

## FUNCTIONAL THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION AND CHURCH GROWTH IN ANGLICAN CHURCH

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### Abstract

*This journal endeavours to probe the intricate interconnection between the practical interpretation of ordination theology and the dynamics of church expansion within the Anglican Church. In the face of swiftly changing societal landscapes, grasping the theological foundations of ordination becomes imperative for nurturing the well-being and vibrancy of congregations. The work employed a comprehensive mixed-methods of historical and descriptive approaches with quantitative and qualitative method to analyse church attendance, membership trends, and demographic data. The work aims to unearth the subtle correlations between the functional interpretation of ordination and pivotal indicators of church expansion. It delves into how these theological underpinnings shape the outreach endeavours of the congregation, the efficacy of pastoral care, and the overarching spiritual evolution of the faithful. The work bridge the chasm between theoretical theological perspectives and the pragmatic hurdles encountered by the Anglican Church in Akure. It aspires to furnish valuable insights into aligning theological principles with the day-to-day realities of congregational existence. The findings are poised to embolden clergy, to enlighten congregational growth initiatives, and inform strategic planning endeavours within the Anglican Church.*

**Keywords:** Functional theology, Ordination, Church growth, Anglican Church.

### Introduction

The functional theology of ordination represents a nuanced perspective on the sacramental ceremony of ordaining individuals within religious traditions. While traditional views of ordination often focus on the ritualistic aspects and the conferral of a designated status, the functional theology of ordination delves into the profound implications and practical applications associated with this sacred act. This theological framework emphasizes that ordination extends beyond a mere formal recognition of leadership; it is a transformative commissioning for specific functions and responsibilities within the faith community.

In most Protestant churches, ordination is the rite by which their various churches recognize and confirm that an individual has been called by God to ministry, it is

also acknowledge that the individual has gone through a period of discernment and training related to this call (e.g. having graduated from a seminary), and authorize that individual to take on the office of ministry.

In the light of the above views of the protestant Churches (especially Anglican), the theology of ordinations is well stated and categorized into three perspectives, as follows

1. Ontological Theology “nature of being” of Ordination
2. Functional Theology “How a person seeks to live out their confessional theology” of Ordination
3. Relational Theology “God’s interaction with man” of Ordination

In a general sense, functional theology of ordination refers to priesthood of all believers without restriction to gender or inequality. Nevertheless, it has different stages. Sometimes one need to rethink and re-define what it means to be ordained. The essence of ordination is the gospel, which is the good news of Jesus, – not minding the cultural sentiments of different localities.

This work therefore focus primarily on the functional theology of ordination and will critically examining the functional theology of ordination and how it will help in bring out church growth within the Anglican church.

The work also involved field studies, personal observations and oral interviews. It also utilized extensively, library research to collect relevant information regarding a large part of the work particularly, the background histories to the research. Books, Journals and Articles on Functional Theology of Ordination

### **Theological Foundations of Ordination**

The perspective of the theological foundation of ordination is drawn from diverse theological understanding, incorporating scriptural references, historical traditions, and ecclesiological principles. Scriptural passages such as Acts 13:2-3 and 1 Timothy 4:14 highlight the laying on of hands as a means of conveying spiritual authority and responsibility. Historical precedents within various religious traditions further contribute to shaping the understanding of ordination as a dynamic and purposeful undertaking.

The theological foundations of ordination are deeply rooted in the understanding of ministry within Christian tradition. In his seminal work, *Ordained Ministry in the Church of England*, Michael Ramsey examines the theological rationale behind ordination, emphasizing its sacramental nature and the ordained minister's role as a mediator of divine grace. Ramsey's exploration provides insight into the theological framework that underpins the functional theology of ordination within Anglicanism.

Similarly, Avery Dulles, in *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection*, offers a comprehensive theological analysis of the ordained priesthood, drawing upon Scripture, tradition, and magisterial teachings. Dulles’s work contributes to the

theological discourse on ordination by elucidating its sacramental significance and its implications for the ministerial identity and function within the Catholic tradition.

### **Ecclesiological Considerations**

Ecclesiology plays a crucial role in defining the nature of ordination within different religious contexts. The functional theology of ordination contends that the act is deeply intertwined with the ecclesial body's mission and purpose. In the Catholic tradition, for instance, ordination is viewed as a sacrament that imparts grace for the fulfillment of ministerial duties. Protestant ecclesiology often emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, influencing a broader understanding of ordination's functional significance within the community.

