

The Doctrine of the Call

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The Doctrine of the Call

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Conclusion:

Preserve this doctrine among us, Lord.

Twenty-seven years ago this fall I was lying deathly ill in a hospital bed, having undergone emergency, life-saving surgery. It was the same night the former Milwaukee Braves beat the New York Yankees in the world series to become the champions of baseball. Fears and concerns regarding my call were disturbing me in those critical, post-operative hours and over the long days and weeks that followed. Would I be physically able henceforth to endure the rigors of my calling? Would my future ministry be hampered by what at that time appeared to be a physical handicap? Would it be better for me, as well as for the congregation to which I had been called, to submit a letter of resignation? Should I perhaps inform the president of the district that I was ready to be called elsewhere? Would my congregation have the patience to endure my six-month absence? Would the programs of my parish collapse without my leadership? These thoughts were unburdened before my father, who by divine will just happened to be my assistant in that calling and my pastor, ministering to my spiritual needs. There was great need for reassurance and encouragement.

Naturally, I felt that the expression of my concerns would have my father's kind and sympathetic ear. To my deep amazement in that moment of weakness, both physical and emotional and even spiritual, my father answered in a way which at the time seemed anything but kind. My concerns didn't draw much sympathy from him. In no uncertain terms he even reprimanded me. He wanted me to dismiss these unnecessary fears. He hoped to alleviate those concerns. He said, "Don't you know that you are where you are by God's good and gracious will? If you need to be called to a place with lighter responsibilities and less rigorous demands, don't you think His Holy Spirit knows where you live? Don't you know that, if it is His will that you be moved, the Lord of the church can so direct men to bring it about?"

Now whether or not there were valid reasons under those circumstances for resignation from that call is not the point at this moment. Obviously, my father told me what I needed to be told. He was dealing with me in paternal and Christian love. He was trying to give me some comfort and reassurance that are inherent in the doctrine of the call. He was trying to calm my fears and remove my concerns.

The very nature of our calling invites resistance by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Such resistance often sows the seeds of depression. When we meet that resistance and experience those moments of discouragement, how well that we be energized and encouraged and enthused again for the work of the kingdom by the doctrine of the call.

Congregations also have reassurance in this doctrine, which assures them that their pastors and teachers are servants of God called according to His will and by His direction into their midst. Even though they may have some weaknesses together with their strengths, His called servants are His co-workers, His special gifts to the church.

The doctrine of the call affords comfort and reassurance and encouragement both to the called and to those who call in the Lord's name. We hope to derive such benefits anew as we consider this Scripture based doctrine,

The Doctrine of the Call

We shall focus attention on five aspects of this doctrine:

- I. What our calling is,
- II. By whom we are called,
- III. What makes us eligible for calling,
- IV. How our calling is conferred, and
- V. How our calling may be terminated.

I. What Our Calling Is

What is our calling? The answer is offered by the Lord through the Apostle Paul in II Corinthians 5:18-21:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God.

We are called as ambassadors for Christ to the ministry of reconciliation. That reconciliation with God was accomplished through the redemptive work of Christ. We who knew no peace as a result of sin have peace with God because He made His Son to be sin for us. Our glorious calling is to declare that peace with God in Christ to the world—to men, women, and children everywhere, to a world that needs it desperately. It has been estimated that of the four billion people in the world two thirds to three fourths of them, that is, 2.6 to 3 billion people do not know and enjoy God's peace in Christ.

As His ambassadors we are to administer the keys of heaven, which He has given to His church. The keys have been given to all who in faith acknowledge with Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). It was in answer to Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15) that Peter made that confession. Then Jesus said to His disciples:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19).

Christ's disciples, believers, have been given authority to use these keys of heaven.

The purpose of a key is two-fold, both to open and to lock. The keys of heaven serve this dual purpose—they open and they lock heaven. As these keys are administered by divine authority, they do not fulfill the purpose indiscriminately or according to the whims of those who administer them. The keys open heaven to the penitent, since the sins which close the door to heaven are not imputed to those in Christ, and, on the other hand, the keys lock heaven to those who reject Christ in impenitence and unbelief.

The call to use these keys which open and close heaven is the "peculiar authority" given by God to believers, that is, to His church. The commission to use the keys is stated in Matthew 28:18-20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."

This privilege is given by Christ to all Christians. It is given to no one else. It is not given to government. Every Christian is called to proclaim Him and to be a witness to Him wherever he may be in the world. All Christians are ambassadors for Christ.

But this authority is administered according to the will of God publicly only by called servants. The key word here is "public." God has ordained that "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (I Corinthians 14:40). If every Christian considered himself a public servant of the Word authorized to preach and teach and to administer the sacraments publicly, there would be confusion and disorder. To avoid confusion and to maintain order in His Church, God has ordained the public ministry. To that public ministry we are called. "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God" (I Corinthians 4:1). It is the ministry of the public preaching and teaching of the Word and the public administration of the sacraments in the church. It is the ministry which affords me the wonderful privilege of publicly proclaiming peace and pronouncing the absolution,

I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Incidentally, in my pronouncement of the absolution I have made it a practice to drop the words “and ordained.” They add nothing and can even be confusing, as though the rite of ordination gave the minister some special power.

The public ministry may be carried on in different ways. Various roles in the public ministry are outlined in Ephesians 4:11-12:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

While the essence of the call remains the same, as we shall see later, and while the basic purpose of all these roles is the same, namely, the work of the ministry, preparing God's people for works of service, the edifying or the building up of the body of Christ, yet not all ministerial calls impose the same responsibility. For example, the calling of the pastor and of the assistant or associate pastor are in essence the same. Both work toward the same basic purpose. And yet there may be different responsibilities given to each. And so there will be different responsibilities given to pastors, teachers, professors, executive secretaries, district presidents, the president of the Synod. There are differences in the scope of these calls, even though all serve in the building up the body of Christ. Many different offices may be established in the church, even as various offices were established in the church at Jerusalem for carrying out the total program of the Gospel proclamation. As long as the offices are involved directly or indirectly with the Means of Grace in building the body of Christ, they are the public ministry.

