.*

Now the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts are rightly disapproved, who either take the use of the external ministry of Word and sacrament entirely out of the church, or imagine that it is useless and unnecessary. For they teach that new and special revelations should rather be sought and expected from God without the use of the external ministry of Word and sacrament, and that this kind of calling, illumination, and conversion is much more excellent and worthy of honor than if we use the voice of the ministry. And indeed, it is God by whose power, working, efficacy, impulse, and inspiration whatever pertains to calling, illumination, conversion, repentance, faith, renewal, and in short, to the business of our salvation is begun, effected, increased, and preserved in men. But God arranged by a certain counsel of His that He wills to dispense these things, not by infusing new and special revelations, illuminations, and movements into the minds of men without any means, but through the outward ministry of the Word. This ministry He did not commit to angels, so that their appearances are to be sought and expected, but He put the Word of reconciliation into men, and He wills that the proclamation of the Gospel, divinely revealed, should sound forth through them.

All Christians are indeed priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6), because they offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Everyone also can and should teach the Word of God in his own house (Deut. 6:7; 1 Cor. 14:35). Nevertheless, not everyone ought to take and arrogate to himself the public ministry of Word and sacrament. For not all are apostles; not all are teachers (1 Cor. 12:29), but those who have been set apart for this ministry by God through a particular and legitimate call (Acts 13:2; Jer. 23:21; Rom. 10:15). This is done either immediately or mediately. Paul prescribes a legitimate manner of calling which is made through the voice of the church (1 Tim. 3:2-7; and Titus 1:5-9). Christ Himself indeed called certain men to this ministry immediately, in order to show that He approves the ministry of those who are chosen and called by the voice of the church according to the rule prescribed by the apostles... There is added also the promise that God will truly work effectively through the ministry of those who teach the Gospel, which the Son of God wills to preserve in the church through perpetual calling, as Paul says in Eph. 4:8 ff.: He ascended; He gave gifts to men; and He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, others evangelists, others however pastors and teachers for perfecting of the saints in the work of ministry, in edification of the body of Christ. To this use of the ministry, which God both instituted and preserves in the church, men must therefore be guided, and taught that through this ministry there are offered to us eternal blessings, and indeed that God in this way receives us, rescues us from sin and the power of the devil and from eternal death, and restores to us righteousness and eternal life.

This ministry does indeed have power, divinely bestowed (2 Cor. 10:4-6; 13:2-4), but circum-

scribed with certain duties and limitations, namely, to preach the Word of God, teach the erring, reprove those who sin, admonish the dilatory, comfort the troubled, strengthen the weak, resist those who speak against the truth, reproach and condemn false teaching, censure evil customs, dispense the divinely instituted sacraments, remit and retain sins, be an example to the flock, pray for the church privately and lead the church in public prayers, be in charge of care for the poor, publicly excommunicate the stubborn and again receive those who repent and reconcile them with the church, appoint pastors to the church according to the instruction of Paul, with consent of the church institute rites that serve the ministry and do not militate against the Word of God nor burden consciences but serve good order, dignity, decorum, tranquillity, edification, etc. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, trans. by Fred Kramer [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978], pp. 677-79. Emphases added.)

...without the preaching and hearing of the Word there is no faith, no calling on God, no salvation (Rom. 10:14). However, no one is able to preach in order that faith may follow hearing unless he be sent (Rom. 10:15). Moreover, this also is certain, that the call to the ministry of the Gospel ought to have the public testimony and the public attestation of the church, on account of those who run although they were not sent (Jer. 23:21). Therefore *the apostles with some public testimony and public attestation of the church announced and as it were pointed out the call of those who had been legitimately chosen for the ministry of the Word and the sacraments*. For the Holy Spirit willed that also Paul, who had been called immediately, should be declared and designated as the one who should be the apostle of the Gentiles [Acts 13:2-3]. In that public approbation, attestation, or announcement, since it was a public action, *the apostles employed the outward rite of the laying on of hands*, which was customary at that time with those people, in part on account of the public designation of the one called, in part on account of the prayers and supplications which were made by the whole church in behalf of the person called.

The rite of laying on hands was extraordinarily suited to this process: 1. That the person in question might be publicly pointed out to the church and declared to be legitimately chosen and called. For by this rite Moses points out and declares to the people the calling of Joshua, his successor (Deut. 34:9). 2. That by means of this rite the one who had been called might be given full assurance about his legitimate and divine call and might at the same time be admonished to devote, give, and as it were vow himself to the service and worship of God. Thus hands were laid on sacrificial animals and in this way Joshua was confirmed in his call. 3. That it might as it were be a public and solemn declaration of the church before God that the model and rule prescribed by the Holy Spirit had been observed at the election and calling. Therefore Paul says (1 Tim. 5:22): “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor participate in another man’s sins.” 4. That it might be signified by this visible rite that God approves the calling which is done by the voice of the church, for just as God chooses ministers by the voice of the church, so He also approves the calling by the attestation of the church. Thus the calling of the deacons was approved (Acts 6:6). And thus it comes about that God bestows grace through the laying on of hands. 5. During the prayers, when the name of God was especially invoked over a certain person, it was customary to employ the imposition of hands, by which that person was as it were offered to God and set in His sight, with the request added that God would deign to shower His grace and blessing on him. Thus Jacob placed his hand on the lads whom he blessed (Gen. 48:14 ff.); thus the elders pray over the sick (James 5:14-15); thus Christ blessed little children, laying on His hands (Mark 10:13-16). Now the prayer of a righteous man avails much if it is *energoumenee*, that is, full of activity or earnestness. In order, therefore, that men may consider how necessary the special divine grace and blessing is in view of the usefulness and difficulty of this gift, in view also of the hindrances laid in its way by Satan, the world, and the flesh, and that thus the prayer of the church may come to its aid and be, according to James, rendered full of activity or earnestness, therefore the outward rite of the laying on of hands was employed.

Fasting was also added to the prayer (Acts 13:3). And this earnest prayer at the ordination of ministers is not without effect, because it rests upon a divine command and promise. This is the meaning of Paul's words: "The gift...that is within you through the laying on of...hands" [2 Tim. 1:6].

If ordination is understood in this way, of the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, as already the Apology of the Augsburg Confession explained the position of our churches, then we have no objection to calling ordination a sacrament. And there the words are added, "We shall not object either to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament." ...the term *sacrament* covers a wide range of meanings... This reminder must, however, be added, that the rite of ordination must be distinguished from the ceremony of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for ordination is not a sacrament in the same way as Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The difference is plain. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are means or instruments through which God applies and seals the promise of reconciliation or forgiveness to individual believers who use Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Ordination is not such a means or instrument, neither are all to be ordained who desire and ask that forgiveness of sins be applied and sealed to them. Many also, like Judas, indeed receive and have the grace of ordination but do not have the grace of reconciliation or the forgiveness of sins. There is therefore a difference between the promises which are added to ordination and those which are added to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Besides, there is also a difference in the ceremony or external rite. For in Baptism and the Lord's Supper the Son of God Himself prescribed and commanded a certain external element, a certain ceremony or rite. In ordination, however, such as we now understand it, Christ Himself applied an external sign just once, when on the day of His resurrection He breathed on His disciples (John 20:22). He did not, however, add a command that the church should imitate that rite of breathing upon the ministers at their ordination. ... It is also worthy of consideration that when the apostles wanted to apply some outward rite in ordination, they did not take the visible sign of breathing on the ordinand, which Christ had used – lest people think that Christ had given a command about using the rite of breathing on them. Therefore they took another rite, one indifferent and free, namely, the rite of laying on of hands, for they did not want to impose something on the church as necessary concerning which they did not have a command of Christ.

Now the ministry of the Word and the sacraments has divine promises, and the prayer at ordination rests on these, but these promises are not to be tied to the rite of the imposition of hands, about which there is neither a command of Christ nor such a promise as there is about Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, pp. 693-95. Emphases added.)

NOTE: In the Lutheran Church of the sixteenth century the rite of ordination in its traditional form, involving the laying on of hands, was generally "reserved for those who served a congregation in some capacity," and who in such a parish setting were called to a comprehensive ministry of Word *and Sacrament*. "Those, like [Philip] Melancthon and [David] Chytraeus, who spent their entire lives in teaching as the doctors of the church, even though they might preach, were not ordained. Likewise [Martin] Chemnitz, although he was engaged to serve on the Wittenberg faculty, was not ordained until he received and accepted the call to Braunschweig, which did involve the pastorate of Martin Church" (J. A. O. Preus, *The Second Martin: The Life and Theology of Martin Chemnitz* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994], pp. 364-65). It was, however, "the opinion of Luther and of all genuine Lutherans" during this period, "that a doctorate is a special testimony of a call to the ministry; that doctoral promotions of theologians are nothing other than a public commendation of the evangelical ministry according to apostolic rite; [and] that *the promotion itself is a true, legitimate, and solemn ordination to the ministry*" (Johann Affelmann, *De sanctor. Invocat.*, ch. 2, th. 23; quoted in Johann Gerhard, *On the Ecclesiastical Ministry*, Part One,

trans. by Richard J. Dinda [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012], p. 207. Emphasis added.)

In Göttingen, Johann Sutel was made a preacher at the church of St. Nicolai through the call only, without public liturgical ordination or prayer and the laying on of hands. He asked Luther whether he could administer the Holy Supper without priestly consecration. Luther answered his question in a letter dated March 1, 1531: He had received the impression that the people of Göttingen were not serious about the Gospel. If that were the case, he should continue to refrain from administering the Sacrament. But if the people of Göttingen were actually serious about the Gospel, he should first have himself publicly endued with the “testimony [*testimonium*]” (most likely of his ability to teach and of his call) and the “authority for handling the Supper [*auctoritas cenae tractandae*]” by the other ministers with prayer and the laying on of hands before the altar [WA Br 6:44.15ff. “...then publicly before the altar, by the other ministers with prayer and laying on of hands, you shall receive the testimony and authority to handle the Supper.”]. Luther thus regards the liturgical ordination as mandatory at least for the full office with administration of the Sacrament. This public ordination rite which Luther suggested to Sutel is a public attestation of the legitimate call and bestowal of the authority to administer the Sacrament, both performed by the other ministers of the Word. (Hellmut Lieberg, *Office and Ordination in Luther and Melancthon*, trans. by Matthew Carver [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2020], p. 159)

What is the ministry of the Gospel? The ministry of the Gospel is the office which God has instituted, the office of preaching and confessing the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel concerning Christ, in the public assembly of the Church; of rightly administering the sacraments; of announcing the forgiveness of sins or of absolving those who repent; of excommunicating the obstinate; and of ordaining ministers of the Church, through which ministry God is truly effective for the salvation of all who believe, Luke 24; Matt. 10, 18 and 28; Rom. 10; Eph. 4; 1 Tim. 5; 2 Tim. 2.

What is ordination? In general, the ordination of ministers is the ritual by which the public testimony is given in the presence of the entire Church of a certain person that he has been legitimately called and is fit to teach the Gospel and administer the sacraments.

What is required for a legitimate call? There are four requirements: the invoking of God, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest,” Matt. 9; the selection of a person; examination of the doctrine and behavior of the man chosen; and the approval of the presbyters. (David Chytraeus, *A Summary of the Christian Faith* [Decatur, Illinois: Repristination Press, 1997], p. 144)

It should be known that those who have been called and chosen by the voice of the church and who administer the office even without the laying on of hands are true ministers of the church and may teach and administer the Sacraments. For by this rite a special character is not imprinted on the ordained, nor does the authority of the church or the right to teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments depend on this rite, nor does this rite render the office of the ordained efficacious, for the office is efficacious and a power for salvation for everyone who believes because of its divine institution. *The custom of the laying on the hands is added as a public declaration of the called persons in order to make [ordination] more solemn and to bring to remembrance certain duties.* (David Chytraeus [comments on Exodus 29]; quoted in Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, De minist. § 139; quoted in turn in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, trans. and edited by Matthew C. Harrison [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012], p. 258. Emphasis added.)

Is ordination necessary for conscience’s sake? It certainly is necessary, but not because of any necessity of purpose and means (as though the purpose in view could be accomplished only by this

means)... Nevertheless, it is necessary according to the requirement of the necessity of an apostolic and positive (not moral) command: “Set apart [for Me Barnabas and Saul]” (Acts 13:2), and an ancient apostolic custom (1 Timothy 5:21). Similarly, according to the necessity, which is imposed from the resulting benefit, *that the examined and unexamined teachers of the church can be distinguished, so that a certain [Christoph] Besold may not rightfully complain that “the Lutherans often use as vicars certain scholars who are not yet ordained with the laying on of hands, permitting them to hear confession, feed the sick, and administer their [Lord’s] Supper.”* ... Who, then, is the opponent of order who superciliously despises this rite? He is neither peaceful, because he goes against the church [*Kirche*], nor conscientious, because he regards as worthless the means that serve to calm consciences; rather, he is headstrong. (Johann Conrad Dannhauer, *Liber conscientiae apertus, sive theologiae conscientiarum* [Strassburg: Spoor, 1679], pp. 1005-06; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, pp. 259-60. Emphasis added.)

