

# Study Leave Report

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## **Ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand 1900 – 2010: a reflection on theology and practice from a historical perspective**

including a comparative survey of the ordination services of the  
United Reformed Church, and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

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## PREFACE

Ordination, what is it, how is it done, by whom is it done, to whom is it done? There are many questions to be asked of a word that is tossed about with considered abandon in a multiplicity of ecclesial traditions. So before considering the development of its practice, particularly in regard to ministers of Word and Sacrament in the PCANZ, and the comparative Churches (United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland) in the period 1900-2010, a number of definitions are supplied to whet the ecclesiological appetite, to offer a rite of initiation into the exploration.

### *Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century*<sup>1</sup>

“...‘Church orders’ is ‘not a scheme delivered by the Lord to the apostles, and by the apostles to the Church’. But what we contend is not that it was ‘a scheme,’ but that it was ‘a principle’ delivered by the Lord to the apostles and by the apostles to the Church; a principle of which ‘commission’ was the essence...”<sup>2</sup>

### *Early Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

“...a Divine-human act in which God was thought to convey to the ordained person – through certain men as special organs of Christ’s Body the Church – actual Divine power, both as authority (ἐξουσία) and as energy (δύναμις), to perform certain sacramental acts.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The dating refers to the publication date, not necessarily the period in which the understanding may be representative.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood: Chapters (Preliminary Study of the Ordinal) on the Rationale of Ministry and the Meaning of Christian Priesthood*, re-issue 1907 ed. (London, U.K.1907), xxv.

<sup>3</sup> James Vernon Bartlett, *Church-Life and Order During the First Four Centuries: With Special Reference to the Early Eastern Church-Orders* (Oxford, U.K.: Basil Blackwood, 1943), 86.

### *Late Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

“...an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgement and prayers of the congregation.”<sup>4</sup>

### *Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

“For the group which draws an “ontological” distinction between the ministerial office and the universal priesthood, a special grace is given to the ordinand through the “laying on of hands” – something of the essence or power, equipping and empowering... On the other hand, for that group which regards the distinction between pastor and people as functional, the event of ordination merely corroborates the people’s choice; it is the transference of office by the universal priesthood to one of its members and is without redemptive significance.”<sup>5</sup>

Clearly making a definitive statement about ordination will prove elusive.

However, this essay is more a journal of personal reflection and discovery than a document of academic precision. The Northland Union District Council ordained me to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 1987. It is with regret that I have no recollection of teaching on ordination in my theological training. This may be because my memory is poor, rather than an oversight in course content.

As Moderator of the Presbytery of Dunedin (2007-2008) it was my privilege to ordain as teaching elders Barry Kelk, Alofa Lale, Nimarota Lale, and Anne Thomson in the order of the Church and to the glory of God. Yet the responsibility of ordination did not prompt me to read, question or define what

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<sup>4</sup> Quoting The World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, M, 40. Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History: Ecclesial Existence*, vol. 3 (New York, U.S.A.: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2008), 178.

<sup>5</sup> Roy A. Harrisville, *Ministry in Crisis: Changing Perspectives on Ordination and the Priesthood of All Believers* (Minneapolis, U.S.A.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 14-15.

I might have believed was to be done theologically in the name of the church, or what happened in the action of ordination.

Thus I am very thankful for the opportunity afforded by Study Leave to explore understandings of ordination and compose a preferred personal understanding. Without the support of the following this time of enquiry would not have been possible:

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Geoffrey Skilton

## INTRODUCTION

This historical reflection on the theology and practice of ordination of elders in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) 1900 – 2010 is set against the backdrop of the union of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand represented by presbyteries and synods north of the Waitaki River – ‘the holy river’, and the Synod of Otago and Southland in 1901. The Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (particularly in regard to the Presbytery of Auckland) have been regarded as the ‘mother churches’.<sup>6</sup> However in the post union period the primary point of reference has been the Church of Scotland.

There is no record that the ordination practices adopted by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (PCNZ) at its formation were debated prior to the union. The practices were as follows.<sup>7</sup>

Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Pastoral Care were ordained by the presbytery. The moderator of the presbytery read the ordination prayer which was followed by the laying on of hands by the ministers of the presbytery.<sup>8</sup>

Missionaries were ordained by the moderator of the General Assembly until 1932 when the General Assembly decided that “future ordination be carried .

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<sup>6</sup> Dennis McEldowney, ed. *Presbyterians in Aotearoa 1840-1990* (Wellington, N.Z.: The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1990), 30.

<sup>7</sup> The addition of ‘Aotearoa’ was by resolution of the General Assembly in 1990.

<sup>8</sup> “Here the presiding Presbyter shall lay his hands upon the head of the Candidate, the other Presbyters also laying on their right hands severally.”

G.W. Sprott, ed. *Euchologian a Book of Common Order: Being Forms of Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Ordinances of the Church* (Edinburgh: UK: Church Service Society, 1905), 382.

out by Presbyteries, and, if necessary, under instruction from the assembly.”<sup>9</sup>

The ordination was by prayer without the laying on of hands.

Ruling elders were ordained after election by the congregation, by the minister of the congregation by prayer without the laying on of hands. Likewise Deacons were ordained without the laying on of hands. This liturgical separation of ministers from others who were ordained was continued when the Deaconess order was established.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst stating the practice of the PCANZ at the time of its formation it is informative to provide an overview of the development of the understanding of ordination in the period of the Reformation, and the Scottish church in particular. This will be a broad brush approach. It begins with the opening paragraph of an unofficial paper prepared by the Women’s Work Committee of the PCNZ, which was submitted to the Doctrine Committee for comment before becoming part of the latter’s Report to the General Assembly 1957. The statement on Ordination never appeared in the Reports of the General Assembly.

“Ordination to the Ministry is by prayer accompanied by the laying on of hands. The latter was accepted by Calvin and other Reformers because it was scriptural. In the earliest years of the Scottish Reformation, however, it was rejected by Knox and others because the right to lay on hands had come to distinguish one order of clergy from the others. The *First Book of Discipline* (1560), in which their rejection of the rite is recorded, never received the approval of either the Church or the State.

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<sup>9</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, The, *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand* (Dunedin, N.Z.: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Ltd., 1932), 48.

<sup>10</sup> A. M. Elliffe, "Ordination," (Dunedin, N.Z.: The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand: Women's Work Committee, 1957).



In the *Second Book of Discipline*, drawn up by Melville and others in 1578, the laying on of hands at Ordination is accepted. The Scottish General Assembly approved of this in 1581.”<sup>11</sup>

John Calvin in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ICR) indicated that he believed the then current practice of ordination in the church could be traced back to the Bible record of the laying on of hands for blessing and consecration.<sup>12</sup> New Testament examples of laying on of hands included the setting aside of deacons (Ac 6:1-6) by the apostles for works of welfare, and Paul and Barnabas to mission work (Ac 13:1-3). What understanding did Calvin associate with this public act? Calvin appears to have considered it a symbol by which “the dignity of the ministry should be commended to the people, and he who is ordained, reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and the Church.”<sup>13</sup> He also interpreted 1 Timothy 4:14<sup>14</sup> in the following manner, “Act so, that the gift which you received by the laying on of hands, when I made you a presbyter, may not be in vain.”<sup>15</sup> This had the effect of locating the act of the laying on of hands with the apostle himself, whose equivalents for Calvin were the pastors. Thus he could write, “that it was not the whole people, but only pastors, who laid hands on

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “It is certain, that when the apostles appointed any one to the ministry, they used no other ceremony than the laying on of hands. This form was derived, I think, from the custom of the Jews, who, by the laying on of hands, in a manner presented to God whatever they wished to be blessed and consecrated. Thus Jacob, when about to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, placed his hands upon their heads (Gen. 48:14).”

J. Calvin, "Institutes of the Christian Religion." (Bellingham, WA: USA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997),  
logosres:cicr;ref=InstitutesOfTheChristianReligion.Institutes\_IV,\_iii,\_15

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders (NRSV).”

<sup>15</sup> Calvin, "Institutes of the Christian Religion."

ministers.”<sup>16</sup> The translation and interpretation of 1 Ti. 4:14,<sup>17</sup> and *πρεσβυτερίου* in particular is crucial in the discussion of who ordains.

The first question to answer is, “Do any recent translations or paraphrases echo the sentiment of Calvin’s translation?” The English Standard Version, The New Revised Standard Version, The New International Version, The New Century Version and The Good News Bible all locate the action of the laying on of hands with a number of elders, rather than with an individual or a sub-group of elders called pastors as adopted by Calvin.

In Acts 20:17 Paul called to himself a number of elders from Ephesus, possibly from a number of congregations. They are not described as a *πρεσβυτερίου*, or council of elders but may have functioned as an informal governing group in the absence of Paul. If this was the case, and we cannot be sure that it was, then a case might be made that the ordination of all elders was a function a regional gathering of elders. This presupposes that Paul thought he was ordaining with the understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century ecclesiology.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “μὴ (Not) ἀμέλει (not take care) τοῦ (the) ἐν (in) σοὶ (you) χαρίσματος (favour gift), ὃ (which) ἐδόθη (was given) σοι (to you) διὰ (through) προφητείας (speaking before) μετὰ (with) ἐπιθέσεως (setting on) τῶν (of the) χειρῶν (hands) τοῦ (of the) πρεσβυτερίου (old men).”

Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, and Carol M. Martin, "The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology and McReynolds Interlinear)." (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

Such a possibility would raise questions about the current PCANZ practice of a minister of a local congregation ordaining elders, rather than a gathering of elders from the city. Let's not go there yet! Similarly

There also seems to be a discrepancy between the information in this verse and that found in 2 Tim 1:6: in the former it was the elders who laid their hands on Timothy, whereas in the latter it was Paul himself. It is of course possible to reconcile the two verses by assuming that Paul was the main commissioning official and was himself a member of the group of elders.

*Elders* is literally the "presbytery," a term that suggests a certain grouping of the elders, hence *council of elders*. That there were many elders in the church at that time is beyond doubt, but the existence of a formal organization of elders during such an early stage of the church has been questioned by some scholars. There is no problem, however, of an informal grouping or gathering of elders in order to participate in an important function.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, "A Handbook on Paul's Letters to Timothy and to Titus. Ubs Handbook Series; Helps for Translators." (New York: USA: United Bible Societies, 1995), [logosres:ubshbk75;ref=Bible.1Ti4.14](#).

## **PCANZ STATEMENTS ON ORDINATION**

### *Book of Order and Appendices to the Book of Order*

The PCANZ has currently three statements regarding ordination in the *Appendices to the Book of Order*. A chronological examination of the statements will highlight changes in understanding.

#### **APPENDIX D-3**

##### **Statement on Ordination, 1937**

Key points to note in the 1937 Statement<sup>19</sup> are:

1. Ordination is described in relation to function.
2. There are various kinds of ordination (elders, ministers of word and sacrament, deacons).
3. The difference in function constitutes a difference in meaning.
4. Ordination publicly declares a person “fit and proper”, i.e., has been prepared for the office and is of good character.
5. Ordination authorizes a person to exercise their function in the name of the church.

The statement in section 2 “Induction or Appointment” notes that while the ordination, “of minister, assistant, *locum tenens*, and home missionary is

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<sup>19</sup> Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, The, *Book of Order: Rules and Forms of Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand* (Wellington, N.Z.: The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2006), Appendix D-3.

identical, their status is different in virtue of the different restrictions placed upon each in the exercise of his or her functions.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus the 1937 Statement on Ordination records that there are both different types of ordination, and different status within one type of ordination. This outcome raises some questions:

- What biblical basis is there for different ordinations?
- Was the church clear on what it meant by ordination? Was it the prayer and associated act of laying on of hands that was the ordination, or was it the particular ecclesiology that constituted the ordination, or a combination of both?
- The different status within minister ordination hints strongly at a hierarchy within the office of minister of word and sacrament. Was there an unwritten hierarchy implied between deacons, elders and ministers?

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-3.

## **APPENDIX D-2**

### **Ordination and the Eldership, 1966**

The second Statement, “Ordination and the Eldership”, which was adopted by the General Assembly of 1966<sup>21</sup> was set against a need to clarify the meaning of the word ordination when it was used in reference to the office of elder. The PCANZ statement draws directly upon a statement approved by the 1963 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which stated “the Eldership is a spiritual office in the Church, concerned with the rule and pastoral oversight of the congregation. It is distinct from, though closely associated with, the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.”<sup>22</sup>

The wording of the statement associates ordination of an elder as a ceremony with the appointment to an office, we might say function, “...solemnly appointed to the office with prayer that the Holy Spirit may enable them to discharge it well.”<sup>23</sup>

Of particular interest are the comparative comments made about ordination of ministers and the ordination of elders. If, the order in which the material of the statement is placed is significant then whether elders were ordained in the mind of the Church is a moot question. In the second sentence of the statement the use of the phrase “in strict technical use”<sup>24</sup> suggests that it is only ministers of word and sacrament who are properly ordained. This elevation of the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “As the statement has made clear, in strict technical use, the word ‘ordination’ is concerned with the Ministry of Word, Sacraments and Pastoral Oversight.” Ibid., Appendix d-2.

ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament is further reinforced by the commentary on the introduction of elders, “in the years following the Reformation as the need was felt for representatives of the people, seniors, Church governors.”<sup>25</sup> The impression is given that elders were ‘Johnny come lately’. The introduction of elders into Presbyterian order was thus institutional-political-ecclesial rather than by biblical warrant or principle.

As the paragraphs descend it might be said that a softening of the pragmatism occurred with reference to a “recovery through the New Testament of an enriched awareness of the Church as the whole people of God, the ‘laos’”.<sup>26</sup> Comment was made on the development of the conciliar model of governance (synods and councils) under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ which is expressed through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This conciliar form of governance meant leadership in the church was never solely by ministerial deliberation.

After significant effort had been made in the statement to emphasis the unity of the church with diversity of office and function, and representation of the people in the office elder, the concluding paragraph echoed the earlier paragraphs.

It has been suggested that it might assist clearer use of the word ordination if it were restricted to its properly strict technical sense in relation to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. But provided it is clearly borne in mind that the use of the word does not imply that elders

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

are made ministers of the Word and Sacraments, it seems reasonable that the word should be used as expressing convictions outlined above.<sup>27</sup>

**For Further Thought:**

- What was ‘special’ about ministers compared with elders?
- Were elders truly ordained in the period following the 1966 resolution?
- Has the PCANZ ever amended, rescinded the inference that it only really ordains ministers of Word and Sacrament?

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



#### **APPENDIX D-4**

##### **Ordination and the Ministry of Word and Sacraments (1966)**

The 1966 statements were influenced by an increased emphasis and attention to the ministry of the body of Christ, what we might call the ministries of the church. The separation between ministers of Word and Sacrament and the rest of the members of the body of Christ created an awkwardness and categorization. The uneasy division was perhaps summarized in the declaration that "... 'ordination' of all the members of God's people in Baptism to the Church's evangelical and pastoral task, this must not be confused with the peculiar nature of ordination to the ministry."<sup>28</sup>

In seeking to define ordination the D-4 statement began by defining the process of the argument. The murky question of 'What happens at ordination?' was first addressed by "attempting to clarify the nature of the 'ministry' to which the ordinand is admitted,"<sup>29</sup> rather than a focus on what may have happened in the moment of ordination by the action of the Holy Spirit. Ordination was primarily associated with function and was defined as "admission to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments in the Christian Church."<sup>30</sup>

The General Assembly accepted that neither of the original meanings of the words 'ministry' and 'ordination' contained religious meaning or were exclusively ecclesiastical.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-4.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-4.