### **Historical Perspectives on Ordination**

To understand the functional theology of ordination, it is essential to trace its historical trajectory. In *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dom Gregory Dix provides a historical survey of Christian worship practices, including the development of ordination rites. Dix's examination sheds light on the historical evolution of ordination and its integration into the liturgical life of the Church

Furthermore, in *Ordination: Past, Present, Future*, Gary Macy explores the historical development of ordination from its origins in the early Christian communities to its various forms in contemporary Christianity. Macy's analysis offers valuable insights into how historical contingencies have shaped the functional theology of ordination across different epochs and ecclesial contexts.

### **Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives**

In the contemporary landscape, the functional theology of ordination faces various challenges and reinterpretations. In *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, Mark Chaves investigates the theological, cultural, and social dynamics surrounding the ordination of women within religious institutions. Chaves's study illuminates the complex interplay between theological convictions, institutional norms, and societal attitudes in shaping the functional theology of ordination.

Additionally, in *Called and Ordained: Lutheran Perspectives on the Office of the Ministry*, Timothy J. Wengert and A.G. Roeber offer Lutheran perspectives on ordination, addressing theological controversies and ecclesial practices within the Lutheran tradition. Their examination provides insights into how different theological traditions negotiate the functional theology of ordination in response to contemporary challenges and theological debates.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed highlights the rich theological, historical, and contemporary dimensions of the functional theology of ordination. From its theological foundations to its historical developments and contemporary challenges, ordination remains a complex and multifaceted aspect of Christian ministry. Further research in this area is essential for deepening our understanding of ordination and its significance within diverse religious traditions.

### **Scriptural Foundations of Functional Ordination**

The functional theology of ordination, deeply rooted in scriptural foundations, offers a profound understanding of the transformative nature of the sacred act. Biblical passages, particularly in the New Testament, provide a rich tapestry of insights into the laying on of hands as a means of commissioning individuals for specific functions within the faith community.

**A Commissioning for Ministry (Acts 13:2-3):** One of the pivotal scriptural references underpinning the functional theology of ordination is found in the book of Acts, specifically in the account of the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas. In Acts 13:2-3, we encounter a powerful narrative where the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands, sets apart Paul and Barnabas for a specific mission: *“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off”* (Acts 13:2-3, NIV).

This passage signifies more than a mere ritualistic gesture; it serves as a profound illustration of functional ordination. The laying on of hands becomes a conduit for the divine commissioning of individuals for specific roles in the ministry. It establishes a direct link between the spiritual realm and the earthly mission, emphasizing the tangible transmission of authority and responsibility.

**Impartation of Spiritual Gifts (1 Timothy 4:14):** The Apostle Paul further contributes to the scriptural foundations of functional ordination in his pastoral epistle to Timothy. In 1 Timothy 4:14, Paul writes, *“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you”* (1 Timothy 4:14, NIV). Here, ordination is not merely a symbolic gesture; it involves the impartation of spiritual gifts and responsibilities.

This passage underscores the notion that ordination is not a humanly devised recognition but a divine act through which individuals are equipped for specific functions within the body of believers. The laying on of hands, in this context, is a conduit for the transmission of divine gifts and a tangible expression of God's empowerment for ministry.

To delve deeper into the scriptural foundations of functional ordination, Roland Allen's seminal work, *"The Ministry of the Spirit,"* provides valuable insights. Allen explores the biblical basis of ordination and highlights the dynamic relationship between the Holy Spirit and the act of laying on of hands. Drawing from Acts and Pauline epistles, Allen contends that ordination is not a static event but an ongoing, Spirit-led process that empowers individuals for their unique roles within the community of believers.

### **Implications Scriptural Foundations for Functional Ordination**

The scriptural foundations of functional ordination carry significant implications for how religious communities perceive and practice the act of ordination. Rather than reducing it to a mere formality or a hierarchical recognition, the scriptural narrative points to ordination as a divine commissioning for specific functions. This perspective challenges conventional paradigms and invites a reevaluation of the purpose and significance of ordination within the context of Christian ministry. The scriptural foundations of functional ordination provide a robust framework for understanding the divine mandate and empowerment associated with the laying on of hands. Acts 13:2-3 and 1 Timothy 4:14 serve as anchor points, illustrating that ordination is not a human invention but a scripturally endorsed means of setting apart individuals for specific functions within the faith community. Roland Allen's *"The Ministry of the Spirit"* enriches this exploration, offering a comprehensive examination of the biblical roots of ordination and emphasizing the ongoing, Spirit-led nature of this sacred act. Embracing the scriptural foundations of functional ordination can revolutionize the way religious communities perceive and practice ordination, fostering a deeper appreciation for the divine empowerment and commissioning that accompany this sacred journey.