...we are far from assigning to ordination an absolute or divine necessity since the argument for its divine institution is an *argumentum a silentio*. Rather, along with the entire orthodox church we recognize ordination as an adiaphoron. ... Also in agreement with the church of God, however, *we hold it to be relatively necessary*. Ordination is an ecclesiastical order sanctioned by ancient apostolic practice which serves to clarify and publicly confirm that the call to the ministry of the word that has come before is legitimate. [Johann Conrad] Dannhauer writes: “Who is against this order? Who despises this usage? Such a one neither loves peace, because he is against the church, nor is a person of conscience, because he despises the means that serve unto peace of conscience. He is an obstinate person.” Whoever omits ordination without need is a schismatic. He separates himself from the orthodox church of all time. ... If we do not wish to deny, for example, that the administration of the holy supper by a non-ordained layman called only for a time by an entire congregation *in an emergency* is effective and legitimate, still we must determinedly stress that *only the most difficult of emergencies would permit this*. If a congregation in ordinary circumstances calls an unordained person, she despises ecclesiastical order. The call to the office of the word must have some public witness on account of those who run and are not sent (Jer 23:21), and ordination gives this witness. If this is the case – and no Lutheran will deny it – then it is also correct when we claim: He who should administer an essential part of the holy ministry should be ordained. If circumstances arise in which it is impossible to hold to the order of ordination, then we must at least demand some type of setting apart of the person called to the holy office, for Acts 13:2 says: “When they had served the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke: ‘Set apart for me (αφορισατε) Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (see Rom 1:1).

Johann Freder, born in Cöslin and a student of Luther, functioned as a preacher in Hamburg, Stralsund, Rügen, and Wismar without being ordained. When the Greifswald theologian Dr. Knipstrov demanded that he subsequently allow himself to be ordained in order to correct the offense given, Freder would not yield to this. Rather he called ordination a snare to the conscience. For this reason he was deposed in 1551. In a Wittenberg faculty opinion given on this matter in 1553 among other things was said: Although ordination in and of itself is not necessary, it serves as a publication and approval of the call. To consider it a snare of conscience is nothing else than to say that anyone can take up the preaching office even when no examination or confirmation of the call has gone before. That is contrary to order and cannot be condoned.

The Strassburger theologian Dannhauer writes concerning ordination: “Is ordination necessary on account of conscience? It is most certainly necessary: not on account of a necessity of its goal and means (as if the intended goal could only be accomplished through this means). ... Still it is necessary on account of an apostolic and positive (not moral) command: ‘Set apart,’ Acts 13:2, and an ancient apostolic practice (1 Tim 5:21). Likewise [it is necessary] according to *the need to be able to distinguish between the proven and unproven teachers of the church* and for showing reverence

to the ministry. Therefore *no one can complain that Lutherans often use students who have not yet been ordained as vicars and allow them to hear confession, visit the sick and administer the sacrament to them.* [This is our practice] so that no one might think that a pastor and an attendant are the same thing.” [Hieronymus] Kromayer seems to contradict [the statement that only ordained men should work in the office of the word] when he writes: “In some places, as in the region of Württemberg, as well as from time to time even here in Swabian churches, students of theology administer the sacraments.” This apparent contradiction with the earlier citation from Dannhauer is solved by the following text found in the Wittenberg Judgments: “In many Württemberg, Schwabish, Alsatian, and other highland churches of the Augsburg Confession, it is customary that such *actiones sacrae* (preaching, administering the sacraments, comforting the sick, burying) are committed to ordained students of theology who do not yet have a parish or place of their own as helpers of the regular clergy.” (E. W. Kaehler, “Does a Congregation Ordinarily Have the Right Temporarily to Commit an Essential Part of the Holy Preaching Office to a Layman?,” trans. by Mark D. Nispel, *Logia*, Vol. VI, No. 3 [Holy Trinity 1997], pp. 44-45. Emphases added. This essay was originally published [in three parts] in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 20, Nos. 9, 11, and 12 [Sept., Nov., and Dec. 1874].)

Ordination is an ecclesiastical custom which is rightly held in high regard for the sake of its purposes, of which it primarily has three. For (1) it is a public testimony that this candidate has been found fit and worthy for the ministry, that the souls of people can be entrusted to him. (2) This custom makes the candidate himself publicly certain that he is legitimately called and is therefore bound to the Church for the holy ministry. (3) The entire congregation prays over him that his gifts, which are necessary for the Church, would increase and that he would be given the courage to serve God steadfastly and to care for the salvation of souls.

After this, we must answer the question of what should be believed about the necessity of this custom. Two extremes are to be avoided here. First, that one does not, with the Papists, impute an absolute necessity to it. According to them, this practice imprints [such] a character on a person that he is transformed from a [member of the] worldly [estate] into [a member of the] spiritual [estate], from a layman into a clergyman – that is, that he can perform the holy acts, especially effecting (*conficere*) the sacraments. This is why they also ordain those without a call, so that they can immediately enter their ministries when they are called. Second, *that one does not, with the Calvinists, hold it in low regard, as if it had no significance.* For if we do not even consider marriages not consecrated by a public blessing to be truly Christian marriages, how much less the holy ministry?

Two rules follow from this: (1) That one who is called, if *a case of necessity* demands it or if he cannot be ordained immediately because of some obstacle, can carry out both the ministry of preaching as well as of administering the Sacraments. In such a case, the congregation should be instructed that these things do not depend on ordination as a means of imprinting a holy character without which the minister cannot perform the holy acts. (2) That, *except in cases of necessity*, one who is called but not ordained should not perform these acts readily – not because they would be invalid once done, but so that others are not given cause for offense, as if the prayers of others in such a holy and important matter were unnecessary and one could fall into the pastoral office the way animals fall upon their food. This is also the reason why the custom that once prevailed in Strassburg – that pastors were often ordained only several years after entering their ministry – was abolished. (Johannes Henrich Fecht, *Instructio pastoralis*, edited by G. F. Fecht, 2nd edition [Leipzig: Jo. Heinr. Russworm, 1722], ch. 5, § 1.2, pp. 47f.; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, p. 79. Emphases added.)

Luther teaches this: The Keys or the Office [*Amt*] are originally and immediately possessed by the entire Church [*ganze Kirche*], that is, all believers. God has, however, established within the Church the order [*Ordnung*] that this office be administered publicly only by persons specially called to it,

who are apt to teach, and who now, in a special sense, by virtue of their office, can act in the name and in the stead of Christ. But because the Church has the office originally, so can and shall every Christian make use of this privilege, where its order is not overturned. [This may happen,] for example, among the heathen, or where the need supersedes the order, when, for instance, no preacher is present to baptize a child who is near death, or when within the Church a wolf opens his mouth, and whom then every Christian has the power to contradict, indeed, the duty and responsibility to do so. This doctrine...is found throughout Luther, and there is no statement of Luther, either from his earlier or later period, which contradicts it. ...

Regarding students and candidates who also occasionally preach, ...these men preach in order to maintain the order of the preaching office, not to overturn it. Their sermons are exercises, preparations, and examinations so that in the future, they may be placed into and established in the preaching office. They do this therefore not as laymen, but as Tertullian says, as “*episcopi aut presbyteri aut diaconi discentes*” (bishops or elders or deacons in the process of learning)... To that end it happens that their sermons are thoroughly evaluated. They subject themselves thereby at the same time to the election of the Church. ...

God give you [in the Norwegian Synod] good courage for the struggle that He has ordained for you! While we [in the Missouri Synod] have had to struggle chiefly against hierarchy and the dominance of priestly rule [*Pfafferei*] by advocating the rights of Christians, perhaps your lot is to guard God’s order against *Schwaermerei*. Well then! Let’s proceed in both directions! (Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, “On Luther and Lay Preachers: A Letter to Pastor J. A. Ottesen,” in *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, edited by Matthew C. Harrison [Fort Wayne, Indiana: Lutheran Legacy, 2009], pp. 139-40)

NOTE: Lutherans have always exercised more flexibility in allowing non-ordained theological students or lay readers to preach or proclaim the Word of God when a pastor is not available (albeit under pastoral supervision) – in contrast to the administration of the Lord’s Supper – due to their conviction that “of all acts of worship, that is the greatest, most holy, *most necessary*, and highest, which God has required as the highest in the First and Second Commandment, namely to preach the Word of God” (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XV:42 [German], *Concordia Triglotta* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921], p. 327. Emphasis added). Luther also writes that “the word of God is the greatest, most necessary and most sublime part in Christendom (for the sacraments cannot exist without the word, but indeed the word can exist without the sacraments, and in an emergency one could be saved without the sacraments – as for example, those who die before receiving the desired baptism – but not without the word)...” (“The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 38 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], p. 189). So, Walther did allow men who might be described in a certain sense as “bishops or elders or deacons in the process of learning” to deliver approved sermons. But he did not allow those men to administer the Lord’s Supper until they were *actual* “bishops or elders or deacons” who had *completed* the process of learning.

Pastoral Responsibility and Emergency Situations in the Lutheran Church

The only administrators of the Holy Communion are the ministers of the Word, who have been legitimately called, ...like Aaron, Heb. 5:4; also because those alone should administer this Sacrament who are able to examine the faith of the men using this Sacrament. (Jesper Rasmussen [Caspar

Erasmus] Brochmand, *Systematis Universae Theologiae*, II, VIII:36; quoted in “Lay Celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar,” *Logia*, Vol. II, No. 1 [Epiphany/January 1993], p. 55)

One or more assisting ministers, chosen and instructed for this purpose, may assist in the distribution of the Sacrament by administering the blood of Christ. The presiding minister himself always administers the body of Christ, because the administration of the Lord’s body indicates admission to the Sacrament. The presiding minister bears responsibility both for the celebration and for the administration of the Sacrament, and he is to exercise pastoral judgment in admitting communicants to the table. This responsibility may not be borne by vicars, field workers, or other lay persons. (Charles J. Evanson, *The Divine Service: The Service of the Sacrament*, in *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice*, edited by Fred L. Precht [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993], p. 432)

1. God has instituted the office of the public ministry for the public edification of Christians unto salvation through God’s Word. 2. For the public edification of Christians God has not instituted any other order to be placed alongside of this. 3. When one undertakes the leadership of the public edification of Christians through the Word, he undertakes and exercises the public ministry. 4. It is a sin when anyone without call or in the absence of an emergency undertakes this. 5. It is both a right and a duty in the case of an actual emergency for everyone who can to exercise in proper Christian order the office of the public ministry. 6. The only correct conception of an emergency involves the actual existence of a situation in which there is no pastor nor can there be one, or in which there is one who does not properly serve them or who propounds false doctrine or cannot serve them sufficiently but so inadequately that they cannot thereby be led to faith or preserved therein and protected against error so that the Christians would perish spiritually from lack of supervision. 7. When an emergency is at hand, efforts should be made to relieve it by definite and fitting arrangements as the circumstances permit. (Theses on Lay Preaching, adopted by the Norwegian Synod in 1862, in Herman Amberg Preus, *Vivacious Daughter: Seven Lectures on the Religious Situation Among Norwegians in America*, trans. by Todd W. Nichol [Northfield, Minnesota: The Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1990], p. 131)

The church is commanded to appoint ministers who will preside over the churches (2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5, Ap XIII, 12), who must have the scriptural qualifications for a full use of the keys: “The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. ...[T]his power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters or bishops” (Treatise 60-61). God commands that properly called men publicly preach, teach, administer the sacraments, forgive and retain sins, and have oversight of doctrine in the name of Christ and the church (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Therefore a presiding office, whether it is called that of pastor, shepherd, bishop, presbyter, elder or by any other name, is indispensable for the church (Luke 10:16, 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Matthew 28:18-20, Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 5:1-2).

We reject any teaching that denies the exercise of spiritual oversight by the pastoral office. ...

Scripture clearly teaches that women are not to be in the pastoral office, because this presiding office includes the exercise of authority over men (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-12). Also, when Scripture refers to one who officiates at the Word and sacrament liturgy it speaks in male terms (1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 4:13). Therefore women shall not read the Scripture lessons in the divine service, preach the sermon, administer Baptism or distribute the Lord’s Supper, for these things are intimately related to the pastoral office (1 Timothy 4:13-14, 1 Corinthians 4:1).

The church is free to divide the labors of the pastoral office among qualified men (1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6). While every incumbent of this [pastoral] office must be qualified

for a full use of the keys, not every incumbent must be responsible for full use of the keys. Missionary, assistant pastor, professor of theology, synod president (who supervises doctrine in the church), and chaplain are some examples of this. ...

The church has freedom in dividing the labors of the public ministry (for example, vicars, principals, Lutheran elementary school teachers and other teachers), but must not go beyond the bounds of God's commands when calling men or women to carry out a limited public use of the keys (1 Corinthians 14:34, 1 Timothy 2:12ff, etc). ...

We reject any teaching that makes the office of the Lutheran elementary school teacher, Sunday school teacher or any other limited office in the church equivalent to the pastoral office. ...