Sometimes the differences in the scope of the call give rise to petty jealousies, jealousies between pastors and their associates, between pastors and principals and teachers, between presidents and professors, between male and female teachers. Their callings are one in essence, to be sure, but the scope of their callings and their responsibilities may vary greatly. And these differences may be reflected in salaries and benefits and other ways. But why should there be jealousy when more is required of one than another? Isn't the laborer worthy of his hire? Doesn't the bank president receive more in benefits, even honor, than the teller? Isn't more required of the pastor than of the first grade teacher? Indeed they both are called, but the scope of the respective callings is quite different. If both rejoice in their blessed privilege as co-workers in God's kingdom work, in building the body of Christ, there will be no room for pride and arrogance on the one hand or inferiority complexes or jealousies on the other hand.

Surely the word of the Lord given through the Apostle Paul regarding various roles in ministry should also effectively dispose of the idea that only local pastors have a divine call and that other church officials in the congregation or the Synod have divine calls only insofar as they perform some spiritual work as helpers to pastors of local congregations—as advocated by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod position on church and ministry. Viewing the Ephesians 4 passage as it applies to the divinity of the teachers' calls, Prof. Max Lehninger, describing in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly (Vol. XLVII, No. 1, p. 105) the development of the doctrinal position of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, asked, “By what right can we vindicate the divine call of the local pastor and deny it to the teacher who labors in the Word and doctrine?” And in this same article, which underscores many of the blessings of our Synod today, Lehninger applied this truth also to those who labor and serve in synodical offices.

The public ministry, whatever its role in building the body of Christ, has been instituted by God and has the validity which God gives it when He says:

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven: if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven” (John 20:22-23).

Because the Ministry of the Keys administered by men bears the validity of heaven, they who call ministers of the Word are urged to

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep ,catch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17).

The validity of the Gospel ministry is borne out further by the Lord Himself when He says,

“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me: but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16).

That’s true as the Word is proclaimed from the pulpit, or in the classroom, or wherever.

What, then, is our calling? Ours is not a contract which can be easily negotiated or initiated or ended at will. When either they who call or they who are called treat the call as a contract, the call is despised and denigrated. Our calling is a blessed privilege which is of divine origin. God’s authority is behind it. He instituted the office of the ministry. The means which are used publicly in His ministry, the Word and the sacraments, are of God. The effectiveness of this ministry also is of God, for He says,

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Thus the effectiveness of our ministry and the blessings which may flow from it also are of God. They are not of men. Men can only stand in the way. The power is of God, as St. Paul so effectively states: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).* There is the dynamite that crushes hard hearts stone.

What a privilege that God should use frail human beings, who are but dust and who will return unto dust, who are vessels of clay pouring out His love, to open heaven, to pronounce His divine absolution, to minister to men in their greatest need, and to proclaim and teach His precious Gospel. Indeed, this is a calling that should be cherished and treasured both by those who are called and by those who call.

There will be problems—many of them; there will be frustrations—frequently; there will be resistance—much of it; and there may be reverses—more than we care for, but all these things, too, the Lord of the church will use for good, to accomplish His purpose.

II. By Whom We Are Called

The privilege which we enjoy in exercising authority to use the Ministry of the Keys is heightened when one considers further from whom this privilege comes and by whom it is bestowed. As we consider the doctrine of the call we note secondly by whom we are called. Particular emphasis will be given in this section to the so-called divinity of the call.

The ministers of Christ are not self-appointed. They don’t just take this honor on themselves. A fundamental principle with respect to the call is the necessity of it. The Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, underscores this necessity of the call:

No one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called (Triglotta, p. 49).

Luther testified to this necessity of a call, stating, “I dare not preach without a call” (Luther’s Works, Vol. XXIII, p. 227). To have a call without God’s Word is not enough, and to have God’s Word without a call is not enough. The call is essential for the ministry, and without it there can be no public ministry.

By what authority can one assume responsibility for the public ministry except that authority be given him? By whom is the calling done? The Scriptures indicate that the Lord once called His servants immediately, that is, directly. They were called through no one else, through no agency, without any intervening aid of men. Moses was called in this way, as were also Noah, Abraham, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the prophets and the evangelists, Paul, and others. Theirs were calls which came directly from God. They were divine calls. But church history indicates that God no longer calls in this way today. He could; His power and authority are never limited. But history indicates that immediate calls should no longer be expected or awaited. Dr. Theodore Mueller quotes Hollaz on this matter (Christian Dogmatics, p. 571), stating that immediate calls are not to be expected in the church today. Rather, God calls through men, through congregations, through groups of congregations, through representatives of the church, through boards or commissions, through an assignment committee, through an agency of the church. Again, their right to do so stems from the privileges that Christians have in the use of the keys.

The right to call is one which God has given to the church. The Smalcald Articles (Of the Power and Primacy of the Pope, 67-69) state:

Wherever the church is, there is the authority to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers. And this authority is a gift which in reality is given to the church. Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists.

A call is a valid call—*vocatio rata*—when it is implemented by those who have the right to call. God has commissioned His church to use the Means of Grace. Only those who have the Means of Grace can function as the Christian church, as the saints of God. The saints function through a visible body of confessing Christians. Wherever the Means are used, there believers will be found. There, then, there will be confessing Christians, even if only two or three in number, and they have the divine right to call one publicly to administer their authority to use the keys. The right to exercise the authority of the invisible church exists wherever a group of representatives, two or more, of the invisible church are gathered together.

While God works through men and now calls His servants mediately, yet God uses Christians to call those whom He has chosen.

Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

That’s why Paul could write to the Ephesians:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

Though God’s called servants are elected by men, they are ambassadors for Christ. Though Barnabas and Saul were sent out by men, they were called to their mission work by the direction of the Spirit. That direction is evident in the following account.

