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Now What?

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## BRIEF STUDIES

### LAY WORKERS IN THE CHURCH

EDITORIAL NOTE: To what extent can functions of the sacred ministry properly be given to a layman, such as a lay worker or seminarian? Can he, for example, be given the right to celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar? The following opinion was prepared by the Systematics Department of Concordia Seminary at the request of several persons who are practically involved in this problem.

No passage in the Sacred Scriptures speaks explicitly either to the general question of whether a lay worker can be given charge of a congregation or the specific question regarding the Sacrament of the Altar.

Various passages have been considered applicable in this connection, however, by the Lutheran symbolical books or the dogmatic tradition of the Lutheran Church.<sup>1</sup> The understanding which the Lutheran symbolical books have concerning those passages of the Sacred Scriptures which bear on the question may be summarized with the following points.

1. The ministry of the church (*ministerium ecclesiasticum*), as God instituted it, is precisely the office of the responsible public preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the administration of the holy sacraments. Augsburg Confession, 5, 1: "That we might receive this [justifying] faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and of administering the sacraments was instituted." Augsburg Confession, 28, 5: "The authority of bishops according to the Gospel is the authority or commandment of God to preach

the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments."<sup>2</sup> In the same article, paragraph 21 describes bishops as "those to whom the ministry of the Word and sacraments is committed." Apology, 13, 9: "Priests . . . are called to teach the Gospel and administer the sacraments to the people." Apology, 28, 13: "A bishop has the authority of orders (*potestas ordinis*), that is, the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments." The Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, 60—61:

The Gospel gives those who rule over the churches the command to preach the Gospel, to remit sins, and to administer sacraments. . . . This authority by divine right is common to all who rule over churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops.<sup>3</sup>

2. Only those who have been admitted to the sacred ministry in the prescribed way ought to undertake to proclaim the Word of God responsibly and administer the sacraments (Augsburg Confession, 14). The verbs that this article uses — *debeat* in Latin and *soll* in German — allow no option; they are the same verbs which describe the relation of good works to faith. The term *publice* does not imply a public proclamation in the presence of many hearers in contrast to a private proclamation before a small and restricted number of listeners, or a public ad-

<sup>2</sup> "According to the Gospel" is in the Lutheran symbolical books a synonym for "by divine right, *jure divino*."

<sup>3</sup> Other passages of the Lutheran symbolical books which coordinate the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments include Augsburg Confession, 7, 2; 14; Apology, 9, 2; 13, 7, 9; 14, 1; 24, 70; Smalcald Articles, Part Three, 3, 8; 4; Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, 31; Formula of Concord, Epitome, 2, 1.13.18; Solid Declaration, 11, 71.

<sup>1</sup> These passages include Is. 55:11; Matt. 16:18; 18:18; 28:16, 19-20; Luke 10:16; 24:46-49; John 20:21-23; 21:15-17; Acts 1:8, 16-17, 26; 2:42; 6:3-6; 8:12, 38; 14:23; 16:33; 20:17, 28; Rom. 1:16; 10:15; 1 Cor. 1:14-17; 4:1; 12:29; 14:16; 2 Cor. 2:10; 5:18-20; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2:7; 4:14; 5:17, 22; 2 Tim. 1:6; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:7, 17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:2-3.

ministration of sacraments in a church service in contrast to a private or quasiprivate administration in a home or institution and in the presence of only a few people. *Publice* implies that the proclamation of the Word of God be done and the administration of the sacraments be undertaken by the person concerned as a public official of the church, vested with responsibility for his words and actions. That Article 14 is talking about ordination is clear from a number of facts:

a. It is the Lutheran response to the charges contained in John Eck's *404 Propositions*, widely disseminated in Augsburg during the month of May 1530, that the Lutherans denied the existence of the sacrament of orders, called it a figment of human invention, and asserted that any layman at all can consecrate churches, confirm children, and so on.

b. As such careful students of the Reformation theology of the ministry as Ernst Sommerlath, Hellmuth Lieberg, and Hans Asmussen have pointed out, the very word *rite* in *rite vocatus* implies a formal ordination as something over and above a mere calling.