In the Lutheran Confessions ordination is understood as the rite by which the church confirms a man to be suitable for a call to the pastoral office (SA Part III, Art. X, Treatise 66–69). Historically the Lutheran church has reserved this rite for those entering the pastoral office. (*The Public Ministry of the Word*, adopted by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 2005)

The keys are the pope's as little as Baptism, the Sacrament [of the Altar], and the Word of God are, for they belong to the people of Christ and are called "the church's keys" not "the pope's keys." Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer [*Zum fünfften kennet man die Kirche eusserlich da bey, das sie Kirchen diener weihet oder berufft oder empter hat, die sie bestellen sol*]. There must be bishops, pastors [*Pfarrher*], or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things [*Stücke*] or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4[:8], "He received gifts among men..." – his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc. The people as a whole cannot do these things, but must entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other? It must be entrusted to one person, and he alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments. The others should be content with this arrangement and agree to it. Wherever you see this done, be assured that God's people, the holy Christian people, are present.

It is, however, true that the Holy Spirit has excepted women, children, and incompetent people from this function, but chooses (except in emergencies) only competent males to fill this office [*Wahr ist's aber, daß in diesem Stück der Heilige Geist ausgenommen hat Weiber, Kinder und untüchtige Leute, sondern allein tüchtige Mannspersonen heizu erwählet (ausgenommen die Noth)*], as one reads here and there in the epistles of St. Paul [I Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:6] that a bishop must be pious, able to teach, and the husband of one wife – and in I Corinthians 14[:34] he says, "The women should keep silence in the churches." In summary, it must be a competent and chosen man. Children, women, and other persons are not qualified for this office, even though they are able to hear God's Word, to receive Baptism, the Sacrament, absolution, and are also true, holy Christians, as St. Peter says [I Pet. 3:7]. Even nature and God's creation makes this distinction, implying that women (much less children or fools) cannot and shall not occupy positions of sovereignty, as experience also suggests and as Moses says in Genesis 3[:16], "You shall be subject to man." The Gospel, however, does not abrogate this natural law, but confirms it as the ordinance and creation of God. (Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], pp. 154-55)

If the papists were to argue on behalf of the retention of their private Masses: that a priest might well communicate his own self or give himself communion, just as one communicates individuals who are sick in their homes, but then one must answer: First, it is not enough to speak thus or to undertake [such a thing], but they ought to have a clear Word and command of God, that this is proper and

should be done; for without God's Word one ought not undertake anything in God's service and in the things of God. Secondly, it is a perversion of the priestly office which God has instituted, for the Sacraments are to be distributed through a common public office in the stead of Christ and of Christendom [*so ist's ein Verkehrung des priesterlichen Ampts, das Gott eingesetzt hat; denn die Sacrament sollen durchs öffentlich gemein Ampt gereicht werden an Statt Christi und der Christenheit*]. Now a single individual cannot have or exercise a common public office all by himself in opposition to Christendom. However, when one gives the Sacrament to the sick, this comes from the instituted office [*das geschieht aus dem ordenlichen Ampt*], just as if one took the Sacrament from the altar otherwise and brought it to someone in a corner or behind the church door; and so the office should remain unperverted here in its function [*Werk*]. (Martin Luther, Letter to George Spalatin, July 27, 1530 [WA Br. V, 504]; quoted in Edward Frederick Peters, *The Origin and Meaning of the Axiom: "Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament Outside of the Use," in Sixteenth-Century and Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Theology* [Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1993], p. 184)

...it is not by our doing, speaking, or work that bread and wine become Christ's body and blood, much less is it by the chrism or consecration [received at ordination]; rather, it is caused by Christ's ordinance, command, and institution. For Christ commanded (as St. Paul says in I Corinthians 11[:22 ff.]) that when we meet together and speak his words with reference to bread and wine, then it is to be his body and blood. Here, too, we do nothing more than administer and bestow bread and wine along with his words according to his command and institution. *This command and institution of his have the power to accomplish this, that we do not present and receive simply bread and wine but his body and blood, as his words indicate: "This is my body, this is my blood." So it is not our work or speaking but the command and ordinance of Christ which make the bread the body and the wine the blood, beginning with the first Lord's Supper and continuing to the end of the world, and it is administered daily through our ministry or office.* We hear these words, "This is my body," not as spoken concerning the person of the pastor or the minister but as coming from Christ's own mouth who is present and says to us: "Take, eat, this is my body." We do not hear and understand them otherwise and know indeed that the pastor's or the minister's body is not in the bread nor is it being administered. Consequently, we also do not hear the command and ordinance according to which he says, "Do this in remembrance of me," as words spoken concerning the pastor's person; but we hear Christ himself through the pastor's mouth speaking to us and commanding that we should take bread and wine at his word, "This is my body," etc., and in them according to his command eat his body and drink his blood. (Martin Luther, "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests," pp. 199-200)

NOTE: The italicized portion of this text is quoted in the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord [VII:77], and is therefore included in the Confessional subscription of orthodox Lutherans. The meaning of Luther's and the Formula's statement that the Lord's Supper is administered "through our ministry or office" is explained and applied in the other excerpts from "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests" that here follow.)

...Christ's intention is that we should celebrate the sacrament or the mass in such a way that it might be distributed among his Christians and administered to others. For a cleric should be a servant of the church in order that he might distribute the sacrament and preach; all this is clearly demanded by the words of Christ concerning the Holy Supper in I Corinthians 11[:23ff.]. Therefore it is called *communio*, that is, a mutual participation, by the ancient fathers, to the end that not only the cleric should take it but others in the community should also receive it with him.

...Christ's intention is that we should preach about him and his death in the sacrament and publicly confess him, as he says: "Do this in remembrance of me" [I Cor. 11:24]. That is, as St. Paul says, "Proclaim my death until I come." But you clerics who say private masses have never preached

one word or confessed Christ in all your private masses. You partook of the sacrament by yourself. You have whispered it to yourself. Is this the way you uphold the intention of Christ? Is this what you call a true cleric? Is this the holy consecration [that you received at ordination]? Have you received and used your clerical office and consecration in this way?

...Christ's intention is that it should be a common sacrament to be imparted to other Christians, but you have been consecrated to sacrifice it to God. You have not been consecrated as a cleric for the sacrament but as a cleric for the sacrifice. ... For you are making what ought to be a common meal, *which God ordained should be administered to Christians through the clerical office*, into a sacrifice to God for individual persons. O abomination upon abomination! (Martin Luther, "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests," pp. 151-52. Emphasis added.)

For, God be praised, in our churches we can show a Christian a true Christian mass according to the ordinance and institution of Christ, as well as according to the true intention of Christ and the church. There *our pastor, bishop, or minister in the pastoral office, rightly and honorably and publicly called*, having been previously consecrated, anointed, and born in baptism as a priest of Christ, ...goes before the altar. Publicly and plainly he sings what Christ has ordained and instituted in the Lord's Supper. He takes the bread and wine, gives thanks, distributes and gives them to the rest of us who are there and want to receive them, on the strength of the words of Christ: "This is my body, this is my blood. Do this," etc. Particularly we who want to receive the sacrament kneel beside, behind, and around him, man, woman, young, old, master, servant, wife, maid, parents, and children, even as God brings us together there, all of us true, holy priests, sanctified by Christ's blood, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and consecrated in baptism. (Martin Luther, "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests," p. 208. Emphasis added.)

Preaching and teaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, ESV), and exercising general spiritual oversight in the church (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-7), require a level of pastoral competence that is lacking in most Christians. "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1, ESV). [When a "lay reader," in the absence of a pastor, is asked to conduct a service of the Word and deliver a sermon for a congregation, the sermon should be one that a pastor has either written or approved beforehand. The pastor thereby validates its soundness as an extension of his preaching office, and bears the responsibility for its content.]

Officiating at the administration of the sacraments, in the way that God wants this to be done, also involves more than simply performing the mechanics of the rite – which any Christian could conceivably master. An examination of the faith of adult baptizands, or of the faith of the parents and sponsors of those who are baptized in infancy, is, in ordinary circumstances, an important and necessary component of the proper administration of Baptism – in view of the fact that Jesus links the administration of this sacrament with the duty to teach all that he has commanded (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). This is an aspect of the spiritual care of souls, to which not everyone is called, and for which not everyone is qualified. And this kind of soul-care and spiritual oversight is particularly necessary for the proper administration of the Lord's Supper, with which is associated an explicit apostolic warning of potential harmful consequences – spiritual and temporal – for communicants who partake of this sacrament in an unworthy manner (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Admitting communicants to the altar, or declining to admit them, is a serious matter. It is an exercising of pastoral authority over those communicants. John F. Brug reflects the classic Lutheran understanding when he writes:

It is clear that the Lord's Supper should be administered by the pastor. It is not our practice to have a layman officiate at the Lord's Supper. Even when congregations were quite isolated and some did not have a pastor present every Sunday, the Lord's Supper was celebrated only when the pastor was present. Proper administration of the Lord's Supper involves more than

being able to read the right words. It involves pastoral responsibility for the souls of those who attend. [*The Ministry of the Word* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), p. 221]

In something as important as the faithful and orderly administration of the means of grace – which is itself a matter of New Testament doctrine – a Biblically-based unity and consensus in practice is of the highest necessity. The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope draws together many of the strands of Biblical teaching that pertain to the question of spiritual care in the church, and speaks on behalf of all true Lutherans when it confesses that

The gospel bestows upon those who preside over the churches the commission to proclaim the gospel, forgive sins, and administer the sacraments. In addition, it bestows legal authority, that is, the charge to excommunicate those whose crimes are public knowledge and to absolve those who repent. It is universally acknowledged, even by our opponents, that this power is shared by divine right by all who preside in the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops. [Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope 60-61, Kolb/Wengert p. 340. Emphases added by the quoting author.]

When the Treatise declares here that “The gospel” bestows this commission and authority on the “presiding” ministers of the church, we know from the context that what it is saying is that *the New Testament revelation* bestows this commission and authority on them. Such a ministry, with such liturgical duties entrusted to it, does not exist only on the basis of a human arrangement, only as a matter of practical expediency, or only as a consequence of historical development. It is, as the Treatise says, a matter of “divine right” that such men are called to such work among God’s people.

The various *outward configurations* of the church’s pastoral ministry have indeed developed and changed over time, and exist today in a multiplicity of forms. Spiritual oversight can be and is carried out among God’s people by pastors with comprehensive and general calls, and by pastors with focused and specialized calls; by pastors in parish settings, and by pastors in institutional or mission settings. But the *essence* of the pastoral ministry *more generally considered* – that is, the supervision and care of souls in Word and sacrament, by men who have been properly trained for this work and properly called to this work – is willed and mandated by God for the church of all times and places. The Apology teaches that “priests...are called to preach the gospel and to administer the sacraments to the people. ... For the church has the mandate to appoint ministers, which ought to please us greatly because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it” [XIII:9, 12, Kolb/Wengert p. 220]. These are the “spiritual fathers” and “preachers,” who “govern and guide us by the Word of God” and who “watch over” our souls, about whom Luther speaks in his Large Catechism explanation of the Fourth Commandment [I: 158-63, Kolb/Wengert p. 408].

As far as the pastoral competency of those who are called to a presiding ministry in the church is concerned, the Small Catechism – drawing directly from St. Paul’s pastoral epistles – lays out the God-given requirements for “Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers” in these words:

“A bishop is to be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, virtuous, moderate, hospitable, *an apt teacher*, not a drunkard, not vicious, not involved in dishonorable work, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not stingy, one who manages his own household well, who has obedient and honest children, not a recent convert, *who holds to the Word that is certain and can teach, so that he may be strong enough to admonish with saving teaching and to refute those who contradict it.*” From 1 Timothy 3[:2-4,6a; Titus 1:9]. [Table of Duties: 2, Kolb/Wengert p. 365. Emphases added by the quoting author.]

We see here that the office of spiritual oversight is to be entrusted only to qualified men who have a level of knowledge necessary for comprehensive teaching, for admonition, and for refutation of error.

When congregations honor these standards in the calls that they issue to ministries of liturgical presidency in their midst, this contributes significantly to the unity in doctrine and practice that

God wants his church to have. It is self-evident that God's Word is more likely to be preached accurately, and with the proper division of law and gospel, when men who have been carefully trained to preach God's Word accurately, and properly to divide law and gospel, are the ones who are doing the preaching! But it also contributes toward the preservation of trust among brother pastors and sister congregations, and reflects a proper respect for the covenant of fraternal order to which the pastors and congregations of a synod are pledged, when the provisions of that fraternal covenant are consistently followed. And that means, among other things, that the duties of pastoral oversight should be carried out in the various congregations by individuals whose qualifications and credentials are recognized by the church at large – by means of their “clergy roster” status, or their “ordained minister” status. [Lutherans have always recognized the legitimacy of a layman temporarily stepping into the office of pastor to perform a necessary pastoral act – such as the baptism of a person near death – when a regular pastor is not at hand. In the case of such a pastoral emergency, “the order yields to the need” (John Gerhard, *Loci theologici*; quoted in C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry* [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987], p. 285). But Lutherans should also make sure that it is a genuine need that prompts any departure from the normal, divine order. Cf. *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* 67, Kolb/Wengert p. 341.] (David Jay Webber, “‘Walking Together’ in Faith and Worship: Exploring the Relationship between Doctrinal Unity and Liturgical Unity in the Lutheran Church,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 52, Nos. 2-3 [June-September 2012], pp. 209-13. Emphases in original.)

