

"HIRTENBRIEF"

by

Johannes Andreas August Grabau

A Translation

by

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We wish to dedicate this endeavor to Professor Martin O. Westerhaus for bringing the need for this translation to our attention, and in appreciation of the time and help he gave us. We hope the translation of the "Hirtenbrief" will be a useful source to future students of Church History who wish to study in this area.

An Introduction to the Translation
of the
HIRTENBRIEF

In this short introduction we do not intend to provide a detailed account of the history surrounding the writing of the "Hirtenbrief." And yet, if this historically famous document is to be at all meaningful to the average student of church history, it can not be isolated from its historical setting. But we will provide only the skeletal frame. Perhaps the letter itself will challenge the reader to put flesh on our skeleton. That is our hope.

The "Hirtenbrief" is the product of Johannes Andreas August Grabau's pen. We can hardly understand the letter unless we also know a little about its author. Grabau, who lived from 1804-1879, was born in Germany, but died in America. This wasn't a strange occurrence for the people of that time since the 19th century saw the greatest influx of Germans into America. Although the majority of our German forefathers came to this country for economic purposes, Grabau emigrated for a different reason. As the pastor of St. Andreas Lutheran Church in Erfurt, Grabau openly and staunchly opposed the Prussian Union. Because of his unwillingness to buckle under, the government deposed him and had him imprisoned. Through the assistance of friends he

managed to escape, only to be arrested a year later and returned to prison. By now Grabau had had it with the authorities and determined to emigrate from Germany. The Lutheran congregation in Magdeburg asked him to go with them to America, the land of religious freedom. Grabau gladly accepted their offer and reached New York in September of 1839.

Grabau was among the last immigrants from his group to step onto American soil. In the meantime, those who had already arrived moved on to Buffalo and settled there. At the advice of von Rohr, one of the main organizers and leaders of the venture, some of the settlers forged ahead into Wisconsin and made their homes in Milwaukee and Freistadt. Von Rohr assumed that Pastor L.F.E. Krause could serve the Lutherans in Wisconsin; while Grabau served those who remained in Buffalo. Krause had come to America before the main emigration took place. But now, unbeknown to von Rohr, he was enroute to Germany. He had decided not to stay in America!

Krause's unexpected return to Germany left the Wisconsin group in the lurch. They had no pastor to conduct their worship services or dispense the Sacraments. So, for lack of anyone else, they called Grabau. But he declined their call because of his obligation to serve the Buffalo settlers. In desperation, they then appointed a layman to conduct services and had von Rohr ask Grabau if their action was justifiable.

In answer, Grabau wrote his "Hirtenbrief" on December 1, 1840. Although he had several reasons for writing this letter, one reason stands out as the primary. Grabau wanted to

convince the Wisconsin settlers that "they could not pick anybody at random to dispense the Sacraments among them, but that there was a number of requirements which had to be met when calling a pastor."¹

In addition to sending the pastoral letter to the various settlements under his charge, Grabau also mailed a copy of the letter to the Saxons in St. Louis. He asked these men to give him their opinion of what he had written. Due to internal troubles of their own, the Saxons, finally in June of 1843, commissioned Loeber to write a critique of the "Hirtenbrief." In this critique he says,

If we are to give a general opinion of the "Hirtenbrief," we will say that in one part, in view of the great emphasis on the old church polity (Kirchenordnung), the essentials are confused with the non-essentials; and the divine with the human. Thus Christian freedom is curtailed. In the other part more is ascribed to the office of the ministry than is proper, so that the spiritual priesthood of the congregation is put last.²

For the next twenty-three years a raging literary battle ensued between Grabau's Buffalo Synod and the Missouri Synod. Books on church & ministry were written by both sides. Even special periodicals were published to attack the opponent. In 1851 Buffalo began to print The Kirchliches Informatorium. And in 1857 Missouri introduced its Notwehr-Blatt, with Lochner as the editor. As it was, all the other publications put out by the Missouri Synod were also employed in the

¹Roy A. Suelflow. "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866." Concordia Hist. Inst. Quart. (Vol. XXVII, No. 1) April, 1954, p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 10.

intersynodical controversy.³ The manpower and money expended in the "war" must have been tremendous.