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 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. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper (Acts 13:1-5).

To summarize, then, the call is divine because it is given by authority of those whom God has given the divine right to exercise the Keys. The call is divine because the Lord of the church directs that calling through His Spirit to those whom He chooses. God is its author, and He confirms those whom He calls by His gracious promises, i.e., "*Surely I will be with you always*" (Matthew 28:20).

The call, then, may be defined as the election of a certain and suitable person to the ministry of the church, with the right to teach the Word in public, to administer the sacraments, and to exercise ecclesiastical discipline, issued by God either alone or by the intervening of men. This is the definition presented by Dr. Mueller in *Christian Dogmatics*, page 670. And it is this divine call and the acceptance of the same which makes ministers of men.

While all Christian ministers who are duly called are "fellow elders" of the blessed apostles, 2 John 1, 3 John 1, I Cor. 3:5-9 (Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.), they are elders and bishops (ministers, pastors) not through any "apostolic succession" nor through any "self-propagation of the clerical estate," but solely by virtue of the call which they have received from their church. In other words, it is alone the divine call extended to them mediately... that makes them "fellow-elders" of the apostles (Mueller, p. 574).

As noted at the outset, the doctrine of the divinity of the call is of real practical value both for those who are called and for those calling. Since his calling is of God, the holder of that call will not be concerned about his own image but will seek rather to glorify God. With the confidence that he is called of God, he can be joyful in spite of difficulties, that is, difficulties that do not rise as a result of his own incompetence. He can be strong when obstacles are placed in his way, that is, obstacles that are not instigated by his own obstinacy. He can be courageous when he knows his cause is the Lord's. He will be diligent and faithful, knowing his work is the Lord's.

In this divinity of the call there is practical value also for the calling body. Recognizing that they who use the authority of the Keys are servants of God who are called by Him, they who call will diligently hear those whom they have called. They will follow them and accept them. Congregations will accept their pastors and teachers as men and women of God. They will hear them as God's mouthpieces. They will strengthen them in their work. They will not impede their work by setting obstacles in the way. And, surely, they will not run after or covet the pastors and teaches of others.

Just because God uses men in the calling procedure and just because men are sinful, there will be abuses in the calling by which men can easily be deprived of the comfort and the reassurance that are inherent in the doctrine of the call.

Certain procedures are followed in the calling process which are not divinely established. Such procedures are followed for good order and in the interest of brotherly love. It is an abuse when there is a disregard for such order and brotherly love. All kinds of examples could be offered, but you're well aware of them. It is an abuse when calls are issued on a temporary basis as a trial period before a permanent call is

extended. There may be temporary calls by their very nature, such as tutor calls, vicar calls, calls to serve as vacancy pastors, or emergency teachers, calls to supply in time of illness, and such calls also are divine for the very reasons that regular calls are divine. They may be limited in time and restricted to specific work. A call may be temporary when the factor of human arbitrariness is not present, and it may be temporary by the very nature of the work. But when a call is issued on a temporary basis for no other reason than to serve as a trial period, it could be an abuse.

Another abuse sometimes seen in the calling process is the disregard for the advice of elected officials. By our human arrangement, district presidents are elected to oversee doctrine and practice in their respective geographical districts. In their role as district presidents they are given the responsibility of proposing lists of candidates from which congregations elect their ministers. I believe all of our district presidents are receptive candidates who might be proposed from within the congregation. Good order would require, however, that the nominees to be presented from the floor be cleared through the president's office, preferably prior to the meeting. This procedure enables the president to do some research on the candidate proposed and his abilities to meet the needs of that particular calling. While these officials are not infallible, yet by our arrangement they often are in a position to know not only the candidates but also the qualifications of the candidates for the particular positions. They are ill advised who do not seek or ever follow advice.

There seems to be a growing concern in congregations and other calling agencies that more information be provided regarding the capabilities of the proposed nominees for a particular calling. Some calling bodies would like to know more about the candidates than their name and age, size of family, and previous experience. This writer sees no abuse nor any violation of brotherly love in the desire to be more informed about candidates. A well-informed vote just as well as a non-informed Vote can be used by the Lord to bring about His will. Our synodical schools sometimes receive nominations for professorships without further pertinent information. The following resolution was adopted by the Commission on Higher Education to meet this problem.

- WHEREAS our synodical schools call candidates from lists of nominees submitted by the constituency of the Synod; and
- WHEREAS it is necessary that the boards of control be provided with pertinent information on the nominees to assist them in their calling of candidates; and
- WHEREAS it has become the practice of our schools, with the exception of WLS, to augment the information which is volunteered by the Synod's membership by means of questionnaires; and
- WHEREAS questions have been raised regarding the lack of uniformity of the questionnaires and the manner in which they have been used; and
- WHEREAS the Conference of Presidents has suggested that the CHE consider developing a uniform questionnaire for this purpose and more uniformity in its use; therefore be it
- Resolved* a) That we prepare a questionnaire for common use in soliciting pertinent information on nominees for professorships at our schools; and be it further
- Resolved* b) That this questionnaire be brief and easy to complete.

Another abuse of the divinity of the call relay he perpetrated by so-called self-appointed advisers, people who have not been elected to offer advice but always feel free to do so.

Perhaps a not-so-common abuse among us, although frequently seen in many other church bodies, is the practice of sermon testing. In the case of teachers, it could be testing of musical abilities. If only that phase of the ministry is tested, a congregation should not be disappointed when gifts for other phases of the ministry are found wanting.

Further abuses of orderly calling procedures are seen in submitting applications or in offering of one's self for particular calls. All of these abuses that have been cited may lead to disastrous results.

If we believe that it is God who grants the divine right to call, if we believe that He directs the calling procedures and even uses the abuses of men to bring about His will, then we know that we are where we are by the will of God and that we are doing what we are doing by His direction. That assurance should make the

pastures beyond our fences less green and should fill us with zeal to go about our work. rather His work, with vigor and zeal.