Since you must have a ministry but have no means of correcting abuses, each one teaches what he wishes, one preaches this, another that, some deceive the people with the assumed title of priest, some purchase parishes, others force their way in, a successor upsets the work of his predecessor. In the absence of any form or basis of a valid ministry, we see noble Bohemia transformed into a Babylon described by Isaiah, in which satyrs dance, and howling creatures and sorceresses answer each other [Isa. 13:21, 22]. What wonder, then, if in this confusion the people of Bohemia become nothing but schismatics, and no certain basis of faith or life exists, and the ministry seems to be one of perdition?

These atrocious and cruel conditions ought in all justice compel us, with one accord, to rid all Bohemia of these monsters. Clearly if misfortune and need are so great that they can secure ministers in no other way [than by subterfuge], I would confidently advise that you have no ministers at all. For it would be safer and more wholesome for the father of the household to read the gospel and, since the universal custom and use allows it to the laity, to baptize those who are born in his home, and so to govern himself and his according to the doctrine of Christ, even if throughout life they did not dare or could not receive the Eucharist. For the Eucharist is not so necessary that salvation depends on it. The gospel and baptism are sufficient, since faith alone justifies and love alone lives rightly.

Surely if in this way two, three, or ten homes, or a whole city, or several cities agreed thus among themselves to live in faith and love by the use of the gospel in the home, and even if no ordained man, shorn or anointed, ever came to them or in any other way was placed over them as minister to administer the Eucharist and other sacraments, Christ without a doubt would be in their midst and would own them as his church. Christ would not only not condemn, but surely would reward a pious and Christian abstinence from all the other sacraments when these would be offered by impious and sacrilegious men. For He himself said “One thing only is necessary” [Luke 10:42], the Word of God, in which man has his life. For if he lives in the Word and has the Word, he is able to forego all else in order to avoid the teachings and ministries of impious men. And what would it avail to have all other things, but not the Word by which one lives? The mercenary papists who have intruded themselves ply their trade of consecrations, so that while the sacraments are here the Word does not exist in Bohemia. That is, they deprive you of essentials and lord it over you in non-essentials.

The father in the home, on the other hand, can provide his own with the necessities through the Word and in pious humility do without the nonessentials as long as he is in captivity. In this regard we follow the custom and law of the Jewish captives who were not able to be in Jerusalem or to make offering there. Upheld in their faith alone by the Word of God they passed their lives among enemies while yearning for Jerusalem. So in this case the head of the household suffering under the tyranny of the pope would act most appropriately and safely if while longing for the Eucharist, *which he neither would dare nor could receive*, in the meantime zealously and faithfully propagated faith in his home through the Word of God until God on high in his mercy either brought the captivity to an end or sent a true minister of the Word. So, I hold, it is better to have none than to have a minister who is guilty of sacrilege, impiety, and crime, and comes as a thief and robber only to kill and destroy [John 10:10]. (Martin Luther, "Concerning the Ministry," *Luther's Works*, Vol. 40 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), pp. 9-10. Emphasis added.)

And what must the Christians do who are held captive in Turkey? *They cannot receive the sacrament* and have to be content with their faith and desire which they have for the sacrament and the ordinance of Christ, just as those who die before baptism are nevertheless saved by their faith and desire for baptism. What did the children of Israel do in Babylon when they were unable to have public worship at Jerusalem except in faith and in sincere desire and longing? Therefore, even if the church would have been robbed completely of the sacrament by the pope, still, because the ordinance of Christ remained in their hearts with faith and desire, it would nevertheless have been preserved thereby, as indeed now in our time *there are many who outwardly do without the sacrament* for they are not willing to honor and strengthen the pope's abomination under one kind. (Martin Luther, "The Private Mass and the Consecration of Priests," p. 207. Emphases added.)

Kindly tell your dear sir and friend that he is not in duty bound to go ahead in this matter and commune himself and his household. Nor is this necessary, since he has neither call nor command to do so. And if the tyrannical ministers of the church will not administer it to him and his family, though they are in duty bound to do so, he can still be saved by his faith through the Word. It would also give great offense to administer the Sacrament here and there in the homes, and in the end no good would come of it, for there will be factions and sects, as now the people are strange and the devil is raging. The first Christians, mentioned in Acts, did not administer the Sacrament individually [*insonderheit*] in the houses, but they came together. ... But if a father wishes to teach the Word of God to his family, that is right and should be done, for it is God's mandate that we should teach and bring up our children and household; that is commanded to everyone. But *the Sacrament is a public confession and should have public ministers*, because, as Christ says, we should do it in remembrance of Him; that is, as St. Paul explains it, we should show forth or preach the Lord's death till He comes [cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26]. And here [Paul] also says that we should come together, and he severely rebukes those who, each in his own way, use the Lord's Supper individually. On the other hand, it is not forbidden but rather commanded that everyone individually should instruct his household in God's Word, as well as himself, though no one should baptize himself, etc. For there is a great difference between a public office in the church and [the office of] a father in his household. Hence the two must neither be mingled into each other nor be separated from each other. Since there is neither an emergency nor a call here, we must do nothing out of our own devotion without God's definite mandate, for no good will come from it. (Martin Luther, Letter to Wolfgang Brauer, 1536 [Halle 10: 2736-39]; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, pp. 163-64. Emphasis added.)

The faculty in Leipzig was asked the following question: If a pastor faints while he is consecrating the bread, can the sacristan or some other Christian consecrate the chalice and commune the congre-

gation? The faculty answers that since Luther was of the opinion that the head of a household cannot celebrate the Sacrament in his home, it would be improper for a layman to do the same in this case, since he has neither the call nor the command to do so. According to the Holy Scriptures, in First Corinthians, chapter four, verse one, and also in chapter three, verse nine, *the administration of the Sacraments is assigned to pastors*. Furthermore, one cannot use the excuse that this is an emergency, since the Sacrament of the Altar is not an absolute necessity in the sense that Baptism is. Therefore, the congregation should either wait until the pastor has been revived and can continue the consecration, or should call in a neighboring pastor [(George) Dedekennus, *Appendix*, p. 408]. (Edward Frederick Peters, *The Origin and meaning of the Axiom: "Nothing Has the Character of a Sacrament Outside of the Use," in Sixteenth-Century and Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Theology*, pp. 531-32. Emphasis added.)

[Robert] Bellarmine assails Luther for teaching that any baptized person has the power and right to administer the Sacraments. Bellarmine, however, knows that we by no means approve of confusion within the church and that we do not concede the power to administer the Holy Supper to anyone except one who has been legitimately called to the office, not even in an emergency, because Baptism has a different character than the Holy Supper. When it comes to Luther, he does not absolutely and simply concede the power to administer the Holy Supper to all the baptized. Instead, he is speaking about some general *aptitude* that Christians have for the Sacraments over against unbelievers, because they, having been taken into the covenant of God through Baptism, are suitable and fit for this office if they are called to it legitimately. Luther sets this general suitability against the sacerdotal character about which the Scholastics and Papists argue – that through the sacrament of holy orders a certain spiritual power is produced and caused in the soul of their recipient, through which the priest becomes fit for making the Sacrament of the Altar, such that without that (power) it could in no way be made, and because they say that a mark is imprinted upon the soul as a sign of this power. (Johann Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, Loc. de Sacram., § 29; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, p. 207. Emphasis in original.)

According to Justin the deacons give the bread and wine which have been consecrated by means of thanksgiving to all who are present, and the same elements are given to deacons to be carried to those who are absent. ...from the assembly of the church they carry it to those who are absent in order that they may commune. ...in the ancient church...it was given to boys to be carried away; according to Dionysius of Alexandria, to women...

...it is simplest, most correct, and safest that this whole matter should be examined according to the norm of the institution of Christ and that we should consider what comes closest to what is prescribed in the institution, agrees best with it, and serves for edification of the church. ... The matter is not obscure if we set before ourselves as norm and rule the description of the institution. For Christ first of all used His words, which He wanted to have come to the element in order that it might become a sacrament; He used them in the place and at the time where and when He was about to distribute Communion, and in the presence of those to whom He wanted to communicate His body and blood. Therefore it agrees better with the description of the institution and the example of Christ to recite the words of institution and by means of them to bless the Eucharist at the place and time of Communion, in the presence of those who are to be communed...

For these reasons *our men, in the Communion of the sick, recite the words of the Supper, which are in fact the consecration, in the presence of the sick person*. Neither has anyone the right to reprove or to condemn us on account of this custom; for we are following both the prescription and the example of Christ, concerning whom the Father called out from heaven: "Hear Him." It is manifest that this custom agrees with the institution of Christ. And, according to Augustine, what decides in matters of faith is not: "This I say; that you say; that he says," but: "Thus says the Lord."

And, speaking of the Supper, Cyprian says: “We ought not to give heed to what someone before us thought should be done, but to what He, who is before all, did first.” ... Yes, in a rural house where there was no special prayer chapel *a presbyter celebrates the Eucharist*, as reported by Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Bk. 22, ch. 8. (Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, pp. 301, 303, 311-13. Emphases added.)

It is clear that the Lord’s Supper should be administered by the pastor. It is not our practice to have a layman officiate at the Lord’s Supper. Even when congregations were quite isolated and some did not have a pastor present every Sunday, the Lord’s Supper was celebrated only when the pastor was present. Proper administration of the Lord’s Supper involves more than being able to read the right words. It involves pastoral responsibility for the souls of those who attend. (John F. Brug, *The Ministry of the Word* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009], p. 221. Emphasis added.)

Need the right to officiate at the Lord’s Supper be restricted to the theologically trained clergyman? As far as the proclamation of the Word is concerned, there can be little question that in our day the aptitude to teach which the Lord sets down as a qualification for the office of a bishop does require theological training. I am not thinking only of the formal sermon in the worship service, but also of the varied areas of teaching, the devotional addresses at organization meetings, and the devotions with the sick and shut-ins. I believe, too, that this training is requisite for the capable performers of the vast variety of pastoral duties. This applies also to the stewardship of the Lord’s Supper, which involves not only granting it to those who are entitled to receive it, but also withholding it from those who are not entitled to receive it. (Irwin J. Habeck, “Who May Officiate at the Lord’s Supper?,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 3 [July 1968], p. 201)

The administration (administratio) of the Lord’s Supper is the responsibility of none but the ordained servants of the church. [1.] According to Scripture, in the regular course of events, the regularly called servants of the church are the administrators of the mysteries of God, and only in real emergency cases may the lay people also administer them. [2.] According to Scripture, there is no such emergency case in regard to the Lord’s Supper as there is in regard to Baptism. Our dogmaticians, therefore, have decided that if a sick person desires the Lord’s Supper and a pastor cannot be reached, we should convince him that spiritual partaking is enough for him and that more anxiety than comfort must come from a partaking of the Lord’s Supper that departs from the order of God. More on this point is to be found in discussions of casuistry. There are also differing views among the Lutheran dogmaticians. (Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, Vol. IV, trans. by Joel Fredrich, Paul Prange, and Bill Tackmier [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999], pp. 140-41. Emphasis added.)

NOTE: In a book review of this volume, John F. Brug writes that “Anyone who accepts the present WELS statements on church and ministry won’t find anything in Hoenecke (or for that matter in Walther) that contradicts those statements or even anything that makes them very uncomfortable” (*Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 97, No. 4 [Fall 2000], p. 316).

Starting with Luther, the vast majority of our theologians maintain that the Holy Supper should never be administered privately by a person not holding the public preaching office or by a so-called layman – partly because, unlike with Baptism or Absolution, there cannot be an emergency regarding Holy Communion which would justify straying from God’s order (1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4); partly because the Holy Supper “is a manifest confession and should thus have manifest ministers”; partly because divisions can easily be caused by such private [acts of] Communion. (See Luther’s letter of 1536 to Wolfgang Brauer, pastor at Jessen...)

However, it is a different question whether it belongs to the *reality* and *validity* of the Holy

Supper for the one administering it to be legitimately called and ordained to the public preaching office, and thus not to be a layman; whether the “office” or the authority received to administer the public office and the ordination make the Words of Institution powerful, so that not only the Word and element alongside the use belongs to the essence (*forma*) of the Sacrament but also a certain quality of the one administering [it]. This is a doctrine of the Roman Church, which has been rejected and contested by all of the theologians generally recognized in our church as orthodox. Most of them declare that the administration of the Holy Supper by a layman is never correct [*recta*] and legitimate [*legitima*] and is never done lawfully [*de jure*], but none of them denies that it would be valid [*rata*] and would be possible to do in point of fact [*de facto*]. ...

Just how far the teachers of our church were from the horrible doctrine that strips away all certainty from the Holy Supper – namely, that only a rightly called and ordained preacher is capable of effecting the presence of Christ in the Holy Supper through his administration [of it] – is revealed by the fact that a whole series of strictly orthodox Lutheran theologians, all above suspicion, have taught that the Holy Supper could even be validly administered not only in point of fact [*de facto*] but also according to the law [*de jure*] by a layman in a (presumed) case of necessity. (Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, pp. 206-07. Emphases in original.)

...suppose a group of earnest Christian laymen were taken prisoner and set down in a desert without an episcopally ordained priest among them. And suppose they were to come to a common mind there and then in the desert and elect one of their number, whether he were married or not, and charge him to baptize, say mass, pronounce absolution, and preach the gospel. Such a man would be as truly a priest as though he had been ordained by all the bishops and popes in the world. That is why in cases of necessity anyone can baptize and give absolution. (Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 44 [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966], p. 128)

In a case of necessity – when a rightly called minister of the Church is unavailable – there is no doubt that every Christian has the authority from God’s Word and is authorized in accordance with Christian love to carry out the ministry of the Church by proclaiming God’s Word and distributing the Sacraments. ...