In this regard, Missouri had the obvious advantage. Missouri was growing rapidly; while Buffalo experienced little or no growth over these years. This lack of growth proved frustrating to many of the pastors of the Buffalo Synod. Finally, in 1866 they voted to accept the Missouri Synod's proposal of 1857 for a colloquy. As a result of this meeting, the Buffalo Synod split three ways. Eleven pastors, willing to accept the Missouri position on church & ministry, joined the Missouri Synod. Seven pastors, including von Rohr who had become a pastor in America, remained independent for some time and then entered the Wisconsin Synod. And Grabau, together with three other men, continued in the Buffalo Synod. The conflict, which began with the writing of the "Hirtenbrief," came to an end.

Let this suffice as an introduction to the translation of the "Hirtenbrief." By making this document available in translation, we hope to give future students more insight into this painful and hard time in the early, frontier history of American Lutheranism.

³Roy A. Suelflow. op.cit. p.108.

HIRTENBRIEF

I.

To all brothers and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Buffalo, New York, Milwaukee, Eden and Klein Hamburg, Albany and Portage, Canada.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

Dear fellow-redeemed brothers, together with all the members of your households!

The mercy of our God has brought us, as a part of the true Church of God on earth, into a good land where no one hinders, or is even allowed to hinder, the mutual nurturing of our souls in the Word and Sacrament. This freedom of religion and separation of church and state which has been acquired through God's help and as His gift should just for that reason be properly used by us and not abused. Such an abuse of church freedom against any article of faith or any part of the worship service would cause our purpose for emigrating from the country that oppressed churches to fail. We all have one Lord, one faith, one baptism; therefore, the Church seeks to preserve its spiritual unity since it cannot be the spiritually united body of Christ in and of itself without the correct oneness and unity in the Spirit.

Since it is so extremely easy here in America for each one to choose and set up his "own thing" and since the church can thereby so easily suffer, therefore the ministers of the church are obligated to oppose such a self-seeking spirit in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power with the weapons that are not fleshly. To that end I also would like to assist through this modest instruction.

An important article of the Augsburg Confession, which is misunderstood and misinterpreted by many here in America, is the 14th, which reads: "OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER (de ordine ecclesiastico) they teach that no one should teach publicly (publice) in the Church or preach or administer the Sacrament without a proper call (nisi rite vocatus)."

In regard to the role of preaching and teaching there is still agreement among us, although among the Methodist and Baptist sects some young men, such as Gattel and Bauernmeister, two craft journeymen, have already had themselves appointed as preachers. In addition, it is reported that Ameryn, a tailor journeyman who has become an apostate from the church, has preached. It is also said that the farmer Roggenbuck, as the leader of his mob, gives many people private instructions, which in the midst of his mob assume a public nature since he delivers a speech based on a text. There are one or several spokesmen in each mob. Now if, however, the members of the church appreciate the great importance of the public ministry and the proper call to that office as far as the teaching role is concerned, that

is not the case with their appreciation for the priestly role of the office inasmuch as it depends on the right administration of the holy Sacraments. The letter to the Hebrews says: "No one assumes for himself the honor of being a priest, rather he is called by God, as was Aaron." Therefore, I implore all of you, beloved of God, to listen to this voice of your weak, but, as he believes, sincere pastor. I exhort each one for the sake of his own peace of conscience and on account of the peril to his soul not to desecrate the public administration of the holy Sacraments by not having a proper and complete congregational call. Unfortunately, this has already happened in some places. If we want to continue to be the Church, then we must also believe that the 14th article of the Confession is truly and firmly based on the Holy Scriptures. To show this should be my duty here, and I ask you humbly and in a brotherly way to examine my exposition to see whether or not you perceive the voice of the old apostolic church in it. Wherever you feel that I have erred, you may point it out to me and reprove me with brotherly words so that we might come to an understanding. So then, the point of discussion is the public administration of the holy Sacraments, concerning which the Confession asserts and dictates that it is not to be done by any uncalled or improperly called person. The Confession labels each one who has not been called rite (i.e. according to the contents of the old