A theological case for a sub-group was made by appeal to the community of God's people in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, as an elect people. The notion of election was then extended, "But already within Israel, certain individuals and groups participate in the nation's election in special ways."<sup>31</sup> Care was taken to avoid giving the impression an extra or special election occurred. The 'special ways' were associated with the offices and functions of prophets who spoke for God, the priests who guarded the teaching, traditions and rituals, and kings who executed justice and governed the nations life.

Whilst noting the multiplicity of patterns of ministry in the New Testament, and its charismatic nature along with the headship of Jesus, and the embodiment of the Old Testament prophet, priest and king in Jesus, a swift leap was made to establish a particular place for ministers in the church.

...we may go on to suggest that the Pastorals emphasis, perhaps in face of a chaos of connecting claims to 'spiritual gifts', the value of wholesome order – Christ makes himself known through his ministers duly called and acknowledged within the Church.<sup>32</sup>

First, a ministry has ever been, and is, Christ's gift to the Church... the continued provision of a ministry in the Church is clearly in accordance with the nature of the Church as we see it in the New Testament."<sup>33</sup>

The movement from biblical patterns of multiple ministries recognized by first century churches (e.g. Acts 2:26; 1 Corinthians 12)<sup>34</sup>, to the affirmation of the continuous provision of 'a ministry' should be noted. The 'special ministry' was given to the Church "in order to safeguard, in a particular and necessary

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> The house churches were without ecclesiastical order or office as we know it.

way, His own sovereignty over the Church's life."<sup>35</sup> It was also given so that the lay people, a polite way of saying the rest of the Church, may be adequately "nourished and disciplined in the discharge"<sup>36</sup> of their commission as Christ's witnesses.

So what was the "peculiar task laid on the ministry"<sup>37</sup> which was recognized in the act of ordination?<sup>38</sup> Broadly speaking, it was the actions associated with keeping the Gospel before the people of God in "its contemporary form, for its effectiveness in the life of the Church and the World, and for the 'style of life' which it elicits from those addressed by it."<sup>39</sup>

If the above described the function recognized in ordination, what happened in ordination?

- i) ... the Church herself acknowledges that Christ, the Head of the Church, ordains that there shall be a ministry to speak, act and govern in His name. She confesses her need of the ministry, knowing that she does not live from her own resources, but from Him, 'clothed in His Gospel'.
- ii) By the act of ordination the Church recognises that Christ has called the ordinand to be His minister.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Book of Order: Rules and Forms of Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*, Appendix D-4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> I cannot help but feel the use of 'a' and 'the' is unavoidable, intentional and separatist.

<sup>39</sup> Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Book of Order: Rules and Forms of Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*. Appendix D-4

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Appendix D-4.

The act of ordination also admitted the ordinand to “a fellowship continuous with that of the Apostles.”<sup>41</sup> This was signified in the liturgy by the laying on of hands by those who were already ministers of Word and Sacrament in the Church. A biblical basis for this was located in Acts 2:42 where the followers of Jesus devoted themselves to the Apostles’ ‘teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.’” In the penultimate paragraph the General Assembly affirmed,

That the ministry has its place within the Church is signified by the decision to ordain belonging to the elders and ministers together in Presbytery. That the ministry is also a gift of Christ to the Church is signified by the consequent admission to the ministry through the laying on of hands of those already ordained to the ministry.<sup>42</sup>

### **For Further Thought:**

- If the ministry is the gift of Christ to the Church, why is it not the church that ordains, as represented in the elders, and ministers previously ordained?
- What bearing does the nature of the early church as a ‘house church’ and Acts 2:46 have on the application of Acts 2:46 to a Christendom model of institutional Church?
- In a time when congregations are not uneducated, and the minister is unlikely to be the only university educated person in the congregation, and in the reformed tradition it is affirmed that everyone should study

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

and interpret the Bible for herself or himself, why do we persist with a ‘special ministry’?

- Is the use of phrases like “upgrading of the lay person’s role” a hint of a presupposition or arrogance of class and power?

## **APPENDIX C-6**

### **The Faith We Affirm Together, 1968**

*The Faith We Affirm Together* was adopted by the General Assembly in 1968 as a statement of faith in anticipation of union with the Associated Church of the Christ, the Anglican Church of the Province of New Zealand, the Congregational Union of Churches in New Zealand, and the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The statement was accepted by the five partners as part of the basis of negotiation.

With respect to ordination the churches affirmed:

The Church's ministry derives from Jesus Christ, its risen and exalted Lord, the Head of the Church. Christ's ministry is prophetic, priestly and kingly and by the Holy Spirit is continued through the Church which he sends among men as the servant people of the servant Lord. By virtue of their membership of His Church, His people are called and commissioned to share His ministry in, to and for the world. The Church is thus called to a life of ordered yet varied service in which every member shares.

For the good ordering of this ministry God gives to the Church some to minister in special ways. These are set apart, ordained, and sent as were the Apostles, for a particular ministry within the general ministry of the Church, to build up the Church and to equip all members for their task. This particular ministry exercises the functions of proclamation, service and oversight and is expressed in a form including elements that are episcopal, presbyterial and diaconal.<sup>43</sup>

When read in isolation from the earlier statements of the General Assemblies of the Church, the statements were brief and did not state clearly that the act of ordaining an ordinand was the exclusive role of those previously ordained as ministers of Word and Sacrament. They affirmed the theological truths that Jesus is the head of the Church, that the commission to bear witness to Christ

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Appendix C-6.

in the world was given to the whole church, and that the ministries of the Church were ordered in a variety of ways. The ordering and the manner of the ordering included those who ‘minister in special ways.’

Once again there was a shift from general ordering, the acknowledgement of the ministries of all the people to God, to the confirmation of a unique grouping in the life of the church. Perhaps one could be forgiven for thinking that the Jesus we meet in the gospels might react less than favourably to the public setting aside, or the claim-provision of a special position for an educated set of guardians of truth and ritual.

### **For Further Thought:**

- Did the plural ‘special ways’ indicate that ordination may apply to a multiplicity of ministries inclusive of, but not exclusive to, the ministry of Word and Sacrament?
- As the latest statement in the order of the PCNZ did it interpret the earlier statements, or was it interpreted by them?
- The statement does not make it clear that only bishops or ministers of Word and Sacrament ordain. Does this indicate that the PCANZ, along with the other signatories were open to renewing their practices in light of the congregational ecclesiology of the Congregational Union of New Zealand and the Associated Churches of Christ?

## **Doctrine Core Group Report to General Assembly 2010**

### *Appendix 1: A Brief Theology of Ordination*

The intent of the Doctrine Core Group in offering the paper was to give to the Church “a resource, and invite feedback and comment as we continue to refine our thinking in this crucial area.”<sup>44</sup> Part of the motivation for preparing the paper was the continuing lack of clarity, perhaps confusion created by the ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament, and the ordination of elders.

The paper was marked by two divisions. The first focussed on the ministry of Word and Sacrament with sub-headings of Context, Leadership and Ordination (which included brief comments on relevant New Testament text), Conclusions and Suggestions. The second much slimmer division was titled ‘The Eldership’. Was the division significant, purposeful, or helpful?

The paper began with a lengthy section developing a theology of ordination for “those who will make life-long vows and who have a sense, akin to the ancient prophets... of the call on God on their lives for this service,” rather than the ordination of ruling elders. This seems reasonable because many who become ministers are elected and ordained as elders before they candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The order may be helpful because, those who are ordained as elders sit as a court of the church (church council) examining the ordained elders and the un-ordained who candidate before they are examined by a presbytery.

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<sup>44</sup> Doctrine Core Group Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, “The, “A Brief Theology of Ordination,” in *General Assembly 2010: Reports, E8* (Wellington, N.Z.2010), E8-1.



The arrangement of the paper suggests a subordination of the ordination of ruling elders and the Biblical text with respect to a systematic theology of the ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament. Perhaps the shape of the document hinted at an unconscious motivation to provide a well reasoned justification or defense of the ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament in a church influenced by egalitarianism and congregationalism.

The defense of the ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament was grounded in a strong Christology. God was the primary agent for the presence and action of the Church in the World. Jesus was the one anticipated in the Old Testament narrative, and the one explained in the New Testament narrative, particularly the Gospels. The defence defined worship as the central defining action of humans, but even the act of worship was a divine act and institution. At the centre of the divine action were the “practices gathered under the categories of ‘Word’ and ‘Sacrament’”.<sup>45</sup> The maintenance of the practices by the Spirit would it was stated, “inform us in our innermost and outermost being – psychologically and politically – and so our meals will become celebratory anticipations of future divine hospitality.”<sup>46</sup>

Having identified the focus of the theology on ministers of Word and Sacrament in the opening paragraph the following three and half pages made little reference to the group. The text on the following pages presented a Christology and theology of worship which undergirded the life of the whole Church. “This means that we are obliged to pay special attention to proper

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., E8-3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., E8-4.

maintenance of the institutions of Word and Sacrament as the essence of worship, and the source of the politics of Jesus in the world.”<sup>47</sup> Like, earlier approved statements on ordination, the need to “pay special” attention was somewhat abruptly placed in the care of a particular sub-group<sup>48</sup> - the ministers.

It may have been better to have begun with an exposition of Biblical understandings of ordination followed by the application of that understanding first to elders who rule, and then to elders who teach i.e., ministers of Word and Sacrament in particular. Such an ordering would be more consistent with the place of Scripture as the supreme standard of the PCANZ. Reference might well then have been made to the sub-ordinate standards, and then the tradition, the interpretation of the General Assembly.

The exegesis of key scriptures in the whole document is light. Even in the paucity of exegesis it is clear that leadership was at first informal, relational, what we might call organic. The appointment of church leadership in a town was a development noted alongside statements on the lack of uniformity in the manner of appointment. Referring to the work of Paul Trebilco, *The Earliest Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*, the Core Group noted,

that when formal office is finally established in communities like Ephesus it is strongly linked to a teaching role which some elders had. And there is a strong argument made that the term *episcopoi* simply referred to those elders (*presbyteroi*) who led by teaching and preaching

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “In order to order our life with these institutions in their proper place we acknowledge and

‘ordain’ certain people to care for them as ‘guardians of the gospel’”. Ibid.

in a role which by then was formally acknowledged by the laying on of hands and a developing set of criteria of suitability.<sup>49</sup>

This was immediately followed by ‘Conclusions and Suggestions’ that opened with the statement, “Ordination to service of Word and Sacrament is the current way the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand takes seriously its responsibility to be led in all its life by Christ and so by Word and Sacrament.”<sup>50</sup> There was no questioning of the practice in light of the evidence of scripture, nor from the observation that where there has been no institutional practice of ordination the mission of the church has frequently been effective. However, there was some openness to further reform. In the same paragraph the Doctrine Core Group wrote, “To continually find structures which will serve rather than hinder the dynamic processes of a missional church is the challenge for all of us.”<sup>51</sup>

The section pertaining to ‘Eldership’ noted that all believers enter the priesthood of Christ through baptism, and that some have the task of equipping the “saints for priestly work (Ephesians 4:11-12)”.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore Scripture also referred to elders who ‘rule’, ‘teach’ and ‘preach’ (1 Timothy 5:17), and to those who exercise leadership (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Elders who are elected by the congregation and ordained into the office by a minister of Word and Sacrament “exercise their role on behalf of the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., E8-6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., E8-7.

congregation.”<sup>53</sup> Is it not equally true that ministers of Word and Sacrament also exercise their office on behalf of the congregation for their ordination only proceeds following a call by a congregation? At times it appears that our theology and practice of ordination inadvertently creates a hierarchy of ministry rather than identifying the ministry of Word and Sacrament as one gifting among many which a congregation may acknowledge publicly with prayer and the laying on hands. It is not unknown for a congregation to publicly appoint Youth Pastors, Community Workers or Sunday School teachers with prayer and the laying on of hands.

The concluding paragraph of the Report called the Church to recognize that “a complementarity of function exists between eldership and the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Both serve the life of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit; neither should dominate the church at the expense of other ministries and vocations”.<sup>54</sup> However the distribution of the content of the paper as a whole leaves the impression that somehow the ordination of ministers of Word and Sacrament is more significant, worthy of greater attention. Or might it be that the scope of the content suggests that the theology and practice of ordaining ministers of Word and Sacrament is suspect, fragile when laid alongside the ordination of ruling elders?

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., E8-8.

## DIRECTORIES OF WORSHIP, ORDINALS, AND PRAYERS OF ORDINATION

### *Pre - 1901*

At the union of the northern and southern churches in 1901 there is no statement in the record of the PCNZ General Assembly declaring which of the Scottish ordinals, Church of Scotland or the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland or the Free Church of Scotland was adopted.<sup>55</sup> Neither is there a statement acknowledging the adoption of either the ordinal of the Presbyterian Church of England or the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Nevertheless, a case can be made from later inferences that it was primarily to the Scottish churches, and the Church of Scotland in particular that the PCNZ General Assembly and its committees looked for direction in matters of doctrine, order and liturgy.<sup>56</sup>

This inclination, this dependence was evident in the preparation of a PCNZ ordinal in the period 1934-1938. The first attempt by the PCNZ to prepare its own ordinal was abandoned in 1930 due to the knowledge that the about to be united Church of Scotland was to prepare its own Book of Common Order, including an ordination service. The book was eventually published in 1940, *The Book of Order (1940)*,<sup>57</sup> and was regularly used in the PCNZ.

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<sup>55</sup> The latter two denominations united in 1900 to form the United Free Church of Scotland which published its own service book, the *Book of Common Order* 1928. In 1929 the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland united.

<sup>56</sup> McEldowney, ed. *Presbyterians in Aotearoa 1840-1990*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Church of Scotland, The, *Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1940).

The PCNZ was part of a wider liturgical renaissance in the mid 1930s. In 1934 the Ordination Questions and Formula were sent to the Committee on the Brief Statement of the Faith “for consideration and report to the next Assembly.”<sup>58</sup>

In 1935 the ‘Report Anent Preamble, Questions, and Formula’ recorded that

“Replies to the remit were received from fifteen Presbyteries. Thirteen expressed approval, though seven of them favouring the scheme as a whole, suggested comparatively unimportant alterations. Of the other two Presbyteries, it may be said that one expressed contentment with the present Preamble, etc., while the other gave no decision, but expressed a desire for delay until further developments had taken place in the Church of Scotland and until additional questions had been prepared to be put to other office bearers, to young communicants, to candidates for adult baptism, and to parents presenting children for infant baptism. Replies were also received from 38 Sessions. Thirty-one expressed approval, though two of them desired some minor amendments. Of the remaining seven, six expressed disapproval, while one, though expressing partial disapproval, might equally well be included in the previous group.”<sup>59</sup>

At the conclusion of the debate the Convener, Principal J. Dickie, moved, and it was seconded and agreed, “That the Preamble, Questions, and Formula as adopted by the Assembly be sent down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act.”<sup>60</sup> The 1936 General Assembly adopted unanimously the ‘Preamble, Questions and Formula.’<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, The, *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1934* (Dunedin, N.Z.: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Ltd., 1934), 31.

