

**Note: This is an abbreviated rough draft.** This means that I am aware more work is needed to refine the historical and theological picture presented here. I have been asked to present this paper in July of 2017, so I expect to publish an improved edition after that. Please see [www.dwightgingrich.com/125-years-7-ordinances-rough-draft/](http://www.dwightgingrich.com/125-years-7-ordinances-rough-draft/) for more discussion of this essay, to check for updates, and to give me feedback, which I warmly welcome.

For Christ and his Church,  
Dwight

## 125 Years of Seven Ordinances: An Historical and Biblical Review

“Do you practice the seven ordinances? If so, I can give you a discount.” The setting was a building project at a conservative Mennonite church in Ontario. The speaker was an Anabaptist contractor from another church fellowship. The exact words are my imaginary reconstruction, but the story is real,<sup>1</sup> and so is the thinking behind the story.

Stories like this invite questions. Why do conservative Mennonites traditionally observe seven ordinances? What is the biblical or historical basis for this practice, or for the term *ordinance*? How has the observance of seven ordinances become for some a primary mark of the true (or at least truest) Church? And if these ordinances are so important, can you list them? In case you can't, here they are: baptism, the Lord's Supper, foot washing, the holy kiss, the Christian woman's veiling, anointing with oil, and marriage. In this essay I would like to sketch the historical origin of our list of ordinances, compare our traditional understanding with the Bible, and propose some responses.

### A History of Ordinances: Before Anabaptists

The New Testament (NT) contains teaching about each of our seven ordinances, but it does not contain any list of ordinances. We must look to church history for the development of such a list. I will summarize the pre-Reformation history of ordinances by noting three developments:

1. The growth of formal *ritual* instead of simple obedience to NT commands;
2. The development of the theology and vocabulary of *sacraments*; and
3. The formation of a defined *list* of seven Roman Catholic sacraments.

#### *The Growth of Ritual*

In the earliest days of the NT church, the church was a family of spiritual brothers and sisters who gathered freely in public spaces and in each others' homes. There were no benches, no pulpits, no church buildings, no hymn books, no NT Scriptures, no weekly monologue-style

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<sup>1</sup> Here is the account as I originally heard it from a friend via email: “When we put an addition on at [name of church], the contractor who did the concrete work was Amish (or Beachy...not sure). He wanted to know whether we practiced the 7 ordinances and if so, we'd get a discount on his work.”

sermons to passive audiences,<sup>2</sup> no Sunday School classes, no church weddings,<sup>3</sup> no pastors' handbooks, and no written membership standards. The church was a diverse and imperfect body that was unified not by institutional structures, but by mutual love and Spirit-guided devotion to "the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42 KJV<sup>4</sup>).

In this NT church, activities such as baptism and the Lord's Supper were not reserved for special formal occasions, but were a natural part of daily life. As Luke hints and Paul makes clear, believers ate the Lord's Supper as part of a full shared meal—sometimes called a "love feast."<sup>5</sup> Thus, "for the Corinthians, the idea of a sacrament without a community meal would have seemed as strange to them as a fellowship meal in the midst of a worship service seems novel to us."<sup>6</sup> Church historian Justo Gonzales writes:

We are told in the book of Acts that from the very beginning the early church had the custom of gathering on the first day of the week for the breaking of bread. The reason for gathering on the first day of the week was that this was the day of the resurrection of the Lord. ...Besides the well-known

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2 When the NT church met on the first day of the week, their primary purpose was "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). "Only at a relatively recent date has it become common practice in many Protestant churches to focus their worship on preaching rather than on communion" (Justo González, *The Story of Christianity, Vol. I: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* [Peabody, Massachusetts: Prince Press, 2006], 94). Intentional teaching was also crucially important, as was public reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13, etc.). But the evidence suggests that this teaching often involved more dialogue than most modern sermons do. For example, when Acts 20:7 says "Paul preached" to the believers at Troas, the KJV word *preached* is a translation of the Greek word *dialegomai*, which actually has a range of meaning that includes "to reason, argue, prove, persuade" (*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, ed. William D. Mounce [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006]). This word is used of Paul "disputing" about Christ in synagogues and marketplaces (Acts 17:17; 19:8, etc.), of the disciples who "disputed" who was the greatest (Mark 9:34), and of Michael the archangel who "disputed" with the devil (Jude 1:9). 1 Corinthians 14:26-33 similarly suggests that dialogue characterized many NT church gatherings.

3 The fascinating history of weddings demonstrates how many religious ceremonies that we consider normal are actually historical developments that would hardly be recognized by the NT church. Paul simply requires believers to marry "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). Ignatius (about A.D. 100) adds, "When men and women marry, it is desirable to have the bishop's consent" ("The Epistle to Polycarp," in *Early Christian Writings*, trans. and ed. by Maxwell Staniforth and Andrew Louth [New York: Penguin Books, 1987], 110). Marilyn Yalom summarizes what happened next: "During the early Middle Ages, the Catholic church gradually took over the jurisdiction of marriage. Previously, much of Europe had followed the Roman model that required the consent of the bride, groom, and their fathers. But from the mid-twelfth century onward... the church pressured individuals to marriage in the presence not only of witnesses, but also of a priest, and to perform this ceremony "at church." ...The sacramental nature of marriage was accepted broadly from the eighth century onward, although it was not made canon law until 1563 at the Council of Trent," (*A History of the Wife* [New York: Harper Perennial, 2002], 45-46; available from <<http://www.amazon.com/History-Wife-Marilyn-Yalom/dp/0060931566>>; accessed 02 December 2011). The Roman Catholic church acknowledges that "the Church accepted the leading features of that ceremony of marriage which was most in honour in pagan Rome... and that it blessed these rites, substituting in particular the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the libations and sacrifices to the gods" ("Ritual of Marriage," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* [New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912]; available from New Advent, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09703b.htm>>; accessed 02 December 2011).

4 Bible quotations will be from the KJV unless otherwise noted.

5 Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 1:12.

6 A. A. Das, "1 Corinthians 11:17-34 Revisited," *Concordia Theological Review*, 188; as quoted by David Garland *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 546, n. 12. Paul's critique of the Corinthian love feasts was not a command that they be discontinued, but rather a rebuke of the rich who were gluttonously devouring their meals without sharing with the hungry (see 1 Cor. 11:21-22). "If they are intent only on indulging their appetites, then they should stay at home" (Garland, 555) so that they don't receive "judgment" for participating "in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor. 11:34, 27 ESV).

but scant data offered by the New Testament, it is possible to reconstruct early Christian worship by piecing together information from a number of extant documents. ...The most remarkable characteristic of those early communion services was that they were celebrations. The tone was one of joy and gratitude, rather than sorrow and repentance. In the beginning, communion was part of an entire meal. Believers brought what they could, and after the common meal there were special prayers over the bread and the wine. However, by the beginning of the second century the common meal was being set aside, perhaps for fear of persecution, or in order to quell the rumors about orgiastic "love feasts." ...The celebration then became more symbolic.<sup>7</sup>

Baptism underwent a similar change from spontaneous event to structured ritual. We read in Acts that the NT church did not treat baptism as a formal, scripted event that occurred in a church building months or years after conversion, while a bishop read from a manual. Rather, "we are told that people were baptized as soon as they were converted."<sup>8</sup> Baptism was the initiation of a newborn Christian, not an award given to those who demonstrated spiritual maturity by surviving a long process of testing. In fact, baptism was so closely linked with faith, repentance, and confession<sup>9</sup> that Paul could say, "We were buried therefore with him *by baptism* into death, in order that... we... might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4 ESV, emphasis added), and Peter could simply say, "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21 NASB). We would never think of telling a repentant sinner that he must wait until our annual revival meetings or even until next Sunday to become a Christian; the NT church would have been equally dismayed by the idea of telling a convert they must wait days or months to be baptized. In the NT pattern, baptism was a profound but natural part of the conversion moment, and it "could be performed late at night (Acts 16:33) or when no one else was present (Acts 8:26-40)."<sup>10</sup>

However, as increasing numbers of Gentile pagans were converted, the Church began to require a period of preparation before baptism. Gonzales explains:

This was the "catechumenate," which, by the beginning of the third century, lasted three years. During that time, catechumens received instruction on Christian doctrine, and were to give signs in their daily lives of the depth of their conviction. Finally, shortly before being baptized, they were examined and added to the list of those to be baptized. Usually baptism was administered once a year, on Easter Sunday.<sup>11</sup>

By this time baptism had become "a rigid and established ritual that borrowed much from Jewish and Greek culture—elaborate with blessing the water, full disrobing [men separated from the women], the uttering of a creed, anointing oil with exorcism, and giving milk and honey to the newly baptized person."<sup>12</sup>

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7 Justo González, 93-94.

8 Ibid., 96.

9 Robert H. Stein, "Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1998), 6; available from <<http://www.sbts.edu/resources/journal-of-theology/sbjt-21-spring-1998/baptism-and-becoming-a-christian-in-the-new-testament/>>; accessed 02 December 2011. Stein's thesis in this excellent article is: "In the New Testament, conversion involves five integrally related components or aspects, all of which took place at the same time, usually on the same day. These five components are [1] repentance, [2] faith, and [3] confession by the individual, [4] regeneration, or the giving of the Holy Spirit by God, and [5] baptism by representatives of the Christian community."

10 Ibid., 14.

11 González, *The Story of Christianity*, 96.

12 Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity: Exploring the Roots of our Church Practices*, revised ed. (Carol Stream, Illinois: BarnaBooks, 2008), 189-90. See also Gonzalez's more detailed description.

### *The Development of Sacramental Theology and Vocabulary*

Over time, a sacramental theology was also added to the simple NT commands. By the end of the first century, the Apostolic Fathers regarded the Lord's Supper as a sacrifice, an offering on an altar.<sup>13</sup> Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (writing about A.D. 98-117 while on his way to martyrdom in Rome), called the bread of the Lord's Supper "the medicine of immortality, and the sovereign remedy by which we escape death and live in Jesus Christ for evermore."<sup>14</sup> Ignatius did not develop a theory of sacraments, but he believed that the bread and wine were actually Jesus' body and blood,<sup>15</sup> "he clearly conceived of the Eucharist (Communion meal) as a sacrament [though not using that word]—a means of grace that creates a transformation of the person participating in it,"<sup>16</sup> and his words "medicine of immortality" were used by later Christians to justify sacramental rites.

Historian J. N. D. Kelly writes that there is "some circumstantial evidence" that the church considered baptism, the Lord's Supper, and penance as sacraments as early as the second century. However, there is "no absolutely certain" evidence that *sacrament* was used as a technical term for Christian ceremonies until the end of the second century, with Clement and Origen of Alexandria in the East (using the Greek term *mysterion*) and Tertullian in the West (using the Latin term *sacramentum*).<sup>17</sup> Leonard Verduin summarizes the pagan origins of *sacrament*:

In [the Roman] mystery religions [compare 1 Cor. 10:14-22]... one partook of deity by ingesting a morsel of a sacrificial victim. By ingesting, something of the *élan* [ardor, life] of the god was said to be infused into the devotee, in a transaction known as a *mysterion*—the word that has given us the expression "mystery religion." This word *mysterion* was by the Latins rendered *sacramentum*—the direct antecedent of our word "sacrament."<sup>18</sup>

### *The Formation of a Fixed List of Sacraments*

As late as Augustine (who died in A.D. 430) the term *sacrament* could be still be used in a general sense to refer to diverse things such as the traditional use of the Lord's Prayer or Old Testament (OT) events foreshadowing Christ.<sup>19</sup> According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "For many centuries all signs of sacred things were called sacraments, and the enumeration of these signs was somewhat arbitrary.... After the ninth century, writers began to draw a distinction between sacraments in a general sense and sacraments properly so called."<sup>20</sup>

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13 J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 196.

14 Ignatius, "Letter to the Ephesians," in *Early Christian Writings*, trans. and ed. by Maxwell Staniforth and Andrew Louth (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 66.

15 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 198.

16 Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 48.

17 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 193.

18 Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Sarasota, Florida: Christian Hymnary Publishers, 1997), 137-38. The term *sacramentum* was also used to refer to "a military oath taken by all Roman legionaries on entering the Roman army, part of the state [religious] ritual created by Augustus during his military reforms in the early 1st century CE. ...At the start of the 3rd century Tertullian, in *De corona*, condemned any Christian soldier's willingness to swear the sacramentum, since baptism was the only sacrament a Christian should observe" (Wikipedia contributors, "Sacramentum," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, available from <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacramentum\\_%28oath%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacramentum_%28oath%29)>; accessed 06 December 2011).

19 Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 423-24.

20 Daniel Kennedy, "Sacraments," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912); available from New Advent, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm>>; accessed 18 November 2011.

Peter Lombard may have been the first writer to specify seven and only seven sacraments, in his *Four Books of Sentences* written about 1150.<sup>21</sup> Roman Catholic doctrine had solidified sufficiently by then that his list was universally accepted.<sup>22</sup> His book "became the basic textbook for the teaching of theology in the universities."<sup>23</sup> Centuries later Martin Luther and John Calvin quoted and commented on it extensively.<sup>24</sup> Although theological understandings of the sacraments continued to develop, Lombard's list remains the official list of Catholic sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist (or the Lord's Supper), penance, anointing of the sick (or extreme unction), holy orders, and matrimony (or marriage).