Kirchenordnung¹) uncalled or improperly called. The Apology of the Confession says in this regard, "Several times we have testified in this assembly that we are inclined to retain the old Kirchenordnung." From this it is clear that they understand under the term rite vocatus, or the proper call, that manner of calling which was used in the old apostolic age. This manner of calling has also been preserved after the Lutheran reformation of the church at Wittenberg and all other orthodox places. We can still see this same emphasis in the old Lutheran Kirchenordnungen. The old Kirchenordnungen are here the chief source from which the method of the proper call must be recognized, since it is assumed and supposed that they not only thoroughly understand the 14th article of the Confession, but have also applied it correctly. Also old sermons of true teachers of the Augsburg Confession are to be consulted in this connection. (For example: Stengers, Pastor at the St. Gregory Church in Erfurt, "Sermons on the Augsburg Confession," 1648, especially about the 14th Article.)

For everything that is included in a proper call, which is considered and believed to be godly in the church, listen now *(Stengers)*

¹ These "Church Orders" were the governing documents of the state churches as they existed in Europe. They provided legislative and constitutional regulations, as well as regulations regarding the liturgy, and the appointment of church officers.

1) that the one who is to administer the holy Sacraments does not merely understand how to imitate such administration with a certain skill. For the Egyptian magicians also understood how to imitate the miracles of Moses with skill, and yet they were not from God. Rather, it is vital that he has studied thoroughly from the Word of God, under proper guidance, and has recognized what the holy Sacraments are, for what purpose the holy God instituted them, why their celebration is administered in the Church in such a way and not another, why they are also so important, and how those who want to come to the Sacrament of the Altar are to be examined in the confessional service or at some other time, and how they are to be dealt with. He must also have studied how and when he should grant the absolution in God's name, and what kind of an office this is. Furthermore, (he should know) how to keep the teaching about the holy Sacraments, about confession and absolution pure, how he should defend and maintain them against sects and divisive groups. How he has to defend and preserve the related doctrines of sin, repentance, the Law and the Gospel, faith, righteousness before God, of the person, office, states and work of Christ, etc. Whoever would admit souls to the Sacrament of the Altar must be well-grounded in the whole of church doctrine.

2) The proper call also includes not only that he diligently study church doctrine from the Word of God following the guidance of orthodox teachers; but, in

addition, that he also have such gifts of the Holy Spirit which put him in the position of using that correct knowledge properly for his own and the Church's salvation; to ward off harm against it. So then, he needs to be given power by the Holy Spirit in order to admonish (Titus 1:9), to preserve the doctrine of the Church in all dangers, so that one seeks the Law from him as from the mouth of a priest, for he is a messenger of the Lord of hosts (Mal. 2:7). He is also a steward who should know where the treasures of his house lie, and should bring forth from his treasure both new and old (Mtt. 13:52) as the circumstances demand.

3) In addition, the proper call also includes not only that he have knowledge and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but that he also be examined or tested regarding such knowledge and gifts by previously ordained and faithful ministers of the church in a so-called tentamen (examination). (cf. Stengers, Sermons, loc. cit.). Paul says (1 Tim. 3:10) that men ought not to serve or to administer the Sacraments before one has had opportunity to test them, (*hi autem probentur primum*), i.e., to see whether they possess the qualities mentioned under No. 1 & 2. For to this end, scrutinizing the testimony they give concerning their completed course of instruction and their conduct, and observing them for a while in regard to their conduct, is also involved. After these steps have been completed, one can assign them lesser offices in the church as,

for example, cantor, lector, etc. After this, one may allow them to serve, i.e., to administer the Sacraments, and to help in "seelsorge" if they are blameless in doctrine and behavior (sic ministrent, nullum crimen habentes). According to verse 1, the aforementioned tentamen, however, has this special objective: that one investigate whether they have the mystery of faith in a pure conscience (habentes mysterium fidei in conscientia pura), i.e., whether they stand in purity of doctrine and at the same time, holiness of living, and whether they are therefore able to be trustworthy stewards of God's mysteries. The intention is that thereafter they will not be servants of men or of their own impure hearts, men who act according to their caprice and not according to the standard of true faith and of true piety in office.