<sup>59</sup> ———, *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1935* (Dunedin, N.Z.: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Ltd., 1935), 197.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>61</sup> ———, *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1936* (Dunedin, N.Z.: The Otago Daily Times and Witness Newspapers Ltd., 1936), 45.

The ordination services for ministers and elders, and the licensing of ordinands adopted by the 1936 General Assembly are still current (2010). In addition to these services the 1983 General Assembly approved the use of the ‘Alternative Ordinal and Induction Service’<sup>62</sup>

Having briefly summarized the history and process of adoption of ordinals, or services of ordination by the PCNZ we come to the major interest of this section. We examine the liturgies, particularly the prayers of ordination and the rubrics, with the intent to derive an understanding of ordination that was expressed in the liturgy. The beginning point is the liturgies that were available immediately prior to the unification of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1901.

The Church of Scotland, *Εὐχολογιον: A Book of Common Order*, 1884<sup>63</sup>

At the point of ordination the presiding Presbyter (minister) has the candidate kneel before him, and the other Presbyters. Prior to the prayer of ordination an introduction is offered.

Let us pray, my beloved brethren, to God the Father Almighty, that He may be pleased to bestow His heavenly gifts upon this His servant whom He hath called to the office of the holy ministry; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> ———, *Reports of Committees and Other Papers to Be Presented to General Assembly 1982* (Dunedin, N.Z.: . 1982), 143ff.

<sup>63</sup> Church of Scotland, The, *Εὐχολογιον: A Book of Common Order: Being Forms of Prayers, and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Ordinances of the Church* (Edinburgh, U.K.: The Church Service Society, 1884).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

In ordination the Church first acknowledged its dependence, and the ordinand's dependence upon God. The dependence was twofold. First, the necessary dependence upon God for the "heavenly gifts" required to exercise a ministry of Word and Sacrament, and second the 'call' to the office. Ordination was centred in Jesus Christ.

The opening section of the Prayer of Ordination contained a Trinitarian ascription of praise which linked the "heavenly gifts" to the gifts associated with the office. The gifts were given for the "edifying and perfecting of His body the Church."<sup>65</sup> Immediately prior to the laying on of hands the presiding presbyter asked the risen Jesus to send the Holy Spirit upon the one upon whom hands were to be laid.

At that point in the prayer "the presiding Presbyter shall lay his hands upon the head of the Candidate, the other Presbyters also laying on their right hands severally."<sup>66</sup> In that action the newly ordained man received "authority to minister Thy Word and Sacraments."<sup>67</sup> The prayer went on to describe functions associated with the office of one who was placed "over Thy household."<sup>68</sup>

The rubric following the Prayer of Ordination and the sung 'Gloria Patri' had the newly ordained minister receiving the right hand of fellowship from the other presbyters. The elders of the presbytery did not offer the right hand of fellowship.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



Ordination as described in the Prayer of Ordination was a public act in which a man was authorized to exercise a ministry of Word and Sacraments using the gifts of the Holy Spirit appropriate to that office, to the glory of God.

George W. Sprott in *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland* (1882),<sup>69</sup> gave the background to the practice of only previously ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament laying on of hands. He traced it to the immediate Reformation period in Scotland.

In Scotland there were some irregularities after the reformation, as indeed there had been before, but these were not sufficient to break the chain. Nearly all the old Clergy became Reformed...The laying on of hands was probably omitted at first in some cases in the setting apart of new Clergy, as it was the induction of old Priests to the charge of Reformed congregations. But if so, this ceremony was restored while the ranks of the old Clergy remained unbroken by death. We read of its being practised in 1572, five years after the Church was established.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, there was a clear link to the practise of succession that was reinforced by the 1662 Act of Uniformity of the English parliament. Sprott dated the Act as 1661.

...the State restored Episcopacy, a new bevy of Clergy were despatched to England and consecrated Bishops, and some of them were not only consecrated but reordained, because of the Act of Uniformity, which for the first time made this necessary. On returning to Scotland, they did not reordain others who were raised to the Episcopate, nor the Clergy who had been ordained by Presbyteries...<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> G.W. Sprott, *The Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland: Ot the Celebration of Public Worship, the Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Divine Offices, According to the Order of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, U.K.: The Church of Scotland, 1882).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 200.

Sprott continued his explanation of the origins of ministry in the Church of Scotland, noting the formation of the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1582 which did not require re-ordination of Church of Scotland clergy who separated. Hence, Sprott stated, "Indeed both parties at that time generally held the old Reformed view, - that whether Episcopacy or Presbytery might be preferable, they were only different ways of marshalling officers of the same order."<sup>72</sup>

The Free Church of Scotland, A New Directory for the Public Worship of God (1898)<sup>73</sup>

The Free Church of Scotland ordination prayer was similar to that of the Church of Scotland. The 1898 *Directory of Worship* in its full title directed the reader to the *Book of Common Order* (1560-1564) and the *Westminster Directory* (1643-45). The practice and understanding of ordination was based upon the works of the Church of Scotland.

The relevant sections of the 'The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government' as adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland at Edinburgh, 10 February 1645, significantly influenced the ordinal that followed.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>73</sup> Free Church of Scotland, The, *A New Directory for the Public Worship of God: Founded on the Book of Common Order (1560-64) and the Westminster Directory (1643-45), and Prepared by The "Public Worship Association in Connection with the Free Church of Scotland."* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Public Worship Association, 1898).

### Touching the Doctrine Of Ordination of Ministers

No man ought to take upon him the office of a minister of the word without a lawful calling (John 3:27. Rom. 10:14,15. Jer. 14:14. Heb. 5:4.).

Ordination is always to be continued in the church (Tit. 1:5. 1 Tim. 5:21,22.).

Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick church office (Numb. 8:10,11,14,19,22. Acts 6:3,5,6.).

Every minister of the word is to be ordained by imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, by those preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong (1 Tim. 5:22. Acts 14:23. Acts 13:3).

The 1898 *Directory of Worship* of the Free Church made it clear that the laying on of hands was an action of the whole presbytery even if only ministers of Word and Sacrament jointly administered the ordinance. “They (presbyters) should sit together, along with the Presbytery elders, beside or in front of the pulpit or communion table, so that the whole action may be *visibly*<sup>74</sup> a Presbyterial one.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Italics in the original text

<sup>75</sup> Free Church of Scotland, *A New Directory for the Public Worship of God: Founded on the Book of Common Order (1560-64) and the Westminster Directory (1643-45), and Prepared by The "Public Worship Association in Connection with the Free Church of Scotland."*, 200.

The Presbyterian Church of England, *The Book of Order (1894)*<sup>76</sup>

Like her northern counterparts the Presbyterian Church of England maintained the practice of only previously ordained ministers laying hands upon the man to be ordained.<sup>77</sup>

The Presbyterian Church of Ireland

*The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with a Directory for the Administration of Ordinance (1887)*,<sup>78</sup> hereafter *The Code (1887)* was sighted. No Service Book was sighted for the period immediately prior to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *The Code (1887)* defined the ordination of ruling and teaching elders as a function of the presbytery.<sup>79</sup> Unlike Scotland and England as described above, the laying on of hands was administered by teaching and ruling elders.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Presbyterian Church of England, The, *The Book of Order or Rules and Forms of Procedures of the Presbyterian Church of England Together with the Model Trust Deed*, Revised ed. (London, U.K.: The Presbyterian Church of England, 1894).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>78</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The, *The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with a Directory for the Administration of Ordinances* (Belfast, N.I.: The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1887).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 37, 86.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 88.

## Summary

Immediately prior to the union that formed the PCNZ, the order of the ‘home’ Presbyterian churches was not uniform. In Scotland and England, ordination by prayer, with the laying of hands by previously ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament acting in the name of the presbytery was pre-dominant.

Commissioned presbytery elders participated by giving their assent to the ordination, and by observing of the action of the ministers.

The practice arose from the pre-Reformation act of priesting, of setting men aside to holy orders. The practice continued largely unquestioned across the Roman Catholic – Protestant Reformation divide. It was reinforced in Great Britain and Ireland by the ‘Act of Uniformity (1662),’ and the quest for a common state church with civil influence in England and Scotland. Though this did not eventuate, the desire to offer security to the state north and south resulted in attempted uniformity through service books, and the ordination of clergy by clergy. Wales and Ireland though sharing the same monarch had not been as influential in the development of Protestant rule in England as Scotland.

The Prayer of Ordination, as received from the ‘home’ churches generally began with adoration of God. God the Father is praised for becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ, who in turn is acknowledged as the Saviour who sent the Holy Spirit who gifted the church with the five-fold apostolic offices<sup>81</sup> for the purpose of equipping the church. The request of the ordination prayer had three functions, to authorize the man as a minister of Word and Sacrament, to

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<sup>81</sup> Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher

seek empowerment for their particular ministry, and that the man would faithfully exercise that ministry.

Against that backdrop we will explore developments of the ordinal in the PCNZ. Particular attention will be given to identifying departures from the received understanding and practice of the churches of Scotland. Comparison with the ordinals of the Presbyterian Church in England and its successor the United Reformed Church in England and Wales, and the Presbyterian Church of Ireland will be made to highlight differing past and current practice. Differences that are found may contribute to the current discussion in the PCANZ.

## DIRECTORIES OF WORSHIP, ORDINALS, AND PRAYERS OF ORDINATION

### *Post - 1901*

#### The churches of Scotland

The Church of Scotland in its revision of 1913<sup>82</sup> made no changes to the rubric or wording of the Prayer of Ordination. The United Free Church of Scotland in the *Book of Common Order 1928*<sup>83</sup> provided the church with an official manual of worship that was in “close touch with modern needs”.<sup>84</sup> This was a response to the outdated language of *The Book of Common Order (1564)*, commonly known as Knox’s Liturgy, and the *Directory for the Public Worship of God* prepared by the Westminster Assembly in 1645. Perhaps the most significant change was associated with the description of the role of the minister in the prayer following the laying on of hands. In the 1898 liturgy God is petitioned to “Make him helpful to his brethren and to all the flock over which he is set this day in the Lord as pastor and bishop.”<sup>85</sup> In the 1928 liturgy the reference to bishop was deleted. The parallel sentence read, “Make him a light unto them that sit in darkness, a watchful and loving guardian over Thy

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<sup>82</sup> Church Service Society, The, *Euchologian: Book of Common Order, Part Iii, the Administration of the Sacraments and Other Ordinances of the Church*, 9th, carefully revised ed. (Edinburgh, U.K.: The Church of Scotland, 1913), 250-52.

<sup>83</sup> United Free Church of Scotland, The, *Book of Common Order 1928 for Use in Services and Offices of the Church* (London, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1928).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> Public Worship Association Free Church of Scotland, , The, *A New Directory for the Public Worship of God: Founded on the Book of Common Order (1560-64) and the Westminster Directory (1643-45)* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Free Church of Scotland, 1898), 213.

fold, and a follower of the true Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.”<sup>86</sup>

The new sentence also included reference to a Christ.

*The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland (1940)*<sup>87</sup> was prepared for a reunited Church of Scotland. The purpose was to bring material contained in the “*Prayers for Divine Service*, 1923 and 1929, and the *Book of Common Order (1928)*”<sup>88</sup> together in way that aided ministers in the preparation of services in the regular course of their duties. Since the ordination of ministers was not a regular function it was located in the “*Ordinal and Service Book for Use in the Courts of the Church*”.

Church of Scotland publications since 1940 have not been reviewed. This choice has been made because the PCANZ continued to be influenced liturgically by the Church of Scotland in the latter period as it developed its own service booklets. By looking to the United Reformed Church it might be observed how ecumenical partners in union influenced ecclesiology and liturgy. In a similar way by looking to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which has been less, perhaps even unaffected by ecumenical considerations, the PCANZ may be enriched in the development of its ecclesiology and liturgy. Before making comparisons the development and content of PCANZ services are examined.

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<sup>86</sup> United Free Church of Scotland, *Book of Common Order 1928 for Use in Services and Offices of the Church*, 109.

<sup>87</sup> Church of Scotland, *Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.



### Presbyterian Church of New Zealand 1983

The service titled *Alternative Ordinal and the Alternative Induction Service* (1983)<sup>89</sup> was authorised for use in the Church by the General Assembly in 1983. The Ordination Service in general use in the PCNZ immediately prior to 1983 was the Scottish rite published in the *Ordinal and Service Book for use in courts of the Church* (1954).<sup>90</sup>

The language of the *Alternative Ordinal and the Alternative Induction Service* (1983) as published in booklet form was an amended version of what appeared in the 1982 White Book of the 1982 General Assembly. The final version reflected the desire that the language of the Church should be more inclusive.

It was also significant that the *Alternative Ordinal* (1983) included a 'Liturgy of the Eucharist'.<sup>91</sup> This is the only ordinal viewed that set ordination in the context of a full service of Holy Communion. The Eucharist scripted in the liturgy was referenced to *The Holy Eucharist* (1978).<sup>92</sup> The setting of the Ordination in the context of the Eucharist reflected the positive ecumenical outlook of the period as reflected in the publications of Vatican II and the World Council of Churches, and Presbyterian – Roman Catholic Dialogue

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<sup>89</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, The, Committee on Church Worship *Alternative Ordinal and the Alternative Induction Service* (Wellington, N.Z.: The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1983).

<sup>90</sup> Committee on Public Worship Church of Scotland, , The, *Ordinal and Service Book for Use in Courts of the Church*, ed. The Church of Scotland (London, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1954).

<sup>91</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, *Alternative Ordinal and the Alternative Induction Service*, 11-15.

<sup>92</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, The, *The Holy Eucharist*, 3rd Printing 1982 ed. (Wellington, N.Z.: The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1978).

Groups endorsed denominationally in New Zealand. The Worship Committee was convened by the Rev. Dr. Peter G. Gardner who was a participant in the Catholic-Presbyterian Dialogue group based in Dunedin, and a skilled liturgist.

Following the reading and signing of 'The Formula' the rubric recommended that the hymn 'Come Holy Ghost our Hearts Inspire' be sung. At the completion of the hymn the ordinand knelt and the prayer of ordination was spoken with the laying on of hands. After announcing that the Presbytery had a new minister of Word and Sacrament, the Moderator offered the newly ordained minister the 'right hand of fellowship'. A hymn was then sung "during which not only the ministers, elders and those associated with the presbytery, but also others who wish to do so, are invited to offer the right hand of fellowship." The presentation and order in the rubric make it plain that the service of Ordination is a service of the presbytery. The absence of clear instruction in the rubric as to who participated in the laying on of hands may be explained by the fact that the accepted and stated practice of the PCANZ was for previously ordained ministers to lay on hands.

Like the Scottish rite before it, the Prayer of Ordination in the *Alternative Ordinal* (1983) invoked the blessing of the Holy Spirit and appointed the ordinand "to the office of the holy ministry in your holy, catholic and apostolic church, committing to him/her authority to minister your word and sacraments."<sup>93</sup> Thus ordination had three functions, it admitted a man or woman to an office in the church, it authorized their teaching and sacramental role, and it sought the continued active presence of the Holy Spirit in their life.

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<sup>93</sup> Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, *Alternative Ordinal and the Alternative Induction Service*, 9.