When we are conscious of the high privilege which is given to ministers of Christ, when we are reminded that this privilege is given to them by the will and the direction of God, then we are overwhelmed by our own unworthiness and we ask: Who is sufficient for these things? Who is eligible for such a high calling?

III. What Makes Us Eligible for Calling

What are the qualifications which God sets forth in His Word for those whom He would have serve in His ministry?

The first requisite is faithfulness.

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful (I Corinthians 4:1-2).

As stewards of the mysteries of God, God's ministers are to cling faithfully to the Word, recognizing that it is the inspired, inerrant Word of God. On the basis of that unchangeable Word faithful ministers of God will assume a sound confessional stance.

Faithfulness to the Word also assumes a thorough acquaintance with the Word and a thorough knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions, which are based upon the Word. We who are His ministers and know this requisite of faithfulness pray that God would make us and keep us faithful to the end.

The second qualification enables one to spread the knowledge of the Word. If that knowledge cannot be communicated effectively, the Gospel may well be hampered and hindered. Hand in hand with faithfulness, then, is the ability to preach and teach the Word. *"Now the overseer must be... able to teach"* (I Timothy 3:2). Aptness to teach and the ability to communicate the Gospel are qualifications which can be improved through diligent study and faithful practice. These qualifications particularly—knowledge of the Word and the ability to communicate the Word—we endeavor to implant through the worker training program of the Synod.

A third qualification that God requires of those whom He deems eligible for calling is blamelessness.

Here is a trustworthy saying: If a man sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders (I Timothy 3:1-7).

Blamelessness must not be confused with sinlessness. Sinlessness is a qualification which could be met by no one except through Christ. Blamelessness implies that one cannot be blamed for offenses by which either those from within or without would be disturbed or hindered in their faith.

Let's take a closer look now at this characteristic or qualification of blamelessness as it is described by Paul in his letter to young Timothy. The office of a bishop involves good work, noble tasks—noble because they are the work of God. They who do His work publicly should always be above reproach, that is, unable to be charged as unfit for this work. Morally, too, they should be above reproach, with their personal lives in good order, with sound marriages free of scandalous problems, having nothing to do sexually with women other than their wife, innocent of sexual promiscuity, or of anything that even hints of inappropriate sexual behavior.

The minister's marks of character are then described by the inspired apostle in a series of descriptive adjectives: vigilant, or temperate in all things: of sober mind, self-controlled, with sound and balanced judgment as opposed to one who is flighty and unstable: of good behavior, that is, respectable, orderly in his habits, tidy;

given to hospitality, hospitable, a person that relates well to people, a people person; one who has the ability to teach effectively. What a delightful array of desirable qualifications.

And that isn't all. The Lord requires still more of His servants. They are not to be given to wine, not alcoholics or abusers of strong drink. They are not to be strikers or violent people; they are not to be quarrelsome people who carry a chip on their shoulder, who have quick fists; rather, they are to be of a gentle nature. They are not to be mercenary, lovers of money.

On the positive side, God's ministers are to be people who manage their own family well, whose children are respectful.

Finally, ministers of the Gospel are not to be novices in the Christian faith; rather, they are to be mature Christians who have a good reputation among those who are still outside of the church.

In the pastoral letter of Paul to Timothy quoted above certain weaknesses are cited which also would hinder the success of the ministry—a disposition to wrath, a tendency to be proud and boastful, an overpowering desire for the materialistic things of this world, and either unnatural or unfaithful abuses of sex. In all of these things, then, God requires that His ministers be “*examples to the flock*” (I Peter 5:3).

When these qualifications are present in God's servants, they are eligible for calling. On the other hand, when these qualifications are absent, or when evidence is provided that they are no longer present, their absence may make one ineligible for the high calling of the public ministry.

Why are these qualifications cited and set forth in the Scriptures? Is God setting down an ideal which can never be attained and which therefore can be discarded as outmoded? If these qualifications can not or need not be met, aren't they excess baggage in the sacred Scriptures? I believe strongly that we cannot avoid or overlook them as no longer relevant. I believe they are relevant qualifications for ministers going into the 21st century.

There was a time not long ago when ministers failing short of these qualifications in one area or another were placed on the “move” list of the district presidents. Problems were solved in one congregation simply by foisting them upon another. It seems to me that more recently there have been more resignations in such instances. That, in my judgment, is the more honest solution to the problem.

The worker training program of our Wisconsin Synod is designed and maintained as a vital part of our mission to provide workers, both pastors and teachers, whose God-given abilities will be developed, whose Christian sanctification may be strengthened, whose will and desire to serve may be motivated through the power of the Word, workers who will be qualified and eligible for assignment, workers who will be ready and able to serve the Lord. One of the special blessings of our Synod is this program which so thoroughly qualifies our young people for this high calling. Without an effective worker training program a church body is doomed for trouble and headed for disaster. Problems rising out of the absence of a quality worker training program were experienced in the early history of our Synod. Thanks be to God for this blessing of His grace.

In the self-study conducted by the Commission On Higher Education in 1981 the following questions were formulated about the qualifications of the workers entering the Synod's preaching and teaching ministry.

1. What do you perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the new workers entering the pulpits (and classrooms) of our Synod's churches (and schools), both in established congregations and in mission fields?
2. Do you observe positive or negative attitudes in our young workers?
3. What can they do well? Where are their shortcomings and problem areas?
4. Do you see connections between their strengths/weaknesses and the educational programs by which they were prepared for service?
5. Could gaps in their preparation be closed through opportunities for in-service training?

Responses indicated the following. We heard many more positive than negative comments about attitudes and motivation of the seminary graduates. The young pastors are “humble, but not afraid to tackle

anything.” A district president was “often pleased at the maturity and humble self-confidence of our graduates.” “It’s true that they need to grow, but they have a grasp of what’s necessary in the ministry.”