4) After such a tentamen has been employed, they are however, still not ministers of the Church. But they are only such as can be allowed to enter the ministry and to administer the holy Sacraments. Now, when a congregation selects a man, who has been tested in this way, to administer the holy Sacrament or perform other holy church duties, then he can be allowed to do that by previously ordained ministers, according to I Tim. 5:22: "Lay hands (you Timothy) on no one quickly!" Through careless admission (to the office), such previously ordained men would be sharing in another's sin. The laying on of hands by those ministers who are available should take place

in the following manner:

5) When the congregation which has no shepherd has for a long time asked God for a pastor every Sunday; when they have found one, and a particular person for their choice, according to Article 6, they must place him before those ordained men who are available. Once again these must conduct an examination with him in the presence of the congregation, not in order to investigate his knowledge, for that has to take place previously in the tentamen, but so that the congregation hears what kind of a confession he makes, and sees that he is no novice. For in I Tim. 6:12, St. Paul wills that he (Timothy) should make a good confession before many witnesses, also, that he has learned the pattern of holy words by faith (II Tim. 1:13). However, if the whole congregation cannot be present on this occasion, then enough congregational representatives must still be there so that the confession takes place before many witnesses and each one is also convinced that hands have not been laid on anyone too quickly. Secret ordinations are, for that reason, to be repudiated according to the Word of God.

6) When this happens, namely when such a confession has been made by him, then those ordained men who are officiating lay their hands on him, i.e., they ordain him, as is the custom according to the church's Agenda. And they consign to him the office of the ministry in the name of the Triune God, as the Lord Christ Himself ordained His

disciples (Mtt. 28, Lk 24). II Tim. 1:6, I Tim. 4:14, Ac. 6:6, II Tim. 2:2, Tit. 1:15. (Compare Stengers, Sermons on the Aunosburg Confession, Art. 14, pp. 602, 603). See also the form of the ordination in the old Kirchenordnungen.

7) After the ordination has occurred according to divine order, there is still one thing left to do. The ordained man is to be publicly installed in that congregation which he is going to serve. There he is invested or confirmed, i.e., he is placed before the congregation as a pastor who has actually been called by God. The congregation is entrusted to him as a flock of Christ which he is to care for. He pledges his faithfulness to the congregation in doctrine and behavior, and the congregation binds itself to him with their faithfulness and their obedience in all matters which are not contrary to God's Word.

Note: However, no individual member of the Church decides what is and is not opposed to God's Word. Rather the Church itself, in her symbols, Kirchenordnungen, and Synods, makes such decisions.

This is the divine order für rite vocatus of which Dr. Luther says that the apostles and their pupils so preserved it, and that it must remain the same until the last day.

II

CONCERNING THE GREAT NECESSITY OF THE PROPER CALL

1) This great necessity is already evident from this

that St. Peter and all the apostles always refer to the proper divine call in the introduction of their letters, as when Paul says, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ through the will of God, called to be an apostle etc." He would not have thought it worth mentioning if the proper call were not necessary, and if it had not contributed anything to the matter. In the case of the apostles, this call was direct, having come from Christ; with Timothy, Titus, and Ignatius, it was indirect. That, however, doesn't alter its necessity in any way.