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2006<sup>94</sup>

If the *Ordinal and Service Book* (1954) of the Church of Scotland and the *Alternative Ordinal* (1983) of the PCNZ are placed alongside the latest *Service of Ordination and/or Induction of a Minister of Word and Sacrament* (2006)<sup>95</sup> the contrasting style of language is striking. The latter localized the service in a New Zealand context with a line of the 'Call to Worship' in Te Reo (Maori Language), and a less formal, contemporary, poetic Preamble.

In an act of fire and love,  
the Spirit of God came upon a people of flesh and blood.  
In wind and word,  
they became the Church of the risen Jesus Christ.  
By God's hand  
some became prophets to speak the truth;  
some became teachers, instructing old and young;  
some received gifts of prayer, holding a world of need before the gaze  
of God;  
some received the power to hope and to see a vision;  
some received the greatest gift – the capacity to love.

God blessed it all,  
and under the life of Christ made it into one unified body.  
In Christ they lived as one,  
in Christ they moved as one,  
in Christ they found their one reconciled being.  
As then, so now.

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<sup>94</sup> The word 'Aotearoa' was inserted in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1990. References to the denomination from 1990 onwards are labelled PCANZ.

<sup>95</sup> Matthew Jack, "A Service of Ordination and/or Induction of a Minister of Word and Sacrament," ed Graham Redding. (Dunedin, N.Z.: Equipping the Leadership Sub-Committee, The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2006), [http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for\\_ministers/worship\\_resources/Ordination\\_induction\\_service.pdf](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for_ministers/worship_resources/Ordination_induction_service.pdf).

Still the fire,  
     still the love,  
     still the gifts,  
     and still the life.  
 This day, in this place,  
 God calls a people to be the Church.  
 Amid unique needs, singular challenges, and unrepeatable  
     days,  
 God reforms and recreates us.  
 Amid shifting shapes, and moving boundaries,  
 God calls a people once again, to be one in Christ.  
 Within this people there are those who are called to break bread,  
     and to baptize the children of God.  
 They are appointed to preach the Word,  
     and to look for the signs of God's coming reign.  
 They are to encourage participation in God's mission.  
 They are to be leaders.  
 They are to be servants.  
 They are to play their part in God's body,  
     as if God was their very life – as God most surely is.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament are part of God's care for the life of  
     the Church.  
 That is why we have seen fit to ensure that this congregation has a  
     Minister in its midst.<sup>96</sup>

The 'Introduction' to the service began by stating that "Ordination is not the  
 conferring of a personal status and privilege, but the setting apart of men and  
 women to perform certain functions within the Church to the glory of God."<sup>97</sup>

The function was considered to be "in continuity with the calling,  
 responsibility and task accepted by the first apostles,"<sup>98</sup> and the "apostolic role  
 is customarily conferred"<sup>99</sup> by the laying on of hands by those who have been

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

previously set aside to this task. Having noted the custom, the Introduction then stated “Ordination is an act of the Presbytery rather than the local congregation.”<sup>100</sup> As an action of the Presbytery, a tension may arise for some in the church when only a portion of the Presbytery, those previously ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament, confer the office in the laying on of hands.

The ‘Prayer of Ordination’ began with thanksgiving for the process that brought the church together on the occasion and a declaration that without God’s initiative there would be no gathering of the Church. Acknowledgement was made of the fractured history of the Church, and that it was the place “where gifts were discovered and released.”<sup>101</sup> The language perhaps reflected the internal tensions of the PCANZ of the period as it debated and made statements on the way towards a legislated decision regarding sexuality and leadership in the church in 2006.<sup>102</sup>

Your church is a great mystery, Lord.  
An institution with a chequered history; an organisation internally  
divided.  
Yet a mystery of your making, a chaos of uncalculating love,  
a place where gifts are discovered and released,  
a sign of hope and reconciliation.  
So we live in this tension.  
And ministry is exercised in the tension

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Sexual relations outside marriage. In accordance with the supreme and subordinate standards of the Church, sessions, parish councils, presbyteries and united district councils shall not accept for training, license, ordain or induct anyone involved in a sexual relationship outside of a faithful marriage between a man and a woman. In relation to homosexuality, and the interests of natural justice, this ruling shall not prejudice anyone who, as at 29 September 2006, had been accepted for training, licensed, ordained or inducted (*Book of Order*, 9.1.1.a.)

between calling and actuality,  
between already and not yet,  
between obedience and disobedience  
– a tension where the energies of grace are relied upon  
and the lessons of grace are learned.<sup>103</sup>

At the point of the laying on of hands the Church asked that the Holy Spirit would “rest” upon the one being ordained thereby “blessing” and “equipping” the one ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

The prayer concluded with the affirmation that the ministries of the body of Christ do not rest in the institution called the Church. Rather, they were centred in “the One in whose name all ministries are exercised – Jesus Christ our Lord.” The ministry of Word and Sacrament was considered one ministry among many ministries.

Up to this point the survey has been upon long established national denominational churches which were presbyterian by polity. The 1971 *Plan for Union*<sup>104</sup> and the ‘Basis for Union in New Zealand’ are part of the ordination setting of the PCANZ. Despite the failure of the denominations to unite many Cooperative Ventures were, and have been formed, in anticipation of a past or future institutional union. Consequently there remain multiple understandings of ordination among the intended partners.

This diversity impacts on congregations that merged in co-operative ventures. Many of these partnerships have historic and present links to the PCANZ. The

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<sup>103</sup> Jack, "A Service of Ordination and/or Induction of a Minister of Word and Sacrament."

<sup>104</sup> Joint Commission on Church Union in New Zealand, *The Plan for Union, 1971* (Wellington, N.Z.: Office of the Joint Commission, 1971).

United Reformed Church (URC) was formed by reformed denominations with differing ecclesiology. The experience of the URC can inform the development of the understanding and practice of ordination in the PCANZ. To date it would be generous in the extreme to state that the influence of Co-operatives on the PCANZ understanding and practice of ordination has been minimal.

### The United Reformed Church (URC)

The URC of 2010 is the result of a series of unions. The first union in 1972, that formed the URC was the amalgamation of the Presbyterian Church of England (PCE) and the Congregational Church in England and Wales (CCEW). In 1981 the URC gathered the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ (RACC) into its family. Then, in 2000 the Scottish Congregational Union (SCU) found a place in the URC.<sup>105</sup>

Tony Tucker in 'Ordination Services' in *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church*<sup>106</sup> traced the development of ordination rituals and liturgies back to the Restoration Settlement of 1660-1662. A consequence of the Restoration Settlement was the Act of Uniformity (1662) by which "more than 2000 ministers, lecturers and fellows were deprived of their posts."<sup>107</sup> Associated with the Act of Uniformity was the imposition of the *Book of Common Order (1662)*. Many

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<sup>105</sup> Tony Tucker, *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church* (London, U.K.: The United Reformed Church, 2003), iii.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 119.

congregations rejected the sacerdotalism and hierarchy imposed by the Book of Common Order and became Dissenting churches.

The Dissenters frequently replaced the imposed liturgy with an order of service modelled on an outline of the Genevan liturgy. Though such services contained less formal liturgy, they did include the Lord's Supper at which it was normal practice for an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament to preside.

Tucker named the questions of the period in his essay. Those questions were in essence the same questions at the heart of this examination of the history of the development of the theology and practice of ordination in the PCANZ.

“Was the ordained minister set over the community as one possessed of authority, and if so, what is the nature of that authority? Or was the ritual act of presidency a sign that ministry existed for the sake of the Church and that the minister stood within the community of the faithful as one who served?”<sup>108</sup>

Tucker provided a survey of Ordination Services including those of the PCE that have already been examined. In addition to those he reviewed the worship books of CUEW. The CUEW produced “a range of semi-official liturgies”<sup>109</sup> in *A Manual for Ministers* (1936),<sup>110</sup> which was reprinted in 1946 and in 1948. The order of the Ordination Service reflected that of other reformed churches of the period.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>110</sup> Congregational Union of England and Wales, The, *A Manual for Ministers* (London, U.K.: Independent Press, 1936).



Unlike the order of the denominations whose liturgies have been previously examined, for whom the ordaining authority rested with the presbytery or its equivalent, the ordaining authority in the reviewed service books of the CUEW rested with the congregation. However the rubrics of the service included the expectation that representatives of the County Union would be present as a “sign of the concurrence and approval of the wider church.”<sup>111</sup> It was similarly urged that a representative of the denomination, usually the Provincial Moderator, should be invited to preside since the minister ordained at the service would thereby be recognized as an accredited minister of the denomination.

The mode of ordination reflected the inherent congregational locus of the act. Like the previously examined ordination services the presiding minister and previously ordained ministers stood around the ordinand. However, to this group was added at least one representative of the church which was to receive the minister as pastor. The representative may have been a minister who had been previously ordained by the congregation. Following the Declaration of Ordination by the presiding minister the “right hand of fellowship” was given by the presiding minister, the representatives of the County Union and the ordaining church. The laying on of hands was offered as an equal alternative, but there was an “implied preference”<sup>112</sup> for the former. The Ordination Prayer which followed did not include an invocation of the Holy Spirit, but it did offer

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<sup>111</sup> Tucker, *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church*.A121

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 122.

thanksgiving for the call of the newly ordained minister, and presented supplications for his ministry.<sup>113</sup>

The “semi-official” book was replaced by *A Book of Services and Prayers* (1959)<sup>114</sup> which was produced by a Committee appointed by the CUEW. Part I included a service for the ordination and induction of ministers. As in *A Manual for Ministers* (1936) the ordaining authority remained with the local congregation. In the latter order of service, the ordination occurred by prayer and the laying of hands by the ministers and church representatives. There was no specific invocation of the Holy Spirit at the moment when hands were laid on the ordinand. “The clear intention was that the act of ordination took place within the Ordination Prayer.”<sup>115</sup> However, the explicit of laying on of hands identified the CUEW within the pattern of the “Genevan liturgical tradition.”<sup>116</sup>

Unlike the CUEW and the PCE the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ (RACC) did not produce semi-official or official directories of worship. Neither did they prepare books of prayers and services. However, the Annual Conference of the RACC of 1942 approved the “Report on Ordination”<sup>117</sup> which included a suggested service order for the Ordination of Evangelists.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Congregational Union of England and Wales, The, *A Book of Services and Prayers* (London, U.K.: Independent Press Ltd, 1959).

<sup>115</sup> Tucker, *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church*, 125.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 132.

The ordination occurred at the Annual Conference in a service of worship, separate from the business of the Conference, conducted by the Chairman of Conference. The authority for ordination lay with the conference.<sup>118</sup>

The mode of ordination was by prayer followed by the laying on of hands. After the Prayer of Ordination the congregation either knelt or stood while the Chairman of Conference laid hands upon each ordinand in turn. The Report recommended that “the Principal of Overdale College, and one Presbyter or other appointed representative from the candidate’s home church”<sup>119</sup> should usually participate in the laying on of hands.

It is significant that though the ministry of the Evangelist was a ministry of Word and Sacrament, it was shared with others who had also been ordained with the laying on of hands. These others had been ordained to be Elders and Deacons in the local congregation. Where an Evangelist was not present it was competent for an elder to preside at The Lord’s Table.

At its creation in 1972 the URC asked its Doctrine and Worship Committee to develop appropriate forms of worship that drew upon the inherited traditions. Orders of service that first circulated as drafts for use and comment were revised and published as *A Book of Services* (1980).<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>120</sup> United Reformed Church of England and Wales, The, *A Book of Services* (Edinburgh, U.K.: Saint Andrew Press, 1980).

The Preliminary Note to the ‘Ordination and Induction of Ministers’ made explicit that the action to be taken was a function of the District and not that of an individual or ministers of Word and Sacrament only.

In order to give body to the fact that it is the whole District Council which, through the person of the presiding Moderator, is conducting the service, it is recommended that every ordination/induction should be a duly constituted and minuted meeting of the District Council, and that wherever practicable the representatives of the District Council, both ministerial and lay, should gather beforehand, together with others taking part in the service, in order that the Moderator or his deputy may constitute the meeting.<sup>121</sup>

The Prayer of Ordination immediately prior to the laying on of hands by “Those appointed” was brief taking the form of two statements of thanksgiving which located the call, proclamation, salvation, abilities and the task of building up the church in the collective body. The inference was made that the ministry of the one about to be ordained was from within the church. Thus the ministry to be exercised was neither from above, nor below, nor alongside, nor as a representative of the congregation.

The words spoken whilst hands were laid on the ordinand authorized her/his ministry, sought their enrichment with the Holy Spirit and petitioned that he/she may be faithful in their work as a minister of the Church.<sup>122</sup>

In 1981 the union of the URC with the RACC meant *A Book of Services* (1980) had a limited lifespan. Along with the addition of the theology and practices of the new partner, increasing attention to the use of inclusive

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 118.

language in worship resulted in the preparation of a new service book. It was published in 1989 as the *Service Book*.<sup>123</sup>

Unlike the Ordination prayer of *A Book of Services* (1980) which began with the barest of addresses to God the Father, “Lord God our Father, we thank you for our love towards us,”<sup>124</sup> the 1989 prayer centred the act of ordination in Jesus. The centrality of Jesus was announced in a creed like manner:

Lord God, we offer you praise and thanksgiving.  
Out of love for the world you sent Jesus Christ,  
Who humbled himself, became a servant, suffered and died on a cross.  
You glorified him, raising him from the dead.  
We glorify his name above all others.<sup>125</sup>

The prayer then picked up the essential role of the church in the ordination in a manner similar to the 1980 prayer:

Now we pray for his love and humility in our service.  
We praise and thank you for creating the Church and blessing her with  
the gifts of your Spirit, and we remember with gratitude all your servants  
who have witnessed faithfully to the Gospel of Christ.<sup>126</sup>

The words, and the authorizing intent of the words spoken over the ordinand whilst hands were laid upon her/him by the people appointed by the District Council, were expanded in *Service Book* (1989) with the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The *Basis of Union* did not prescribe the laying on of hands as a

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<sup>123</sup> ———, *Service Book*, Reprint 1990 ed. (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>124</sup> United Reformed Church of England and Wales, *A Book of Services*, 117.

<sup>125</sup> ———, *Service Book*, 89.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

requirement of ordination though it appeared in both service books thus continuing the pre-union practices of the three denominations.

Tucker was ambivalent when he described what the URC understood to happen at the laying on of hands. He wrote,

“For some it might be little more than a symbolic gesture. Others would see it as a real conferring of authority to minister in Christ’s name. Most would agree that those who were appointed to lay hands had no personal power or authority, but acted in the name of the District Council as the ordaining authority. The act of touching was charged with biblical symbolism and precedent. The rite was not conceived as a magical transference of power, but was it, at least in some sense, sacramental?”<sup>127</sup>

The next revision of services provided *Worship: from the United Reformed Church (2003)*<sup>128</sup> and *Worship: from the United Reformed Church (2004)*.<sup>129</sup>

The first volume contained services of Word and Sacrament, of reception in the Church, of the Word and other aids to the worship of the congregation.

The second volume contained occasional services including ordination, induction and commissioning. The reasons for the latest revision were stated in the second paragraph of the ‘Foreward’ over the name of the Convener of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, John A. Young.