But here we are talking about *a case of necessity* when righteous and true ministers of the Church are unavailable, which is then permitted for [any] Christian. As, [for example], if some Christians were in a place where there is no called pastor; if some Christians were imprisoned on account of the truth or were in danger at sea; or if some Christians lived among Muslims or in Roman Catholic lands, where there are no real pastors; if some Christians lived among the Calvinists or Schwenkfeldians or Adiaphorists or Majorists, from whom they would have to separate themselves as from false teachers in accord with God’s command; or if some Christians lived among pastors and ministers of the Church who publicly acted as tyrants and cruelly persecuted the proper confessors of truth, so that they dearly demonstrated that they were not members of the true Church, and devout Christians were therefore obligated to avoid their fellowship so as not to bolster their tyranny and help condemn innocent Christians. *In such and similar cases of necessity* (which occur very frequently), in which true ministers of the Church whose teaching and confession is righteous and coincides with God’s Word are unavailable, then an individual private person and believing Christian is also permitted to absolve repentant sinners of their sins, to encourage the weak with God’s Word, to baptize little children, and to distribute the Lord’s Supper. And in such a case, such a Christian should not be afraid or think it is forbidden, as if he were appropriating a ministry that does not belong to him. Instead, he should know that he is following a righteous, proper call from God and that his ministry is just as effective as if he had been confirmed for the preaching office with the laying on of hands before the whole church and before all the angels of God.

...the entire ministry of the Church – which consists of preaching, admonishing, comforting, forgiving sins, retaining sins, administering Sacraments – was not committed by the Lord Christ to a specific estate – neither the spiritual nor the secular – but to the entire congregation of God, as is shown by the saying, “What you bind on earth will be...” [Matt. 18:18]. So, then, whoever is an orthodox Christian and a living member of Christ has his part in and right to the holy preaching office and to everything that belongs to the ministry of the Church. Christ gives the whole Church the power to forgive the sins of the penitent in accordance with God’s Word and promise, and when preachers exercise this power, they do so not on their own authority but in the power and by the command of the Church, which has entrusted preachers with administering such privileges, which it has been given by Christ. Now if ministers of the Church are not present, then surely every Christian is entitled to exercise this authority. For if preachers do not exercise their office as they are obligated to do, or none are present, the office surely returns to the Church, which is charged to confer it [on someone]. Similarly, when a vassal dies or forfeits his fiefdom, the fiefdom returns to the lord. But according to God’s Word, whatever is permitted to the entire Church and belongs to every Christian, every Christian may also distribute and administer in the common spirit of all believers *in a case of necessity*. ...

I am not saying that two or three should separate themselves from the true Church, flee from the called, proper preachers, and form their own sects. Rather, [I am saying] that *in a case of necessity* – if either no preachers are available [or] they are spouting false teaching and should therefore be avoided, [and] in addition the hardship of being unable to seek the use of the Sacraments in other places befalls one – then with the consent of one or two, any Christian is empowered and authorized to distribute the Sacraments and to strengthen those *who are weak in the throes of death*. The pope-donkeys are stuck in the delusion that no one may baptize, confirm, speak Absolution, or distribute the Supper of Christ unless he is a consecrated priest. But this error, which contains numerous lies, has long since been refuted and overthrown from God’s Word. (Tilemann Heshusius, *Wer Gewalt, Fug and Recht habe, Prediger zu berufen* [Saint Louis: L. Volkening, 1862], pp. 135-40; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, pp. 206-07. Most emphases added.)

It is the judgment of the Holy Spirit that in the churches [*Kirchen*], according to Paul’s direction in 1 Corinthians 14[:40], all things should be done decently and in order. Therefore, God has also instituted and established the public preaching office, and it is His will that one should not administer it unless he has [been] called to it in an orderly way. However, Christ did not give the power to remit and retain sins to the apostles alone. He mandated all pious believers in common and the godly to announce the Gospel to their penitent fellow brothers. Therefore, not only ministers of the Church but, *in a most urgent and extreme emergency* (that is, when no minister of the Church can be obtained and a Christian is sought out and asked by a fellow believer), laymen also are permitted to administer Holy Communion, as well as to baptize, and to pronounce absolution. (Johann Gallus; quoted in Felix Bidembach, *Consiliorum Theologicorum*, 3:148f., p. 390; quoted in turn in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, pp. 275-76. Emphasis added.)

If it were to happen that someone *in extreme mortal danger*, in a case in which a pastor was not at all available, with the good intention of strengthening his faith, appealing to the fact that the Sacrament was instituted to be added to the Word and to confirm it for cases of weakness – [if that person] were to plead with someone knowledgeable about the proper administration of the Sacrament to give it him and would not be appeased after that [person’s] admonition, then I would not wish to accuse someone like that of disturbing the order. Since the Sacraments have been conferred on the Church from its roots, but this [church] baptizes, teaches, and absolves through a layman by general consent *in a case of necessity*, and although *a case of necessity* occurs extremely rarely – also with respect

to the Lord's Supper, more often with respect to the other acts – I thus confess that I can reach no other conclusion, should the case occur as just described. (Johannes Henrich Fecht, *Instructio pastoralis*, ch. 14, § 3, pp. 157f.; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, pp. 210-11. Emphases added.)

The question is: what should be done *in an extreme emergency or in mortal danger* – for example, when laymen are driven among barbarians by a storm or are imprisoned or live where there is absolutely no pastor – and someone who is dying or is in a state of affliction is burning tremendously with desire to receive the Sacrament and will not be satisfied with the mere Word and spiritual reception? In this case we believe that the Sacrament can be administered even by a pious layman who has been called to this act apart from the [regular] order, whether explicitly or implicitly. ...in the Treatise accompanying the Smalcald Articles it is taught: “Just as *in a case of necessity* even a righteous layman can absolve another and become his pastor.” Accordingly, he can also prepare and distribute the Holy Meal. (Salomon Deyling, *Institutiones prudentiae pastoralis*, 3rd edition, edited by Chr. W. Küstner [Leipzig: Johann Frederick Junii, 1768], pt. 3, ch. 5, § 5, pp. 468-70; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, p. 211. Emphases added.)

The theologians do not doubt that, during a time of plague, if all of the regular ministers have been taken away by death; likewise, in times of public disorder, if the order of the church has dissolved; or in foreign places, where one lives among unbelievers and the heterodox – [in these situations] an individual may be provisionally called with the consent of the Christians who are present to teach the Word only by reading it aloud and to give the Holy Supper to those who desire it until they are once again provided with a regular minister. However, in this manner the layman is not distributing as a layman, but as a truly and temporarily called minister. (Zachary Grapius, *Systema Novissimarum Controversiarum*, Vol. 4 [Rostock: Parchimi, Fritchius, 1719], p. 86; quoted in Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *American-Lutheran Pastoral Theology*, p. 212)

The majority of our Lutheran theologians, including Luther, are of the opinion that the Sacrament of the Altar should never be administered privately by the layman. Such an emergency as might arise in the case of Baptism and absolution may not occur, and there is therefore no good reason to depart from God's own established order that the means of grace should be administered by the called ministers of Christ, 1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4. Communion administered privately by a layman might be the cause of divisions in the Church.

It is an entirely different question whether a layman may at all administer the Sacrament. To deny this would mean that the validity of the Sacrament depended not only upon the consecration of the proper elements and their administration, but also upon a certain special qualification on the part of the administrator (“ordination”). ... While we admit that the administration of the Sacrament by a layman is, as a rule, not *recta* and *legitima*, we do not deny that it may be *rata* and *de facto* and, *in a case of emergency*, even *de iure*. If a layman in an exceptional case is permitted to baptize, why should he not also, *in an exceptional case*, be permitted to administer the Sacrament of the Altar? Such an exceptional case might arise when an orthodox pastor cannot be called, as when a Christian is at the point of death, at high sea, or when he has been taken captive by barbarians, and the like. Even under such *exceptional circumstances*, however, we would advise a Christian not to insist that the Sacrament be administered to him contrary to the regular established order.

May an entire congregation under exceptional circumstances *call* a layman (or a student of theology) to administer to them the Sacrament? We need not hesitate to answer this question affirmatively; for under such circumstances the layman, by virtue of his having been called to do so by the entire congregation, *acts* as the congregation's representative, even as a regularly called minister would do. In due respect, however, to God's own established order of the ministry and His precise

mention of the necessary qualifications a layman should not be called to administer the Sacrament unless *very exceptional* circumstances justify it. (John H. C. Fritz, *Pastoral Theology*, 2nd edition [Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945], p. 126. Most emphases added.)

What about having a theological student assist with the distribution of the Lord's Supper or *in an emergency* even to function alone? Again it is a case where the pastor delegates this function which has been entrusted to him to another in a given situation. True, the qualifications of the student for the public ministry have not yet been established by his being presented to the church as a candidate for the holy ministry. But this does not involve a permanent call to exercise all of the functions of a pastor but only a very limited assignment. The fact that a man is a student in good standing at our Seminary will be accepted as evidence that he possesses the general qualifications which the Lord requires for the exercise of any public function in the church. If, however, there should be a question on the part of any congregation about having a student officiate at the Lord's Supper, charity would demand that the question be discussed and the arrangement continued only if unanimity has been attained. As said before, charity, which includes the avoiding of offense, must be exercised in all arrangements for the worship life of the church. (Irwin J. Habeck, "Who May Officiate at the Lord's Supper?," pp. 197-98. Emphasis added.)

There yet remains the question of *Christians in isolation*. If there are two or three in a similar plight in the same general location, far removed from a church or pastor of their confession, may they agree to celebrate the Lord's Supper together? My answer would be a guarded Yes. First of all I would advise that they make sure that their isolation is real. The fact that it would take some effort to get to a congregation or a pastor of their faith in itself would not be cogent. Effort and sacrifice are not to be eliminated from the Christian's vocabulary. But if the isolation is real, we must bear in mind that the Lord says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Where He is, the Keys are, also the right to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

I remarked, however, that my Yes was guarded. Even if circumstances do warrant that Christians in isolation exercise their spiritual priesthood by arranging for their own communion service, the principles to which we referred before ought not be ignored. If they are so earnest in their Christianity that they will avoid communing with the heterodox, it may be supposed that they will have maintained membership in their home congregations. Then order requires that they inform their home congregations of their plight and of their intentions and do not act without their knowledge and consent. The counsel ought to be forthcoming that they designate one or two of their group to officiate, but be sure that they know what is proper in the celebration of the Lord's Supper and be conscientious stewards of the Sacrament. In effect they will be forming temporarily their own congregation and calling someone qualified from their own midst to officiate.

If these cautions must be sounded in the case of even mature Christians in isolation, there is all the more reason to sound them in the case of military personnel. Age is no guarantee of spiritual maturity, to be sure, nor youth evidence of spiritual immaturity. But the Lord does warn against entrusting the bishop's office to a novice (I Tim. 3:6). The home pastor who informs a youth of his privilege must also impress upon him the solemnity of celebrating the Lord's Supper, especially the need for good order and for the conscientious stewardship which involves close communion. One need only read the solemn words which the Lord spoke through St. Paul when the communion practice at Corinth had degenerated to realize how relevant these words of caution are.

We must underscore the reminder too that *what is done in an emergency, as a case of casuistry, dare not become the basis for a general practice*. (Irwin J. Habeck, "Who May Officiate at the Lord's Supper?," pp. 204-05. Emphases added.)

It is a Lutheran commonplace that a lay Christian could administer baptism in the case of an emergency. He could do this because all Christians have the ministry of the keys.

However, Lutheran teachers have debated throughout the years whether or not a lay person should ever consecrate and administer the Lord's Supper. The orthodox dogmaticians generally said that even in the case of emergency it should not be done. [Johann Wilhelm] Baier wrote: "When there is a lack of ordinary ministers, and a faithful man anxiously desires this sacrament, it is better for him to be persuaded that spiritual eating is sufficient and to show the danger of other temptations which could arise if the sacrament were administered by another without a legitimate call and therefore with a dubious mind and result."

In the WELS I assume we follow the line of thinking of Prof. [Irwin J.] Habeck in his article, "Who May Officiate at the Lord's Supper?" He says that if there are Christians *in genuine isolation, far removed from a church or pastor of their confession*, a "guarded yes" could be given to them to celebrate the Lord's Supper, assuming they know what is proper. WELS soldiers in World War II were sometimes instructed on how they could celebrate communion in the war zones.

Still, as a general practice the administration of the sacraments in our congregations is entrusted to those in the pastoral ministry. Certainly others may be asked to help distribute the Lord's Supper. But pastors are asked to oversee and preside. I know of no one advocating that this responsibility be given to others.

This work fits well with the role of the pastor as the spiritual overseer. The administration of the Lord's Supper, for example, often involves spiritual judgment. Decisions commonly need to be made by the administrant about who is properly prepared to receive the sacrament, both in the public worship services and in the visitation of shut-ins. This requires a knowledge of the sheep and is definitely the work of spiritual oversight. (Thomas P. Nass, "The Pastoral Ministry as a Distinct Form of the Public Ministry," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 4 [Fall 1994], p. 262. Emphasis added.)