### **A History of Ordinances: Early Anabaptists**

The early Anabaptists, even more than the other reformers, experienced a radical shift in their theology and practice of the sacraments. This shift was based on a renewed commitment to biblicism, and it affected all three dimensions of the historical developments we have described: ritual, sacramental theology, and lists. We will begin by discussing the first two, giving evidence both for radical change and for a failure to fully return to NT practices. Finally, we will turn to the question of lists, asking which practices the early Anabaptists considered sacraments.

#### *The Anabaptist Rejection of Ritual and Sacramental Theology*

Even more than their former teacher, Zwingli, the early Swiss Brethren rejected religious rituals and sacramental thinking. Conrad Grebel's words to Thomas Müntzer (1524) are typical:

Just as our forefathers fell away from the true God and from the one true, common, divine Word, from the divine institutions, ...and lived without God's law and gospel in human, useless, unchristian customs and ceremonies... so today too every man... wants to persist in all the old manner of personal vices, and in the common ritualistic and anti-Christian customs of baptism and of the Lord's Supper... If thou will abolish the Mass, it cannot be accomplished with German chants... It must be rooted up by the word and command of Christ... The words found in Matt., ch. 26, Mark, ch. 14, Luke, ch. 22, and I Cor., ch. 11, alone are to be used, no more, no less... Ordinary bread ought to be used, without idols and additions... An ordinary drinking vessel too ought to be used... Also it ought not to be administered by thee. That was the beginning of the Mass that only a few would partake, for the Supper is an expression of fellowship, and not a Mass and sacrament... Neither is it to be used in "temples" according to all Scripture and example, since that creates a false reverence... If ever thou desirest to serve it, we should wish that it would be done without priestly garment and vestment of the Mass, without singing, without addition.<sup>25</sup>

Balthasar Hubmaier (1525) complained that "out of this Supper we have until now made a bear's mass [trained, ignorant bears shuffling around], decorated it with mumbling and bumbling and

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21 "Peter Lombard," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002; available from <from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/lombard/#H2>>; accessed 18 November 2011.

22 Kennedy, "Sacraments."

23 González, *The Story of Christianity*, 314.

24 Wikipedia contributors, "Peter Lombard," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, available from <[https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Peter\\_Lombard](https://secure.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/wiki/Peter_Lombard)>; accessed 18 November 2011; see also Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 350.

25 Conrad Grebel and friends. "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," Zurich, September 5, 1524. Ed. by George H. Williams in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 74-77.

sold it for a great deal of money."<sup>26</sup>

The early Swiss Brethren (1527) exhorted each other to hold the Lord's Supper "as often as the brothers are together," which was to be "at least three or four times a week."<sup>27</sup> The Hutterite Peter Riedemann (1542) described a practice more rigorous, but still very different from Roman rituals:

When... we come together to keep the Lord's Memory or Supper the people are encouraged and taught for one, two or three days and told vividly what the Lord's Supper is, what happens there and what one does thereby, and how one should prepare himself worthily to receive the same... When all this has taken place, and the Lord's Supper has been kept, a hymn of praise is sung to the Lord.<sup>28</sup>

Menno Simons' skepticism of sacramental theology famously began while he was still serving as a priest:

...A thought occurred to me, as often as I handled the bread and wine in the mass, that they were not the flesh and blood of the Lord. I thought that it was the suggestion of the devil, that he might lead me off from my faith. I confessed it often—sighed and prayed, yet I could not be freed from this thought.<sup>29</sup>

Years later (1554), his conscience emboldened by the Scriptures, Menno condemned Roman Catholic sacramentalism as idolatrous and futile:

...We, in our infancy were baptized... with an open, anti-christian baptism, by such as... practice open idolatry; who bend their knees before wood and stone; who put their trust in idle doctrines and commands of men; ...and who worship and honor a creature of God, namely, a piece of bread, as the only and eternal Son of God.<sup>30</sup>

[Christ] did not institute this ceremony with the intention that God would be pleased in the mere eating of the bread or drinking of the wine. O, no. But he instituted it that thereby you should observe and faithfully conform yourself to that which is represented and admonished by this sacrament. For not the ceremony itself, but the meaning represented by it, rightly understood and fulfilled in actions, constitutes a sincere christian.<sup>31</sup>

The previous examples focus on Anabaptist understandings of the Lord's Supper. But their rejection of ritual and sacramental thinking extended to other Roman Catholic sacraments, too, and sometimes even to the ideas of their Protestant peers. We will examine in turn baptism, holy

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<sup>26</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier. "The Sum of Christian Life," 1525. Gunnar Westin and Torsten Bergsten. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*. IX. Bd. *Balthasar Hubmaier: Schriften* (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1962), 113-14. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 193.

<sup>27</sup> "Congregational Order," 1527 (originally circulated with the *Schleitheim Confession*). Global Anabaptist Wiki. <[http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php/Schleitheim\\_Confession\\_%28source%29#cite\\_ref-69](http://www.anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php/Schleitheim_Confession_%28source%29#cite_ref-69)>; accessed 15 April 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Riedemann. *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*, 1542 (London: Hodder and Stoughton in conjunction with the Plough Publishing House, 1950), 129-30. Quoted by Walter Klaassen in *Anabaptism in Outline* (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), 132.

<sup>29</sup> Menno Simons, "Menno's Renunciation of the Church of Rome," 1554. *The Complete Works of Menno Simons* (published by John F. Funk; Elkhart, Ind., 1871); available from *Menno Simons.net: Life, writings, doctrine, images and links* (2007-2014), <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft002-renunciation.html>>; accessed 15 April 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Menno Simons, "A Reply to a Publication of Gellius Faber," 1554. *Complete Works*. Available from <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft063-gelliusfaber.html>>; accessed 15 April 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Menno Simons, "The Lord's Holy Supper," *A Foundation and Plain Instruction of the Saving Doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, 1539-54. *Complete Works*. <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft107-holysupper.html>>; accessed 15 April 2015.

orders, anointing with oil, and (briefly) marriage.

Regarding baptism, Grebel (1524) wrote that "the water does not confirm or increase faith, as the [Lutheran] scholars at Wittenberg say, and [does not] give very great comfort [nor] is it the final refuge on the deathbed. Also baptism does not save."<sup>32</sup> The Anabaptist rejection of both Catholic and Protestant sacramental infant baptism was so significant and universal that Walter Klaassen writes, "baptism was the external act by which Anabaptists expressed their rejection of the sacramental church of Rome and the territorial churches of Protestantism."<sup>33</sup> The Anabaptists rejected traditional baptismal rituals, too. These included, at the time, practices such as "the double signing of the cross, blowing under the eyes, salt placed in the mouth, spittle on the ears and nose, and finally the anointing with oil."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Hans Schlaffer (c. 1527) had no time for baptismal exorcisms: "Eternal God! How do you know that the child only just born in all innocence is possessed by the devil? Let me advise you that it is of the utmost urgency that you cast the devil out from yourselves. He has knocked your bottoms out so that no one can ever fill you."<sup>35</sup>

Regarding holy orders, Hubmaier (1526-27) taught that "Satan with his monastic vows and priests' oaths has pressed in and taken his seat in the holy place."<sup>36</sup> Most Anabaptists taught that the church had authority to designate recognized leaders and teachers, but often the clergy-laity divide was rejected even more strongly than in Protestant churches. The earliest Swiss Brethren congregational order (1527) gave no instructions about church leaders, simply advising, "When the brothers and sisters are together, they shall take up something to read together. The one to whom God has given the best understanding shall explain it, the others should be still and listen, so that there are not two or three carrying on a private conversation, bothering the others."<sup>37</sup> Several years later (c. 1532-40) some unnamed Swiss Brethren gave the following instructions for congregational meetings:

When such believers come together, "Everyone of you (note, *every* one) hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation," etc.... When some one comes to church and constantly hears only one person speaking, and all the listeners are silent, neither speaking nor prophesying, who can or will regard or confess the same to be a spiritual congregation, or confess according to 1 Cor. 14 that God is dwelling and operating in them through his Holy Spirit with his gifts...?<sup>38</sup>

Pilgram Marpeck (1531) noted from 1 Corinthians 12 that "not all are apostles, not all are prophets, not all perform miracles, not all are teachers," yet he insisted that "regardless of how much the false prophets may exalt the preaching office, this testimony is evidently, even today,

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<sup>32</sup> Conrad Grebel and friends. "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 80.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Klaassen. *Anabaptism in Outline* (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), 162.

<sup>34</sup> William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996), 204-205.

<sup>35</sup> Hans Schlaffer. "A Short and Simple Admonition," c. 1527, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter I* (Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger, 1938), 100-101. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 171.

<sup>36</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier. "A Christian Instruction," 1526-27, *The Works of Balthasar Hubmaier*, ed. George Duiguid Davidson. Microfilm, Conrad Grebel College Library, 1930, 281-283. Trans. rev. by Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 168.

<sup>37</sup> "Congregational Order," Global Anabaptist Wiki.

<sup>38</sup> "Some Swiss Brethren," 1532-40, Shem Peachey and Paul Peachey, "Answer of Some Who Are Called Anabaptists—Why They Do Not Attend the Churches: A Swiss Brethren Tract," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* XLV (Jan. 1971), 5-32. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 126-27.

not forbidden to any of the true believers."<sup>39</sup> Melchoir Hoffman gave similar instructions:

God's community knows no head but Christ. No other can be endured, for it is a brother- and sisterhood. The teachers have none who rule them spiritually but Christ. Teachers and ministers are not lords. The pastors have no authority except to preach God's Word and punish sins... A true preacher would willingly see the whole community prophesy.<sup>40</sup>

Regarding anointing with oil, J.C. Wenger claims that "the only known Anabaptist mention of this anointing is the denial of its identity with the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction (Martyrs Mirror, 423, 778, 779)."<sup>41</sup> The first mention (of two total) reportedly occurred during the trial of an Anabaptist sister (1527):

Ques." What do you hold concerning the holy oil?"

Ans. "Oil is good for salad, or to oil your shoes with." I Tim. 4:4.<sup>42</sup>

The second mention, from another trial (1569), is even more radical in its wholesale rejection of Roman sacraments:

Fr. Corn. A thousand devils (God bless us) what ails this hellish heretic now, that he makes sorcery of our reading, consecrating, blessing, and sanctifying over the sacrament of extreme unction. You bewitched, bedeviled, possessed Anabaptist... But you are not worthy that I should so incense and excite myself about you. Therefore I tell you, yes, we Catholics call holy unction a sacrament, and regard it as a sacrament, and it is a sacrament, in spite of your mouth. Do you understand this, you bewitched, accursed Anabaptist, that you are?

Jac. If you want to imitate all the things which the apostles did, and regard them all as sacraments, why do you not also regard your aprons or handkerchiefs as sacraments, and lay them upon the sick, as Paul did? For what greater sacredness was there in the oil of which James writes, than in Paul's aprons, by which he also healed the sick, as is written in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles?

Fr. Corn. If the devil does not wag your tongue, I do not understand the matter. You accursed Anabaptists may yourselves make a sacrament of your filthy handkerchiefs or aprons; for you people have no sacrament, but we Catholics have seven sacraments; is it not enough, eh?

Jac. Yea, in troth; for since the term sacrament is not once mentioned in the holy Scriptures, you have only seven too many.

Fr. Corn. Bah, does not St. Paul call marriage a sacrament? And he does not bestow too much honor upon marriage, when he says, in the fifth chapter to the Ephesians: This sacrament is great. Would you reject this honor, put it from you, and trample upon it with your feet, I suppose?

Jac. Paul says, "Two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery." Eph. 5:31, 32. If you want to make

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<sup>39</sup> Pilgram Marpeck. "A Clear and Useful Instruction," 1531, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, ed. William Klaassen and Walter Klaassen (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978), 77-78. Quoted by Stuart Murray in *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000), 162.

<sup>40</sup> Melchoir Hoffman. From a paper of directions sent to Emden to assist in the organization of an Anabaptist congregation. Date unknown. Quoted by Thomas Martin Lindsay in *A History of the Reformation* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 237.  
<[https://books.google.com/books?id=GZd76tiMi1YC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.com/books?id=GZd76tiMi1YC&source=gbs_navlinks_s)>; accessed 17 April 2015.

<sup>41</sup> John C. Wenger. "Anointing with Oil." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (1953)  
<[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Anointing\\_with\\_Oil&oldid=103729](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Anointing_with_Oil&oldid=103729)>; accessed 16 April 2015.