What has changed at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the context in which public worship is offered. We find ourselves in a missionary setting where the church can no longer take for granted that most people understand the religious language and imagery of past generations. Language is changing and the language of worship has to take account of

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<sup>127</sup> Tucker, *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church*, 138.

<sup>128</sup> United Reformed Church, The, *Worship From: The United Reformed Church (Part 1)* (London, U.K.: The United Reformed Church, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> ———, *Worship From: The United Reformed Church (Part 2)* (London, U.K.: The United Reformed Church, 2004).

this. Our words may be beautiful and doctrinally sound, but if they are not ‘something understood’, they do not aid our worship. There is, of course, a measure of ambiguity and mystery at the heart of the most telling language of worship. However we should aim at clarity as well as elegant expression. We should be expressing old truths in new ways. We also need the language to express new truths in thoroughly Christian ways. Contemporary liturgists search for such language – and this quest can bring creative tension with the traditional language of the church.<sup>130</sup>

The latest Service of Ordination, like its predecessors of 1980 and 1989, used the act of ordination to authorize the ministry of Word and Sacrament. In the introduction prior to the prayer of ordination with the laying on of hands, the ministry of Word and Sacrament was located in the ministry shared by all Christians by virtue of “their baptism, in the ministry of Christ”.<sup>131</sup> The liturgy then noted that some were called “to be ministers of Word and Sacraments, to serve the Church as the Church serves Christ.”<sup>132</sup> The alternative wording was more traditional stating that some are “....to be pastors and teachers, to equip the Church for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ.”<sup>133</sup>

Unlike the ordination prayer of 1989 that began like a creed, the 2004 liturgy reverted back to the preceding tradition of beginning with a brief reaffirmation of the truth that God calls the people who are the church “in every age ....to show forth ....acts of mercy and love.”<sup>134</sup> This was followed by the thanksgiving for the call upon the life of the one to be ordained. A

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<sup>130</sup> United Reformed Church, *Worship From: The United Reformed Church (Part 1)*, v.

<sup>131</sup> ———, *Worship From: The United Reformed Church (Part 2)*, 265.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 272.

distinguishing feature of the liturgy was inclusion of the phrase, “in succession to the apostles and in company with all who follow in Christ’s way”<sup>135</sup>.

Curiously the ‘Basis for Union’<sup>136</sup> in paragraphs 19-25 did not make a link between ‘apostolic succession’ and the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

However the ‘Basis for Union’<sup>137</sup> did place the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the continuing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ “in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it (19)”;<sup>138</sup> “in offices duly recognised within his Church (20)”;<sup>139</sup> into which by ordination, “They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world (21).”<sup>140</sup> There was no explicit reference to the office of minister of Word and Sacrament having a lineage back to the apostles of the biblical era. That association has historically been hinted at, or made explicit in some branches of Reformed liturgy and polity.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 272-73.

<sup>136</sup> United Reformed Church, The, "The Manual," United Reformed Church, [http://www.urc.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/the\\_manual/the\\_basis\\_of\\_union](http://www.urc.org.uk/what_we_do/the_manual/the_basis_of_union)

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.



## Presbyterian Church in Ireland

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has retained a less liturgical approach to services of ordination when compared to the other branches of the church Presbyterian in this essay. In the period 1887 – 2010 the instruction and prayer of ordination with the laying on of hands has been contained in *The Code: The book of The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* and published in service books titled *Public Worship*. The title of the earliest edition in the period examined differed slightly from later editions<sup>141</sup> omitting the phrase, ‘*The Code*’.

*The Code* (1887) set the theology for the practice of the Presbytery through teaching and ruling elders jointly ordaining ministers of Word and Sacrament. It declared that the church had been given officers “extra-ordinary and ordinary”<sup>142</sup> by Christ, the head of the church to govern and administer. The extra-ordinary officers were the Apostles directly chosen by Christ who do not have successors. The ordinary officers “according to the New Testament are Presbyters (Elders) or Bishops, and Deacons. That bishop and presbyter (elder) were in the apostolic Church but different titles for the same officer ...”<sup>143</sup> *The Code* (1887) went on to make plain that there was no difference of rank between bishop and presbyter, that in each apostolic Church a plurality of

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<sup>141</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The, *The Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with a Directory for the Administration of Ordinances*, (Belfast, N.I.: The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1887). Hereafter called *The Code* (1887)

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

elders ruled, and that some of those elders “also laboured in word and doctrine.”<sup>144</sup>

*The Code* (1887) stated that it was the “inalienable right”<sup>145</sup> of members of the Church to elect who would rule them. This phrase remained in *The Code* (2010)<sup>146</sup> although the surrounding text differed. The intent of the altered wording remained the same.

#### 1887

“... freely to elect their own officers, while it belongs to those already in office to ordain proper persons when thus chosen.”<sup>147</sup>

#### 2010

“... to choose their own officers; and such officers are under obligation to serve together in the courts of the Church.”<sup>148</sup>

The intent was to make plain that ordination and induction were actions of the Presbytery as a whole and not the preserve of a sub-group of presbyters (elders) – the clergy. This unity is made clear in each edition of *The Code* in the instructions for the ‘Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders’<sup>149</sup> and ‘Ordination and Installation of Ministers’.<sup>150</sup> The services were duly constituted meetings of Presbytery<sup>151</sup> and the body laying hands on in both

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>146</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The, *The Code: The Book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, Reprinted with amendments 2010 ed. (Belfast, N.I.: The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1980), 11.

<sup>147</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *The Constitution and Government of the Pci* (1887), 18.

<sup>148</sup> ———, *The Code* (2010), 11.

<sup>149</sup> ———, *The Constitution and Government of the Pci* (1887), 37-39.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 85-89.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 37, 85.

instances was the Presbytery. The 1887 wording precedes that of 2010 in the extracts that follow.

### Ruling Elder

He or they shall then be ordained with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery ... the Moderator using the following or like words :- In the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of His Church, we, the Presbytery of ....., do hereby ordain you, ....., with prayer and the laying on of our hands to the office [or install you, ....., with prayer in the office] of elder, and we appoint you to the oversight of the church in this place.”<sup>152</sup>

(7) The ruling elder or elders-elect shall then be ordained with prayer and the laying on of hands of the Presbytery, or installed with prayer, as the case may be -

(a) In the prayer, such words as the following shall be used :-

—We beseech thee, almighty God, to grant thy Holy Spirit unto us, the Presbytery of ....., and to thy servants whom we do now with prayer (and the laying on of our hands ordain to the office of the Ruling Eldership, and) install to oversight in this congregation ...<sup>153</sup>

### Teaching Elder

In a case of ordination the Moderator shall use the following or like words :- “In the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole King and Head of His Church, we, the Presbytery of ....., authorized and appointed by Him to commit to faithful men the ministry of Word and the administration of the ordinances, do hereby ordain you, ....., with prayer and the laying on of our hands [the Presbytery laying hands on his head] to the ministry of the Gospel, and we appoint you to the oversight of the church in this place ...”<sup>154</sup>

(8) (a) The minister-elect shall then kneel for the prayer of ordination or installation, and the congregation shall stand. Not less than three

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>153</sup> ———, *The Code (2010)*, 66.

<sup>154</sup> ———, *The Constitution and Government of the Pci (1887)*, 88.

members of Presbytery, or more than seven, shall take part in the laying on of hands at an ordination.

(b) The Moderator shall make the prayer of ordination or installation, including the following, or such like petition -

—We beseech thee to grant thy Holy Spirit unto us, the Presbytery of ....., and unto thy servant ....., whom we, in thy name, do now with prayer (and the laying on of our hands ordain to the Holy Ministry of the Church Universal ...<sup>155</sup>

The unity of presbyters was expressed in the common wording of the liturgy, and the Presbytery by the action of ordaining which had been retained in each edition of *The Code*. A change occurred in *The Code* (1912), and subsequent editions, which permitted the Presbytery to appoint a commission to ordain and/or install elders and ministers.<sup>156</sup>

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland published books of services titled *Public Worship* in 1923, 1931, 1942 and 1965. The General Assembly Committee that prepared *Public Worship* (1931)<sup>157</sup> opened the ‘Preface’ with a one sentence paragraph that assured the reader that the publication was prepared and issued by the authority of the General Assembly. This was followed in the second paragraph with a declaratory statement that it was not the intent of the Committee “to introduce a Liturgy, still less to restrain what is called “free

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<sup>155</sup> ———, *The Code* (2010), 211.

<sup>156</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The, *The Code: The Book of the Constitution and Government of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast, N.I.: The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1912), 25, 72.

<sup>157</sup> ———, *Public Worship* (Belfast, N.I.: The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1931).

Prayer,” but rather to aid those on whom rests the responsibility of expressing the heart of the Church to God.”<sup>158</sup>

Irish Presbyterians were a people of the Book – the Bible, and not people of a service book. However the same ‘Preface’ made plain that the “Orders of Service and Induction” in *Public Worship (1931)* contained material that could only be used as printed. The purpose of the exemption was to comply with *The Code (1912)* and provide uniformity of procedure across the Church.

A Sermon was preached before the ‘Prescribed Questions’ were asked and the ‘Subscription to the Formula.’<sup>159</sup> However, all editions of *Public Worship* contained a statement titled ‘Presbyterian Orders’<sup>160</sup> which could be read in place of the sermon. The statement set before the presbytery, the ordinand and the congregation a Presbyterian ecclesiology.

‘Presbyterian Orders’ linked the office of elder to Old Testament civil institutions, governance in synagogues, and the minister to the president or teaching elder of the early church period. Reference was made to the loss of the simple forms of the early churches which were redressed in the Reformation. The essential role of the congregation in electing presbyters was stated, as was the action of the presbytery which set the elect apart for office by the imposition of hands.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., iii.

<sup>159</sup> ———, *Public Worship* (Belfast, U.K.: The Witness Office, 1923).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 143-46.

The text offered a strong indication that ordination lacked any sacerdotal implication in the mind of the Church. While something spiritual might be felt in the moment – a religious experience, and petition for empowerment and anointing by the Holy Spirit was sought for the man to be ordained in the ordination prayer, ‘Presbyterian Orders’ strongly suggested ordination did not impart new grace. Rather, the grace of the office had already been received in the personal sense of call.

In Presbyterian theory it is, moreover, presupposed that the minister has, in addition to the congregational call and presbyterial ordination, received a vocation from God to enter upon the ministry of the Word, has been trained to the end, and been licensed by a Church court, other than the session, as a probationer for the Christian ministry.<sup>162</sup>

The ‘Prayer of Ordination’<sup>163</sup> began with paragraphs of praise which extolled God and the Church of which Christ is the Head. The ultimate paragraph before the imposition of hands, focused upon the Holy Spirit and the man or men to be ordained. Central to the paragraph was the petition that by the work of the Holy Spirit the church “may receive fresh power from on high, and upon this Thy servant Thy Holy Spirit may descent with His sevenfold gifts, anointing him for the sacred office”.<sup>164</sup>

The words spoken whilst hands are laid upon the ordinand announced the Presbytery’s authority to “commit to faithful men the Ministry of the Word, and the Administration of Ordinances.”<sup>165</sup> The word “commit” was expressed

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 145-46.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 147-51.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 144-45.

as “do hereby ordain you”<sup>166</sup> when spoken over the ordinand. Ordination was a public recognition of the ordinand being set apart to do a particular work, not an elevation to a superior rank or order among the presbyters. The declaration of the authority of the Presbytery to act in the name of Christ and the Church was repeated after hands were removed and the ordination declared.

In *Public Worship* (1965) the words spoken over the ordinand whilst hands were upon his head did not include the announcement of the authorization of the Presbytery in Christ and on behalf of Christ to ordain. The words were spoken after the act in the declaration. The words at the imposition of hands were new and were retained in *The Code* (1980) and the reprints with amendments published in 1992, 1997 and 2010.

WE BESEECH THEE TO GRANT THY HOLY SPIRIT UNTO US,  
THE PRESBYTERY OF ....., AND UNTO THY SERVANT,  
N....., WHOM WE, IN THY NAME, DO WITH PRAYER  
(AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS ORDAIN UNTO THE HOLY  
MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL, AND) INSTALL TO  
THE PASTORAL OVERSIGHT OF THE CHURCH IN THIS  
PLACE.<sup>167</sup>

After the imposition of hands, and the said or sung Aaronic Blessing, the prayer continued. The blessing of the Lord was sought for the man newly ordained that “the Lord go before him, making his way prosperous, and giving him good success.”<sup>168</sup> As the prayer drew to its conclusion the focus shifted to

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>167</sup> ———, *Public Worship* (Belfast, N.I.: Graham and Heslip Ltd., 1965), 230-31.

<sup>168</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *Public Worship* (1923), 149.

the people of God, the church visible and invisible, and located the ministry in the people of God as the blessing from Hebrews 13:21<sup>169</sup> was spoken.

When the liturgies are compared with the relevant editions of *The Code* occasionally curious statements are found. For example in the opening paragraph of the Service for the ‘Ordination and Installation of Ministers’ in Public Worship (1923)<sup>170</sup> it is stated

There is no more grave and solemn service of our Presbyterian Office than the Ordination and Installation of men to the Holy Ministry. Hereby we perpetuate the true Apostolical Succession, committing unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also, the Word of Truth, till the Living Word Himself returns in glory.<sup>171</sup>

However, *The Code* (1912), stated, “The Apostles were appointed for a special purpose, and as such, have no successors.”<sup>172</sup>

There are two distinctive features of ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland when compared with the present theology and practice of ordination in the PCANZ. The first distinctive is that the service of ordination and installation of ruling elders and the service for the ordination and installation of teaching elders are both Presbytery services. The Presbytery ordains on the authority and in the name of Jesus Christ the Head and King of the Church as the representative of the church universal. The second distinctive is that the Presbytery imposes hands through the Moderator and presbyters, ruling and

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<sup>169</sup> And may the God of peace, Who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>170</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ireland, *Public Worship* (1923).

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>172</sup> ———, *The Code* (1912), 2.



teaching. This is a consequence of affirming neither apostolic succession nor rank exist within the presbyterate.

To state what is obvious from the survey of regulations and services above, there is no uniformity in the theology and practice of ordination in the named reformed churches in the period 1900-2010. What they do share is a prayer, the of laying on of hands by a group of people representative of the wider church, and a proclamation which authorizes a man historically or a woman more recently to announce the Word and administer the Sacraments. Perhaps by looking back to the time of the early churches, the period in which the manuscripts that became the New Testament were drafted, further insight might be gleaned.

## SOCIAL-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

To look for the origins of ordination as practiced in the apostolic churches requires an examination of scripture. Before this can be done, an issue of boundaries must be decided. The key boundary to be addressed is the continuity or lack of continuity of the forms of church life, including ordination, between the Old and New Testaments.

Two dominant schools of thought have existed. They may be represented by Thomas B. Dozeman and Thomas F. Torrance respectfully. Dozeman considered ordination as continuous within an evolution of covenant theology and ritual systems. In his 'Introduction' to *Holiness and Ministry: a biblical theology of ordination*,<sup>173</sup> Dozeman wrote:

The central teaching on ordination in the Bible is contained in the complex development of the Mosaic office, where the prophetic and priestly dimensions of Moses's call establish the paradigm of ordination to word and sacrament. The Mosaic office in Torah informs the composition of New Testament literature in dynamic ways, which far exceed the scattered references to pastoral offices, requiring a broad interbiblical approach to the study of ordination.<sup>174</sup>

Torrance offered an alternative approach which was strongly Christo-centric in which he argued convincingly that a discontinuity existed between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The discontinuity was complete because the Mosaic and Levitical priesthoods, the liturgical and atoning sacrificial function of the Temple, and the teaching office of the pre-Christ era in the

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<sup>173</sup> Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology* (New York, U.S.A.: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008).