c. The *Confutatio Pontificia* accepted Article 14 in principle, something that it would not have done if it had understood the article as suggesting that ordination was not necessary. It was satisfied that ordination was implied, and the proviso that Papalists attached to their approval was that the ordination be performed by a bishop. This becomes very clear when we consult the Apology on Article 14. Melancthon's first draft formulates the proviso in these words: *ut ordinatio fiat ab episcopis*. In the final form the Apology reformulates the proviso: *si tamen utamur ordinatione canonica*. In this vein the Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, 65, argues: "Since by divine right the grades of bishop and pastor are not different, it is manifest that an ordina-

tion performed by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right." Again in paragraph 72: "When the bishops either become heretics or are unwilling to impart ordination, the churches are compelled by divine right to ordain pastors and ministers, using their pastors for this purpose (*adhibitis suis pastoribus*)." Significant too is the bracketing of "calling, choosing, and ordaining" (in that sequence) under the singular noun *jus* (right) in paragraph 67 and of "choosing and ordaining" again under the same singular noun in paragraphs 67, 69, and 72.

d. When the Greek translation of the Augsburg Confession was drawn up in 1559, it added to *rite vocatus* in Article 14 the words *pros tēn hypēresian* ("to the ministry"). In 1584 the Lutheran theologians of the University of Tübingen published their correspondence about the Augsburg Confession with the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Jeremiah II. In 1576 the Patriarch had indicated his understanding of the Augsburg Confession by paraphrasing the Greek translation that James Andreae and Martin Crusius had sent to him: "except by those assigned in the legally prescribed way to this ministry (*ei mē hypo tōn tachthentōn enthesmōs pros tautēn tēn hypēresian*)." The Patriarch approved the Augsburg Confession in this sense. Crusius significantly translated this phrase into Latin: "*nisi rite vocatus et ordinatus ad hanc functionem* (unless he is rightfully called and ordained to this function)." In a later letter (1577) Lukas Osiander, signing for the absent Andreae, and Crusius summarized the areas where the Patriarch and the Lutherans agreed, including the thesis that "it must not be granted to anyone to take to himself the office of teaching or administering the holy sacraments in the church unless he be lawfully called (*mē nomikōs*

*klēsbenta*), but that in a case of necessity even a layman can rightfully baptize." How they understood this is apparent from their description of a Lutheran ordination: "In a well-attended assembly of the people, after a sermon has been preached and a number of prayers said pertaining to this matter, the candidates are ordained (*cheirotounontai*) by the bishop of the place, with one or more sacred ministers assisting, and then he assumes the care of the church committed to him."

e. Apology, 13, 12, sees the imposition of hands in ordination as an integral part of what it is ready to call the "sacrament of orders."

With specific reference to the Sacrament of the Altar the symbolical books imply that the celebrant will be an ordained clergyman. Augsburg Confession, 24, 34, German: "The Mass . . . is to be a Communion at which the priest and others receive the Sacrament." Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, 7, 32, quoting Luther approvingly, affirms that in the Sacrament of the Altar Christ's "body and blood are orally eaten and drunk, even though the priests who administer it or the recipients did not believe or otherwise misused it."

The Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope, 67, contemplates the possibility that a life-and-death emergency may occur—in the passage in question it is an imminent shipwreck—in which a layman may, in the absence of an ordained clergyman, baptize a catechumen and reconcile a penitent excommunicated person. It makes no such provision for the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar in a comparable life-and-death emergency. Lutheran theologians have differed in the answer to the question if in a life-and-death emergency a layman can legitimately consecrate the Sacrament of the Altar. Some have envisioned this possibility. Others have given a negative answer, gener-

ally on the ground that the necessity of receiving the Sacrament of the Altar is only relative in comparison to the necessity of an unbaptized person to receive Baptism and of an excommunicated person to be reconciled to the church.

These facts appear to lay down the principle that lay workers should *not* be given charge of congregations by District officials, if this implies that they are to exercise the pastoral ministry.