<sup>42</sup> "Weynken, a Widow, Daughter of Claes, of Monickendam, Burnt to Death in the Hague, the 20<sup>th</sup> November, A. D. 1527," *Martyrs Mirror* (1660), 423. <<http://www.homecomers.org/mirror/martyrs058.htm>>; accessed 16 April 2015.

sacraments of all the mysteries, I am surprised that you have only seven sacraments.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding marriage, the Anabaptists generally refused to marry in either the Catholic or Reformed churches, despite often facing severe consequences (for example, marriages were called invalid, children were called illegitimate and denied inheritance rights, and worse). They insisted instead on simple proceedings that involved their own church elders and congregations.<sup>44</sup>

### *The Anabaptist Failure to Restore All New Testament Practices*

The Anabaptist rejection of Roman Catholic theology and practice was not as sweeping as might be imagined from the previous examples. The Anabaptists were still people of their time, and some of their practices would have looked more familiar to their Catholic contemporaries than to us. For example, "there is no hint that the early Anabaptists used anything other than real wine in Communion"; according to Timothy George, the switch to grape juice did not happen until the modern American temperance movement.<sup>45</sup> More significantly, despite trimming away many Catholic additions, the Anabaptists did not fully return to the practices of the early church. For example, if anointing with oil for physical healing as described in James 5 was ever practiced by the early Anabaptists, it must have been very rarely. According to Wenger, "there is no record of this practice among any of the Mennonites of Europe," excepting rarely (and more recently) among some congregations in Russia.<sup>46</sup>

This incomplete restoration of NT practices can also be seen with baptism. As William Estep notes at the end of his survey of Anabaptists and baptism, "the symbolic significance of immersion as a mode of baptism apparently escaped most sixteenth-century Anabaptists. The pouring of water upon the head of the kneeling believer was the most common method of baptizing."<sup>47</sup> Sometimes even less water was applied, as in this report from 1527: "They take some water in a bowl or a pitcher, dip two fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross upon the forehead. That is the form and manner of their baptism."<sup>48</sup> Neither did the Anabaptists regain the NT practice of same-day, anytime-anywhere baptism for all who believed. Hubmaier wrote a baptismal order (1527) that specified detailed pre-baptismal doctrinal testing of the candidate by a bishop, presentation before the congregation, and a carefully-scripted order of service involving congregational prayers for the candidate, a six-question baptismal vow, baptism itself, more congregational prayers, and a final laying on of hands by the bishop to bless the new church member.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Jacob de Roore, or the Chandler and Herman Van Vleckwijck, Both Burned Alive at the Stake, at Bruges, in Flanders, for the Testimony of Jesus Christ, the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, A. D. 1569," *Martyrs Mirror*. 778-79.

<sup>44</sup> Ernst H. Correll, Harold S. Bender and J. Howard Kauffman. "Marriage," in *GAMEO* (1987); available from <<http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Marriage&stableid=112094>>; accessed 17 April 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Timothy George. *Theology of the Reformers*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2013), Kindle edition, Location 6525.

<sup>46</sup> Wenger. "Anointing." *GAMEO*.

<sup>47</sup> Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, footnote 58, 233-34.

<sup>48</sup> "Interrogation of Ambrosius Spitelmaier," 1527, Karl Schornbaum, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*. V. Band. *Bayern II. Abteilung*. (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951), 26. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 123.

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier. "Baptismal Order," 1527, as followed at Nicolsburg. Rollin Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1966), 143-44. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 121-23.

Similarly, Anabaptists thoroughly discussed the question of who could *be baptized*, but showed comparatively little interest in visiting the question of who could *do baptisms*. The Hutterian Chronicle reflects the Anabaptists' traditional mindset when it says the very first Swiss Brethren (1525) baptized each other "since there was at this time no ordained minister to administer this ordinance."<sup>50</sup> "The Christian church gives and administers the sign or the covenant of baptism through a true minister, as Christ received it from John," wrote Hans Hut (c. 1526),<sup>51</sup> perhaps forgetting Jesus' words about the least in the kingdom of heaven being greater than John (Matt. 11:11). Riedemann (1542) agreed: "It is not for all and sundry to take upon themselves such an office, namely that of teaching and baptizing."<sup>52</sup>

Ordained ministers would come to hold great, nearly apostolic, power among the Dutch Anabaptists—a power greater than what the NT ever ascribes to church elders. Menno Simons, as Leonard Gross observes, was an clear and influential example of such authoritarian leadership:

This Dutch leader hardly followed the mutual address as found in Matthew 18, where the congregation is ultimately responsible for admonition and discipline. Menno banned—on the basis of his own authority as a bishop—individuals, congregations, and indeed, at one point, ...the whole "denomination" of Swiss Brethren... Matthew 18—so central in the Swiss Brethren tradition, and so obvious in the Swiss Brethren's Schleitheim Confession of 1527—is not mentioned, directly or indirectly, in the [original Dutch] Dordrecht Confession of 1632.<sup>53</sup>

Stuart Murray's analysis suggests that the Anabaptist rejection of the Catholic sacrament of holy orders may not have been as complete as sometimes imagined:

In many Swiss, central German, and Dutch congregations communal hermeneutics [the practice of interpreting Scripture as a brotherhood] gave way sooner rather than later to reliance on congregational leaders and on received understandings. Catholic and Reformed models were increasingly in evidence, with emphasis on the received tradition (a relatively recent, predominantly oral tradition) or on authoritative leaders. Dirk Philips, for example, taught in *The Sending of Preachers* that "it is not everyone's thing to teach God's Word and to distribute the sacraments of Christ," citing 1 Cor. 12 (not chapter 14) and drawing a different conclusion from that of Marpeck... The hermeneutic community may have been implemented by only some Anabaptist groups and may have survived only the early years in a limited number of congregations...<sup>54</sup>

A similarly incomplete restoration of NT practices can be seen with the Lord's Supper. As with baptism, administration of the Lord's Supper was often reserved for ordained church leaders. Conrad Grebel told Müntzer (1524) that "it ought not to be administered by thee. That was the beginning of the Mass."<sup>55</sup> George H. Williams suggests a probable motivation for Grebel's words:

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<sup>50</sup> The Hutterian Chronicle, as quoted by Harold S. Bender in *Mennonites and Their Heritage: A Handbook of Mennonite History and Beliefs* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1964), 22.

<sup>51</sup> Hans Hut. "The Mystery of Baptism," Rollin Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1966), 83-84. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 170.

<sup>52</sup> Riedeman. *Account*. Quoted by Klaassen in *Anabaptism*, 132.

<sup>53</sup> Leonard Gross. "Introduction: Swiss Anabaptist Self-Understanding from the Perspective of 1702," *Golden Apples in Silver Bowls: The Rediscovery of Redeeming Love (1702)*, (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1999), 24-25.

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Murray. *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2000), 165, 182. Stuart's Philips quote comes from *The Writings of Dirk Philips*, ed. Cornelius J. Dyck, William E. Keeney, and Alvin J. Beachy (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992), 219.

<sup>55</sup> Conrad Grebel and friends. "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 76.

The objection here appears to be against the perpetration of the priestly conception of administering the elements. To avoid any suggestion of a sacerdotal act, Müntzer, ordained to the old priesthood, should relinquish to a server from out of the congregation the distribution of the elements.<sup>56</sup>

Hubmaier (1527), however, paints a different picture as he describes "in what form the Lord's Supper is celebrated in Nicolspurg [Moravia]." After outlining a lengthy service of moral examination, led by a "priest," Hubmaier specifies that "the priest takes the bread, breaks it, and offers it to the hands of those present... when everyone has been fed, the priest likewise takes the cup with the wine... and offers it into their hands."<sup>57</sup> Menno Simons, likewise, when discussing "the calling and sending of true preachers" (1539-40), specified that one of their duties is "to set forth and administer the Lord's holy baptism and Supper, in a right manner."<sup>58</sup> In another place (1539) he specifies that one of the tasks of a "bishop, pastor or teacher" is "to teach and administer the sacraments of the Lord."<sup>59</sup> Dirk Philips, as seen in Murray's quote above, agreed. Differences of practice later arose as to whether believers should stay in their seats or gather around a table at the front of the meeting place, but either way normally bishops, ministers, or deacons distributed the bread and wine.<sup>60</sup> Kraus and Rempel summarize the evidence by saying, "Originally not only elders (bishops) performed the function of administering the Lord's Supper but also ministers, deacons, and possibly lay members. Gradually the practice developed that elders (bishops) only could be in charge of this function."<sup>61</sup>

The frequency of observing the Lord's Supper is another point where the Anabaptists did not retain a full NT practice. Conrad Grebel had also told Müntzer that the bread "should be used much and often."<sup>62</sup> The early Swiss Brethren congregational order that was circulated with the *Schleitheim Confession* (1527) gave similar instructions (see above under "Anabaptist Rejection"). Bernhard Rothmann, Anabaptist theologian and pastor in the ill-fated city of Münster, seems to have agreed (1534):

Now regarding the usage of the Supper. The Scriptures indicate that Christ used it in a common room and after the supper in simple manner... Similar is the witness of Paul... This use of the Supper is now the practice among us. We gather together in a convenient place and *expect that we will come each with examined heart* so that we may approach worthily... After that we fervently pray... Then any need in the congregation is looked after and corrected. Thus the Lord has again restored the Supper and *whenever we have been gathered together* he has granted us to be richly quickened with heavenly blessing and other spiritual gifts.<sup>63</sup>

Yet this emphasis on including the Lord's Supper as a normal part of everyday church life apparently did not last long. As Timothy George suggests, "how frequently the Anabaptists celebrated the Supper probably depended on the ad hoc and clandestine character of their

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., footnote 10, 76.

<sup>57</sup> Balthasar Hubmaier. "A Form of the Supper of Christ," 1527. The Anabaptist Network, 2008. Available from <<http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/252>>; accessed 21 April 2015.

<sup>58</sup> Menno Simons. "Sending Preachers," *Foundation.; Complete Works*. Available from <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft012-sendingpreachers.html>>; accessed 21 April 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Menno Simons. "The Reason Why Menno Simon Does Not Cease Teaching and Writing," 1539, *Complete Works*. Available from <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft100-reasonwhy.html>>; accessed 21 April 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Cornelius Krahn and John D. Rempel. "Communion," *GAMEO* (1989); available from <<http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Communion&oldid=120975>>; accessed 21 April 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Conrad Grebel and friends. "Letter to Thomas Müntzer," *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, 77.

<sup>63</sup> Bernhard Rothmann, "Restitution," 1534. Robert Stupperich. *Die Schriften Bernhard Rothmanns* (Münster i. Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970), 257-58. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 201-202. Emphasis added.

worship services prompted by the threat of impending persecution.”<sup>64</sup> Even the Hutterites, who adopted the *Schleitheim Confession*<sup>65</sup> and who regained the NT practice of sharing meals, did not practice frequent Lord’s Suppers for long if at all, as evidenced by the Peter Riedemann quote above (1542). The theological confusion of the times (1561) makes the following testimony of Hutterite leader Hans Mändl understandable, for instruction about the true meaning of the Lord’s Supper was certainly needed. Yet we may still sense some ironic tension between the prolonged ceremony described in the first two sentences of this testimony and the simple biblical practices referenced by its last two sentences:

When we observe the Supper, we do it publicly, that all who wish to see or hear the Word may attend. The servants preach the Word of God a day or three before and remind everyone that the Supper is an important, lofty, and holy observance. Then we observe the Supper as Christ commanded it and the apostles taught it. Thus we are sure that it is the true, proper Supper of Christ.<sup>66</sup>

For reasons that are not fully clear, “by the 17th century it had become usual for Mennonites in northern Europe to celebrate communion twice a year while Mennonites in south Germany and Switzerland celebrated it once a year.”<sup>67</sup>

Despite their restorationist desires, the Anabaptists were influenced not only by Scripture but also by tradition and current custom. This summary by Stutzman seems accurate, barring a few exceptions mostly in the first decade of Anabaptist history:

Like their Reformed neighbors, who celebrated the Lord’s Supper quarterly, the Anabaptists also rejected a weekly Eucharistic celebration. While some Anabaptists preferred an evening celebration of the Lord’s Supper, which was closer to the Scriptural practice, there was flexibility concerning the time of the actual celebration. When the Lord’s Supper was celebrated in the evening, however, the participants did not share a full meal together but still continued the tradition of sharing only bread and wine. Although the Anabaptists did not celebrate Communion as part of a fellowship meal, nor use the terms *agape* or Love Feast (*Liebesmahl*) to name their eucharistic worship, their renewed focus on the church as the body of Christ helped to reclaim a significant aspect of the Love Feast tradition that had been largely neglected.<sup>68</sup>

### *The Anabaptist Refinement of the Roman Catholic List of Sacraments*

What we now lump together as “the Anabaptists” was actually a diverse, evolving, and sometimes disconnected set of church renewal movements. Great variety persisted, for example, both in the Anabaptist terminology about ordinances (sacrament, witness, ceremony, sign, ordinance, etc.) and in the number listed. Protestant reformers such as Luther and Calvin rejected all the Roman sacraments except for two: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>69</sup> This was also the most common Anabaptist position. No Anabaptists held a list that was much like ours. An extended excerpt from the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO)* paints

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<sup>64</sup> Timothy George. *Theology of the Reformers*, rev. ed. (Nashville, NT: Broadman & Holman, 2013), 389.

<sup>65</sup> Dora Maendel and Jesse Hofer. “Hutterite History Overview” (Hutterites.org, Inc., 2012) <<http://www.hutterites.org/history/hutterite-history-overview/>>; accessed 21 April 2015.