2) Even the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be given His proper call from the Father, and testified that the Father had sent Him and that He was doing His Father's will. Therefore the Father calls Him His beloved Son with whom He is well-pleased, and that one should listen to Him. (Mt. 3:17). Therefore it is also said in Heb 5:5: "Even Jesus Christ did not take upon Himself the honor of being a High Priest, but the One who had said to Him, you are My Son today have I begotten you." So then, only the proper call is in accord with the divine will, therefore it is necessary (I Cor. 14:40). And just as necessary as the proper call is, even so dangerous is the improper call. Where the proper call is not retained, says an old teacher of the church from 1649, there uneducated and imprudent people can easily creep in (as unfortunately is the case in 1840) who afterwards would cause all sorts of disorders (Stengers, Sermons, loc.cit.).

3) God wants to deal with us on earth through the public ministry, to instruct us through the same, to pronounce the absolution, to distribute communion, etc. Therefore the church must have sure infallible proof that the person in the office is a minister certified according to divine order and divine will, so that God might deal with us through him. For this reason, the apostles also disavowed sectarian men who appeared on the scene as teachers without a proper call, and they (the apostles) say they gave them no orders, i.e., indeed they were not given charge of an office, they were not ordained. From this it is evident that the church from earliest times has believed that not only the words of institution, but also the proper divine call and command are essential to the correct administration of the Sacraments and to the granting of absolution. Even assuming that the minister is evil, the words of institution are still powerful on account of the office which the Lord still acknowledges. For in the office lies the testimony of Christ, his one-time institution. Through these words he wants to actualize and to administer absolution and the Sacraments on earth again and again. Not that Christ would need the office just to empower His words of institution, but because He wants to give us greater assurance, He makes use of the office, instituted by Him in grace, in order to deal with men by virtue of His Word. Compare question 518 in the Catechism: "Who may administer the Lord's Supper?"

"The called teachers and preachers of the true Church."

Passage: I Cor. 4:1, "For this reason let everyone regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries."

Questions 519 & 520: "The function of the minister consists in the consecration and distribution of the holy Lord's Supper." Passage: I Cor. 10:16 "The blessed cup which we bless. . ." Consequently, we are persuaded that a man who has been arbitrarily nominated by the congregation may neither give the absolution nor distribute the body and blood of Christ. If he does, he gives nothing but bread and wine. For Christ recognizes His divine irrevocable order, not our whims and disorder. But, perhaps in a case of necessity when no minister is at hand, nor can be obtained, a Christian can instruct the others (privately) in God's place, comfort and supply their spiritual need; except that he needs to be selected by the congregation and to be publicly nominated to that position. But whoever says there is an emergency when he has the true Church and a pastor at his doorstep, he is a liar. Whoever has enough ability and means, either alone or in common with others, to have a distant minister come or to go to him, and yet doesn't do it, he is a miser in God's eyes. But the necessity, especially as it regards the Sacrament of the Altar, can never even be so great that one must be publicly nominated for the administration of the same. For where no minister is present, every head of the household can administer the Sacrament even without office and agenda,

at the bed of the sick and dying. Moreover, we will not be saved through the Sacrament in itself, but through faith in Jesus Christ which is strengthened through the Sacrament. This Sacrament already presupposes saving faith when we approach the altar. Now, since the Lord is not bound to this means of grace, though He has bound us to it, He can, throughout a prolonged need, preserve our faith for eternal life without the Sacrament, through the Word alone.

III

A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE APPOINTMENT TO CHURCH OFFICES IN THE SMALCALD ARTICLES

Unfortunately, it has also been reported that sections in the Smalcald Articles concerning the authority of bishops are being misused. As is well known, after Dr. Luther, as well as other theologians and pastors at Wittenburg and many other places, had returned to the Lutheran or old Catholic Church, they ordained new ministers. These were men who had been tested, chosen by congregations, and also installed. The Papal party opposed this and said, "Only a Roman Catholic Bishop can ordain; consequently, the Lutheran ordination is worth nothing, and those ordained in the Lutheran Church have no proper divine office."