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

synagogue were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the Word made flesh.

... the Church looks upon its ordering in the space and time of this on-going world as the required form of its obedience to Christ or the attestation of its reliance upon the new Covenant founded forever in the historical Jesus, as the sign that points to the new divine order of the Church's life communicated to it even now through Word and Sacrament in the Spirit, and as the provision form given to it, until the redemption of the body, of the order of the new creation which will be revealed only at the final advent of Christ.<sup>175</sup>

Torrance also wrote that though the early churches made use of some features of Old Testament and inter-testamental Jewish institutions they were given new meaning because of the Incarnation.

Now in interpreting what the New Testament has to say about ordination and its adaptation of Old Testament rites, we have to remember that nowhere does the New Testament take over an Old Testament rite and develop it as such. What it does is to lay several images or rites together, elements of which are then used in the freedom of the apostolic church for its own purposes in forming a new image or a new rite which derives its significance not from Old Testament ceremonies or images as such but from Christ and from what the apostolic church makes of it.<sup>176</sup>

A third minority approach was offered by R. Alastair Campbell in *The Elders: seniority within earliest Christianity*.<sup>177</sup> He affirmed the discontinuous viewpoint, but went further than Torrance. He asserted that neither episcopal nor presbyterial office when tied to the practice of ordination, had nor has a

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<sup>175</sup> Thomas F. Torrance, "The Ministry," in *Theological Foundations for Ministry: Selected Readings for a Theology of the Church in Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Edinburgh, U.K.: T & T Clark Ltd., 1979), 405.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>177</sup> R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh, U.K.: T & T Clark, 1994).

biblical foundation. His argument was grounded in a social-religious examination of the context in which the biblical text is set.

Campbell asserted, like most other theologians and biblical scholars that the Greek words *ἐπίσκοπος* (*overseer, guardian; bishop*) and *πρεσβύτερος* (*elder eldest; old man or woman*) may be used interchangeably. What set him apart from Dozeman and Torrance was his argument that “the household context is itself the best explanation of the non appearance of the term ‘the elders’ in Paul’s writings”,<sup>178</sup> and that *charismata* (gifting) rather than “legal organization”<sup>179</sup> ordered the life of the house churches.<sup>180</sup>

It is time to take a fresh look at his (Paul’s) churches also. When we do so, we shall find neither precisely the ‘threefold’ order of the later Catholic church, nor the charismatic democracy of Protestant imagining, but a society in which *charismata* operated within a framework of honour and respect, a society which belonged within its own social world even while it claimed to experience the in-breaking of another.<sup>181</sup>

Exegetes generally agree that the terms elder, bishop, and overseer are used interchangeably in Epistles. Therefore, if Campbell is correct, that there was no office of elder in the early churches, then we must ask the question, “Was there an office of bishop or overseer?” A further question beckons, “Was there an office of apostle in Jesus’ lifetime or in the early churches?”

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>180</sup> “That is not to say that the church is without order. Quite the opposite! But it is not a legal order, but a charismatic order. Christ rules his church through the gift of teaching brought by apostles, prophets and teachers.” Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 19.

The argument of social context as the pre-eminent supposition impacts the interpretation of texts such as 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.”<sup>182</sup> A casual reading of the text may give the impression that Paul wrote in general terms of multiple *charismata* (1 Co. 12:4-11) then associated the *charismata* with what appear to be particular offices in the early churches. The ordering of the gifts in 1 Co. 12:28 has been interpreted by some as a hierarchy of offices in the early churches. The interpretation that establishes a number of offices (perhaps not exhaustive), and hierarchy among the offices, requires a swift ‘routinization’ of *charisma*.<sup>183</sup> H. von Campenhausen<sup>184</sup> affirmed this as the process by which the early churches of the New Testament period gained a settled leadership, to which ‘the later New Testament documents bear witness.’<sup>185</sup> Strict adherence to this process creates difficulties when exegetes try to reconstruct institutional functions in the early churches from texts that simultaneously make reference to the Spirit.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:28

<sup>183</sup> ...the prophetic figure who comes to be seen as the founder of the movement is himself ‘a purely individual bearer of *charisma*’, understood as a power bestowed by God through a personal call in virtue of which the prophet enters his mission. If his mission is in any way successful, the prophet gathers around himself a body of helpers and followers who have a vested interest in maintaining the benefits of the ministry after the prophet himself has passed away. Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, 102-03.

<sup>184</sup> H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Scriptural Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J.A. Baker, tr. from 'Kirchliches Amt Und Geistliche Vollmacht' © J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, 1953 ed. (London, U.K.: Black, 1969).

<sup>185</sup> Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, 103.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

If we do not find, seek or force into a single pattern what Paul wrote regarding gifts and the appointment of officers in the early churches, we are left with ambiguity. Rather than feeling disappointed at the failure to discover ‘the pattern’ we perhaps meet a church that is not idealized, but recognizable. Thus when Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 are examined, the latter being an expansion of the former, we can better answer the question “1 Corinthians: Church Order or Order in Church?”<sup>187</sup>

If we approach the text of 1 Corinthians 12 with determination to find validation for current church order we are likely to consciously or subconsciously presuppose some form of the ‘routinization’ argument. We then interpret, “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues (1Co 12.28)” to highlight an emerged order in the gifts, a proto leadership hierarchy in the early churches. The early churches thus become the early church as uniformity is forced upon, them.

Campbell by standing apart from the consensus view above, represented by von Campenhausen, asserted that the early churches of the 1<sup>st</sup> century did not use ‘recognized *charismata*’ as the primary organizing principle, whether the community examined was socially Jewish or Graeco-Roman. That does not mean that he denied Paul recognized a form of leadership in the early churches e.g., “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you... (1The. 5:12).” Rather, he argued the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

right to be a leader was not reserved for a select few (1The. 5:14). Indeed Campbell asserted that the development of a more formalized leadership was “inherent from the start in the household setting of the earliest congregations.”<sup>188</sup>

Since the apostle Paul did not use the term ‘the Elders’ how can its emergence in the non-Pauline epistles and immediate post-apostolic writing be accounted for? Campbell accounted for it when he proposed

*It is the household structure of the earliest churches which is both the factor that makes the calling of people ‘the elders’ inappropriate in the first generation, and inevitable in the second.*<sup>189</sup>

To repeat the question in part, if Campbell is correct, that there was no office of elder in the early churches, then who were ‘the elders’ and what was their role, or status? Campbell opened the main content of his book with an examination of ‘The Elders in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism’.<sup>190</sup> He concluded the chapter by writing:

“Whether we look at the history of ancient Israel or the political life of early Judaism, at the nations as a whole or the life of a town or village within it, the answer is the same. The elders are the senior men of the community, heads of leading families within it, who as such exercise an authority that is informal, representative and collective. It is a term both flexible and vague. It neither denotes particular office-holders, nor excludes them, but can easily associate with more precise official titles.”<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Italics Campbell’s Ibid., 126.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 20-66.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 65.

The conclusion to the second chapter, ‘The Elders on Graeco-Roman Society’<sup>192</sup> is not dissimilar to that of the first chapter. Though it is noted that comparative anthropologists have found that as societies become more urban, affluent, literate and mobile, not necessarily in that order, the respect typically shown to older members of society tends to erode. Yet in the period in which the earliest house-churches were formed gender and age were generally the basis of respect and office.<sup>193</sup>

The combination of the Jewish and Graeco-Roman understandings of seniority led Campbell to conclude that although not all the heads of families were old men, seniority was in large part determined by age relative to other members of the family in the New Testament period. This he argued had “a profound formative influence on the way in which the earliest churches developed.”<sup>194</sup> It was a short step to then say that the early churches which met in houses came with ‘in-built’ leadership.<sup>195</sup> When the Pauline texts are placed in Jewish and Graeco-Roman social contexts, any reference to a group of people called ‘the

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 67-95.

<sup>193</sup> “... the typical Graeco-Roman household, especially in the case of the well off, can fairly be described as an extended family, and we should expect that the senior people within such families would continue to enjoy considerable respect.” Ibid., 96.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> “The householder was *ex hypothesi* a person of standing, a patron of others, and the space where the church met was his space, in which he was accustomed to the obedience of slaves and the deference of his wife and children. Those who came into it will have been to a large extent constrained by the norms of hospitality to treat the host as master of ceremonies, especially if he was a person of greater social standing or age than themselves. The table moreover was his table, and if any prayers were to be said, or bread or wine offered, the part was naturally his to play.” Ibid., 126.



elders' is best understood as a "way of speaking about leaders, than an office of leadership itself."<sup>196</sup>

Campbell's social-religious approach appeals because it locates the biblical text in the human context. The community and the community's social structures are examined prior to reading them through the eyes of received and current church order. When evaluating Campbell's contribution to the study of ordination his Baptist denominational background is noted.<sup>197</sup> He wrote from a position outside episcopal or presbyterial denominations which look to scripture, systematic theology, and tradition as sources to authenticate current practices of ordination. His examination of ordination from a social-historical vantage point largely independent of developed and received theology results in clarity. The clarity is in stark contrast to the complexity of covenantal theological arguments that attempt to convince a reader of apostolic origins (or succession) of the office and ordination of elders, and a particular group of elders – ministers of Word and Sacrament.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>197</sup> Within the Baptist Union of Great Britain a number of understandings of ordination exist. Paul Goodliff provides an account of what he called a "sacrament turn" in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in Paul W. Goodliff, *Ministry, Sacrament and Representation: Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology, and the Rise of Sacramentalism*, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies ;V. 2 (Oxford, U.K.: Regent's Park College, 2010).

## **‘THE ELDERS’ AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN APOSTOLIC-PRESBYTERIAL OFFICE IN SCRIPTURE**

An examination of the development begins with the “surprising fact that Paul, so far as we know called no one ‘elder’, and yet within a generation of Paul’s death the term ‘elders’ was freely used in his churches.”<sup>198</sup> The accuracy of this ‘fact’ is dependent upon the dating and authorship of the epistles, and the dating of the Acts of the Apostles. Campbell for the purposes of his argument splits the Pauline epistles (1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians) and the Pastorals (1 Timothy 5:17-22, Titus 1:5; to which he adds 1 Peter) in which ‘the elders’ are noted from the Acts of the Apostles. The presence of ‘the elders’ in the Pastorals is one argument used by scholars who date these texts after Paul’s death.

The beginning point of the evolution of leadership in the early churches and subsequent institutionalization of the leaders was the natural leadership of the house-churches in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Leadership did not have to be put in place i.e., the owner of the house was usually the leader. The seed of later leadership was thus present and only needed the right conditions to germinate.<sup>199</sup> When that happened, instruction about elders appeared naturally in the text. The lack of uniformity in timing or description of the elder’s role was a reflection of the inconsistent development of social structures across communities. The difference of thought between Paul’s own writing and the writing of post-Paul authors may be accounted for by the differing purposes of the authors. Paul wrote in a manner appropriate for one who was doing the

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<sup>198</sup> Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 100.

work of an apostle. Later authors wrote as church leaders responding to questions that arose in generally more settled churches.

Although the letters of Paul are the earliest Christian documents known to us, written by one of the leading missionaries and theologians of the time, the early churches did not begin with him. For at least twenty years before Paul the church of Jesus Christ had been developing in Jerusalem, and had already experienced mission-like expansion gaining "...adherents at least in Samaria (Ac. 8:4-25), Damascus (Ac. 9:2), Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Ac. 11:19)."<sup>200</sup> It is also probable that converts were to be found in other locations that are not named in our only source.

Paul's association with the early churches began in the city of Damascus (Ac. 9:1-25) from which he fled by night to Jerusalem (Ac. 9:26-28) where he was at first viewed with suspicion before speaking 'boldly in the name of the Lord (Ac. 9:28).' The freedom to preach was short lived as the text records his forced exit from the city to Tarsus when Grecian Jews tried to kill him (Ac. 9:29-30). Paul was invited to Antioch, by Barnabas who had been sent to Antioch by the churches in Jerusalem, to share the teaching of the church. Paul had a teaching role, and was likely one of a number of leaders in the churches at Antioch, but not the leader.<sup>201</sup>

It must be noted that without seeking to place the Pauline texts within the framework of the Acts of the Apostles we have no means of locating his writing in relation to his work. But this presents a difficulty, for the "historical

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

reliability of Acts is a matter of controversy...”<sup>202</sup> Though Campbell discussed the authorship of Acts, the date of Acts, the Sources, and the Purposes that shaped Luke’s selection and presentation of the incidents (pp 142-151), of greater note is the absence of any doctrine of the church, or the promotion of a particular form of church in Acts. It is for such absent evidence that 21<sup>st</sup> century churches look in their search for the origins of offices and ordination. Luke in the Book of Acts mentioned church leadership, and Paul’s association with that leadership as it developed. But he did not attempt reconcile the two into a set of instructions. Likewise, Luke does not offer a doctrine of the sacraments, nor a set pattern by which people became Christians.

This does not mean that the search for forms of the earliest Christian churches is hopeless, but it does mean that if we seek to reconstruct the history of the development of the ministry using the scattered and unsystematic references in Acts, we shall be using Luke’s writing in a way incidental to his purpose. This, so far from being illegitimate, should give us all the more confidence, since, if we are able to glean any information and discern any pattern, we shall know that we are not merely finding what Luke intended us to find, or arriving at conclusions dictated by Luke’s theological interests.<sup>203</sup>

Luke’s account of the Jerusalem churches and the Gentile churches beyond refers to ‘the elders’ as a unique group twice (Ac. 11:30; 21:18). He also associated them with ‘the apostles’ in the account of the Jerusalem Council (Ac. 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4).

From the association of “the apostles and the elders” a commonly held view of succession has emerged, a view which Campbell challenged. According to the succession thesis the first leaders of the church were the Twelve, who in the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 150-51.

Book of Acts Luke called ‘the apostles’. In the early years after Jesus’ death, perhaps within the first decade or two, the Eleven and Matthias established an office of elder similar to that in a Jewish synagogue. The creation of the office was prompted by the need to replace the Twelve as they left Jerusalem to proclaim the gospel, or to provide assistants to the apostles for the management of the churches. Thus James takes the place of Peter, and the elders replaced the apostles. This is the generally accepted account of the origin of the office of elder which is found in apostolic and post-apostolic documents.<sup>204</sup>

The view presumes that ‘the elders’ have a title, an office, by institutional factors. At its heart, this approach locates the impetus for the title or office of elder in a human response to a need to ‘hand the baton on’. The thesis ignores the cultural-social factor that those who held office or rank received respect (and title) based on their seniority or age.

If that was the case, then it is curious that Luke wrote of elders being ‘appointed’ in Ac. 14:23. If the recognition had arisen naturally there would seem to be little reason to appoint elders or note their appointment. By highlighting the appointment an impression is given that something different may have occurred.