<sup>66</sup> “Interrogation of Hans Mändl,” 1561. Joseph Beck. *Die Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn 1526-1785*. (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1967), 649. Klaassen, *Anabaptism*, 139.

<sup>67</sup> Krahn and Rempel. “Communion,” *GAMEO*. Rempel speculates that this infrequency may have been caused by the fear of unworthy communion, especially given the divisions caused by persecution and differing factions.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Fike Stutzman. *Recovering the Love Feast: Broadening our Eucharistic Celebrations* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 141.

<sup>69</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity, Vol. II: A.D. 1500–A.D. 1975* (New York: HarperCollins, 1975), 713, 756.

a diverse picture:

Those Anabaptists who retained the term "sacrament" to describe the Lord's Supper and baptism or other marks of the church generally redefined it because of negative associations carried by the term. Pilgram Marpeck was typical. He resorted to the term's ancient meaning as an oath of loyalty. ... At the same time, Marpeck showed a strong preference for the term "ceremony" which he defined as any external ritual given by Christ to proclaim the Gospel. ... His list of ceremonies included not only baptism and the Lord's Supper but footwashing, preaching, the ban, and acts of neighbor love....

Balthasar Hubmaier and most Swiss Brethren shared Marpeck's preference for the term "ceremony," generally limiting its scope to baptism and the Lord's Supper....

In the Dutch-North German communities the marks of the church were most often called "ordinances," from the fact that Christ had ordained them. Dirk Philips stipulates seven ordinances (ordination, sacraments, footwashing, discipline, neighbor love, crossbearing, suffering).... The term "sacraments" in this list refers to communion and baptism [which Philips often called *signs*]; it is used to indicate their primacy in the life of the church....

Without formally designating them as ordinances, the formative Mennonite confessions of faith all include marriage, ordination, footwashing, discipline, and neighbor love (often under the category of nonresistance) as essential signs of how God orders the life of the church....

There has never been complete clarity in the Mennonite mind as to what status and meaning to give to the various ceremonies by which the church expresses its life. A surprising variation exists not only in the number of ordinances practiced, but in their form.<sup>70</sup>

The Anabaptists mentioned the holy kiss various times in their writings, but apparently gave it no extended treatment or unusual emphasis. As for the woman's veiling, "this point received no literary treatment by Mennonites in previous centuries, perhaps because in other Christian groups the women used to worship with their heads covered."<sup>71</sup>

In his book *On Infant Baptism* Hubmaier wrote: "I am not speaking of church customs invented by man. Rather do I speak of two ceremonies of Christ, that is, of baptism and of the Supper. We need no more."<sup>72</sup> Menno Simons appears to have held to the same number,<sup>73</sup> although he retained the term *sacrament*. In a letter to a theological foe, he listed signs "by which to distinguish the church of Christ.... The second sign," he wrote, "is the right and Scriptural use of the sacraments of Christ, namely, the baptism of those who, by faith, are born of God... [and] the dispensing of the Lord's Holy Supper to the penitent."<sup>74</sup> No other sacraments are listed in this letter.

The *Gale Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World* says, "like other Protestants, Anabaptists accepted only two sacraments, communion and baptism."<sup>75</sup> This oversimplifies the matter, but it

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70 Cornelius Krahn and John D. Rempel. "Ordinances," in *GAMEO* (1989); available from <<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/O745ME.html>>; accessed 18 November 2011. See also the *GAMEO* article on "Sacraments," by William Klassen and Nanne van der Zijpp (1959), available from <<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/S2383.html>>

71 John C. Wenger. *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959), 150-51.

72 Estep, *Anabaptist Story*, 220-21.

73 This claim is made by Benjamin Brick in a research paper entitled "A Biography of Menno Simons" (1997), available from <<http://www.angelfire.com/ne/onebrickshort/menno.html>>; accessed 18 November 2011.

74 Menno Simons, "A Reply to a Publication of Gellius Faber," *Complete Works*. <<http://www.mennosimons.net/ft069-signs.html>>; accessed 15 April 2015.

75 Michael D. Driedger, "Anabaptism," in *Gale Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*, available from <<http://www.answers.com/topic/anabaptist>>; accessed 18 November 2011.

seems true of most early Anabaptists. The *Dordrecht Confession of Faith* (1632), the most influential of all Anabaptist confessions, confirms this pattern. On the one hand, one reason why this confession "came to be widely accepted among conservative Mennonite groups" was "because of its emphasis on discipline and foot washing, two articles not found in some of the other [early] confessions."<sup>76</sup> Foot washing was even featured in its own separate article (as was marriage). Here we see the ground being prepared for foot washing's later exaltation to the status of ordinance. Yet when this confession directly names "the Lord's ordinances," it names only two: "baptism and supper."<sup>77</sup> (The holy kiss, the Christian woman's veiling, and anointing with oil are not mentioned at all.)

Why two? Surely one reason is because Anabaptists developed their sacramental theology under the direct influence of the Protestant reformers. This is true from Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock and Felix Manz—who were awakened under the teaching of Zwingli—to Menno Simons—who read Luther's writings while moving towards Anabaptism. Therefore, as *GAMEO* says, "Mennonites universally celebrate baptism and communion as essential marks of the church."<sup>78</sup>

### **A History of Ordinances: J. S. Coffman and Daniel Kauffman<sup>79</sup>**

It may be helpful at this point to briefly reflect on the historical ground we have covered. First, we surveyed the development of ritual and sacramental theology across nearly fifteen centuries, culminating in a fixed seven-fold list of Roman Catholic sacraments. Next, we paused over one century, sampling some evidence for what early Anabaptists believed and practiced regarding sacraments.

Which of these two pictures more closely resembles our own contemporary conservative Mennonite scene? On the one hand, our theology of ordinances is non-sacramental, like the Anabaptists. On the other hand, we have a seven-fold list, like the Catholics. Perhaps the closest match is Dirk Philips, who also had a seven-fold list. Yes his list doesn't match ours very well, either. It includes five we lack (ordination, discipline, neighbor love, crossbearing, and suffering) while excluding others common to both Catholics and us (anointing with oil and marriage). Clearly, our concept of ordinances has been shaped by both Catholics and the early Anabaptists. Yet just as clearly, the picture of ordinances that many of us today assume is normal does not match anything seen in the first sixteen centuries of Christianity.

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<sup>76</sup> Dyck, Cornelius J., ed. *An Introduction to Mennonite History* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1981), 132.

<sup>77</sup> Article IX, "Dordrecht Confession of Faith (Mennonite, 1632)," in *GAMEO* (1963); available from <<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/D674.html>>; accessed 03 December 2011. Note: This is true despite Dyck's assertion that when the *Dortrecht Confession* was adopted by the Mennonites in Alsace in 1660, "foot washing, which had been neglected, was reinstated as a biblical ordinance" (*Introduction*, 148). Dyck's statement may be either a non-technical use of the word *ordinance* or else a description of a further exaltation of foot washing among the Alsace Mennonites, beyond that found explicitly in the confession.

<sup>78</sup> Krahn and Rempel. "Ordinances," *GAMEO*.

<sup>79</sup> In writing this essay I gained a deeper appreciation for both these men as I read biographies of each: *His Name Was John: The Life Story of an Early Mennonite Leader* by Coffman's granddaughter, Barbara F. Coffman (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1964) and *Life and Times of Daniel Kauffman* by Kauffman's daughter, Alice K. Gingerich (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1954).

*Ordinances Among Early American Mennonites*

There seems to have been a significant continuity of theology and practice across the first several centuries of Anabaptism, even among American immigrants. This was due, in part, to some important pieces of Anabaptist literature which Mennonite pioneers brought to America. These included Menno Simon's *Foundation-Book* ("printed in America in five German and in four English editions between 1794 and 1869"), T.J. van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* (published nearly immediately by the first Mennonite pioneers in 1794 and used ever since), Dirk Philips' *Enchiridion* or *Handbook* (printed in America in five German and one English edition between 1811 and 1917), and—probably most importantly for our topic of ordinances—the various confessions of faith brought over from Europe. Most notable among these was the *Dordrecht Confession*, which "was formally adopted at a conference of Franconia and Lancaster ministers in the year 1525," "has been used historically in the instruction of candidates for baptism," and has been called "the standard confession of the 'Mennonite Church.'"<sup>80</sup>

*Roosen's Catechism* (*Christliches Gemütsgespräch* or "Christian Spiritual Conversation on Saving Faith...") was another important training tool. Published in Germany in 1702, it is "the first complete German Mennonite catechism in existence."<sup>81</sup> It was reprinted in German or English at least fifteen times from 1769 through 1892 in various North American communities.<sup>82</sup> Robert Friedmann observed that "few books have met with such general approval among Mennonites everywhere as the *Gemütsgespräch*, the outstanding catechism of the church as a whole."<sup>83</sup>

Given this widespread influence, it is important to ask how *Roosen's Catechism* might have shaped Mennonite thinking about ordinances.<sup>84</sup> *Roosen's Catechism* uses the word *sacrament* narrowly, only to refer to the Lord's Supper. In contrast, it uses *ordinance* flexibly, to refer to general biblical commands of Old or New Testaments, to refer to the commanded activities of the Lord's Supper and baptism, and to refer to civil laws. The Lord's Supper and baptism are the only specific biblical commands that are referred to with the term *ordinance*. They are never collectively referenced as being "ordinances," and no list of ordinances is ever given, yet they hold a special status as a pair. This is clear from the question which follows the discussion of baptism and the Lord's Supper: "Has the Lord Jesus, besides Baptism and the Sacrament, yet also given other high commandments to his Church, which were not given under the Old Testament Dispensation?" The answer, interestingly, is not more ordinances or sacraments, but the command to love "without distinction, ...loving also our enemies."

Does *Roosen's Catechism* mention other practices often considered ordinances? Marriage receives extended but non-specialized treatment, sandwiched between oaths and excommunication. "The brotherly kiss or salutation" is mentioned once in passing, within a

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<sup>80</sup> Wenger. *Glimpses*, 132-34.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Friedmann. "Christliches Gemütsgespräch (Monograph)." *GAMEO* (1953); available from <[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Christliches\\_Gem%C3%BCtsgespr%C3%A4ch\\_\(Monograph\)&oldid=106756](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Christliches_Gem%C3%BCtsgespr%C3%A4ch_(Monograph)&oldid=106756)>; accessed 18 April 2015.

<sup>82</sup> John C. Wenger. *The Doctrines of the Mennonites* (Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950), 111.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Friedmann. *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* (Goshen, IN: Goshen College, 1929), 144. Quoted in Wenger, *Doctrines*, 111.

<sup>84</sup> The observations in this paragraph are based on an English translation published in 1857. *Christian Spiritual Conversations on Saving Faith for the Young: In Questions and Answers*, ed. Christian Burkholder, Benjamin Eby and Gerrit Roosen (Lancaster, PA: John Baer and Sons, 1857); available from <<https://archive.org/details/christianspirit00ebygoog>>; accessed 18 April 2015.

discussion on excommunication. The woman's veiling and anointing with oil do not appear to be mentioned. Most surprisingly, given its prominence in the *Dordrecht Confession*, foot washing is not found anywhere in this catechism.

American editions of *Roosen's Catechism* always also included the *Shorter Catechism*, which was used among the Prussian Mennonites as early as 1690.<sup>85</sup> Friedmann calls this "the most successful" of the Mennonite catechisms, given its "countless reprints."<sup>86</sup> This catechism never uses the word *sacrament*. The word *ordinance* is used to refer to "the service to the poor," baptism, the Lord's Supper, and God's commands in general. Marriage is mentioned but called an "institution." The woman's veiling, anointing with oil, the holy kiss, and foot washing are not mentioned.

Foot washing was the subject of significant debate in at least one pioneer Mennonite community. In 1817 Jacob Nolt moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio, becoming the first Mennonite bishop in that state. Wilmer D. Swope describes what happened shortly thereafter among the young Ohio congregations:

Feetwashing was optional in the Columbiana-Mahoning congregation in the early years, many being opposed to it. In order to have fellowship with the Wayne-Stark County Mennonites who favored it, Nold introduced feetwashing in his home congregations as the result of great effort. This counsel with the Wayne-Stark group in time grew into the Ohio Mennonite Conference.<sup>87</sup>

Clearly, foot washing was an important topic among early Ohio Mennonites. On the one hand, many were strongly opposed to the practice, accepting it only after "great effort" on the part of their bishop. On the other hand, others felt so strongly that foot washing was important that it functioned for them as a boundary marker, necessary for church fellowship.