Thereupon Dr. Luther and other theologians replied in the Smalcald Articles: "Originally there was, as church history teaches, no difference between a bishop and an ordinary pastor, for the words ἐπίσκοπος, bishop, and πρεσβύτερος, pastor (elder), were used synonymously in the New Testament.

But after a while, in order to prevent disunity within the church and to preserve unity, several pastors chose one from their midst whom they considered higher, and called him bishop. They did so, not on account of his higher spiritual office, but merely on account of his added responsibility of supervising the other pastors. This had been a good man-made arrangement which was not against the sense of the Holy Scriptures. To be sure, because of this man-made arrangement, the bishop then obtained the privilege, but not the special divine right of office, to ordain the new ministers in his diocese or area of supervision. From this it does not follow, therefore, that a regular pastor cannot, according to divine order, also ordain a new minister, as soon as the latter is qualified and chosen by the congregation. Yes, the ordinary pastor or pastors, if there are several of them, are indeed obligated according to divine order to ordain a new minister if the Roman bishop will not ordain such a capable minister on the basis of the right confession. The Roman bishops refused in particular to ordain upon the orthodox confession, and required the papal confession, i.e., that a man is righteous before God, not through faith alone, but also through works. As a result, the entire Lutheran or actually old Catholic church was now obligated, as the older pastors gradually passed away, to ordain ministers, capable ministers, who had come over from the Roman church. Hence, each individual

church diocese, which earlier was subject to a Roman bishop, also had the same obligation." (Folio 157, Dresden Edition) Now, in the Smalcald Articles our theologians in no way want to say that the individual congregations on their own should or might arbitrarily single out from their midst and nominate by power of majority alone an uneducated, unexamined, and unperpared man for the public ministry. Such an action has not the least validity in God's eyes, but it is worthless disorder. On the contrary, the theologians wish the individual congregation itself to attend to and contribute toward the search for eligible, competent persons. The congregation should also ask God for capable workers in his harvest, and handle the selection process according to divine order and see to it that the tested and chosen man is ordained and installed into its midst. This Dr. Luther names the calling, choosing and ordaining of a minister, and says that ~~this order~~ must remain until the last day. In this way the apostles had appointed Timothy, Titus, Ignatius, Polycarp, etc. to office. These appointed their successors, the bishops, and so must it remain. The congregation, however, is never to be excluded from choosing a pastor, approving the choice, and praying that he accept. Only the Pope deprives congregations of the right to choose and to vote, by filling the pastoral positions arbitrarily. Therefore the Pope is a spiritual and worldly tyrant.

When one is called, chosen, and ordained in such a way, then he can be assured of having fitting spiritual blessings from God in his ministry. The man who has no call, however, cannot have that assurance; for how should they preach, instruct, absolve, baptize, dispense communion, etc., if they have not been sent? (Ro 10:15, Jn 20:21). Rarely can an uncalled person preserve the Church as Church when he is tempted or persecuted. But he falls away and looks out for his own welfare; he deserts either to a sect or to the world. The legitimately acquired office, however, has an irrevocable promise from Christ: "I will be with you every day until the end of the world." (Mt 28:20) With this promise the Lord does not mean to say that the genuine servants of the church could not also fall away, but that He will protect, rule, and support them in the preservation of the true Church as long as they remain faithful, so that there should always be proper shepherds and a properly united Church even until the last day. No uncalled person has this comfort. And if a congregation nominates a person who has no such call, it deprives itself of this comforting certainty--God will preserve the true Church in their midst. The congregation should sooner remain without a pastor and continue to ask God with common consent for an upright and true ~~seelsorger~~ ^{shepherd} until he answers them. Concerning the minister who has no call, Dr. Luther says, "It is certainly a very dreadful and frightening thing when the conscience accuses him, 'Ah! Lord God! What have you done? This and that you

have done without call and command!' Such a scare and heartache then arises in the conscience that such an un-called person might well wish that he had never heard nor read his whole life long what he is teaching. For disobedience makes every work wicked, be these very works as good as they ever could be. Therefore the greatest and best works become the greatest and worst sins. In this connection we can compare the good intention of King Saul and what the Lord had Samuel say to him." (I Sam. 15:13-25)

From this we come to understand the correct intention of the fathers in the Smalcald Articles. We will not harbor the opinion that the fathers would have condoned such arbitrariness whereby each congregation (better yet called "rabble") which falls away from the true Church and honors itself with the name congregation, nominates at will one from their midst for the spiritual office.