Several concerns also were expressed. “One attitude which worries us in a relatively small but growing number of candidates is undue concern material things, resulting in time being spent on retirement concerns and plans and on other material concerns in the first years of the ministry.” The respondent saw this as a result of the socio-economic attitudes of our day, not of the educational program of the worker training schools. As a district president remarked, “Society teaches people to say, ‘No one’s going to take advantage of me,’ and this attitude may surface in the ministry.” The educational program needs to build motivation which will counter this tendency. Students need to develop “a deep love and commitment to the Word, by which the individual will place his aims, his desires, his talents, and his own personal discipline totally under the blessed influence of the saving grace of God imparted from the Word.”

Several respondents reminded us that attitudes and motivation are rather caught than taught. A good attitude toward the call into the ministry is formed “by the atmosphere and attitude displayed by the staff of our training schools, so that through their years of schooling the students can see from their instructors that serving the Lord in the holy ministry is a blessed, joyful privilege.” There was a comment that “the average professorship probably is not the kind that attracts the ‘happy pastor.’ It’s more likely to attract the man who likes books.” All the worker training school teachers need to remain aware of the importance of being good models and projecting good images of the ministry.”

Christian faith and life need to be nurtured at every stage of a student’s development. For example, “At the synodical schools there’s probably more meanness than we’re aware of.” “Students need to learn the lesson of ‘in honor preferring one another.’” “Can something be done in spiritual guidance,” a district president asked, “making chapel not just a daily activity but really spiritually beneficial? Good attitudes toward others grow out of faith; we can’t just prescribe Christian conduct.” Many students may also have special problems to overcome. “Today we get more students from mixed marriages, broken homes, etc., and that has its influence.”

There is a broad area of concern, which for lack of a better heading could be called “interpersonal relations.” A young pastor may give the impression that “he has his head full of factual knowledge, but he doesn’t care about people.” “Young men who are not sociable by nature have to force themselves to be so in the ministry.” “People look for this quality in a pastor, that makes some attempt to initiate a conversation, rather than waiting for others to come to him.” Being friendly, observing “the common civilities of life, being decently dressed, saying good morning on the street,” even “chewing with one’s mouth closed” are not merely desirable qualities or a polished professional; they rather show a humble regard for the feelings, expectations, and wishes of others. It was no dramatic discovery but the restatement of an old truth when in response to the question, “What kind of experiences lead to lack of sociability?” a committee member said, “Caring about people starts with faith.”

Observing the new pastors in his district, one president said that “in a couple of instances the ability to deal with people in their weaknesses seemed to be lacking. They find it easier to apply the law rather than to correct deficiencies in an evangelical way. They know their doctrine but don’t always take into account that the average layman is not as well grounded as they are. I don’t know whether sensitivity toward the needs and weaknesses of others is something that can be taught in a seminary class, but it is a quality that somehow ought to be inculcated.” One president asked, “Can you really train students to deal with people?” and another answered, “Skill at working with people comes from experience.”

Christian values, motivation, and social maturity are all involved in the future pastor’s choice of a wife. No fewer than five of the presidents and executives called attention to the importance of the pastor’s wife. The training schools “need to impress upon the future workers the importance of a wife who understands our ministry.” The future pastors should use “greater care in choosing mates for life.” Some wives are “not real anxious to share their husbands or their time.” They “may not have been prepared for the rigors of parsonage life, where there are no ‘free’ weekends. This can draw heavily from the spirit of the young pastor.”

Our Synod takes responsibility for the formation of its future pastors as early as the beginning of high school, twelve years before they begin their full-time service. We need to give adequate attention to the kind of men they are becoming, not just to what they need to know.

Moreover, our worker training system is not infallible. Sometimes the screening process fails. Sometimes problems cannot be detected along the path of training. Sometimes problems in meeting the qualifications cited above are not recognized until after people are called into the public ministry. What then? Is it too late to continue the screening process? No, not if God's Word setting forth the qualifications for the high office of the ministry means anything to us. The absence of the qualifications stated in the Scriptures may make one ineligible for continued service in the public ministry. But this determination must be made and implemented always in the highest degree of brotherly, Christian love.

A blessing that accrues to us through our organization as a Synod is the program by which we have certified and declared people eligible for calling. The administrative structure, with the divisions of our congregations into districts, each with its own officers, enables us to carry out in an orderly way the calling procedure. Even for these orderly physical arrangements, which are not by divine authority but rather according to human arrangement made in the interest of decency and order in the church, for these blessings as they relate to the doctrine of the call we thank God.

IV. How Our Calling is Conferred

To this point we have reviewed the office by which the Means of Grace, given originally to the Christians as their inalienable possession, are administered by order and on behalf of Christians. But how is this calling conferred upon men? Let this be our fourth consideration.

It is not conferred by an inner feeling. When it is conferred it does not place upon the conferee an indelible character. It is conferred when a group of Christians chooses a person to use the Keys publicly. And in so doing we follow certain procedures which are suggested in Scriptures as a pattern for us, procedures which are followed in brotherly concern and out of respect for order and decency in the church. In the choice of Matthias to replace Judas we have a picture of a choosing and calling by a Christian congregation.

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about one hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as a guide for those who arrested Jesus—he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." (With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, 'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and 'May another take his place of leadership.' Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they drew lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles (Acts 1:15-26).

Note first of all that there was a presiding leader; that leadership role was taken by Peter. Observe also that there was a need, that there was a place to be filled, a place which had been vacated by Judas. Then note that they were eager to fill this need with a man who had certain qualifications. He was to be well versed in the knowledge of the Lord, and he was to come from the circle of believers. Then you will note that there were two candidates proposed. After these candidates were proposed, the assembly prayed over the choice. Finally came the "election," and this was done in an orderly fashion through the casting of lots. And so the calling fell upon Matthias.