In a revealing passage, J.C. Wenger described the "special services" that were held by American Mennonite pioneers in the 1700s:

Baptismal services were held for those who had "joined the class" and received catechetical instruction from Roosen's *Conversation on Saving Faith*. Once or twice a year, depending on the customs of the conference district involved, communion services were held. Counsel meetings were held a week or two before the observance of the Lord's Supper. Preparatory services were held the day before the communion service. In most congregations feet washing was observed as an ordinance (John 13) after the communion service. Harvest-Home services were held in the autumn... The pioneers were sturdy characters, self-reliant, pious, and a bit formal. But it never occurred to them to send out missionaries or make any innovations in their religious life. Many of them had no conscience against the moderate use of alcohol and tobacco... The fire was still unkindled.<sup>88</sup>

This passage describes a time of relative cultural and theological stability; the reliance on old European Anabaptist literature is still very evident. Wenger describes foot washing as being "an ordinance," but it is unclear whether this represents a new elevation in foot washing's status (higher than in the *Dordrecht Confession*) or, more likely, simply the common terminology of Wenger's day. Wenger's language is fascinating on another level; he describes his forbears as "a bit formal" and lacking in innovation and fire, thus hinting at his gratitude for later historical developments.

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<sup>85</sup> Wenger, *Doctrines*, 90. Observations in this paragraph are based on an English translation in Wenger's book.

<sup>86</sup> Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety*, 129. Quoted in Wenger, *Doctrines*, 90.

<sup>87</sup> Wilmer D. Swope. "Nold, Jacob (1765-1834)." *GAMEO* (1957); available from <[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Nold,\\_Jacob\\_%281765-1834%29](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Nold,_Jacob_%281765-1834%29)>; accessed 20 April 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Wenger, *Glimpses*, 187-88.

These later developments, coming throughout the 1800s and known by Wenger as the Great Awakening,<sup>89</sup> would change the Mennonite church in radical ways. On the one hand, the revivals meetings and Sunday schools restored something of the old Anabaptist eagerness to search the Scriptures for fresh insights, an interest that had faded as Mennonites learned to trust their confessions and catechisms. Thus, for example, "it is possible that the Old Order Amish and the Mennonites (MC) began to anoint with oil during the 19th century as a result of the renewed interest in Bible study which the brotherhood experienced in that era."<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, revivalism and its offspring, fundamentalism, would ultimately result in a brand new flavor of Anabaptism—a flavor that tasted perhaps even more unlike its first forbears and still relied heavily on confessions and doctrinal lists. It was certainly time for change, and the times were certainly changing, but not in predictable ways.

### *Coffman and the Compilation of the Seven Ordinances*

In order to find the list of seven ordinances taught by conservative Mennonites today, we must continue our historical travels. Our journey finally brings us all the way to the 1890s and to pioneer Mennonite evangelist J. S. Coffman. Although Coffman was a prolific writer and editor, few of his writings have become standard Mennonite literature. But his ideas about ordinances, and in particular his seven-fold list, would later be inscribed in literature that has certainly been standard for nearly a century.

Coffman was a creative thinker who was very aware of the dangers of mere ritualism. For example, in a diary entry dated July 29, 1890, Coffman reflected on the new minister's manual that his boss John F. Funk was publishing.<sup>91</sup> Coffman apparently approved of it, noting that there "has long been a felt want in the church for many years" for such a book. But he also wrote, "One danger of the book is that it may encourage ritualism."<sup>92</sup>

Despite this caution, Coffman collaborated with Funk on the manual, which was published later the same year. In fact, "Funk always gave Coffman credit for doing by far the greatest and most

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<sup>89</sup> Wenger seems to have used the term to refer to what today are often described as two distinguishable events: the Second Great Awakening (late 1700s-1850) and the Third Great Awakening (1850s-1900).

<sup>90</sup> Wenger. "Anointing." *GAMEO*.

<sup>91</sup> John F. Funk had recruited Coffman to work as an editor at his Mennonite Publishing Company. Funk was "by all odds the most influential [American Mennonite] leader for 30 years (1870-1900), shaping the course of the Mennonite Church" (Harold S. Bender. "Funk, John Fretz (1835-1930)." *GAMEO*, 1956). He deserves a place in this story for how his doctrinal focus, organizational activities, and publishing efforts prepared the way for Daniel Kauffman and others, but I am not aware that he contributed original thinking on the topic of ordinances.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 223. Near the end of his life, Coffman similarly warned against legislating outward nonconformity: "The Virginia church and conference has done much legislating to keep our people down out of the world in dress and other things, but in spite of all the keeping down they have done, their young men are now more conformed to the world than ours at Elkhart where we do not legislate much, but do some teaching on this point, and instead put our young people to work and have them contend for these principles.... They have tried too much to do by force of law what grace alone can do. What is it worth to keep people down in any sense if they submit only by constraint? We are in the dispensation of grace, and I shall never again help to legislate on outward forms as I did once in the Virginia conference when I did not know better. But I shall work harder in another way for the same principle" (letter to brother-in-law Lewis J. Heatwole, December 12, 1893; recorded by Barbara F. Coffman, 254).

important work on it."<sup>93</sup> In some ways the manual did not so much blaze a new path for future as consolidate the vision of the past. Thus the manual included the *Dordrecht Confession*, as well as the *Shorter Catechism* and even the ancient *Apostolic Confession of Faith*. In compiling the forms for church services for their manual, Funk and Coffman drew on various forms currently in use, including a German work published in Canada by bishop Benjamin Eby fifty years earlier.<sup>94</sup>

In this manual the word *sacrament* is never used and no list of ordinances is given. Usually *ordinance* is used in a vague way, referring either to any of Christ's commands or to any of the church's requirements, or perhaps sometimes more narrowly to an unspecified subset. The only activity specifically called an "ordinance" is marriage, in the wedding vows. The manual includes teaching on "the administration of baptism," semiannual observance of "the communion of the Lord's Supper," and "the exercise of feet-washing," also called a "ceremony." The "kiss of peace" or "brotherly salutation" is mentioned multiple times passing, always in connection with baptism, foot washing, or ordination ceremonies. There is no mention of the woman's veiling or anointing with oil. None of this is surprising, given past American Mennonite understandings.

Funk and Coffman's minister's manual also provides instruction regarding excommunication, handling conflicts, funerals, and ordinations. The ordination charge given to bishops includes the responsibility to "baptize and receive into the church those who believe... and to administer the Communion of the Lord's Supper." They are also responsible to "excommunicate from the church" those who transgress Christ's commands, "and when they repent..., to receive them again," as well as "to officiate at the marriage of members of the church." Again, this reflects common understandings.

Funk and Coffman's little book became standard literature for conservative Mennonite churches, connecting the past with the present and the future. In the preface, they expressed hope that their manual would "do much toward bringing about a closer union, and a greater uniformity between the churches in different locations." More precisely, Funk's biographers say that one purpose of this book was "to provide a uniform method of administering the ordinances of the church."<sup>95</sup> This hope was realized. Today the Coffman-Funk minister's manual is still used (sometimes with significant adaptations<sup>96</sup>) and much of it would sound very familiar to anyone who has attended many conservative Mennonite baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Coffman was not content to simply reinforce past understandings, however. Within a year of the publication of the Funk-Coffman minister's manual, he began to promote a newly-defined list of ordinances. In a fascinating article in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Mark Wenger describes how Coffman's list came about:

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<sup>93</sup> Helen Kolb Gates, John Funk Kolb, J. Clemens Kolb, and Constance Kolb Sykes. *Bless the Lord O My Soul*. Ed. J.C. Wenger (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1964), footnote on pg. 185.

<sup>94</sup> John F. Funk and John S. Coffman. "Preface," *Confession of Faith and Minister's Manual* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Publishing House, 1890), 3. Available from <<https://archive.org/details/theconfessionof00unknuoft/>>; accessed 20 April 2015. The observations and quotes below are based on this first edition.

<sup>95</sup> Gates et al. *Bless the Lord*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> As of 2015, Rod and Staff Publishers still publishes an edition that, so far as I know, matches the 1890 original. A 1984 printing of a Lamp and Light's minister's manual, currently owned by a Beachy minister, specifies that "the vows and greater part of the procedures of the ceremonies given in this manual were adapted from the *Minister's Manual*, dated 1890" (*Minister's Manual* [Farmington, NM: Lamp and Light Publishers, 1980], ii).

Soon after his move [from Virginia] to Indiana in 1879 [at the invitation of *Herald of Truth* editor and publisher John F. Funk], Coffman began vigorously to advocate direct evangelistic and revivalist efforts within Mennonite congregations. In June 1881 Coffman... conducted his first series of "protracted meetings." ...Although he faced some strong opposition initially, Coffman's emphasis on doing Mennonite evangelism in keeping with the values and traditions of the church, and his irenic style and patience, gradually opened doors, even back east. Many prominent leaders of the next generation came into the church through Coffman's unflagging appeals.

...The term "ordinance" had been used widely and loosely across the church to refer both to shared understandings that governed church life, and specific church ceremonies like baptism and Lords' Supper. By 1891, however, Coffman had begun to give "ordinances" a more precise meaning, even providing a definitive list of them.

Coffman usually opened his series of revival services with an emphasis on repentance, new birth, faith and salvation. Toward the end of a revival series, Coffman nearly always took an explicitly doctrinal tack, teaching the ordinances and restrictions of the church. These were firmly buttressed with Scripture citations rather than appeals to tradition. In his diary he sometimes noted the sermon topic as "Ordinances as Symbols," and referred to the ordinances "as a chain."

In the wake of a particularly long-running and successful revival series in 1891 in Waterloo County, Ontario, Coffman compiled and published a four-page pamphlet entitled *Fundamental Bible References*. ...Under the heading "Requirements of Obedience," Coffman included "Ordinances," "Duties" and "Restrictions." The Ordinances were listed with short descriptions and scriptural references as follows:

Principal Ordinances – Heb. 9:1

- (1) Baptism with Water
- (2) Communion
- (3) Footwashing

Secondary Ordinances – 1 Cor. 11:2

- (1) Prayer Head-Covering for the Women
- (2) Greeting with the Holy Kiss
- (3) Marriage
- (4) Anointing with Oil for the Recovering of the Sick<sup>97</sup>

Wenger says that Coffman's list was "the earliest classification of ordinances into a bounded group of seven."<sup>98</sup> Peter Lombard and Dirk Philips might disagree with this claim, yet Coffman was clearly starting something new. On the one hand his two-part list reflects the ancient Dordrechtian emphasis on baptism, communion, and foot washing. But Coffman's inclusion of foot washing as one of the "principle ordinances," on par with baptism and communion, raises it higher than within the Dordrecht Confession. This was also "the earliest compilation of Mennonite ordinances that specifically includes anointing with oil."<sup>99</sup> Anointing had only very recently been accepted as an ordinance among Mennonites. The head covering also was first called an ordinance at about this time. Despite a long history of Mennonites wearing the covering, there had been no rule that it be worn daily. For example, even though J. S. Coffman

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<sup>97</sup> Mark Wenger, "The Origins and Development of Anointing Among Nineteenth-Century Mennonites," *MQR*, LXXIX, 1 (January 2005), about one third way through the article [no page numbers given in the online edition]; available from <<http://www.goshen.edu/mqr/pastissues/jan05wenger.html>>; accessed 05 December 2011.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, fn. 34.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, one third way through the online edition of the article. As Wenger records, in an 1870 article of *Herald of Truth* John F. Funk wrote, "Whether this anointing should still be performed upon the sick is a question not fully settled"; in an 1878 *Herald of Truth* article another "brother" compared anointing to foot washing, Lord's Supper and baptism, but did not call it an "ordinance"; in 1881 J. S. Coffman observed an anointing for the first time, and sometime in the next decade began to refer to it as an ordinance.

had been teaching it for several years "as a biblical imperative," as recently as 1889 his wife "only wore it to church... as was the practice of the community."<sup>100</sup>

Why did Coffman compile and teach this list of ordinances? The main reason seems to have been the desperate need and desire for biblical teaching which he observed during his revivalist meetings. As his granddaughter Barbara F. Coffman writes, in most Amish and Mennonite congregations Coffman found "an overemphasis on formalities and customs handed down from older generations, and a general lack of knowledge regarding the Scriptural basis for their faith."<sup>101</sup> Barbara describes a week of meetings Coffman held in the late 1880s among some of the "more progressive" Amish in Ohio: "At their request John spent one evening explaining the ordinances of the church. For an hour and a half they listened almost spellbound hearing for the first time the meaning of some of their formal practices."<sup>102</sup> Barbara records another event at an Amish congregation in Hesston, Kansas (in about 1890): "At Zook's request he spoke on the ordinances of the church, once more explaining to a custom-ridden people the spiritual meaning of the practices which they had held so tenaciously over the years."<sup>103</sup>

On May 27, 1891, Coffman recorded in his diary his sermon topic for that night—"Communion, our reason for not holding a free communion"—and then observed, "The interest was almost intense." Barbara adds these reflections:

As John recorded these words, the thought suddenly struck him that here, perhaps, was the key to the apathy and indifference which was slowly killing the church. It was the same in so many places, lack of understanding. When the people understood, they were interested. ...And so instead of ignoring the doctrines of the church which had long been the subject of heated arguments and disagreements, he launched into a vigorous program of teaching what the Mennonite Church stood for, and why. Immediately the crowds began to come and people of all denominations listened with interest to his clear and forceful expositions.<sup>104</sup>

The effectiveness of teaching the ordinances was driven home to Coffman in a very personal way on January 24, 1888. That night his son Samuel F. Coffman (future Ontario bishop) responded to an invitation given after a sermon based on Hebrews 9:1 which "unfolded the beautiful meaning of a number of the ordinances." This sermon was part of a series which was a "study of church ordinances with their Scriptural background and meaning." Barbara summarizes the sermon that night:

In setting a pattern for worship, he explained, God prescribed even minute details. No doubt the people in those early days [under the Mosaic Law] had difficulty in understanding why all those forms were necessary. But now, he said, we can see how beautifully they symbolized the things which were to come, the things fulfilled in Christ. Just so these commands which have been given to us to keep in this age are also symbolic. They represent the unseen things of the realm of the Spirit, and are given to

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<sup>100</sup> Andrew C. Martin, "Creating A Timeless Tradition: The Effects of Fundamentalism on the Conservative Mennonite Movement" (MTS thesis, University of Waterloo and Conrad Grebel University College, 2007), 60-62; available from <<http://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstream/10012/3441/1/Thesis%20The%20Effects%20of%20Fundamentalism.pdf>>; accessed 31 December 2011.