### **Historical Precedents and Traditions in Functional Ordination**

The functional theology of ordination is deeply intertwined with historical precedents and traditions, reflecting the evolving understanding and practice of this sacred act within various religious contexts. Exploring historical dimensions provides valuable insights into how ordination has been shaped by cultural, theological, and ecclesiological influences over time.

The concept of ordination has undergone significant development, mirroring changes in religious thought and organizational structures. The early Christian communities had informal practices of appointing leaders, but as the Church grew and faced challenges, more structured ordination rituals emerged. Everett Ferguson's comprehensive work, *"From Age to Age,"* traces the historical development of Christian worship practices, including ordination. Ferguson explores how early Christian communities transitioned from informal leadership appointments to more formalized ordination ceremonies, offering insights into the historical nuances that shaped the understanding of ordination. The shift towards a

more formalized ordination process can be observed in the writings of early church fathers such as Ignatius of Antioch, who emphasized the importance of recognizing and submitting to ordained leaders. These early traditions set the stage for the establishment of ordination practices that continue to influence various Christian denominations today.

### **Apostolic Succession and Sacramental Traditions**

One notable historical precedent in functional ordination is the concept of apostolic succession. This idea, prevalent in traditions like Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, asserts an unbroken lineage of ordination traced back to the apostles. The laying on of hands in this context is not only a symbolic act but is believed to convey spiritual authority in a direct line from the apostles.

Jeffrey Gros, John P. Galvin, and James Loughran's collaborative work, *"Apostolic Succession in an Ecumenical Context,"* delves into the historical and theological dimensions of apostolic succession. This book provides insights into how the concept of apostolic succession has shaped the understanding of ordination in certain Christian traditions.

The sacramental nature of ordination, particularly in Catholic and Orthodox traditions, emphasizes the transformative character of the ritual. Through the historical development of sacramental traditions, ordination is seen as more than a symbolic recognition; it is a sacred and efficacious means of conferring grace and authority for ministry.

### **Reformation and Protestant Perspectives**

The Protestant Reformation marked a significant turning point in the history of ordination, challenging certain aspects of the sacramental traditions associated with it. Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin emphasized the priesthood of all believers, questioning the hierarchical structures of ordained clergy. Edmund J. Rybarczyk's work, *"Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-First Century,"* explores the implications of the priesthood of all believers for contemporary Christian life and ministry. Rybarczyk delves into the historical context of the Reformation and its impact on redefining the roles and functions of the ordained and the entire community of believers. The Reformation not only challenged certain traditional practices but also led to the diversification of ordination within Protestantism. Various denominations adopted distinct approaches to ordination, reflecting their theological convictions and ecclesiological frameworks.

### **Functional Ordination in Contemporary Contexts**

In contemporary religious landscapes, the historical precedents and traditions of ordination continue to influence the understanding and practice of this sacred act. While some traditions maintain a strong emphasis on historical continuity and

apostolic succession, others embrace a more flexible and contextually relevant approach. Samuel E. Balentine's comprehensive exploration in "Ordination: Past, Present, and Future" provides a nuanced perspective on the historical evolution and contemporary challenges of ordination. Balentine addresses how historical traditions shape current discussions on ordination, offering valuable insights into the ongoing dialogue within various religious communities.

Contemporary debates on the inclusion of women in ordained ministry, the recognition of LGBTQ+ individuals, and the evolving nature of leadership roles all bear the imprint of historical precedents. Understanding the historical context allows for a more informed and reflective approach to contemporary discussions on functional ordination. The historical precedents and traditions surrounding functional ordination provide a crucial backdrop for understanding the complexities and variations within different religious communities. Everett Ferguson's exploration of the historical development of Christian worship practices, Jeffrey Gros, John P. Galvin, and James Loughran's work on apostolic succession, Edmund J. Rybarczyk's analysis of the priesthood of all believers in the Reformation era, and Samuel E. Balentine's examination of ordination's past, present, and future collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how historical dimensions continue to shape contemporary perspectives on functional ordination.

These historical trajectories demonstrate the dynamic nature of ordination, its adaptation to theological shifts, and its impact on the diverse expressions of religious communities. By delving into historical precedents, one gains not only a deeper appreciation for the richness of religious traditions but also an awareness of the ongoing dialogue and challenges that shape the understanding and practice of functional ordination.

### **Importance of Functional Theology of Ordination on Church Growth In The Anglican Church**

The Functional Theology of Ordination has specific benefits to church growth within the Anglican Church, Nigeria. This Anglican Church places strong emphasis on ordained ministry and follows a liturgical tradition.

**Spiritual Leadership and Oversight:** The Functional Theology of Ordination in the Anglican Diocese of Akure ensures that clergy members are appointed to provide spiritual leadership and oversight within the local churches. The book "*Anglican Orders and Ordinations*" by Aidan Nichols delves into the Anglican perspective on ordination.