The authority to administer the Lord's Supper, together with the authority to preach the gospel and to baptize, was given by Christ to the church, to all believers. However, the Lord also instituted a public ministry, in which believers call others to represent them and Christ. The called servants do what they have the right to do but do it in the name of all believers and in their place. Thus a pastor normally carries out the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It would be disorderly for a group in a congregation to begin communing themselves at home. They have called their pastor to carry out this task on their behalf. A congregation may call a male teacher, an elder, or some other officer or male member of the church to *assist* the pastor with Communion. Care will be taken to choose those whose lives are in harmony with God's Word. Care also will be taken to observe what Scripture says concerning the roles of men and women in God's creation. *The call will also be a limited call. It will not be a call to carry out the ministry with the full scope of duties carried out by the pastor. ...*

What if a group of Christians were stationed in an area where they did not have access to a pastor of their fellowship, such as in military situations? What if they will be there for a while and they desire to receive the Lord's Supper? First we need to note that though the Lord's Supper contributes to the well-being of faith, it is not necessary for the existence of faith. Faith can be nurtured by the gospel promises. But these people could call one from their own midst to commune them. They would observe, however, the following considerations: 1. They would make sure their isolation is real. 2. They would inform their home congregations of their intentions. 3. They would call one whose life was in harmony with Scripture and one whose knowledge of the Lord's Supper would qualify him to carry out the Sacrament in a valid and orderly way. 4. They would realize that *what is done in an emergency is not the basis for a general practice*. (Lyle W. Lange, *God So Loved the*

World: A Study of Christian Doctrine [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005], pp. 520-21. Emphases added.)

Speaking of his stewardship of the gospel, Paul says, “Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things [the mysteries] of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful” (1 Co 4:1,2). The mysteries of God are commonly understood to include the sacraments. The power of the sacraments is not dependent on ordination or on the person of the administrator, but the pastor is responsible for how the sacraments are administered. The administration of the Lord’s Supper involves spiritual judgment. Decisions commonly need to be made by the administrator about who is properly prepared to receive the Sacrament, both in public worship services and in the visitation of shut-ins. At times, there is a responsibility to exclude some from receiving the Sacrament. This requires a shepherd’s knowledge of the sheep, and it is definitely the work of spiritual oversight. This means that administration of the Lord’s Supper will normally remain with the pastor, even if others are trained to assist him with the distribution. The kind of disorder that arose in the Lord’s Supper at Corinth is most easily prevented *if the administration is in the hands of properly prepared pastors.*

Lutheran teachers have debated whether or not a layperson should ever consecrate and administer the Lord’s Supper. Many orthodox dogmaticians said that even in the case of emergency, this should not be done. They felt that the need for the Lord’s Supper was never a true emergency like the need for Baptism. As an example, [Johann Wilhelm] Baier is cited: “When there is a lack of ordinary ministers, and a faithful man anxiously desires this sacrament, it is better for him to be persuaded that spiritual eating is sufficient and to show the danger of other temptations which could arise if the sacrament were administered by another without a legitimate call and therefore with a dubious mind and result.” This may be considered to be a reasonable opinion, but we cannot demonstrate that it is an absolute, scriptural rule. How about a third choice: an orderly call to a member of the group to serve as the *temporary pastor* of the group. *Cases of war and extreme isolation* might provide *exceptional cases*. But even in the cases of isolated members, we make a concerted effort to reach them with pastoral care for the sacraments.

There is no doubt that laypeople can perform valid baptisms in cases of emergency. But since Baptism is the sacrament of initiation through which people enter the church, under normal circumstances it is administered by the called ministers of the church in the name of the church. (John F. Brug, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 118-19. Emphases added.)

Addenda I-VI

STATEMENTS BY MODERN LUTHERAN WRITERS THAT IGNORE OR REJECT THE LUTHERAN CHURCH’S CENTURIES-OLD STANDARDS OF GOOD ORDER IN THE MATTER OF WHO SHOULD BE CALLED TO OFFICIATE AT THE LORD’S SUPPER

*I. ...the degree of sensitivity among our people on this
issue is different than it was thirty or forty years ago...*

Concerning the selection of those who are to officiate today, Professor [Irwin J.] Habeck gets us started with this clarification: “As far as I can determine, there is only one direct reference in the Word to the officiant at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and that is in the account of the original celebration, at which our Lord officiated. For the rest we must be content with deductions.” For a variety of reasons we shall take care in the selection of personnel for this task. We will want to avoid

the “Romish tendency” that states or implies that ordination somehow elevates the person to a suitable priestly class. We also want to take care that no confusion between the priesthood of all believers and the public ministry results in the way we approach such tasks. *It seems safe to say that the degree of sensitivity among our people on this issue is different than it was thirty or forty years ago, but it would be foolish to pretend that there are no sensitivities.*

A recently revived sensitivity has to do with whether it is proper for women to administer the Lord’s Supper to other women. On the one hand, each congregation has the right and privilege to call qualified people to administer Word and sacraments on its behalf. As long as the qualifications (especially the ability to use law and gospel to determine if a communicant is properly prepared) are present and no violation of the headship principle and gender roles is involved, *one may certainly defend the practice.* On the other hand, some people see this as part of a “slippery slope” to devalue the work of parish pastors, to move in the direction of having woman pastors in our congregations, or to make an unnecessary break with longstanding tradition (and perhaps, then, to be “disorderly”). Perhaps the first step is to talk about the need and value of doing this, to talk to those who are fearful or concerned, and then to move in this direction only when we can say it is the wise and loving thing to do (aside from its being *permissible*). (Forrest Bivens, “The Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper” [2006]. Emphases added.)

II. ...any man whom the royal priests of God call to that task can administer the Lord’s Supper.

Who can administer Holy Communion? [“Administering Holy Communion” consists of presiding over the distribution, including consecrating the elements, distributing them, and speaking the blessing.] *Ordained pastors only? Staff ministers? Can a female administer the Sacrament to other females? What is permissible? And – a better question – what is beneficial?*

The ministry of proclaiming the gospel is entrusted to every Christian. Ever since baptism made us full “sons” of God (Galatians 3:26-28) with all the privileges that entails, the keys of the kingdom of heaven belong to each one of us. God calls every royal priest to declare his praises before the world (1 Peter 2:9). But that doesn’t mean we should all rush forward to the pulpit or altar on Sunday morning to preach or administer the Lord’s Supper. One priest publicly serves other priests only when given the privilege to do so through a call to public ministry (Hebrews 5:4). It is typically our pastor whose call is so defined that his tasks include public preaching and administering the sacraments.

Yet here we must remember that the Sacrament’s validity does not depend on the person who administers it. The Sacrament is valid because Christ promised that when we eat and drink the Supper according to his institution, his true body and blood are received with the bread and wine. We do not believe that ordination imprints some kind of “indelible character” on a pastor, giving him special power to administer the Sacrament. Therefore, any man whom the royal priests of God call to that task can administer the Lord’s Supper. That is true whether that request comes through a formal call (such as pastors, staff ministers, principals) or informal call (elders and other lay leaders). In all those cases, Christ’s promise assures us that the Sacrament is as valid as if Christ were administering his own Supper. The call of the congregation simply gives one royal priest the privilege to administer that sacrament on behalf of his fellow royal priests.

But you’ve asked another question. Before addressing whether a female could administer the Sacrament to other females, let’s state clearly why we don’t typically see a woman administering the Lord’s Supper. Certainly it’s not because a sacrament administered by a woman would be invalid. Every Lord’s Supper administered according to Christ’s institution is valid whether the administrant is male or female.

But there’s another biblical principle to consider. God gave us clear instruction that public

ministry duties that include the exercise of authority over both women and men are the responsibility of the men in the congregation (1 Timothy 2:11,12). Certainly administering the Sacrament exercises the same level of authority as preaching the gospel from the pulpit. Both are rightly reserved for any male whom the royal priests call to carry out those ministry tasks. However, if those gathered were all women, *it would not be wrong for a woman to administer the Lord's Supper*. That sacrament would be just as valid as any sacrament administered by a man.

Yet as you mention, an equally important question to ask is whether this would be beneficial or wise. Such a practice as described above, even as rare as it may be, may trouble consciences that have not sorted through the biblical principles outlined above. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we don't blindly press ahead with everything permissible. We also ask what is most beneficial to all whom we love as family in our risen Lord. (Richard L. Gurgel, "Q&A at the foot of the cross" [Topic: Holy Communion], *Forward In Christ*, Vol. 91, No. 7 [July 1, 2004]. Emphasis added.)

III. ...a non-ordained Christian layman...may serve.

In accordance with God's will and for the sake of order, the church administers the sacraments through specially appointed (called) persons. ... This public (representative) ministry, carried out on behalf of the church, does not replace or set aside the original ownership of the sacraments as held by the church. Rather, it serves to emphasize it. ... When there is a case of urgency, therefore, and no question of order is involved, a Christian may and will administer the sacrament of baptism. In doing this he is exercising his original stewardship and must not be considered as a temporary substitute for the regular public minister. ... Concerning the administration of the Lord's Supper, we also maintain that when the necessary conditions of good order (1 Co 14:40) and brotherly love (1 Co 16:14) have been observed, *a non-ordained Christian layman (e.g., an elder, vicar, student of theology, male teacher or staff minister) who has been properly designated and trained to perform this function may serve.* (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Dogmatics Notes, D2 D, V, 3-5. Emphasis added.)

IV. How appropriate is it for a "layman" to administer communion? ...

There is a very strongly ingrained Lutheran feeling that only the pastor should actually administer the Lord's Supper... There are some excellent theological reasons for this. ... At the same time, this doesn't mean we can't do it...

How appropriate is it for a "layman" to administer communion? In the Lutheran Church as a whole, it's so unusual for anyone other than the pastor or a "theological student" to actually speak the words of institution and lead the distribution of the elements, that [John F.] Brug says, "The wisest course of action is to maintain the long-standing practice that administration of Communion under all normal circumstances is the duty of the pastor" ([*The Ministry of the Word*,] p. 219). Likewise, [Thomas P.] Nass lists "administration of the sacraments" along with "formal preaching in worship services," "general doctrinal and spiritual oversight," and "worship leading" as "four functions [of the pastoral ministry] not generally shared with others" ("The Pastoral Ministry as a Distinct Form of the Public Ministry"). A number of venerated pastoral theology textbooks have addressed this issue. Almost always, the underlying assumption is a situation in which the pastor is away. Sometimes, they felt it was necessary to justify even a seminary student taking on this responsibility. The assumption was simply that no layman would ever do this.

In the middle decades of the 19th century when German immigrants were flooding to this country and moving to frontier communities in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, they rarely found Lutheran congregations. Friedrich Wyneken of the Missouri Synod issued his famous *Notbrief* (Emergency Appeal) to Lutherans in Germany to send pastors because Lutheran children were not

being baptized and Lutheran families were going months or years without communion. Understand, this was in a cultural setting in which many of those families would have had printed books of sermons by Luther and others (called postils) which they would have used for family worship on Sundays and other days. But they would not have dared to commune themselves.

Luther and many other Lutheran theologians imagined situations in which Christians found themselves alone, stranded in a desert or taken captive by the Turk. They generally held that those Christians could designate one of their number as the pastor and call him to administer the means of grace, including administering communion, but there is little or no evidence that Lutherans on the frontier in America did anything of the sort. Even quite recent Lutheran sources have argued against having lay members administer communion in the pastor's absence. The WELS Q&A at www.WELS.net had at least two entries in recent years that advised congregations that "the regular practice of the Lutheran church has been that only pastors acting in the name of the congregation" consecrate the elements. While both articles allowed that a congregation could call a member to do this work, they advised a "reading service" in which a "layman" reads a sermon prepared by the pastor and he conducts the liturgy, but no communion is celebrated.

There is a very strongly ingrained Lutheran feeling that only the pastor should actually administer the Lord's Supper, which in most people's minds would probably include speaking the words of institution and "being in charge" of the distribution. There are some excellent theological reasons for this. Prof. Brug writes:

The administration of the Lord's Supper involves spiritual judgment. Decisions commonly need to be made by the administrator about who is properly prepared to receive the Sacrament. This requires a shepherd's knowledge of the sheep, and it is definitely the work of spiritual oversight. This means that administration of the Lord's Supper will normally remain with the pastor, even if others are trained to assist him with the distribution. ... Lutheran teachers have debated whether or not a layperson should ever consecrate or administer the Lord's Supper. Many orthodox dogmaticians said that even in the case of emergency, this should not be done. (p. 118)

At the same time, this doesn't mean we can't do it, in the sense that it would be unscriptural. Brug goes on to note that when there's a special need, the congregation could issue "an orderly call to a member of the group to serve as the temporary pastor of the group" (p. 119). But the wording he uses show how exceptional he feels that would be. Certainly, *with all the weight of Lutheran counsel against it, we would have to be very certain it was the right thing to do in our situation. But in Christian freedom, a congregation has the right to say within its own parish, what their practice will be, as long as they don't descend into legalism or call other Lutherans who apply the doctrine of church and ministry differently un-Lutheran.*

Should a congregation call a member to be a communion administrator (and at least one congregation in our district is considering doing so), all the scriptural qualifications for public ministry would apply. The congregation would need to make some provision for the concern that Brug raises for dealing with who should be admitted to the Lord's Supper. The communion administrator would need to function under the clear spiritual supervision of the pastor. I assume that if such a call were issued, that administrator would only function independently when the pastor was not there. Even if all that were true, a congregation should not rush into instituting something that would be so unusual among Lutherans. Very careful doctrinal instruction of the congregation would be necessary. Very careful consideration of practical issues would need to happen. Perhaps the hardest part of all this, Christian love would need to be shown to sensitive consciences that were bothered by this. If instituting a system like this caused faithful members to feel like they were sinning if they communed without the pastor administering the sacrament, it would be better not to have a communion service when the pastor can't be there, than to trouble the consciences of faithful members. Even if a congregation is satisfied that their decision will be well understood by those in their church, they still have

a responsibility to the wider fellowship. Will it cause problems in other congregations? At the very least, being brotherly would seem to imply that the area pastors talk about it and evaluate what impact it could have beyond the walls of that parish. (Geoffrey A. Kieta, “Properly Called: The Role of the ‘Laity’ in the Public Administration of the Gospel” [2015]. Emphases added.)