According to Martin, the information about Coffman's wife came from Coffman's son S. F. Coffman, recorded by Melvin Gingerich in "A History of Mennonite Costume" (n.p., n.d.), 40-41.

101 Barbara F. Coffman, 182.

102 Ibid., 213-14.

103 Ibid., 221.

104 Ibid., 234.

us to help us remember what Christ has accomplished for us."<sup>105</sup>

Despite Coffman's influence in standardizing and spreading Mennonite teachings about ordinances, we should remember that he did not wish to establish human traditions but to explain biblical teaching—a point easily missed after more than a century of living with his list of seven ordinances.

### *Kauffman and the Codification of the Seven Ordinances*

Of all the future leaders converted under Coffman's efforts, none became more prominent than a Missourian named Daniel Kauffman. On May 21, 1896, "in a letter to his mentor, Coffman,"<sup>106</sup> Kauffman proposed the idea of a doctrinal handbook that would include "ordinances and restrictions."<sup>107</sup> Coffman encouraged the idea, and about one month later Kauffman sent him a list of proposed subjects for such a book. The list included Coffman's seven ordinances, now with no distinction between "primary" and "secondary":

- IV. Ordinances
  1. Baptism
  2. Communion
  3. Footwashing
  4. Salutation with the Holy Kiss
  5. Sisters' Prayer-head-covering
  6. Anointing with Oil
  7. Marriage<sup>108</sup>

When Kauffman's book *Manual of Bible Doctrines* was published in 1898, this list was presented essentially unchanged.<sup>109</sup> The seven ordinances were covered in seven chapters, comprising 82 of the book's 272 pages. This book was a forerunner of Kauffman's popular *Doctrines of the Bible*.<sup>110</sup>

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105 Ibid., 201-202.

106 Wenger, *MQR*, one third way through article.

107 Daniel Kauffman. Quoted in a description of archived letters originally sent from Kauffman to Coffman. Box 4, Folder 5: Kauffman, Daniel, 1892-1899; from J. S. (John Samuel) Coffman Papers, 1861-1964 Mennonite Church USA Archives-Goshen. By Colleen McFarland and Theron Schlabach. <<https://mla.bethelks.edu/archon/?p=collections/findingaid&id=649&q=&rootcontentid=19639#id19639>>; accessed 18 April 2015.

108 Ibid., one third way through article.

109 Daniel Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines* (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonite Publishing Company, 1898), 12-14; available from <<http://ia700301.us.archive.org/32/items/manualofbible00kauf/manualofbible00kauf.pdf>>; accessed 05 December 2011. Only minor refinements were made: "Footwashing" became "Feet-Washing"; "Sisters' Prayer-head-cover" became "Woman's Prayer-Head-Covering"; "Salutation with the Holy Kiss" became "Salutation of the Holy Kiss"; and the latter two ordinances exchanged places on the list.

110 Kauffman was author of *Manual of Bible Doctrines*. He also served as editor and contributing author of a thoroughly expanded, multi-author book called *Bible Doctrine* (1914), and as editor and chief author of a final edition called *Doctrines of the Bible* (1928). In *Bible Doctrine*, the section called "Christian Ordinances" grew to 105 pages out of 701, with a few more minor rewordings of ordinance titles. Kauffman wrote the chapters on "The Christian Salutation," "Anointing with Oil," and "Marriage," the other four ordinance chapters being written by other contributors. In the 1928 *Doctrines of the Bible*, the ordinances were subsumed under a unit called "The Doctrine of the Church" (further distinguishing them from other "duties, restrictions, [and] graces" which Kauffman gathered into a unit called "Christian Life") and reduced to 61 pages out of 639.

Kauffman's 1898 book became, "in the words of historian Leonard Gross, 'the programmatic platform' for a new doctrinally-centered period in the Mennonite Church."<sup>111</sup> Kauffman, along with his fundamentalist Protestant contemporaries, was fighting a battle against theological liberalism. Mennonites sought to defeat this foe while also distinguishing themselves from their conservative Protestant allies. *GAMEO* explains the role ordinances played in this battle:

About 1900 Daniel Kauffman tried to counter the assimilation of his community into its North American environment by developing a strong and specific teaching on ordinances.... He sought not only to strengthen doctrine and practice concerning baptism, communion, footwashing, anointing, and marriage, but to elevate the kiss of peace and the devotional covering or prayer veil to the status of ordinances."<sup>112</sup>

The list of ordinances that Coffman and Kauffman created was popularized in the early decades of the twentieth century not only through Kauffman's books, but also through the Bible Conference movement (training institutes offered in local congregations by traveling teachers), through the formation of the General Conference denominational structure, and through the General Conference's new publication *Gospel Herald* (edited by Kauffman). This periodical "took on the role of spreading and defending orthodoxy," enabling the General Conference to give "clearer focus and sharper definition to the identity and mission of the church."<sup>113</sup>

The list of seven ordinances was firmly codified in 1921, when the Twelfth Mennonite General Conference gathering near Garden City, Missouri formally approved them by including them in a confessional supplement entitled *Christian Fundamentals*. This confessional is still widely used by conservative Mennonites today, often via a 1964 restatement adopted at the "Third Annual Biblical Discipleship and Fellowship Ministerial Meeting" in Hartville, Ohio, which was attended by "ordained men representing numerous conservative congregations."<sup>114</sup> Both versions contain an article describing all seven ordinances, and both specify that "the Church" (1921) or "the local body of believers" (1964) has God-given "authority" to "regulate the observance(s)" of the ordinances.<sup>115</sup>

Some other Anabaptists use the *1963 Mennonite Confession of Faith*, produced by the Mennonite General Conference because it sensed a need for a confession that was more up to date than *Christian Fundamentals*. It includes Kauffman's seven ordinances plus an eighth, "the laying-on of hands in ordination." This eighth ordinance was listed by J. C. Wenger (apparently the primary draftsman of the 1963 confession) at least as early as 1950, in his book *The Doctrines of the Mennonites*, and is found much earlier in non-Mennonite sources.<sup>116</sup> This confession is also different from the 1921 and 1964 confessions in that it contains language implying (a) that baptism and the Lord's Supper are more significant than the other ordinances

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111 Leonard Gross, "The Doctrinal Era of the Mennonite Church," *MQR* 60 (January 1986), 85; as quoted by Wenger, *MQR*, one third way through article.

112 Krahn and Rempel. "Ordinances," *GAMEO*.

113 Wenger, *MQR*, nearly half way through article.

114 Mennonite Church. "Mennonite Confession of Faith," 6<sup>th</sup> printing, 1985 (Crockett: KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, 1965), i, 91.

115 Mennonite Church. "Christian Fundamentals (Mennonite Church, 1921)." *GAMEO* (1921); available at <[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Christian\\_Fundamentals\\_\(Mennonite\\_Church,\\_1921\)&oldid=86751](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Christian_Fundamentals_(Mennonite_Church,_1921)&oldid=86751)>; accessed 20 April 2015.

116 Wenger, *Doctrines*, 29. Wenger seems somewhat less sure of marriage's status as an ordinance than of Kauffman's other six (based on the criterion of symbolic significance).

and (b) that the eight ordinances named are not an exhaustive list.<sup>117</sup>

*Christian Fundamentals* (1921 version) also forms the basis of *Basic Bible Studies*, an instructional booklet for new believers currently published by Christian Light Publications. This booklet accepts Kauffman's list without any qualifications, stating straightforwardly, "We believe there are seven symbolic ceremonies taught in the New Testament. We call them ordinances. The ordinances are practices or ceremonies that symbolize spiritual truth."<sup>118</sup> Thus thousands of church members today are taught to understand that Coffman's list of seven comes right from the pages of Scripture.

### *Questions and Observations: Why Seven? How Was Ordinance Defined?*

It may surprise some readers to discover that our current list of ordinances is only about one hundred years old, but it appears that no list matches ours before that time. And why seven? Mark Wenger muses over the same question, suggesting some intriguing possible answers:

One cannot help but wonder how Coffman and Kauffman came up with a definitive list of seven Mennonite ordinances. The enumeration sounds suspiciously like a Mennonite equivalent of the seven sacraments of Roman Catholicism. The list could have easily included other actions such as ordination and church discipline. Perhaps seven, the numerical symbol of completeness, appealed to the didactic and systematic minds of Coffman and his protege.<sup>119</sup>

Kauffman himself reflects on this question in *Doctrines of the Bible*, but only briefly, offering no explanation:

There is a difference of opinion as to the number of Christian ordinance, intended as such, that ought to be kept by Christian people. Many of the churches recognize but two—baptism and the communion—classifying them as sacraments—others included a few more. Without entering into a discussion, at this time, as to which ones should be recognized as ordinances, we will name seven ordinances which we believe to have been instituted by divine authority, and which we mean to discuss at greater length in succeeding chapters. Following is the list...<sup>120</sup>

Kauffman, like most Anabaptists and Protestants for centuries before him, seems to have assumed the existence of a category of Christian commands called ordinances. His was not concerned to defend existence of the category itself, but to define the word *ordinance* and then, based in part on this definition, to enumerate which commands qualified as ordinances.

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<sup>117</sup> Mennonite Church. "Mennonite Confession of Faith, 1963." *GAMEO* (1963); available at <[http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite\\_Confession\\_of\\_Faith,\\_1963&oldid=100737](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Mennonite_Confession_of_Faith,_1963&oldid=100737)>; accessed 20 April 2015. See "Ceremonies and Practices" under Article 8, as well as Articles 11-15, for these observations. These changes may reflect the committee's goals to "prepare a statement which was Biblical in character, rather than theological" (ibid.).

<sup>118</sup> Wendell Heatwole, *Basic Bible Studies* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Christian Light Publications, 1988; 5<sup>th</sup> printing, 2006), 65. Mennonite groups which currently use this booklet for instructional classes include, for example, the Beachy Amish Mennonites and the Midwest Mennonite Fellowship.

<sup>119</sup> Wenger, *MQR*, n. 42.

<sup>120</sup> Daniel Kauffman, *Doctrines of the Bible*, ed. Kauffman (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1928), 380-81.

Kauffman defined an ordinance as "a religious ceremony with a heavenward meaning."<sup>121</sup>

A passage in *Manual of Bible Doctrines* clarifies where Kauffman found his definition of *ordinance*. Kauffman asks:

Is feet-washing an ordinance? To answer this question, we must first determine the meaning of the term. Webster defines an ordinance as "an established rite or ceremony." It has also been defined as "a command with a purely God-ward meaning." From these definitions and other testimony of Bible scholars, we conclude that an ordinance is an act or ceremony instituted by some one who has authority to do so.<sup>122</sup>

Later he adds:

We have another reason for calling this an ordinance. We have never heard any one dispute that the washing of feet, instituted according to Ex. 30:17-21, and practiced according to Ex. 40:30-32, was an ordinance. Why then should we dispute that the washing of feet, as mentioned in Jn. 13:1-17, which resembles it in essential particulars, is an ordinance?<sup>123</sup>

It is telling that when Kauffman wanted to define *ordinance* he did not turn directly to the Bible, but to dictionaries and scholars. And when he provided a model for what an ordinance looked like, he did not hesitate to give the example of an OT priestly washing ritual, stating that it "resembles... in essential particulars" Jesus' NT command. This comment by Kauffman is curious for at least two reasons. First, the OT priestly washings and Jesus' example of foot washing resemble each other only superficially and outwardly. The OT washings were part of a religious temple ceremony designed to remind man of his sin and his need of cleansing before approaching a holy God. Jesus' living parable was taken from daily, non-religious life and designed primarily as a pointed lesson in servant-love.<sup>124</sup> Second, the true counterpart to OT ordinances is not NT ordinances, but Christ. OT ceremonial laws were "a shadow of good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1), things now revealed in Christ's high priestly work.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, Kauffman's conception of ordinances appears to spring as much from English dictionaries and the OT as from the NT teachings of Jesus and the apostles. In fact, it appears that this preformed concept of ordinances colored Kauffman's reading of NT texts about ordinances, as we will see next.