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church,  
(χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ’ ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους  
προσευξάμενοι) with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord  
in whom they had believed.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 160.

The same question occurred in the Pastoral Epistles at Titus 1:5. Therefore, it is appropriate conduct a word study of the verb χειροτονήσαντες. The root of the word is χειροτονέω. The verb originally meant to ‘elect with a show of hands.’

The same word was used when Titus was appointed a travelling companion of Paul (2 Co. 8:19). It also appears in the *Didache* when the church appointed bishops and deacons (15:1)<sup>205</sup>, and Ignatius used it three times when referring to the appointment of travelling ambassadors (Ignatius, *Philad.* 10:1<sup>206</sup>; *Smyrn.* 11.2<sup>207</sup>; *Pol.* 7.2<sup>208</sup>). Therefore, we might conclude that by the time of the early church the connection between χειροτονέω and the ‘raising of the hand’ had been lost. Campbell noted that in the Septuagint it was used by Jewish authors to simply mean ‘choose’ or ‘appoint to office’, and sometimes God was the subject. The question discussed among scholars in relation to Ac. 14:23 focuses on congregational involvement, or lack thereof. It is generally agreed that ‘laying on of hands’ was not involved.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> “Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved; for unto you they also perform the service of the prophets and teachers.”

<sup>206</sup> “Seeing that in answer to your prayer and to the tender sympathy which ye have in Christ Jesus, it hath been reported to me that the church which is in Antioch of Syria hath peace, it is becoming for you, as a church of God, to appoint a deacon to go thither as God’s ambassador...”

<sup>207</sup> “...it is fitting that, for the honour of God, your Church should elect some worthy delegate; so that he, journeying into Syria...”

<sup>208</sup> “...to call together a godly council and to elect some one among you who is very dear to you and zealous also, who shall be fit to bear the name of God’s courier—to appoint him...”

<sup>209</sup> Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, 167.

However, the text does not explicitly exclude the laying on of hands. It is this absence that Campbell exploited when he made use of the “striking similarities of language between this passage and other Lukan ‘ordination’ passages. The similarity is accentuated when the Pastorals are brought into the picture,”<sup>210</sup> to argue that Luke used χειροτονέω, to mean the ‘laying on of hands’. If Campbell was right, then that was the first time we meet what has become the regular interpretation of the word by later Christians. If we agree with Campbell then we must ask the question, what did Luke believe was happening when ‘hands’ were laid upon the one appointed? This is important to the understanding of ordination as it emerged in the churches beyond the New Testament period.

In Acts 14:23 the act of ‘appointment’, of choosing is linked to “prayer and fasting”, by which the church “committed (παρέθεντο) them to the Lord.” παρέθεντο may be translated literally as ‘to turn them over to’. The elders, or perhaps all the people present after electing elders, presented them to Paul and Barnabas who commended them to the care of God.

The action thus appears to have little or no association with an installation, enthronement, or elevation to an office or an official position within a Christian community. Rather it has a strong affiliation to an action of blessing, an action seeking the best from God for the people prayed for.

Jew and Christian alike have traced their ordination practices back to the ordination of the Levites (Num. 8:5-13), and the appointment of Joshua (Num. 27:15-23). “When you bring the Levites before the LORD, the people of Israel

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

shall יָמַס (samakh) lay their hands on the Levites (Num. 8:10).” The Hebrew word סָמַךְ means to rest, lean, lay or rely upon in the sense of making a substitute. The word used for the Levites and Joshua’s setting apart is the same word used in Hebrew for when a priest lays hands upon the head of a sacrificial animal which takes the place of a human in a sin offering (Num. 8:12).

The Hebrew’s had another word which was also associated with the laying on of hands יָשַׁם (s’im). יָשַׁם refers to hands lightly resting on someone as a sign of blessing.<sup>211</sup> This word and its derivatives are used when Jacob blessed Joseph’s son Ephraim rather than Manasseh the first born (Ge. 48:14, 18).

The discontinuity created in the person of Jesus Christ which separated the Old Covenant from the New Covenant, that replaced a physical temple with the Incarnate Christ, that replaced many priests and a succession of High priests with a single High Priest, that replaced repeated atoning sacrifices with a final substitutionary atonement negated the need for (hkamas) סָמַךְ laying on of hands in the early churches. Furthermore, unlike later rabbinic laying on of hands in relation to ordination in the period 70-135 CE, Christian laying on of hands was always accompanied by prayer in the New Testament.<sup>212</sup> Taking these together, the action of the early churches was not the creation of a deputy or proxy, but the simple act of offering a prayer, words that entrusted a fellow disciple to God’s care. In doing so the action of Jesus laying hands upon people with accompanying words of blessing was repeated e.g., Jesus Receives Children (Mk. 10:13-16); A Woman with a Disabling Spirit (Lk. 13:10-13).

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 170.



Assent can thus be given to the statement, “Prayer for blessing rather than enthronement remained at the heart of Christian ordination as it developed...”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

## THE REFORMERS AND ORDINATION

At the outset it must be noted that the Reformation did not result in a complete severing from received doctrine and order. The reform of doctrine associated with scripture, faith and the tradition of the church did result in ecclesial changes. However, the reform of inherited theologies and practices of ordination was not a major issue of debate. However two exceptions should be acknowledged. The first exception was more an issue of political and ecclesial authority than a dispute on successional ordination, the severing of allegiance to the bishop of Rome by the Reformed churches. The second exception was the dispute between John Calvin (1509-1564) and Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) on the presence or absence of new grace at the imposition of hands in ordination. The essence of their dispute can be traced to differing doctrine on the nature of the Eucharist, and the priesthood of all believers.

Calvin's understanding of ordination was linked to the Hebrew concept of a substitute, *ehť fo noitanidro eht ni erofeb tem evah ew hcihw* ,*(hkamas)* סמך Aaronic priesthood. Calvin put it thus, Christ being risen and absent makes himself present "...by making them (men-ministers), as it were, his substitutes, not by transferring his right and honour to them, but only doing his own work by their lips, just as an artificer uses a tool for any purpose."<sup>214</sup> This view was re-stated in a clear statement of office in which ordination was given a non-negotiable, everlasting character.

By these words he shows that the ministry of men, which God employs in governing the Church, is a principal bond by which believers are kept

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

together in one body. He also intimates, that the Church cannot be kept safe, unless supported by those guards to which the Lord has been pleased to commit its safety. ... Whoever, therefore, studies to abolish this order and kind of government of which we speak, or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church. For neither are the light and heat of the sun, nor meat and drink, so necessary to sustain and cherish the present life, as is the apostolical and pastoral office to preserve a Church in the earth.<sup>215</sup>

Calvin built a case for ordination of men to “the apostolical and pastoral office”<sup>216</sup> on the substitute, proxy model instituted by Jesus and the early churches. Jesus began the process when he set the apostles apart from the rest of the disciples to be his presence, hands and mouthpiece in the world in a particular way. The apostles enhanced the process in replacement of Judas (Ac. 1:12-26) by selection and election. The action of choosing by lots ensured that the replacement was chosen by God and not men. The retention of the divine initiative was continued in the repentant Paul’s entry to the apostolate (Ac. 9:1-19; Gal. 1:1). His divine calling was confirmed by the Church e.g., the church at Antioch set Saul and Barnabas apart for service with fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands (Ac. 13:1-3). Calvin appropriated the actions of Jesus and the early churches to validate the practice of Reformed churches.

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> When referring to the five-fold ministry of 1 Corinthians 12, Calvin noted that only the last two, pastors and teachers, had a formal office in the church. He believed the offices of apostle, prophet and evangelist were less visible, occasional, and not present in the Church of his day in the manner of the apostolic period. Indeed he stated that they were given by God for the period of the formation of the church and not perpetually present.

Ibid.

God could not give a more illustrious proof of his approbation of this order, than by causing Paul to be set apart by the Church after he had previously declared that he had appointed him to be the Apostle of the Gentiles.<sup>217</sup>

Though Calvin tracked the practice of ordination back to the Jewish practice of sacrifice, he acknowledged that the imposition of hands was not used exclusively in the consecration of offerings and priests.<sup>218</sup> The argument offered by Calvin results in the conclusion that only those previously ordained to the same office or order should act in the laying on of hands.

What influence did Calvin's understanding of sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular have on his theology of ordination? Following the lead and argument of Augustine, Calvin stated, "the sacraments are truly termed evidences of divine grace, and, as it were, seals of the good-will which he entertains toward us."<sup>219</sup> God is described benevolently in that definition of a sacrament. This is a welcome antidote, correction for the rather negative view of God, ascribed to Calvin, by people who caricature his doctrine of election. The sacraments are outward symbols of prior divine action. The words spoken in the rite do not merely express what is physically visible, or visible by similitude. Rather they express the Word that is Scripture, which reveals Christ the Word. Any words spoken are not a mere retelling of an event, or a re-annunciation of a doctrine or dogma. The words spoken announce the Word

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> "...intimated that they made an offering to God of him whom they admitted to the ministry; though they also did the same thing over those on whom they conferred the visible gifts of the Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6)."

Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

present. Grace is thus found in the prevenient action of the Holy Spirit and is manifest in the moment of the sacrament.

Calvin made a divide between sacraments and the ordinary sacraments of the Church. The former included the signs attributed to the covenantal activity of God, examples of which include Noah and the Rainbow (Ge. 9:12-17) and the circumcision of the Hebrew people in response to God's promises to Abraham (Ge. 17:23-27). Interestingly Calvin wrote, "...the laying on of hands, by which the ministers of the Church are initiated into their office, though I have no objection to its being called a sacrament, I do not number among ordinary sacraments."<sup>220</sup>

When it came to the sacrament of Holy Communion Calvin argued strongly against the doctrine of transubstantiation as held at the time by orthodox Catholic theologians. While he denied that Christ was embodied in the bread and wine he did not deny the presence of mystery in the sacrament. Did Calvin equate the mystery with what might be called religious experience or an additional or special impartation of grace through the liturgy and visible action?

Now, should any one ask me as to the mode, I will not be ashamed to confess that it is too high a mystery either for my mind to comprehend or my words to express; and to speak more plainly, I rather feel than understand it.<sup>221</sup>

Given Calvin's view of the sacrament as a mystery and source of nourishment for the soul it is no surprise that he promoted frequent celebration – preferably

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

weekly, that it be accompanied by the preaching of the Word, and that the minister is the celebrant. The minister is a guardian and announcer of the Word; a protector and expositor of the Sacrament; a waiter and wine steward at the Table where Christ is the Host.

...then the minister, having placed bread and wine on the table, should read the institution of the Supper. He should next explain the promises which are therein given; and, at the same time, keep back from communion all those who are debarred by the prohibition of the Lord. He should afterwards pray that the Lord, with the kindness with which he has bestowed this sacred food upon us, would also form and instruct us to receive it with faith and gratitude; and, as we are of ourselves unworthy, would make us worthy of the feast by his mercy.<sup>222</sup>

Calvin from his theology of the Eucharist offered a high, but not Roman Catholic view of ordination as sacramental, as experience and mystery.

We now turn to Calvin's Swiss contemporary Huldrych Zwingli's (1484–1531) understanding of Communion and its influence on his understanding of ordination.<sup>223</sup> In 'A Short Christian Instruction',<sup>224</sup> dated 17 November 1523, Zwingli argued against the mass as a sacrifice. In doing so he affirmed the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth, beginning section '[8] Concerning

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> "Zwingli still snatched time for hastily composed but vigorous and original writing. Along with his Articles, the *Commentary on True and False Religion* (1525) constituted his most comprehensive statement. Other works that call for notice are his *Clarity and Certainty of Scripture* (1522), *Baptism* (1525), *Eucharist* (1525), *Divine and Human Righteousness*, and *Providence*. He summarized his teaching in the *Fidei Ratio* of 1530, prepared for the Diet of Augsburg, and his *Exposition of the Faith* (1531), written in an attempt to win over Francis I to the Reformation."

Douglas, J. D., Philip Wesley Comfort, and Donald Mitchell. *Who's Who in Christian History*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992.

<sup>224</sup> Dikran Y. Hadidian, ed. *Selected Writings of Huldrych Zwingli: In Search of True Religion: Reformation, Pastoral and Eucharistic Writings*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: Pickwick Publications, 1984), 48-80.

the Mass' with the affirmation "none of us wants to abolish or belittle the body and blood of Christ, or teach that it is nothing..."<sup>225</sup> Zwingli was of the opinion that Jesus instructed the disciples to hold a commemoration of the meal Christ himself had instituted. The meal was not a sacrifice as Christ himself was alive at the table, and alive after the meal. The sacrifice took place later when Jesus was executed at Calvary.

At the heart of Zwingli's doctrine of the sacrament was a remembering of what Christ had done for the believer. "And one who trusts in Christ's suffering and salvation is saved. Of this Christ has left us a certain, safe sign of his flesh and blood, and has called these to be eaten and drunk in his memory."<sup>226</sup> The Lord's Supper was a telling of all the "good and peace"<sup>227</sup> Christ brought to humanity. The confirmation of the telling was the feeding of believers "who wish it with the body and blood of Christ."<sup>228</sup>

It is interesting to note that Zwingli seemed comfortable with a very physical naming of "body and blood" in his text. Perhaps he didn't want to remove the liturgical language, nor hide the agonies of Christ's death. While the language of his liturgy resembles that of Calvin, what did he understand the association between the actual body and blood of the deceased Christ, and the bread and wine on the Communion Table to be?

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

The ‘Letter to Matthew Alber Concerning the Lord’s Supper,’<sup>229</sup> originally dated 16 November 1524, contained the main features of Zwingli’s doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. Central to Zwingli’s doctrine was a fresh understanding of Luke 22:19 – “This is my body which is given for you.” In particular what he did with ‘is’ was significant, but to that we will come shortly. The letter also placed before the reader Zwingli’s view of the sacrament as

... a symbol of community within the body of Christ and his view of the sacrament as oath of allegiance, indeed as confession of faith, which binds the believer to the Christian life.<sup>230</sup>

Returning to Zwingli’s “is”. First, it is clear that the bread remained bread.<sup>231</sup> Given that belief or fact, what became of the bread in the sacrament, what was its role?

Zwingli was influenced by Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt who located the demonstrative pronoun “this’ in “Take and eat, this is my body which is given to you,”<sup>232</sup> not with the bread, but with Christ. Thus the words of consecration became, “Take, eat; for I am going to give this, my body, for you.”<sup>233</sup> This differing emphasis, way of approach to the exegesis of “this” encouraged Zwingli to look again at the “is”. Thus he wrote, “I think the hinge of the matter is to be found in a very short syllable, namely, in the word “is”, the

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 127-45.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>231</sup>“ ... I know not whether it was a greater abomination to have worshipped the golden calf in Dan (cf. 1 K. 12:28-30; 2 K. 10:29; 1 Ch. 11:15) than to have worshipped this consecrated bread. I say “if”, for although the opinion I am going to mention greatly appeals to me, I lay down nothing categorically. I put forth what I think.” Ibid., 137.