This basically is the orderly procedure which is followed rather closely in our circles today in the calling process. Our congregations or boards or commissions will be orderly assembled under the direction of a presiding leader. The needs of the calling body will have been clearly defined. This definition of the needs might be considered a "position description." The use of such terminology could be dangerous in that the calling may be considered thereby delimited. Such delimitation may be susceptible to abuse by the called and by those who call. One who is called should be ready to give himself completely and totally to his calling. With that assumed, it may be advisable to define carefully the particular needs of the call. After the requirements have been set down to meet these needs, the qualifications of the person to be called will be considered. What really are the needs of the place? The ministry may be general in nature, or it may need a particular emphasis. Ministering to an older congregation may warrant certain qualifications that are not deemed necessary in a growing community where there are predominantly younger people. A rural setting may require different qualifications than an inner-city area. Ministering to shut-ins in an institutional ministry may require different qualifications from that of a campus ministry. In addition to these special qualifications there will be the general qualifications requiring that a person have those eligibilities that were discussed under the last part. Above all, the calling group will want to make sure that the candidates are well advanced in their knowledge of the Scriptures, that they are apt to teach, and that they are counted with the believers. Certain academic standards which need to be met in our society also are taken into consideration.

According to the orderly procedure that we have adopted, the needs of a calling body, as well as the qualifications that may be desired to meet these needs, will have been presented prior to the meeting to the district officers. The district officers will then be prepared to present the names of those who have those qualifications that will meet these needs. In the case of synodical boards and commissions, the candidates may be proposed by the constituency in response to the call for nominations. The nominees then are listed in the official publication of the Synod to await reactions and comments of our constituency. As an aside, we might mention that this entire procedure has been reviewed by the Commission on Higher Education. While the procedure is cumbersome and lengthy and even though our constituency has not always availed itself of the opportunity to nominate or to react to nominations, yet it has been deemed wise to continue following this procedure as a safeguard against any abuses in the calling practices of boards and commissions.

To return to the calling process, the candidates who have been proposed, and there should generally be at least two lest there be no choice, will then be thoroughly considered. Although objectivity may be difficult, yet it should prevail as much as possible. Should any objections be raised concerning any of the candidates proposed, even though the objections or reservations may not be thoroughly substantiated, it might be advisable to remove such a candidate from further consideration simply to avoid placing any cloud over that ministry. The calling group prays over its election, asking for the guidance of the Lord of the church through His Holy Spirit. Election, advisedly, for good order is by ballot. Once a majority has been won, the calling body generally makes its choice unanimous to reflect its oneness in its choice and to assure the person called that he will have the wholehearted cooperation and backing of the calling body.

We have already stated under part two, when we considered by whom one is called, that even though our calling "is directed by God, He uses men, and therefore there may at times be abuses in the calling procedure. That observation is deserving of repetition at this point. There may be abuses also in the way a call is treated once it has been issued. Properly, the receipt of a call should be acknowledged at once. Properly, a call should not be held for an undue length of time. If there are difficulties in reaching a decision, the calling body should be so informed. There are valid reasons that should be considered for acceptance or declining a call. Reasons which generally are not considered valid, except perhaps, under most unusual circumstances, would be the inadequacy of shortcomings of the physical plant. I have always considered it improper procedure, even though it is a growing practice among us, to inspect the physical plant. Other abuses are salary dealing and negotiating for a new parsonage or teacherage. I enjoyed the blessing of growing up in a home that held the doctrine of the call in high regard. When my father once held a call to another parish in the same city, he refused to drive by the place lest he be affected negatively in his decision by the condition and age of the parsonage. He accepted that call. In declining a call, I have always considered it advisable to offer the rationale

which led to this decision. It is my opinion that the calling body deserves more than a simple statement indicating the declination.

Receipt of a call may also be used as a lever for a raise in salary, for starting some new program, for extracting the promise to erect new facilities. In my book that's using the call as a club. Such promises should neither be sought nor offered. True, there may be wholesome effects resulting from a call, but the call should not be used for this purpose. And here again it might be well to emphasize that a provisional call under which the call is to serve temporarily for a kind of probation or trial period is likewise an abuse.

Once the call has been accepted, under normal circumstances, an extended delay in entering upon the new calling may be inadvisable for obvious reasons. Unnecessary delay puts the congregation under a "lame duck" administration. Only under unusual circumstances should the departure and entrance upon the new calling be delayed.

Formal induction into the new calling is implemented through the rite of indication, installation, or ordination; in the case of the first calling of a pastor that installation is the ordination.

While ordination may be a scriptural practice, it is not a scriptural mandate. Rather, the rite of ordination is an adiaphoron. It is a church rite which marks the formal induction of a pastor to his first calling, but it does not make the candidate a minister. The orderly call and acceptance of it confers the public ministry upon one. In the Smalcald Articles (Of the Power, #70) ordination is described as "nothing else than such a ratification." The tendency to regard ordination as more than a formal induction to the first call is derived from Romanism, which make of ordination a sacrament. The Episcopalian Church also regards consecration and ordination as essential to apostolic succession. Other church bodies make marked distinctions between licensed and ordained ministers. But ordination does not supply any essential part of the call.

In the case of teachers, the formal induction or acceptance of that call is marked by installation, which again is not done by divine command, even though it is a commendable church rite. It is a rite which emphasizes the importance and the privileges and the obligations of the call, and at the same time it underscores for those who will be served by this calling their privilege and obligation to receive the one who is installed as a called servant of God. And so this rite of ordination or installation or induction, while it may not be a sacrament, while it may not be ordained by God, it certainly is a mutually beneficial rite which serves the ministry.