In view of the previous, I exhort you, beloved in the Lord, to ponder well what you are doing in church affairs since you have no minister. I ask you:

1. That you earnestly implore God every Sunday in a congregational prayer to send to North America competent workers in His great harvest. Pray also that the false shepherds who have crept in among the unwitting Germans come to shame.

2. That you leave your children unbaptized, as long as they are healthy, until the minister whom you requested from God arrives. If, however, they become seriously ill

and are in danger of death, you as fathers can baptize them yourselves. If a father feels uneasy about performing the baptism, he can ask one of the other brothers to do it.

3. That you postpone the celebration of the Holy Supper and strengthen your faith through the Word alone, until the arrival of a genuine minister.

4. That you also forgo getting married, so long as it is at all possible, with the help of God. But if Christian people feel they must enter marriage right at this time, they ought to select an upright brother of the church to marry them. They are to be married in the presence of witnesses, after the bans have been published three times. And, of course, Luther's marriage book will be followed. But in doing so the Christian bride and groom should promise that, when a minister does arrive, they will present themselves before him and the entire Christian congregation to have him declare their marriage legitimate as divine order requires; and thereupon receive from him the public blessing of the church.

5. That those elders or even school masters who have the ability may read printed sermons in the worship services and conduct the liturgy. Moreover, the elders ought to be convinced from the preceding arguments that a false clergy is instituted if they would allow themselves to be appointed or nominated to administer the Sacraments. Nevertheless they are still elders who have a share in the rule, that is, such who have the task of watching over the Christian discipline in the congregation together with the

pastor. But this should be handled completely in keeping with the old Kirchenordnungen, as namely the large Pomeranian Kirchenordnung of 1690 and the Saxon-Coburg of 1626 teach in this regard. Everything which is against this Kirchenordnung must be considered an innovation and must not be introduced. Such an example would be that the elders are to be the official watchmen over the office of watchman in matters of doctrine (I Tim. 4:16). But this responsibility belongs to the pastor as shepherd and watchman of the congregation.

They should first take heed to themselves, secondly they should take heed to the doctrine. They should persist in these two actions so that they themselves, and also those who hear them will keep on the road to salvation (Ac 20:28). If a pastor happens to fall into a doctrinal error, (as was the case with Pastor Oertel in New York), which becomes public knowledge in the entire congregation, even then the congregation should still not pass sentence on him. But the elders should first turn to one or more pastors of the church and present the matter in all truthfulness, in writing. These pastors should then ask the accused pastor if these things are so, and should discuss the matter with him either face to face or by letter. In this discussion it will most likely become evident whether the accused pastor is in error, and what error he has committed. Unfortunately, we have had the experience that individual members of a congregation have

become very impertinent judges of their Seelsorger and thereby have thoroughly confused the consciences of the weak. Against this impertinence you would want to guard yourselves, and for this reason leave the judgment of doctrine up to those to whom it falls according to Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession. Your teachers are not teachers of a false church; nor are they teachers who are inclined to go along with the "spirit of the age." But they are teachers of the true Church, as is known well enough. Therefore you can assume they have a thorough knowledge of church doctrine and, to be sure, a deeper understanding than you could have since they have learned in order to believe, to teach, and to preserve you in the true faith. But you have learned in order to believe, and in order to be preserved in the true faith and to be sanctified. Heb. 13:17-18: "Obey your teachers and follow them for they watch over your souls as those who must give an account in order that they may do it with joy and not with sighs, for that is not good for you. Pray for us. Our comfort is this that we have a good conscience and are diligent to lead good lives among all."