<sup>232</sup> 1 Cor. 11:24

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.



meaning of which is not always given by “is” but sometimes by “signifies”. ”<sup>234</sup>

To sustain that approach he appealed to both Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament, Zwingli drew upon Pharoah’s Dream (Ge. 41:26) – ‘The seven fat cows are seven fruitful years.’ The cows are not seven years, they are cows and signify individually a year. In the New Testament, he drew upon John 15:1 in which Jesus proclaimed, “I am the vine”. Yet Jesus was not a vine, yet he represented a vine. Therefore he was able to write that Christ’s words of consecration meant, “This feast signifies or is the symbol by which you will recall that my body, mine, the Son of God, your Lord and Master, was given for you.”<sup>235</sup>

The position Zwingli arrived at clearly set him in a different place to the Roman Catholic Church in regard to the mass and the doctrine of transubstantiation. It is evident that Zwingli believed something happened in the sacrament, it was not an empty sign and meaningless words. The signs, the bread and the wine drew the believer to an act of remembering. The remembering in Zwingli’s theology was devoid of the grace described and experienced by Calvin as mystery in the Eucharist. For Zwingli, grace in a sacrament was the ability to remember and engage with the remembered benefits of the death of Jesus for the believer, rather than any new impartation at receipt of the sacrament. This is a low position with regard to mystery and present grace in a sacrament when compared to Calvin.

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 139.

How was that low position presented in any doctrine or practice of ordination recorded by Zwingli? On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1523, Zwingli was summoned to appear before the Great Council<sup>236</sup> to give account of his teaching. In response to the accusations made against him, or perhaps the tone of the text he wrote, “I have been grossly maligned”.<sup>237</sup> In the same paragraph he wrote that the people of Zurich wanted the matter settled, “... the righteous people of Zurich were unable to tolerate the maligning any longer because they wanted to live by it in the future.”<sup>238</sup> The ‘it’ referred to instruction and a lifestyle based upon Reformed interpretation of scripture. In addition to the Great Council, leading scholars of the city and the Canton of Zurich, the Bishop of Constance, and others from the wider confederacy were present. The substance of Zwingli’s defense was contained in ‘The Sixty-Seven Articles.’

In ‘The Twenty-Seventh Article’<sup>239</sup> Zwingli indirectly hinted at his understanding of the priesthood of all believers when he addressed “religious orders, sects and illegal gatherings.”<sup>240</sup> Zwingli named three grievances in ‘The Twenty-Seventh Article’: the orders excluded believers who could not pay to

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<sup>236</sup> The Great Council (212 members) was the town government. It was composed of the Little Council (the burgomaster and thirteen members from the *Constafel*, (which included the old patricians and the wealthiest burghers) and the thirteen masters of the craft guilds; plus 78 representatives each of the Constafel and of the guilds, besides 3 members named by the burgomaster.

<sup>237</sup> Dikran Y. Hadidian, ed. *Selected Writings of Huldrych Zwingli: In Defense of the Reformed Faith*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Pennsylvania, U.S.A.: Pickwick Publications, 1984), 1.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> “All Christians are brothers of Christ and of one another and no one on earth ought to be elevated to be called Father. This brings to naught religious orders, sects and illegal gatherings.” Ibid., 206.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

belong, or who could not pay to have prayer offered; and that the heads of the orders were called father thereby the orders elevated a human being above the teaching of Jesus (Mt. 23:9). Zwingli believed that the creation of any order or sect which removed people from “the multitude of Christians is wrong.”<sup>241</sup>

Articles Sixty-One, Sixty-Two, and Sixty Three concerned the priesthood. In those three Articles it is clear that the essence of the priesthood consisted in what a priest did. Zwingli was opposed to any sense in which the priest is marked indelibly<sup>242</sup> in ordination with the character of the office. Any notion of once a priest always a priest, even if a bad priest, or priest without appointment had no place in Zwingli’s ecclesiology.

... to be a priest means no more than to be an honourable proclaimer of the word of God and a guardian of the salvation of souls. Whoever does that receives respect as a result. But one who fails to do that, ought to be dismissed; he is then no longer a priest.<sup>243</sup>

So what did Zwingli make of the Apostles’ practice of laying on of hands? He located the action in “the custom of those people who are in the habit of sealing faithfulness, faith and commissions with a hand clasp for greater confirmation.”<sup>244</sup> The act of ordination from Zwingli’s point of view may be described as a-religious, perhaps an institutional commissioning, the equivalent a letter of appointment with the respect yet to be earned.

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>242</sup> “When a priest is consecrated, a mark is etched out in his soul which may never again be removed or extinguished from it” Ibid., 355.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 355-56.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 355.

Zwingli's desire to avoid separate religious orders, which excluded the majority of believers and his belief that only those who preached were true priests, was challenged. Among those who confronted Zwingli were men who considered they had the right to preach even though they were untrained. These men argued that they were called and were under a compulsion to preach and read the scriptures. These free spirits threatened the order of the church in Zurich at a time when the Reformed cause in Zurich was fragile.

To address this disquiet Zwingli published 'On the Preaching Office' in which he sought to temper the freedom of those "self-appointed rabble rousers – not 'Apostles' as they wish to be called".<sup>245</sup> While it is not clear that the preachers to whom Zwingli referred were Anabaptists, he did write they "begin to preach and re-baptise on their own initiative."<sup>246</sup> This individualism was contrary to the central role of the congregation, or parish in Zwingli's ecclesiology. The church likewise was not a stand-alone authority it was subject to the civil authority which Zwingli believed was God appointed. The role of the temporal authorities was crucial in maintaining civil and religious order. Thus Zwingli wrote, "... we practice infant baptism and resist rebaptism here at Zurich (the magistrate by counsel and deed and we, by preaching God's word)..."<sup>247</sup>

Zwingli affirmed the need for adequately trained preachers when confronted with the Anabaptist claim that "One need not have languages. We understand the Scripture just as well as those who know many languages. It depends on

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<sup>245</sup> Hadidian, ed. *Zwingli Writings: In Search of True Religion*, 150.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 152.

the spirit and not on one's skill.”<sup>248</sup> That claim centred on a charismatic office of apostle and was an extension of a particular understanding, perhaps an extreme understanding, of the priesthood of believers.

To avoid the individualism and further conflict with civil authorities Zwingli appealed to the processes of election and appointment of the church which kept the focus on the community of Christ and not the believer. Therefore, he wrote, “... there is nothing more in keeping with God's will than for the entire congregation to elect a minister on the advice of several godly, knowledgeable bishops or Christians...”<sup>249</sup> Notice, counsel is sought beyond a congregation, and the persons sought were first people whose character recommended them and not any civil office they might hold.

We might conclude that for Zwingli any action that involved the laying on of hands, which might be called ordination or consecration, was symbolic of what had previously taken place. The action among other things recognized what the individual had discerned – a desire to preach and the experience of the church – “Yes, he is a competent preacher’. The laying on of hands did not invoke any additional grace, neither did any associated prayer. The action and prayer publically proclaimed that as from that moment the one ordained was authorised to preach i.e., do the work of a pastor. When he ceased to do the work of preaching, he forfeited the office and was no longer a pastor. There was no residual essence of the office that might have been conferred with the laying on of hands.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 179.

## **SOME THREADS COME TOGETHER**

In Jesus of Nazareth God Incarnate, the Old Covenant was fulfilled and the New Covenant inaugurated. In Christ there is both discontinuity and promise. Promise that the descendants of Abraham will be more numerous than the grains of sand on a beach and discontinuous for in Christ all prior acts and future need for atonement was fulfilled. The pre-Christ ordering of the community of the faithful is negated, and a new way of ordering the life of the community of the faithful is still being worked out. The ordering of the community of the New Covenant will be completed, perfected at the return of Christ.

Ordination as practised by the church of Jesus Christ has no direct antecedent in the Old Testament. It was a response to the needs of the second generation of Christians to: organize community life after the death of the Apostles; the multiplication of the early churches geographically; and to authorize, recognize and protect the preaching and teaching of an oral gospel. It is interesting to note that the New Testament does not locate the presidency at the Table of the Lord, nor the responsibility to baptize, with any particular group of people. Thus unlike the preaching and teaching the ordinances were not offered the same protection.

Ordination in the period of the early churches was a human institutional response to a need to recognize leadership in the churches and to respond to Holy Spirit graced invitations to vocation. The most notable institutionalization after the early period was the re-ordering of the Western churches with the evolution of large assemblies of believers under the emperor Constantine (CE

272-377). The re-ordering was expressed in religious orders, and rank within orders. The institution of the Roman church mirrored the ordering of the secular administration.

The universal church, the church catholic has looked over the centuries to the post-apostolic period for archetypes upon which to develop modes of selection and recognition of leaders, including leaders who preach-teach. The principle source of examples has been the New Testament, particularly the Book of Acts and the Epistles. In the Jewish and Graeco-Roman culture of the New Testament period, respect and honour associated with age and gender were primary requirements for public recognition. Thus the elders were usually the head-owner of the house in which the church met, rather than someone appointed from outside the house. It was natural that the home-owner was host at the table in the house. Therefore we do not find a sub-group of elders designated with a particular title in the New Testament with a unique and exclusive teaching-preaching-sacramental role. What we do find are bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) - elders (πρεσβυτέρους) defined by culture, character traits, behaviours, and a solid grounding in the Gospel (1 Ti. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). Some bishop-elders taught in addition to their oversight role (1 Ti. 5:17).

We also find that that following a process of selection-election (Ac. 1:15-26; Ac. 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1 Ti. 4:12-16) an act of public recognition generally occurred. This act set people apart to do a particular task – the work of an apostle, works of charity, the work of mission, the work of preaching and teaching. The public recognition may also have served as a means of

authorization. Fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands were associated with the public recognition. This public act we call ordination.

The PCANZ has the practice of ordaining ruling and teaching elders. This is consistent with the supreme standard<sup>250</sup> of the denomination. However, as has been identified in an examination of the ‘Appendices to the Book of Order’, the ordination services of the Church of Scotland, the PCANZ’s own ordination services and the Doctrine Core Group Report on Ordination to the 2010 General Assembly there is ambiguity surrounding the theology and practice of ordination.

Some of this ambiguity arises from the heavy dependence upon the churches of Scotland in the formative years of the PCNZ, particularly in the development of service books. The shape of the churches of Scotland ordination services was influenced by Reformation politics in England and Scotland, and the intimate state-church relationships of the reformed churches of Calvin in Geneva and Zwingli in Zurich. The consequence was an acceptance of a division in ‘the elders’ expressed in the services of ordination by teaching elders laying on hands with prayer while the ruling elders gave their assent by standing.

The unease felt in the PCANZ is accounted for by three factors. The first factor is the requirement that ruling and teaching elders sign the same Formula. Second, the almost identical wording of the prayer at the point of laying on of

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<sup>250</sup> Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Book of Order: Rules and Forms of Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*, 1.1(2).



hands in the ordination service of a minister of Word and Sacrament, and the ordination service for the ordination of an elder.

The third factor is not related to the content of the ordination services but the context and actions which convey perceptions. The service of ordination for a teaching elder is a function of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery.

Whereas, the ordination of a ruling elder occurs in a congregational service of worship in which the wider church is present in the minister and the commissioned presbytery elder. However, it is the minister who lays hands on the elder elect, who prays and announces that the ordination is complete. The minister then invites the other ruling elders to greet the newly ordained ruling elder.

The first perception given is that the ordination of ruling elders is not as important as that of teaching elders despite what good theology, regulations and rubrics might say. The impression of subordination occurs because the ordination proceeds at the instruction of a lower court.

Unlike at the ordination of a minister of Word and Sacrament, where a number of clergy lay hands on an ordinand and the impression may be given that the power or the indelible quality of the ordained resides in a group, the perception that may be conveyed at the ordination of a ruling is that the authority to ordain resides in a particular individual. The location of an indelible quality or the power to impart additional grace exclusively through an individual or group is sacerdotalism.

Removal of the ambiguity and any impression of sacerdotalism may be overcome by looking to the PCI and the URC. All the denominations in this essay affirm that ordination is enacted in the name of Christ, and under the authority of the universal church.

The PCI in *The Code*, made the representation of the church universal to ruling elders, teaching elders, the session and the congregation in the action presbytery. Therefore, it has required that the ordination of ruling and teaching elders is the responsibility of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery. This process enhances the respect and honour of all elders. The honouring of the office is also recognized in the participation of teaching elders and commissioned elders of the presbytery imposing hands with the moderator during the prayer of ordination.

The URC has made the congregation a necessary participant in ordination. It is the congregation which first tests an individual's sense of vocation, and without a vote to issue a call toward the conclusion of the period of testing there is no ordination. Vocation is initiated by the prior and first movement of the Holy Spirit, who graced the one who is to be ordained with a sense of call, or who prompted a believer, unbeliever or elder of the church to invite that person to consider training for the ministry. The local church is a participant in the process that leads to, and authorizes ordination.

Likewise, the PCANZ through a presbytery will licence an individual who has satisfactorily completed a course of study and Readiness for Ministry requirements. However a licentiate cannot be ordained until a congregation has voted to extend a call. The call requests that the presbytery ordain the

licentiate and then induct her/him to the charge. The congregation is active in the process, and might it not like the presbytery, also be seen as representative of the church catholic.

In the URC the presence of Congregation polity in its origins finds expression in representatives of the congregation participating in the act of ordination at the laying on of hands. The PCANZ by adopting such practice might belatedly honour the many congregants, elders, deacons and clergy of the Congregational Union who were received into the PCNZ in 1969. Such an action might also visually depict an understanding that the elders – ruling and teaching – exercise their vocations from within the congregation at the authorization of the church universal through the presbytery. The current practice of distinctly separate courts authorizing ordination, and the language of CV's – Minister Information Forms, can give the impression that ministers come alongside congregations as consultants, enablers, facilitators, or ecclesiastical experts. A less beneficent take of the visual impression is that ministers come from above as CEO's, managers, or regents.

If the PCANZ honoured its Reformed presbyterial roots, made the ordination of ruling elders and teaching elders a function of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery, legislated that in such a meeting ruling and teaching elders impose hands on the ordinand as do representatives of the calling congregation we may have a fuller, unambiguous biblical understanding and practice of ordination. To embrace this position is not without its challenges.

One obvious outcome of holding such a position and arguing for a single ordination, conducted by the presbytery, with hands imposed by the

institutionally ordained, and people ordained by baptism is the difficulty created for ecumenical progress with Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian denominations. Denominations which honour successional (apostolic) authorization and the indelibility of ordination already have difficulty recognizing the ordination of Reformed ministers. The participation of people who might be described as lay ordained (ruling elders) - now there's an ambiguity – and the laity in the laying on of hands at ordination would make the mutual recognition of ministry more difficult – if not impossible.

However, the theology or the progress of the ecumenical journey are not the inviolable foundation of our faith. Our foundation is sourced in Jesus the Lord and Saviour of the Church, as revealed in the supreme standard of the church, and expressed in the subordinate standards. Therefore the question we must answer to measure our progress toward being the church catholic is not, is our ecclesiology Reformed, but, is our ecclesiology more consistent with our understanding of the Scriptures today than it was a year, a decade, or a century ago?

Any examination of ordination the PCANZ should affirm the plurality of the eldership without rank legislatively, liturgically and visually; uphold the local congregation as an expression of the church catholic; recognize in ordination liturgies that the work of ruling elders and teaching elders is from within the congregation; keep central the role of the presbytery as the body representative of the church catholic, of which Jesus Christ is Head and King, in whose name ordination is practised and the work of a minister of Word and Sacrament authorized.

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