V. Anyone so called, ordained or not, may administer the Lord’s Supper publicly.

...the pastor is called...to administer the Lord’s Supper publicly, both in the public worship service as well as in private Communion. Even though individual Communion that is administered in a hospital, in a nursing home or member home, or as part of a pastoral counseling session is often referred to as “private” Communion, it is still being administered publicly in the sense that the pastor is doing so on behalf of a group of Christians who have called him to administer the sacraments on their behalf and in their midst. Christ gave the Lord’s Supper to every Christian. But the pastor has the right and responsibility to administer the Lord’s Supper publicly because he has been called by a group of Christians to do so. *Anyone so called, ordained or not, may administer the Lord’s Supper publicly. This includes seminary students, vicars, staff ministers, teachers, or elders of the congregation who assist the pastor with this aspect of the ministry.* (John D. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017], p. 84. Emphasis added.)

VI. Within the Lutheran church there is some confusion as to who can consecrate and distribute the Lord’s Supper...

Within the Lutheran church there is some confusion as to who can consecrate and distribute the Lord’s Supper either in a worship service or in private Communion. The simple answer is *anyone who is called to do so. Certainly pastors and, in some cases, staff ministers and male teachers are called to do so. Vicars and seminary students are also called to do so* either through the vicar call or when they are asked to conduct a service that includes the Lord’s Supper. Church laymen may also be called and trained to assist with the Sacrament. The important thing is not that the person is ordained but that he is called to do so. (John D. Schuetze, *Doctor of Souls: The Art of Pastoral Theology*, p. 97. Emphasis added.)

Addenda VII-XI

STATEMENTS BY RESPECTED LUTHERAN WRITERS THAT EXHORT US TO HAVE A PROPER RESPECT FOR THE WISDOM AND GOOD JUDGMENT OF THE ORTHODOX FATHERS OF THE PAST, AND THAT ADMONISH US IN THE PRESENT TO PRESERVE – AND WHERE NECESSARY TO RESTORE – SOUND TEACHING AND ORDERLY PRACTICE IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

VII. How confusing it must be when teachers within the same church present varying views, when...they oppose instead of supporting and helping one another! Who can witness this spectacle without pain and sorrow?

Surely one of the greatest obstacles to the true and sound development of the church in America as well as in Europe is the fact that the teachers of the church often present varying and even opposing interpretations of doctrine. How confusing it must be when teachers within the same church present varying views, when in print and in public gatherings they oppose instead of supporting and helping one another! Who can witness this spectacle without pain and sorrow?

In this church [the Missouri Synod] we have met perhaps more than 50 pastors and teachers during these trips and otherwise at various conferences of pastors and teachers. It is a real joy to be able to say, in gratitude to God, that we have invariably got the impression that they are all possessed of the same spirit that prevails in the university [Concordia College and Seminary]: a heartfelt trust in God, a sincere love for the symbols and the doctrines of the fathers, and a belief that in them His holy Word is rightly explained and interpreted, and therefore a sacrificial, burning zeal to apply these old-Lutheran principles of doctrine and order. May the Lord graciously revive this spirit throughout the entire Lutheran church, so that those who call themselves Lutherans may no longer wrangle over questions settled by the Lutheran Confessions. May they rather show their true Lutheranism by truly believing that God's Word is taught rightly and without error in the Lutheran Confessions. Otherwise, the Lutheran name is but duplicity and hypocrisy. (Jakob Aall Ottesen and Nils O. Brandt, "To the Church Council of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," August 1857, in Carl S. Meyer, *Pioneers Find Friends* [Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1963], p. 69)

VIII. Let us continue to ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.

May it not be that there has been too little study of Martin Luther in our seminaries of late, too little searching of that monument to the Christian faith, the Book of Concord? ... What was it that made a Walther the tower of strength which he became in our American Lutheran Zion? Walther was an assiduous student of Luther, even as a Luther had been but an humble follower of Paul. Yes, we hear ever so often, even within our Synodical Conference: "Let us forget the fathers, and get back to Scripture." Again that may sound very pious and praiseworthy. But what if Scripture, to which they appeal, has something to say about those fathers who have spoken unto us the word of God? Can we then do as we please about what they have spoken? Not unless we want to violate this injunction of the Word itself. And this is what Holy Writ enjoins upon us all: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Heb. 13, 7. ... Let us continue to ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein [Jer. 6, 16]. (Norman A. Madson, "The Crying Need of our Beloved Conference" [sermon preached at the 75th Anniversary gathering of the Synodical Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 10, 1948], in *Preaching to Preachers* [Mankato, Minnesota: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1952], p. 203)

IX. Are we wiser, ...more useful through the inspiration of the "spirit of the times" than our pious fathers were?

Have we really made such progress in the discovery of truth since the era of the Reformation, that we understand the Scriptures more thoroughly than those who framed the symbolical books? When Luther and his associates were prepared to surrender their lives, but not the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Catechisms, had these men of faith and prayer discovered treasures of divine truth of less extent and less value than we possess in modern times? When the Elector Augustus incessantly and with holy fervor prayed to God that the authors of the Concord-Formula might be guided by the Divine Spirit in the preparation of that admirable work, was his prayer for the illumination of the Spirit less efficacious than modern prayers are? If the writers of the Symbols are unworthy of regard, or are erroneous in their exhibition of truth, who are the men that are more competent to unfold the scriptural doctrine? When were their new discoveries made? ... Are we wiser, more holy, richer in divine grace, more useful through the inspiration of the "spirit of the times" than our pious fathers were? (Charles W. Schaeffer, "Symbolic Theology," *The Evangelical Review*, No. IV [April 1850], p. 482)

X. We esteem the fathers...as far more learned and more devout than we are.

We esteem the fathers highly, far higher than ourselves as far more learned and more devout than we are. Therefore, we want to use them, particularly Luther, as guides to Scripture, and to test their doctrines a hundred times before we reject them. (August Pieper, "Foreword to Volume 10" [of the *Quartalschrift*], trans. by Philemon Hensel, in *The Wauwatosa Theology*, edited by Curtis Jahn [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997], Vol. I, p 117)

XI. It would indeed be an outrageous despising of Christ and his gospel if...the church would abolish the pastors and teachers whom God has made proficient for her in the administration of Word and sacrament...

Can we say that the office of pastor is a necessity for every congregation? We *can* say that under normal circumstance the office of oversight and shepherding is necessary for every congregation. Listen to the words of August Pieper:

Then the church or a congregation could do away with the present congregational pastorate and introduce a Quaker type of proclaiming the Word? ...To give up the glorious divine gift of the congregational pastorate, similar to the episcopate of the middle apostolic age, though not identical, without offering something better and of equal value in its place, would mean despising God's gift for the edification of his kingdom of grace and would be hindering the same. ... It would therefore be an outrageous despising of Christ, of his kingdom and of his gospel, yes of grace itself, if the church would not in all places fill the public ministry commanded and given to it with the best gifts bestowed upon it by the Holy Spirit. It would indeed be an outrageous despising of Christ and his gospel if in fleshly arbitrariness the church would abolish the pastors and teachers whom God has made proficient for her in the administration of Word and sacrament and would go over to having inadequate lay preachers take turns preaching. ["Legal Regulations?" WLQ, Vol 86 (Winter 1989), p 47]

The work of oversight and clear, full preaching of the Word is indispensable for every congregation. It is not a divine mandate that all of this be concentrated in one man. It is possible that the duties could be shared by or distributed among a group of pastors or overseers, as it seems was the case in the early church. ... The most common arrangement has been one pastor with general oversight of the congregation. The pastoral ministry in the past has served the church well in bringing order and doctrinal purity. We should continue to treasure this pastoral ministry. (John F. Brug, *The Ministry of the Word*, pp. 120-21. Emphasis added.)

General Observations and Conclusions

The standard practice of orthodox Lutheranism, from the time of the Reformation until the 1970s, was that the Lord's Supper, in all ordinary circumstances, was celebrated only by properly-trained and properly-tested ordained pastors.

This practice was informed and shaped, first, by what Scripture and the Confessions teach about the solemn importance and supernatural potency of this sacrament, and therefore about why the church should be very serious and careful in all matters pertaining to its orderly celebration. Unlike Zwinglians and Calvinists, Lutherans believed (and still believe) that "the body and blood of Christ are truly distributed" to all communicants "when the sacrament is conducted according to Christ's institution and command," so that also "the unworthy truly receive the body and blood... But they receive it to judgment, as St. Paul says [1 Cor. 11:27-32], for they misuse the holy sacrament because they receive it without true repentance and without faith" (Formula of Concord, Solid Decla-

ration VII:16 [quoting the Wittenberg Concord], Kolb/Wengert p. 596). Out of concern for the souls of communicants and would-be communicants, Lutherans accordingly believed (and should still believe) that “those alone should administer this Sacrament who are able to examine the faith of the men using this Sacrament” (Brochmand). The officiating minister, who is responsible for “keeping watch over” the souls of those whom he communes (Hebrews 13:17, ESV), has the right to question a communicant concerning his faith and life, if the minister believes that this would be beneficial for that communicant before he receives the sacrament. A communicant has the right to ask the officiating minister for a confidential conversation concerning his faith and life, or for private confession and absolution, if the communicant believes that this would be beneficial for him before he receives the sacrament. The level of pastoral competency that is necessary for providing this kind of individualized soul-care to those who partake of the Lord’s Supper is the same level of pastoral competency that is necessary for officiating at the Lord’s Supper itself, since the offering and receiving of this kind of soul-care is closely and naturally associated with the offering and receiving of the body and blood of Christ. Even if communicants do not frequently seek out such pastoral guidance and assistance in their personal preparation for Holy Communion, this kind of pastoral guidance and assistance should always be available to them when the Lord’s Supper is made available to them.

This practice was informed and shaped also by what Scripture and the Confessions teach about the divine call to the public ministry of Word and Sacrament. Especially with respect to those who are authorized to carry out a ministry of pastoral oversight in the church, Lutherans confess not merely that no one should publicly preach or administer the sacraments without a *call*; but they confess more fully and precisely that no one should publicly preach or administer the sacraments without a *proper, regular, and rightly ordered* call. This involves not only a recognition of the *ecclesiastical mechanisms* through which men might be called to a ministry of sacramental presidency in the church, but also a recognition of the *pastoral qualifications* that are necessary for those men to be *properly eligible* for such a call. One of these qualifications is that “they are to be seminary graduates, i.e. not in form, but in substance, properly trained” (Teigen). St. Paul, who had trained St. Timothy for his ministry, later wrote to him that “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV). And St. Paul’s statement to St. Titus that a presbyter or bishop in the church is “God’s steward” hearkens back to what he had previously written to the Corinthians concerning the important work of those who serve Christ and his church as “stewards of the mysteries of God” (Titus 1:7; 1 Corinthians 4:1, ESV) – which according to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession means “*dispensers* of the *sacraments* of God.” The rite of ordination in itself was not viewed as bestowing any kind of special charism on a minister, but ordination was understood in Lutheran circles to be an orderly public “testimony” of a pastor’s fitness for his office in general, and of his vocational “authority to handle the Supper” in particular (Luther).

It is true, of course, that “there is only one direct reference in the Word [of God] to the officiant at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and that is in the account of the original celebration, at which our Lord officiated. For the rest we must be content with deductions” (Habeck). But in regard to the orderly celebration of the Lord’s Supper here and now – under the direct supervision of properly-trained and properly-called pastors – Lutheran theologians of centuries past were confident that the deductions from Scripture that they had made, the conclusions that they had drawn, and the definite position that they had taken, were sound, necessary, and pleasing to God, in view of what has more recently been described as the *implied sense* of Scripture. Paul Kolander writes:

There are doctrines, such as the Trinity and Infant Baptism, and practices of our church, such as our position on Lodgery and Close Communion, which are not stated in so many words in the Scriptures. The Bible does not employ the word “Trinity.” It does not say, “Thou shalt not belong to a lodge.” Yet we make definite statements and take definite positions on such matters. On what basis? On what may be called the “implied sense” of Scripture. When we

draw conclusions from clear statements in the Holy Scriptures, the conclusions are valid even though they are not to be found as direct statements in the Bible. (*The Scriptures – How Shall I Read Them?* [Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1970], pp. 43-44).