IV

It has also come to light that there are among us still such weak and disorderly souls who forsake the congregational assembly because they think church discipline has been wrongly applied to one or several of their friends and neighbors. Even if a wrong had occurred, that would still

never make the Church false. For it remains the correct and true Church as long as God's Word and the Holy Sacraments are pure within it. Accordingly, those who forsake the public assemblies of the church, because they suppose one or the other of their fellow countrymen have been wronged, do not act in a Christian way, but in a prejudicial and fleshly way. We are bound by God's command to the holy Church of Jesus and not to our neighbors and friends. A variety of people, (come out of whatever ethnic group they will), who fear God and do right, i.e., they seek and love the right way to heaven, are pleasing to God. This means he admits them into his Church. Therefore we should not question whether someone is our countryman, but whether he is a member of the Church after God's heart. Even if he had been our countryman and friend for thirty or fifty years, but now has become a despiser and blasphemer of the holy Church, we should avoid such an errorist according to God's Word, after he has been rebuked once or twice, or even more. (For here neither Jew, nor Greek counts for anything, nor any country ties, but he is a new creature.) We should not avoid him out of hate, but out of love, so that he may be moved to repent because we separated ourselves from him in a loving way. But if we are thoughtless and show ourselves to be on friendly terms with such errorists, we strengthen them in their perverted way and make ourselves also partakers of their sin.

Finally, it has also been shown that some souls, who were just recently converted and entered the Church, did not want to permit certain customs of the church, such as candles, the crucifix on the altar, the symbol of the cross, the chanting of the collect and the benediction, as well as the responses of the congregation. For this reason they fell away. These are to be answered in the following way. Singing is generally more edifying than reading. Paul doesn't say, "Whoever is of a joyful spirit, let him read Psalms;" but he says, "Let him sing Psalms." Since singing in the assembly of the church is generally more edifying than mere reading, the church is correct in allowing chanting and singing at the altar and singing the "Amen" to such songs. Compare I Cor. 14:16.

b) In the true Church, the symbol of the cross is not magical or superstitious, rather it is a symbol which is memorial and confessional in nature. The old church employed the symbol of the cross in the same exact way before the rise of the papacy. The crucifix, or picture of the crucified Christ, is not a picture to be worshiped or venerated. But it is a public confessional expression of the Church that the crucified, ever-present Christ is and will be visibly portrayed to it in Word and Sacrament, (Gal. 3:1), and that the crucified Christ is the Church's foundation, head, and hope.

c) The candles are put on the altar because it was during the night and not during the day when Christ was

betrayed and when He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar. Through this altar arrangement, Christ's grievous night of suffering as High Priest, from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday, is painted before the eyes of the believers. On that night the Light of the world, God of God, and Light of Light, Jesus Christ, handed himself over to the pains of death for us. Who could be afraid of this? Who could despise such a thing? How could such a continual reminder not do our thoughtless and forgetful hearts good? Therefore, the Church is right in keeping its altar appointments, although it knows that the ceremonies neither help nor harm our salvation in and of themselves. The candles and the cross by themselves can neither help nor harm me. But the correct use of such ceremonies, which are not contrary to God's Word, can be useful to souls.

God our Lord grant that this short and modest instruction be a blessing and that through his mercy it becomes a voice which proves to be a light and a warning to many hearts. The Father of mercy, together with His dear Son Jesus Christ, and the precious Holy Spirit who proceeds from both, be with your souls and preserve you in the sphere of his Holy Church to eternal life. Amen.

Buffalo, December 1st, 1840.

Your pastor, brother and friend
in the Lord,

A. Grabau

The undersigned church administrators testify that the Lutheran Congregation at Buffalo recognizes the principles here expressed as its own:

Friedrich Luedtke, Ernst Krieg, Christoph Schmelzer,
Rudolph Krause, Ernst Schorr, Gottfried Schoenfeld.

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