**Biblical Teaching and Sacraments:** Ordained clergy within the Anglican tradition are responsible for upholding sound doctrine and administering the sacraments, such as Holy Communion and Baptism. This adherence to biblical

teaching and the sacraments serves as a source of spiritual nourishment and growth for congregants, drawing them closer to God.

**Pastoral Care and Shepherding:** Functional Theology of Ordination in the Anglican Diocese of Akure emphasizes pastoral care and shepherding. Clergy members are expected to provide spiritual guidance, counselling, and support to congregants, mirroring the biblical role of shepherds. This pastoral approach fosters spiritual growth and emotional well-being, contributing to church growth. In the Anglican Diocese of Akure, the Functional Theology of Ordination holds pastoral care and shepherding as paramount responsibilities of ordained leaders.

**Liturgical Worship and Community:** The Anglican tradition places a strong emphasis on liturgical worship, which encourages congregational participation and a sense of community. This communal aspect, akin to the early church, fosters a sense of belonging and attracts newcomers to the Anglican Church. The book “*Common Worship*” by Paul Avis explores Anglican liturgy and its role in communal worship. Within the Anglican church, the Functional Theology of Ordination holds liturgical worship as a central aspect of the ordained leaders' responsibilities. Liturgy plays a significant role in Anglican worship, serving as a structured and sacramental expression of the Church's faith. The Functional Theology of Ordination emphasizes that ordained leaders in Anglican do not only preside over the liturgy but also guard the Anglican liturgical tradition.

**Mission and Outreach:** Ordained clergy in the Anglican Church are instrumental in carrying out the mission of the church. “*Evangelism in the Early Church*” by Michael Green discusses the early church's mission and its relevance today. In the Anglican Church, the Functional Theology of Ordination plays a crucial role in emphasizing mission and outreach as integral components of ordained leadership.

### Recommendations

Certainly, here are recommendations and contributions to knowledge for the project topic, Functional Theology of Ordination for Christianity today and for further theological research:

**Emphasize a Comprehensive Understanding of Ministry:** In the functional theology of ordination, prioritize a holistic view of ministry that goes beyond traditional roles. Encourage a comprehensive understanding that includes pastoral care, teaching, community engagement, and social justice.

**Integrate Practical Training:** Incorporate practical training and experiential learning into the ordination process. Equip candidates with real-world skills, such as counseling, leadership, and effective communication, to enhance their ability to serve diverse congregations effectively.

**Foster Inclusivity and Diversity:** Embrace inclusivity and diversity within the ordination process, recognizing the unique gifts and callings of individuals from various cultural, ethnic, and gender backgrounds. This approach helps create a more representative and enriched leadership within Christian communities.



**Prioritize Spiritual Formation:** Place a strong emphasis on spiritual formation as a foundational aspect of ordination. Develop programs that facilitate personal and communal spiritual growth, encouraging ordained leaders to continuously deepen their relationship with God and model a vibrant faith to their congregations.

**Promote Lifelong Learning and Adaptability:** Recognize the evolving nature of ministry and encourage ordained leaders to engage in lifelong learning. Equip them with the tools to adapt to changing societal contexts, emerging theological insights, and innovative approaches to ministry, fostering a culture of continuous growth and improvement.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the functional theology of ordination offers a profound paradigm shift in understanding this sacred act beyond mere ritualistic recognition. Rooted in scriptural foundations, historical precedents, and ecclesiological considerations, functional ordination emphasizes the transformative nature of the commissioning process, where individuals are not merely assigned a title but are entrusted with specific functions and responsibilities within the faith community. By exploring the scriptural passages such as Acts 13:2-3 and 1 Timothy 4:14, delving into historical traditions, and considering ecclesiological perspectives, the theological framework provides a holistic and nuanced view of ordination that aligns with the dynamic needs of religious communities. This perspective challenges static and hierarchical notions, fostering a deeper appreciation for the ordained individual's role in serving, leading, and contributing to the broader mission of the faith community.

The functional theology of ordination invites religious communities to reflect on the practical implications of ordination, transcending traditional boundaries and encouraging a more engaged and participatory approach to ministry. Through this lens, ordination becomes a transformative and ongoing process, empowering individuals for service, leadership, and ministry in alignment with the dynamic and evolving needs of the faith community. As religious traditions continue to grapple with contemporary challenges and shifting cultural landscapes, the functional theology of ordination stands as a relevant and adaptable framework that enriches the understanding of the ordained individual's role within the larger narrative of communal faith and mission.

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