Over the years there have been casuistic debates and discussions on whether there might sometimes be an “emergency” circumstance in which the regular order of vocation could be suspended, so that a layman or a theological student could preside at an observance of the Lord’s Supper and be responsible for admitting communicants to the sacrament. Historically, everyone in the Lutheran Church had always recognized the legitimacy of emergency baptisms, administered by laymen temporarily functioning as “emergency pastors” in cases when an unbaptized person was in danger of death. A majority of orthodox theologians thought that there would never be a legitimate need for an emergency administration of the Lord’s Supper, however, while a minority of orthodox theologians thought that there might be. Yet all orthodox Lutheran theologians agreed that in ordinary, non-emergency circumstances, the Lord’s Supper should be administered only by properly-trained and properly-tested ordained pastors.

Lutherans who do believe that there could be circumstances for an emergency administration of the Lord’s Supper might find some guidance in Martin Luther’s counsel regarding those who were anxious to receive the Lord’s Supper on their deathbeds, even if they had not previously communed very often. He opined that this could “impose an intolerable and impossible burden” on pastors, “especially in time of pestilence,” and that the people should therefore “be told in sermons to receive Communion three or four times a year in order that, strengthened by the Word, they may afterward fall asleep, no matter what the cause of death may be” (Letter to Anthony Lauterbach, November 26, 1539, in *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, trans. by Theodore G. Tappert [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960], p. 305). Luther was, of course, speaking to situations where such people were in fact *able* to “receive Communion three or four times a year,” in church, from a pastor. In situations where this was not possible (isolation, pastoral vacancy, etc.), Luther himself would not have advised that a person near death seek to receive Communion from someone other than a regularly-called pastor. He held to the “majority” opinion. But those who hold to the “minority” opinion, and who are open to the possibility of an emergency administration of the Lord’s Supper, should at the very least probably refrain from even considering it unless someone *is* near death, or unless Lutheran communicants are in a situation where they are truly *not* able to “receive Communion three or four times a year” from an ordained pastor. “The fact that it would take some effort to get to a congregation or a pastor of their faith,” or to arrange for a pastor of their faith to come to them, “in itself would not be cogent. Effort and sacrifice are not to be eliminated from the Christian’s vocabulary” (Habeck). We also recall Luther’s admonition to pastors in the Preface to the Small Catechism, where he states that

We should so preach that, of their own accord and without any law, the people will desire the sacrament and, as it were, compel us pastors to administer it to them. This can be done by telling them: It is to be feared that anyone who does not desire to receive the sacrament at least three or four times a year despises the sacrament and is no Christian, just as he is no Christian who does not hear and believe the Gospel. Christ did not say, “Omit this,” or “Despise this,” but he said, “Do this, as often as you drink it,” etc. (22, Tappert p. 341).

Still, what Luther envisions is that laymen who understand their need for Communion will “compel *us* pastors to administer it to them,” and not that they will compel their *fellow laymen* to administer it to them.

The aberrant practice of “licensing” a man to preach and administer the sacraments on a trial basis before his ordination, which was followed in the nineteenth century by certain American Lutheran synods of dubious orthodoxy, was denounced by C. F. W. Walther as “unbiblical, unconscionable, and spiritually corrupting.” Walther misunderstood a statement by the seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian Hieronymus Kromayer, in which he thought that Kromayer was describing situa-

tions where unordained theological students were permitted in certain Lutheran churches to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This misunderstanding was reflected in a footnote that appeared in Walther's book on *The Church & the Office of the Ministry*, where – in spite of his own disapproval of such a practice – Walther stated: “But here we cannot deny what Kromayer writes: ‘Students of theology in certain places, as in the congregations at Wittenberg [Württemberg?], sometimes also here in Swabia, administer the Sacraments’ (*Theologia positiva-polemica*, p. 1059)” (p. 260). This misunderstanding was, however, later corrected by E. W. Kaehler, who demonstrated – on the basis of a statement in the *Wittenberg Judgments* – that Kromayer was actually describing the custom of “many Württemberg, Schwabish, Alsatian, and other highland churches of the Augsburg Confession,” according to which certain pastoral acts (such as the administration of the Lord's Supper) “are committed to *ordained* students of theology who do not yet have a parish or place of their own as helpers of the regular clergy.”

The period of the 1970s was an era of great chaos and upheaval in America, characterized by a general spirit of rebellion both in the secular society and in the church. This was the time when the conservative Lutheran synods in particular were deeply engaged in the “battle for the Bible” against practitioners of the historical-critical method of Scriptural interpretation who had inveigled themselves into various institutions of the church. This was the time when women's ordination was first introduced in the more liberal branches of American Lutheranism. This was the time when the “charismatic movement” started to make significant headway in its spread within Lutheranism. And this was the time when the principles and practices of the heterodox “Church Growth Movement” first began to influence, and seep into, undiscerning Lutheran congregations. Much attention was paid to these controversial issues, while perhaps not enough attention was paid to other important issues. A pervasive disrespect for inherited traditions, an ignoring of tried-and-true norms and standards, and a craving for novelty, were “in the air” of the larger culture at this time in history. And as far as I can tell, as I have done my best to trace this out, it was at this time in history that the suggestion was first made in conservative Lutheran circles, and was then implemented, that seminary students and even ordinary laymen may and should be allowed to preside at celebrations of the Lord's Supper, and to be responsible for admitting communicants, *also in non-emergency situations*.

It is perhaps understandable why such an unwise and ill-considered innovation might have slipped into the Lutheran Church during this unfortunate period of history, given the weaknesses and confusions of the time. It is not as understandable why conservative Lutheran church leaders of today have not yet fully corrected this mistake, and why they have in some cases even doubled down in defending and promoting this laxity and this departure from historic good order. The claim has been made that “the degree of sensitivity among our people on this issue is different than it was thirty or forty years ago” (Bivens). But for many of us, our sensitivity on this issue is exactly where all of orthodox Lutheranism's sensitivity was for almost five centuries. Alternatively, the observation has also been made that, in spite of the vocational disorders that have afflicted Lutheranism for the past few decades, there is still “a very strongly ingrained Lutheran feeling that only the pastor should actually administer the Lord's Supper, which in most people's minds would probably include speaking the words of institution and ‘being in charge’ of the distribution” (Kieta). May the influence of this sound enduring instinct on the part of our pious laity ultimately lead to wholesome reform and improvement in the sacramental practice of our church.

St. Paul's admonition to St. Timothy, “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Timothy 5:22, ESV), finds a natural application in situations where congregational or synodical leaders have indeed been “hasty” in authorizing someone without pastoral credentials to preside *as* a pastor over the administration of the Sacrament of the Altar. A pastor is as a pastor does. Asking a man to consecrate the elements in the Lord's Supper and to be in charge of their distribution is indeed asking him to be a pastor, even if the term “pastor” is not used. But according to the normal standards of good order and fraternal accountability that Lutherans always followed in the past – and that Lutherans

should consistently follow once again – someone who is not recognized by the larger church as having been *properly trained* to carry out the oversight duties of a pastor, and as being *fully competent* to carry out the oversight duties of a pastor, *should not be authorized* to carry out the oversight duties of a pastor.

As the generation of those who still embrace the liberalizing attitudes of the 1970s passes from the scene, and as their influence on the church wanes, we can only hope that a younger generation of well-informed Confessional Lutherans who take these things more seriously, and who have a deeper appreciation for the sound pastoral judgment of earlier times, will decisively reverse this innovation, and restore to our congregations and ecclesiastical agencies a better and fuller sense of order and propriety in the matter of who is truly qualified to be called to officiate at services of Holy Communion in the Lutheran Church – with all that this entails for the spiritual care of Lutheran communicants.

– David Jay Webber

**Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.
(1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, NKJV)**

**Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you;
and considering the result of their way of life, imitate their faith.**

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever.

Do not be misled by varied and strange teachings...

(Hebrews 13:7-9, NASB)

**Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions
which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.**

(2 Thessalonians 2:15, NKJV)

**Poverty and shame come to a person who ignores discipline,
but whoever pays attention to constructive criticism will be honored.**

(Proverbs 13:18, EHV)



Martin Luther (an ordained pastor) presiding at the Lord's Supper and admitting communicants to the sacrament, with Philip Melancthon (not an ordained pastor) assisting



An ordained pastor administering the Lord's Supper according to the Danish-Norwegian Church Order



An ordained pastor in the Church of Sweden administering the Lord's Supper



Martin Luther administering the Lord's Supper to victims of the plague



Norwegian Lutheran pastors administering the Lord's Supper to the sick and dying



A Swedish Lutheran pastor administering the Lord's Supper to an elderly homebound man



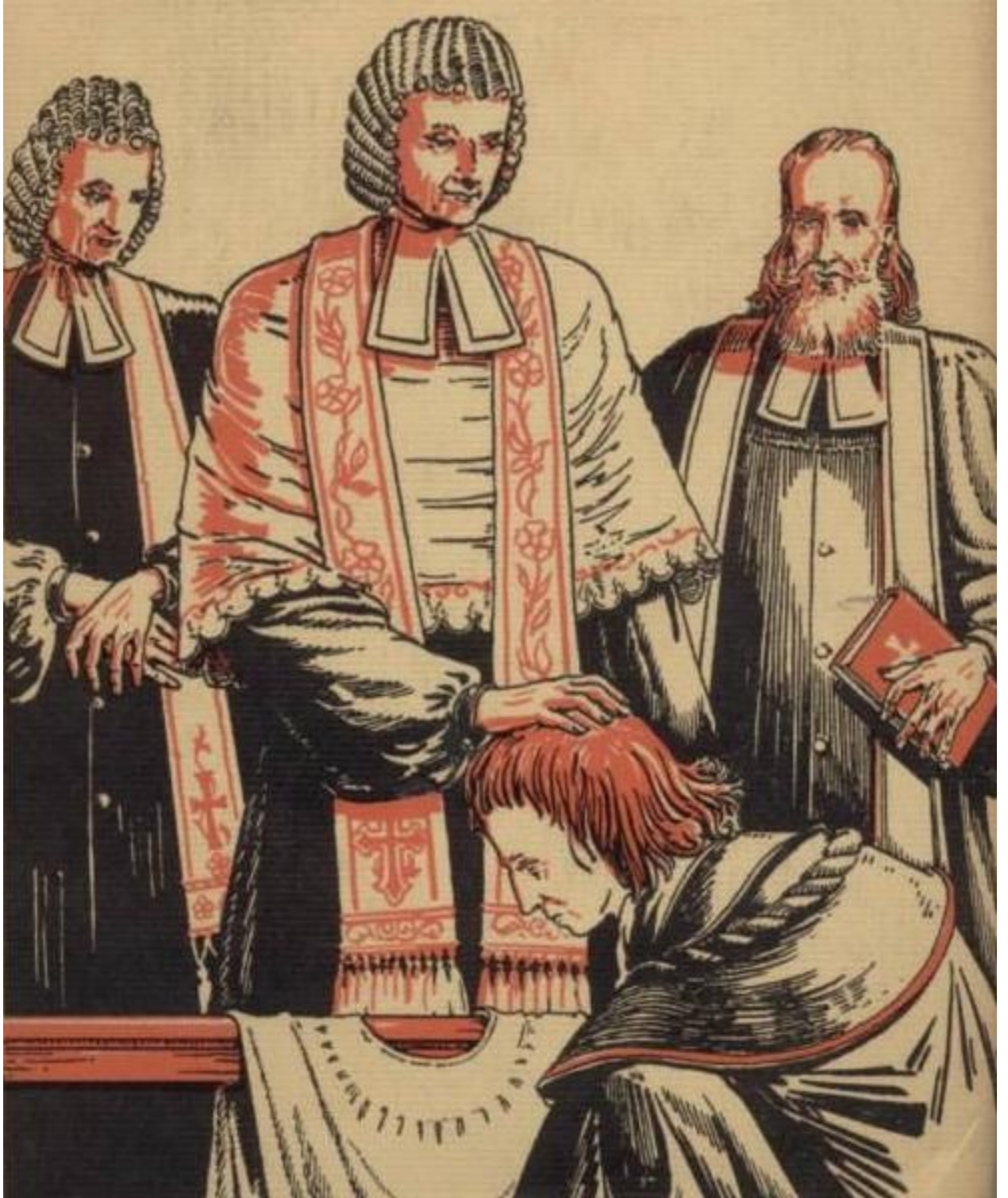
Ordination of Martin Luther by Jerome Scultetus, Bishop of Brandenburg, at the Erfurt Cathedral in 1507



Johannes Bugenhagen consecrating Lutheran bishops at the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1537



Ordination of a candidate of theology at the Lutheran Church of Saint Anna in Augsburg, Germany, in the presence of the magistrates and ministers, in 1733



Church of Sweden Pastors Andreas Rudman, Erik Björk, and Andreas Sandel, ordaining Justus Falckner to be the Pastor of the Dutch Lutheran congregations in New York, at Wicaco (South Philadelphia), Pennsylvania, in 1703. This was the first ordination of a Lutheran Pastor in America.