Furthermore it may be suggested that if the situation in our church is so grave anywhere that it appears necessary to have "lay workers" perform the functions of the sacred ministry, the proper solution would be so to modify the terms of the synodical *Handbook* that such "lay workers," provided they meet the requirements that the Pastoral Letters set up for bishops, be ordained to the sacred ministry. Ordination is not a recognition of academic achievement or competence, but it is the impartation of spiritual authority, as our Ordination Rite puts it:

I now commit unto thee the holy office of the Word and the sacraments; I ordain and consecrate thee a minister of the church . . . in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

There is excellent Lutheran precedent for such a step. To alleviate the great clergy shortage in the Lutheran Church from the late 1530s on, according to the Ordination Record of St. Mary's Church, Wittenberg, 1,979 persons were ordained in that church between 1537 and 1560, an average of one every four and a half days. Of these at least 1,025 (possibly as many as 1,069) are known to have been recruited from other professions and crafts, because the former profession or craft of the ordained is listed (92 were former manual laborers). It is not unlikely that many more of the other 900 plus ordinands had similarly been recruited from other professions and crafts, since it is improbable that all of them were university

graduates. In any case, however, it is quite clear that at the very beginning of the Lutheran community as an organized movement no reluctance was felt at ordaining spiritually qualified persons with minimal theological educational qualifications. This solution appears to be much more defensible than the unwarranted assignment of unordained laymen to perform the duties that the Lutheran symbolical books limit (except in life-and-death emergencies) to the sacred ministry.

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BRIEF TRANSLATION NOTE ON  
JOHN 15:19

*Today's English Version* breaks precedent in its translation on John 15:19. While the *King James Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, *The New English Bible*, and Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English* all agree on the translation, "I chose you *out of the world*" ἄλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, the TEV translates: "I chose you from this world."

Is this even worth noticing? If it is, is TEV's translation better? The translation "out of the world" is ambiguous at best, and at worst is easily misconstrued by men who find the proper Christian role to be "away from" the world. The old cliché "in, not of the world" too easily works out in practice to mean "away from the world." The problem, it is true, may be the word "world," which is variously interpreted by exegetes.

For two reasons the translation "from the world" is preferable. There is a very frequent partitive use of ἐκ in John, occurring about 50 times. The thought may well be: I chose you as ones who were of the κόσμος, or, as

ones who did belong to the number of the κόσμος. If the present passage does not unambiguously present a partitive usage, partitive connotations cannot be ruled out. The partitive idea also effectively excludes any metaphysical or predetermined dualism between the believer and the unbeliever, as was present in much of John's environment.<sup>2</sup> In John 10:16, 26 the phrases "sheep of this fold" and those "not of my sheep" seem to express a partitive idea, and there is no thought of "out of." In John 17:6 the disciples are men whom the Father gave Jesus ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου — certainly not "away from."<sup>3</sup> More important, however, is the fact that the disciples do indeed remain *in* the κόσμος, and Jesus does not pray (17:15) that they should be taken out of it.<sup>4</sup>

The thought, then, of John 15:19 would seem to be this: If you were people who had the same basis of existence as the κόσμος, then the κόσμος would love you as its own kind of people. But because you now do not have your existence from (or belong to) the κόσμος, although I chose and elected you from among those who were (or, when you were; compare Eph. 2:1-5) drawing their existence from the κόσμος, therefore the κόσμος hates you.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Heinz, pp. 89—93.

<sup>3</sup> In John 6:70; 13:18; 15:16, ἐκλέγω occurs with simple accusative, with no idea of "away from." In Luke 6:13 and 10:42 ἐκλέγω is used with a partitive sense. So also in 1 Cor. 1:27. Most clear is the partitive sense in Acts 1:24 and 15:22.

<sup>4</sup> It is true, of course, that ἐκ can mean "out of" or "away from": John 12:17; 13:1; 20:1-2. But it is precisely the idea of "away from" the κόσμος that Jesus negated in His prayer. This should have alerted translators to the dangers of the translation "out of." The stone may be taken away, Mary may think the body of Jesus has been taken away, but the disciples must not be taken away from the κόσμος!

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Donald Heinz, "Kosmos in John," unpublished STM thesis (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1967), pp. 1—3, 153—59.