### **The Bible and *Ordinances***

Anabaptists and other Christians have produced many contrasting lists of ordinances; how are we to know which list is correct? What should we teach as ordinances in our churches? In order to

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121 Daniel Kauffman, *Bible Doctrine: A Treatise on the Great Doctrines of the Bible, Pertaining to God, Angels, Satan, the Church, and the Salvation, Duties and Destiny of Man*, ed. Daniel Kauffman (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1914), 352 [334 in digital edition]; available from <<http://books.google.com/ebooks/reader?id=NmkCQ0br9OUC&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA352>>; accessed 19 November 2011; also *Doctrines of the Bible*, 378.

122 Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 150.

123 *Ibid.*, 151.

124 Though a secondary reference to Christ's cleansing work on our behalf is also implied.

125 Kauffman expressed this truth more clearly later: "As for the ordinances under the ceremonial law, they were fulfilled in Christ, who nailed them to the cross. Col. 2:14. The ordinances instituted under the Gospel of Christ are distinct and separate from Old Testament ordinances" (*Doctrines of the Bible*, 378-79).

respond to these questions, we must turn again to the Bible. It is noteworthy that Anabaptists from Menno Simons to Daniel Kauffman produced their lists of ordinances within the context of specific historical conflicts—in response to such threats as Roman Catholic or modernist heresies. Their courageous stands for biblical truth are praiseworthy, yet it is important for us today to test their “battlefield theologies” against the Bible, lest we are guilty of “teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7). Our teachings must be formed not merely by reaction against heresy, but by careful listening to the Word of God itself.

### *The Old Testament*

What does the Bible say about ordinances? In the KJV OT the term *ordinance(s)* is found forty-eight times. It is used to translate six different Hebrew words.<sup>126</sup> In virtually every occurrence the Hebrew words carry the idea of a decree, statute, regulation, obligation, or command. Although the actions which are being decreed are often symbolic in nature (as is much of the OT ceremonial law), never do the Hebrew words themselves carry the idea of “a religious ceremony with a heavenward meaning.”

For example, the Hebrew word most likely to be behind the KJV word *ordinance* is actually usually translated “statute,” and is used in such contexts as “the *statutes* of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel,” “the [vain idolatrous] *customs* of the people,” and “the *ordinances* [fixed order] of the moon” (2 Kings 17:8; Jer. 10:3; 31:35). The Hebrew word which is second-most likely to be behind the KJV *ordinance* is usually translated “judgment,” being used in such contexts as “the ungodly shall not stand in the *judgment*” or “this will be the *manner* of the king that shall reign over you” (Ps. 1:5; 1 Sam. 8:11).

When these Hebrew words appear in the context of OT symbolic, ceremonial rituals such as the Passover, however, the KJV translators sometimes chose to translate them as “ordinance.” This translation choice reinforces to Kauffman's ears and ours the mistaken post-biblical assumption that *ordinance* means “symbolic act.” Nevertheless, in the OT *ordinance* usually means essentially the same thing that it still means today in non-religious contexts, as when we refer to a “city ordinance” regulating parking or some other activity.

### *The New Testament*

In the KJV NT the term *ordinance(s)* is found nine times. These nine occurrences are actually translations of six different Greek words, and they reflect a wide variety of meanings—everything from Mosaic laws (5 times), to God's establishment of civil governments (2 times), to legalistic human regulations (1 time; perhaps based in part on Mosaic laws), to Christian traditions handed down by Paul (1 time).<sup>127</sup> In five of these occurrences, we are specifically told that the ordinance mentioned has been abolished and replaced by new covenant realities.

In only one instance does the word *ordinance* refer to Christian teaching: “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2).

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126 See Appendix 1 for a chart of words translated “ordinance” in the KJV OT.

127 See Appendix 1 for a chart of words translated “ordinance” in the KJV NT.

The context of this verse shows that the word *ordinance* may here refer, in part, to the head covering and the Lord's Supper. Does this verse provide biblical warrant for our conceptual category of ordinances? Careful examination shows that this is highly unlikely. The Greek word here translated "ordinance" (*paradosis*) is used four other times by Paul, always translated as "tradition(s)." Two of those instances closely parallel 1 Corinthians 11:2:

1. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the *traditions* which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). In this verse, the context suggests that "traditions" refers to Paul's prior teaching, including his teaching about the coming of Christ—specifically, that "the man of sin... the son of perdition" (2:3) must first be revealed. "Remember ye not, that, *when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*" (2:5, emphasis added).
2. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the *tradition* which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). In this example, the context shows the meaning even more clearly. Paul continues:

For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for *we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man's bread for nought.* ...For even when we were with you, *this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.* For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. ...And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him. (2 Thess. 3:7-14, emphases added)

Clearly, in this instance "tradition" refers specifically to Paul's example and command of working quietly and orderly to earn our own food.

In Paul's other two uses of this Greek word *paradosis*, the traditions described are negative: "the traditions of my fathers" and "the traditions of men" (Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8). Indeed, in all the remaining times that the NT uses *paradosis*, it refers to traditions wrongly promoted by the Pharisees (Matt. 15:2, 3, 6; Mark 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13).

This examination of Paul's use of *paradosis* clarifies that in 1 Corinthians 11 he is not using "ordinances" to refer to a special category of symbolic Christian ceremonies. Rather, "it is more likely that he refers to his teaching in general"; he is the apostolic channel through which the Corinthians received the traditions (11:23; 15:1-8), and "the traditions can include [both] historical facts related to the gospel story and [also] doctrine drawn from them."<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Paul's concept of *ordinances* is big enough to include ethical behavior such as hard work and even details of eschatology!

### *Summary*

Neither the OT nor the NT uses *ordinance* as a technical word for "a religious ceremony with a heavenly meaning" (Kauffman)—not at the level of the inspired Hebrew and Greek words, nor at

the level of English translations.<sup>129</sup> In the KJV OT, the English word *ordinance* usually simply means "decree, statute" and in the KJV NT, it usually means either "decree, law" or, more basically, "tradition, something passed on." In neither testament does it carry the idea of a symbolic act. *Our modern category of "ordinances" is therefore an extra-biblical, man-made concept.*<sup>130</sup>

It appears, however, that Kauffman did not realize this. In reflecting on 1 Corinthians 11:2 he writes: "This reference on the part of the apostle, to these things [the head-covering and the communion] as ordinances, forever settles the question as to whether the subject under consideration is or is not an ordinance."<sup>131</sup> Kauffman, doubtless with the best of intentions, seems to have simply brought his own definition of *ordinance* to the Bible, then found the English word *ordinance* there and assumed that it matched and buttressed his theology of "ordinances."<sup>132</sup>

### **Proposed Responses: Thinking and Teaching Biblically About "Ordinances"**

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to address three questions that arise from the historical and biblical data we have surveyed. First, is the word *ordinance* a useful word to retain in our preaching and teaching? Second, does it really matter that Mennonites have developed a doctrine of "ordinances" that is not, strictly speaking, biblical? And third, where do we go from here? What should we do with our historical legacy of "ordinances" and with our responsibility to teach God's Word fully and purely?

#### *Can Ordinance Be Redeemed?*

How should conservative Mennonites change in order to reflect historical realities and more carefully honor the biblical use of the term *ordinance*? A tongue-in-cheek response (forgive this foolishness, which has a point) might be to give several options:

- 1) We could keep our traditional list of seven "ordinances" and change our name to "Kauffmanites."
- 2) We could keep the name "Mennonite" and limit our list of "ordinances" to two, the ones specified by Menno Simons.
- 3) We could emphasize the term "Anabaptist" and then either
  - a) limit our "ordinance" list to the two accepted by all early Anabaptists (baptism

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129 This is also true beyond the KJV. For example, the ESV uses the word *ordinance* only once in the NT (to refer to abolished OT laws), the NIV never uses it in the NT, the NLT never uses it in either testament, and even the NKJV uses it in the NT to refer only to OT laws or civil governments, but never to NT commands.

130 From this point on the word *ordinance* will often be put in quotation marks to indicate its questionable status as a conceptual category. (It will remain in italics when the word itself is being discussed.)

131 Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 160.

132 J. S. Coffman appears to have made the same assumptions, given his reference to 1 Corinthians 11:2 at the head of his list of "secondary ordinances." (And surely only assumptions based on historical precedent can explain why Coffman listed communion as a "primary" ordinance but the head veiling as a "secondary" ordinance, despite both being discussed back-to-back in 1 Corinthians 11.) Did Coffman include Hebrews 9:1 ("the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service") at the head of his list of "primary ordinances" (baptism, communion, and footwashing) because that chapter describes how new covenant realities replace the "meats and drinks, and divers washings" of the old covenant (9:10; compare with baptism, communion, and footwashing)?

and the Lord's Supper)<sup>133</sup> or

b) expand it to include all ever mentioned by our forefathers (adding such items as preaching, the ban, crossbearing, suffering, and acts of neighbor love).

Obviously, if we are truly more concerned about biblical truth than about maintaining historical traditions, then changing merely our denominational name or our lists of ordinances will not suffice. I suggest that we should instead change our very use of the term *ordinance*.

Perhaps we could intentionally use *ordinance* in the varied ways the KJV Bible does. For example, we would say such things as "Many Amish have an ordinance [regulation] that members must not drive cars," or "Because of many faithful reminders in the past from parents and Bible school deans, I still find myself observing the ordinance [tradition] of buttoning the top button of my shirt before going to church," or even "My parents abandoned the ordinance [tradition] of praying only silently when gathered as a family, and we enjoy praying aloud."

On the other hand, perhaps these examples demonstrate that the word *ordinance*, like the word *sacrament*, has become so loaded with extra-biblical connotations that it would be more useful to drop it entirely when speaking of spiritual matters. Is there another word that would help us hear the Bible more clearly? What about the simple word *teachings*?

### *Is This Really Important?*

Does it really matter that we have this extra-biblical concept of "ordinances"? Is the discussion in this essay merely a "striv[ing]... about words to no profit," or is it a matter of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:14, 15)? How important is it for pastors and Bible teachers to "rightly divide the word of truth" regarding "ordinances"? Does it really matter if our reading of the Bible is distorted by theological eyeglasses scratched up over centuries of use and misuse?

I suggest that this problem of extra-biblical assumptions about "ordinances" is vitally important, for it has distracted us from clearly hearing God's Word. Any time we don't carefully listen to God's Word, we set ourselves up for a swarm of additional problems. Since one good list deserves another, here is a list of seven secondary problems that have been exacerbated by the concept of a list of seven "ordinances."

Having extra-biblical assumptions about "ordinances":

1. *Encourages selectivity regarding which NT teachings we apply...*
2. *Reinforces an inconsistent approach to interpreting NT commands, in which we do not display a deliberate method of determining which commands are to be obeyed today on a verbatim surface level, and which were directed more uniquely to the original readers...*
3. *Encourages a merely symbolic obedience of the "ordinance" commands...*

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133 This was the approach of J. C. Wenger in his *Introduction to Theology* (1954), "a widely accepted and influential book, [which] returned to the concept of only two full ordinances, baptism and communion" (Krahn and Rempel. "Ordinances," GAMEO).

4. *Fosters distorted assumptions about the church's ability to prescribe specific applications of NT commands...*
5. *Increases our tendency to exercise church discipline primarily for outward, visible sins...*
6. *Contributes unnecessarily to clergy/laity division...*
7. *Invites skepticism of authentically biblical teachings (and churches)...*

Perhaps this (non-comprehensive!) list is sufficient to remind us of the problems that come when we commit ourselves to reading the Bible through extra-biblical theological lenses.

*Conclusion: Teaching “All Things Whatsoever”*

In conclusion, let me suggest that we need to complete the work that our Anabaptist forerunners began—the work of undoing the three historical developments we noted near the beginning of this essay. The Roman Catholic church presented the Anabaptists with a *list of ritualized sacraments*. The Anabaptists correctly rejected the theology of *sacraments* and much of the extra-biblical *ritual*, and usually spent little time creating doctrinal *lists*. Now we need to reject once again the concept of a special *list* which has crept back into Anabaptist doctrine, guard against *sacramental* thinking regarding the “administration of ordinances,” and more fully reject the extra-biblical *rituals* which have always tended to smother simple NT teachings.

The NT contains no list of ritual ceremonies, no special category of teachings that is elevated above other NT teachings by any term such as *sacrament* or *ordinance*. Jesus simply commanded his followers to baptize disciples, “teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20, emphasis added<sup>134</sup>). Thus, in order to speak biblically—that is, with biblical categories—we must do away with our vocabulary and concept of “ordinances.” I propose that we stop teaching about “ordinances,” seven or otherwise, and rather examine and proclaim each of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles as they are given to us in Scripture.

As for the traditional seven “ordinances,” we should remember that the list has only been with us for about 125 years. Then we should address each of them individually, assessing carefully what the Bible actually says about each one. Are we accurately obeying Scriptural commands or merely observing ritualistic ceremonies? God forbid that Christ should say to us, “Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own *ordinances*<sup>135</sup>... making the word of God of none effect through your *ordinances*”(Mark 7:9, 13).