Where should the ordination of a pastor be held? In the calling congregation or in his home congregation, to be followed then by his installation at the calling church? Since ordination is not a mandate of the Scriptures, neither is the locale where an ordination takes place prescribed. Historically, the practice has changed in our circles. There was a time when candidates were ordained at home and then sent on to be installed in their called place. Later, the policy prevailed that formal ordination take place at the called place. More recently, however, with the calling of candidates into exploratory areas without a nucleus of people, the policy in some instances has been reversed again. Since the Scriptures do not mandate this policy, it will be determined out of brotherly concerns for the maintenance of good order in the church.

Another policy initiated in 1983 deals with the ordination of tutors at synodical schools. That policy states: "That ordination of (Seminary) graduates assigned to worker training schools normally be carried out when the graduates begin their duties at the schools."

Before we continue with the last part of this essay, it might be well at this juncture to inject that a call may be extended in a very temporary way through an invitation to preach for a mission festival, to conduct a wedding, to minister to the congregation during the pastor's vacation, to be a temporary supply teacher. These extensions of the calling conferred by the called upon another are no less divine as long as they are valid and legitimate extensions.

V. How Our Calling May Be Terminated

A call is not necessarily for life. There are circumstances under which a call may be terminated, and, sadly, there are also circumstances under which a call must be terminated. In this final part of the essay we take up this question as to how our calling may be terminated.

To begin with, consider the ways in which a call may be terminated by the called person. A call may be terminated by the acceptance of a call to another field. When a called servant receives a second call, he obviously has two calls, both divine but not in the sense that both must be accepted. Obviously, that would divide a person in two. Calls may be directed to one not necessarily always for acceptance but also to serve some special purpose of the Lord. When one has two or more calls he will have to reach a decision on the basis of which he with his particular talents may be of greater or more beneficial service to the Lord. Here a number of factors may be taken into consideration, but should not calls always be considered in that light?

A call may be terminated by an individual for other legitimate reasons, which might be recognized as acceptance of another calling. In the case of women teachers, acceptance of a marriage proposal may require that she follow the calling of her husband. Or, in marriage, the calling of motherhood may bring either a termination or a temporary interruption of her calling. Finally, our earthly calling is terminated by the higher, heavenly calling when all who have labored diligently will hear the Lord's own word of commendation, “*Well done, good and faithful servant! Come and share your master's happiness!*” (Matthew 25:21).

Calls are terminated by the individual not only through acceptance of another legitimate calling but also by outright resignation. Resignation may be offered when one is thoroughly convinced—because there is clear evidence—of his incompetency as a result of advancing age or debilitating illness. It is most difficult for a person to be objective and to recognize weaknesses which may come with age or illness. Before resignation is offered for these reasons, the called person not only should be ready to seek but also to follow the advice of his Lord, his trusted co-laborers, and his relatives who are competent to judge. Such advice, of course, should be given in a loving way and always with the best interest of the church at heart.

Another way in which a call may be terminated by the called person is through resignation arising out of inadequacy or incompetency in aptness to preach and teach the Gospel publicly. A word of caution is necessary. Resignation is not warranted simply because of an inferiority complex. Yet, it is also true that even after they are adequately trained pastors and teachers in their actual experience may at times come short of gifts and be inadequate for the public ministry. Here, too, the Lord and trusted colleagues should be consulted before any hasty action is taken. Again, the best interests of the church must be the primary concern.

Not only are there situations in which the call is terminated by the called person. At times the call may be—and at other times the call must be—terminated by the calling body. The calling body may have to terminate a call when the need for that particular service no longer exists in the church. For example, the enrollment decline may warrant the reduction in the number of teachers. Under certain conditions a local congregation may cease to exist as it amalgamates with another under one pastor. A course of action may be changed by the church, thereby affecting called persons. That happened in 1969 when the Synod resolved to close Wisconsin Lutheran College in 1970 and merge it with Dr. Martin Luther College. That happened again in 1980 when the Synod closed Northwestern Lutheran Academy and “merged” it with Martin Luther Preparatory School. That happens in home mission fields and could happen in world fields also. In all cases where the calling body finds it necessary legitimately to terminate a calling, love and charity will prevail in dealing with the called person or persons.

Several concerns have been expressed regarding the role of the district mission board in the calling process, in the addition or reassignment of work areas, in closing existing fields. Is there a possibility of arbitrary interference with the call and the pastor/congregation relationship?

The role of the district mission boards is spelled out in the *Home Mission Handbook* as follows.

Procedure for Calling a Pastor

Into a New Field—The right to call a pastor into a new field where no organized congregation exists has been given by the Synod to the District Mission Board. A list of candidates shall be requested from the District President as in the case of an organized congregation. The call in such cases frequently is to a general geographic area. As a congregation is gathered the members of the group, by their affiliation with it, make this missionary their individual pastor in the same manner in which an individual joining

an organized congregation acknowledges the call of its pastor. Therefore no further call needs to be extended after the group formally organizes. If a Mission Developer has done the work of gathering the mission group in a new area, the very nature of his call indicates that he will move on to another area.

Into An Existing Field—In the case of an organized congregation the group shall request the assistance of the District President and the District Mission Board in calling a pastor. The District Mission Board concurs in the calling of the congregation by its joint signature on the call.

“Joint” Calling of a Pastor as long as a congregation is subsidized by the Synod, indicates the responsibility of the Synod for such a group. The District Mission Board pledges its support of a called worker by its joint signing of all calls issued by a congregation receiving synodical subsidy. When the DMB states that it “concurs” in the call this means:

That the DMB approves of the candidate whom the congregation decides to call; therefore it is an agreed upon practice that prior to a call meeting in a mission congregation the district president will solicit suggestions for the call list from the DMB; that the district president will advise the chairman of the DMB of the candidates being proposed to the congregation; that the district president will invite the DMB to have a representative present at the call meeting, if desired. Note: The established mission congregation is the sole calling body, the DMB only concurring in the action.

That the DMB has an interest in and a responsibility for the mission activities of the worker who has been called. (In intra-congregational discipline matters the circuit pastor has prime responsibility even though the DMB may find itself called upon to offer initial counsel.)