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134 In an ironic twist, it was only after writing this sentence that I read Kauffman's explanation of why he joined the Mennonite Church: “I could not get away from the thought that the unpopular ordinances and restrictions (which most churches either reject or ignore) have a place in the Word of God, and that having yielded myself to Him I cannot do otherwise than to yield myself in full obedience to 'all things whatsoever' our Lord commanded his people to do” (*Fifty Years in the Mennonite Church, 1890-1940* [Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1941], 3; as quoted by Daniel Hertzler in “The Patriarch,” 14). Thus, while I aim to correct aspects of Kauffman's biblical interpretation and some of his conceptual categories, I agree with him on ultimate goals.

135 KJV: “tradition.” The Greek word behind “tradition” in these two verses is *paradosis*—which is the same word that is translated in 1 Corinthians 11:2 (KJV) as “ordinances.”

“With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:2). Perhaps, therefore, it would be fitting to close by humbly borrowing Kauffman's worthy words from the preface of *Bible Doctrines*:

[I] believe that the Bible was given to be studied, to be obeyed, to be profited by; that there are too many Bible doctrines which are too lightly esteemed by the Christ-professing world, and too many “commandments of men” imposed upon humanity as Bible doctrines; that the doctrines herein set forth are the teachings of God's Word, and should be prayerfully studied and willingly put to practical use by all people. It was with these convictions... that the writing of this [essay] was undertaken.<sup>136</sup>

## Appendix 1: Words Translated "Ordinance" in the King James Version

### Old Testament

Hebrew Word (Strong's #; Goodrick/Kohlenberger #)	Number of Occurrences in Old Testament	Number of Times Translated "Ordinance"*	Range of Possible Meanings <small>From Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, ed. William D. Mounce (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006).</small>
<i>huqqâ</i> (S 2708, G/K 2078)	104x	23x	<i>Decree, ordinance, regulation, statute</i>
<i>mišpāt</i> (S 4941; G/K 5477)	425x	11x	<i>Justice, judgment; law, regulation, prescription, specification</i>
<i>hōq</i> (S 2706; G/K 2976)	131x	9x	<i>Decree, statute, prescription, a clear communication of what someone should do; allotment, share, portion, prescribed amount of something</i>
<i>mišmeret</i> (S 4931; G/K 5466)	78x	3x	<i>Responsibility, duty, service; requirement, obligation; guard, watch, what is cared for</i>
<i>yād</i> (S 3027; G/K 3338)	1627x	1x	<i>Hand, by extension: arm, finger; figurative of control, power, strength, direction, care</i>
<i>miswâ</i> (S 4687; G/K 5184)	184x	1x	<i>Command, order, prescription, instruction</i>

\* Number calculated manually using online concordance at [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org).

### New Testament

Greek Word (Strong's #; Goodrick/Kohlenberger #)	Number of Occurrences in New Testament	Number of Times Translated "Ordinance"*	Meaning Where Translated "Ordinance" <small>From Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, ed. William D. Mounce (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006). Fine print adds information about primary definitions, other meanings, or typical usage.</small>
<i>dikaiōma</i> (S 1345, G/K 1468)	10x	3x (Luke 1:6; Hebrews 9:1, 10)	<i>A decree, law, ordinance</i> "Refers to 'regulations, righteous requirements, righteousness,' depending on the context."
<i>dogma</i> (S 1378; G/K 1504)	5x	2x (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14)	<i>A decree, statute, ordinance</i>
<i>dogmatizō</i> (S 1379; G/K 2976)	1x	1x (Col. 2:20)	<i>To decree, prescribe an ordinance; mid. to suffer laws to be imposed on one's self, to submit to, bind one's self by, ordinances</i>
<i>diatagē</i> (S 1296; G/K 1408)	2x	1x (Rom. 13:2)	<i>An injunction, institute, ordinance</i>
<i>ktisis</i> (S 2937; G/K 3232)	19x	1x (1 Peter 2:13)	<i>An institution, ordinance</i>
<i>paradosis</i> (S 3862; G/K 4142)	13x	1x (1 Cor. 11:2)	<i>What is transmitted in the way of teaching, precept, doctrine</i> "Paradosis is something deliberately given or handed down over an extended period of time; thus, 'tradition.'" [Usually used of negative or obsolete man-made traditions (Matt. 15; Mark 7; Gal. 1:14-15; Col. 2:8), but also of Christian traditions (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6).]

\* Number calculated manually using online concordance at [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org).

## Appendix 2: Who Baptizes in the New Testament?

A review of all the verses in the NT (KJV, NASB, and ESV) that include the words *baptize*, *baptized*, *baptizing*, *baptizest*, *baptizeth*, *baptism*, *baptisms*, and *Baptist* shows that:

- John the Baptist is the only person who was known for administering baptisms.
- The only NT command which specifically states who should baptize is the Great Commission—given first to the 11 apostles, but generally understood as a mandate for all disciples of Jesus.
- Besides John the Baptist and Jesus' disciples before Pentecost, the only people who are explicitly described as administering baptisms are Philip and Paul. Philip's baptisms prove that the Great Commission command to baptize was not limited to the apostles. The only time Paul is *explicitly* described as having baptized anyone is 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, where he goes to great pains to emphasize how rarely he baptized, usually leaving that task for non-apostolic helpers.
- In Acts, baptism is usually spoken of in the passive voice—baptism is described as something that someone *receives*, not as something which someone *does* to someone else.
- Rather than emphasizing who does the baptizing, Acts often emphasizes the name in which the baptisms occurred—“the name of Jesus Christ/the Lord Jesus/the Lord” (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16). This matches Paul's concern that if he as a prominent apostle baptized too frequently, people might conclude “that I had baptized in mine own name” (1 Cor. 1:15). If he was known for his clever speech or his baptizing, it would distract from the cross of Christ (1:13, 17). Thus, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1:17).
- Paul's letters likewise describe baptism as occurring “into Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:3), “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), and “with him [Christ]” (Col. 2:12). They occur “by one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13), so there is only “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5). Peter similarly emphasizes that the power of baptism comes “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21), not by the action of the water (or by anything else, surely, such by as the person administering the baptism).
- In summary, one gets the impression that it is not important who does the baptizing—even baptisms administered by people who have false motives (see Phil. 1:15-18) would surely be recognized, if the candidates were truly calling upon the name of Jesus. The believing, repentant condition of *the convert* and the authority of *the name of Jesus* are what make a baptism valid. Ananias's admonition to Paul is a good example of this dual emphasis which downplays the role of the baptizer: “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

### New Testament Baptism Texts\*

<b>Event: Explicitly States Who Did the Baptizing</b> – name of baptizer	<b>Event: Does Not Explicitly State Who Did the Baptizing</b> – name of possible baptizer(s)	<b>Teaching/Command: Explicitly States Who Does the Baptizing</b>	<b>Teaching/Command: Does Not Explicitly State Who Does the Baptizing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt. 3:5-7, 11, 13-16; Mark 1:4-5, 8-9; Luke 3:3, 7, 12, 16, 21 – John the Baptist; see other mentions of John the Baptist: Matt. 3:1; 11:11-12; 14:2, 8; 16:14; 17:13; 21:25; Mark 6:14, 24-25; 8:28; 11:30; Luke 7:20, 28-30, 33; 9:19; 20:4; John 1:25-33; 3:23; 10:40; Acts 1:5,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Matt. 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-38; Luke 12:50 – baptism of Jesus' death)</li> <li>• (Acts 1:5; 11:16 – baptism with the Holy Spirit)</li> <li>• Acts 2:38-41 “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ... They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” – If the 12 apostles did all the baptizing, they each baptized 250 persons that day—at a rate of 2 minutes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matt. 28:19 – Jesus' apostles / all disciples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark 16:16 – “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”</li> <li>• Rom. 6:3 “so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death”</li> <li>• 1 Cor. 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”</li> </ul>

<p>22; 10:37; 13:24; 18:25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33 – Jesus: spiritual baptism)</li> <li>• John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2 – Jesus' disciples (in Jesus' name)</li> <li>• Acts 8:36-38 – Philip</li> <li>• 1 Cor. 1:13-17 “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” – Paul</li> </ul>	<p>per baptism from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. with no breaks!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acts 8:12, 13, 16 “they were baptized... he was baptized... they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” – presumably Philip, since he was the only Christian present</li> <li>• Acts 9:18; 22:16 “he... was baptized” – presumably Ananias, since he had just laid hands on Paul; but, note Paul's account of Ananias's words (“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,” 22:16), which avoid any mention of who will do the baptizing, focusing instead on the decisive roles of Paul and the Lord.</li> <li>• Acts 10:47-48 “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized... And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” – presumably the Jewish believers who came with Peter—brethren from Joppa (10:23, 45)</li> <li>• Acts 16:15 “when she was baptized” – presumably Paul or Luke or another of the missionary band</li> <li>• Acts 16:33 “he... was baptized” – presumably Paul or Silas</li> <li>• Acts 18:8 “many of the Corinthians... were baptized” – presumably Paul, Silas, and Timothy (see 1 Corinthians 1)</li> <li>• Acts 19:3-4 “Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism” – presumably disciples of John the Baptist</li> <li>• Acts 19:5 “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” – presumably Paul, who subsequently laid his hands upon them</li> <li>• (1 Cor. 10:2 – baptism of Israelites “in the cloud and in the sea”)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Cor. 15:29 “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”</li> <li>• Gal. 3:27 “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”</li> <li>• Eph. 4:4-6 “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”</li> <li>• Col. 2:12 “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”</li> <li>• Heb. 6:1-2 “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”</li> <li>• 1 Peter 3:21 “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ....”</li> </ul>
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\* This chart does not include other NT allusions to baptism (e.g. “washing” or “water”) or deductions which could be drawn from narratives in Acts or the epistles about who might have been present in a church at a given time to baptize.

### Appendix 3: Who May Anoint With Oil?

Several observations can be drawn from James 5:13-18:

- A. The instruction to anoint with oil is best understood when we remember it is part of a list of parallel exhortations, which should be interpreted consistently: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church" (James 5:13-14). Thus:
  1. These appear to be *inspired suggestions*, not invariably mandatory: *Must* every afflicted person *always* pray? Every merry person *always* sing? Every sick person *always* call for the elders? (Kauffman writes of anointing, "It comes in the form of a divine suggestion," but then suggests it should be obeyed as if it were a "divine command" [*Doctrines of the Bible*, 424-25].)
  2. These suggestions also appear to be *representative options*, not comprehensive restrictions: Must an afflicted person *only* pray alone, or may he call friends to help pray? Must a merry person *only* sing, or could he perhaps speak a testimony of praise? Must a sick person call *only* elders, or could he sometimes call others to anoint and pray?
- B. James gives greater emphasis to the character qualities of the person praying than to the question of eldership: An effective prayer must be offered in faith (vs. 15), by a righteous person who has confessed his sins (vs. 16). Thus:
  1. It is only natural that James would suggest elders as suitable for anointing and praying, since they a) are of tested character, b) are specially devoted to caring for the flock, and c) are well suited to represent the church in the act of consecrating the sick to God for his special care.
  2. However, we commonly apply verses 15-16 to all praying believers, and there seems to be no exegetical reason for forbidding any faithful believer from being entrusted as necessary to represent the body of Christ in the act of anointing the sick.
- C. The most immediate and crucial qualification is that the anointing be done "in the name of the Lord." This specification is remarkably similar to that given regarding baptism (see Appendix 2). This suggests that, as with baptism, *the believing, repentant condition of the sick person and faith in the authority of the name of Jesus* are the primary factors which make an anointing valid.

To this could be added Douglas J. Moo's conclusions regarding anointing and the gift of healing:

James's attribution of healing power to the prayer of local church ministers stands out in light of Paul's references to a "gift" of healing (1 Cor. 12:9, 28). Were there no "charismatics" who possessed this gift in James's churches? *Is the power to heal confined by James to certain ecclesiastical officeholders?* These questions are difficult to answer and involve us in the larger question of the relationship between "charismatic" and "organized" ministries in the NT. Briefly, however, it would seem that the early churches differed in the extent to which certain gifts were manifest. Indeed, the Corinthian church seems to be something of an exception in the NT, since only here do we read of such gifts as "healings" and "miracles" (contrast Rom. 12: 6-8 and Eph. 4:11). Church organization does not depreciate or ignore gifts, but serves as a mechanism to recognize gifted individuals and channel their ministries for the edification of the body. Elders were those spiritual leaders who were recognized for their maturity in the faith. Therefore, it is natural that they, with their deep and rich experience, should be called on to pray for healing. They should be able to discern the will of the Lord and to pray with the faith that recognizes and receives God's gift of healing. At the same time, James makes clear that the church at large is to pray for healing (v. 16a). Therefore, *while not denying that some in the church may have gifts of healing, James encourages all Christians, and especially those charged with pastoral oversight, to be active in prayer for healing.* (*The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000], 237-38, emphases added.)

Finally, a personal testimony: My wife Zonya and I were both anointed several years after our wedding, since we were unable to conceive a child. For our anointing service (hosted in our home), we invited not only our church elders, one of whom anointed us, but also a group of close friends. Some of them were selected especially because they have demonstrated the gift of intercession, several having seen miraculous answers to prayer. We praise God that he saw fit to give us the gift of conception within the very next month!