That the DMB will therefore assist in the support of the worker according to existing policies of the GBHM.

Termination of “Joint Call—Concurrence by the DMB in the call of the congregation and the conditions attached shall apply as long as the congregation is receiving financial subsidy (operating or interest subsidy) from the GBHM or when, after review of the progress of the congregation and after DMB consultation with the congregation, the GBHM terminates the mission status of the congregation. Both the interest-subsidized congregation and its pastor are responsible to and bound by GBHM policies as long as any form of financial subsidy is received. (Cf. II.E.3.49, page 51.)

Termination of mission status is a prerogative of the GBHM. Termination may occur when, as a result of periodic review of mission fields, it is deemed advisable to discontinue synodical commitment to a specific field. Naturally, thorough consultation by the DMB with the mission congregation and with the GBHM Priority Committee will precede such termination. Also assistance will be offered by the DMB in providing other avenues for the spiritual care of the people involved.

Missionary

Approval to Call a first resident pastor for a field can be granted only by the GBHM at the request of a DMB. The request for authority to call new pastoral manpower shall be filed by the DMB with the GBHM on a M-2 form.

In the eyes of this observer, the Handbook calls for an orderly arrangement. Again, even a district mission board could become guilty of loveless action in carrying out its responsibilities. On the other hand, we all have the obligation of putting the best construction on actions taken in line of duty.

Another reason for terminating a call by the calling body may be unfaithfulness of the called. Unfaithfulness here may be defined as persistence in error, inadequate preparation for service, continuing neglect of duty, or presumptuous lording over the called.

Paul speaks about the persistence of false doctrine which calls for deposing one from office (Amtsentsetzung) in this way.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! (Galatians 1:6-9).

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way, contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them (Romans 16:17) .

Unfaithfulness is marked not only by willful persistence in error. Unfaithfulness may be evident in persistent lack of preparation for proper service, in willful neglect of duties, or in presumptuous lording over the called. Unfaithfulness in any of these areas should be clear beyond a shadow of a doubt before any charges are made or any calling is terminated. Whenever such painful removal from office becomes necessary, Christians will exercise discipline with sympathy and patience, at all times extending Christian love. Furthermore, they will at all times follow good order in the church and proceed openly and honestly.

The calling body may have to terminate a call also when it recognizes incompetency in the called person. Such incompetency should be clearly evident and well documented. When a calling body recognizes that a called person is not able to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ or that his personal life stands in the way of effective communication, it may have to proceed in love, for the sake of the Gospel, in an orderly way to remove the called person from his calling.

One may be dismissed from office also when for various reasons he no longer is able to meet the demands of that calling. For example, if a congregation had all German services and then circumstances required that it adopt the English medium and the pastor was not able to preach in English, obviously, he would not be able to meet the demands of that congregation. These and similar circumstances may require the termination of his calling from that office. Obviously, then, there is not and should not necessarily be a stigma attached to such dismissal from office.

Finally, a calling body may have to terminate a call when there is a refusal to repent of a public offense given by a called person. When a public sin becomes a stumbling block for those within and those without, the Gospel is no longer served. What if the guilty person repents of such a public offense? Can he continue in his present calling? That may be a matter of Christian judgment. If confidence of those served can be regained, there may be circumstances under which he could continue that calling. On the other hand, if by his offense he has lost his good reputation and the Gospel can no longer be served effectively in that place by him, it may be better to be withdrawn from that calling. Thus, even when one who has been called repents and is forgiven, the loss of his good reputation may warrant his Amtsentsetzung. A called person “*must also have a good reputation with outsiders*” (I Timothy 3:7). The loss of his good reputation may mean that he is no longer blameless but blameworthy, and that fact may be a stumbling block to those who are without and to those who are within the church.

As soon as a call has been formally terminated, then also the duties, responsibilities, privileges, and authority given through the call immediately cease. Nothing has been conferred upon the called by his installation or ordination which gives him an indelible character and carries over even when he is without a call.

Resignation from a particular call is resignation from the ministry. The ministry does not exist in an abstract entity apart from a concrete position. Resignation from that call takes one out of the ministry.

Nevertheless, the honor that is ascribed to the ministry will continue for the ministry who is retired or may have resigned for reasons of health.

May one whose call has been terminated either through resignation or removal from office be a candidate again for the ministry? With reference to our second part, the answer to this question *hinges upon one's eligibility* to be called again. This will have to be determined with candor and in love, always in the best interests of the nominee and the calling body and of the kingdom. The answer may not be the same in every case.

But what happens when a pastor or teacher really doesn't desire to resign but feels a very definite need for a change? Luther has some pertinent words on this question. (*The Shepherd Under Christ*, pp. 30-31).

Here we should carefully see to it that there is no evil design, that no one in any way obtrudes himself as a preacher, either to get a livelihood (ums Bauchs willen) or to gain honor. For this is dangerous, nor will it ever turn out well. If you are learned and understand God's Word well and think that you would present it to others faithfully and profitably, then wait. If God wants it, He will have no trouble finding you. My friend, do not let your ability burst your belly. God has not forgotten you. If you are to preach His Word, He will no doubt call on you to do so at His own time. Do not determine the time limit or the place for Him (*Luthers Saemntliche Schriften* [St. Louis, 1880-1910] XI, 1911. Trans. in Plass, *What Luther Says* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1959, II, No. 1950). You should not doubt that if the Lord wants you, He will seek you out, and even send an angel from heaven to get hold of you (St. L. IV, 628) .

The preservation of the doctrine of the call among us is another of God's grace. This doctrine may be abused frequently and treated lightly. Let it not be so treated by us.

We pray that God would continue to preserve also this grace among us by which both the called and the calling may derive so much comfort, so much reassurance, and so much strength to preach and teach His Gospel even as we are committed to do—efficiently and effectively, in accord with the Lutheran confessions, to the glory of His name.

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