

THE DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY
WITH ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STAFFING OF D.M.L.C.

Introduction

A study of the doctrine of the ministry dare not, it can not be an abstract thing for you and me. Our God has called most of us here into this ministry. We are involved. He has given to us the additional responsibility of sharing with Him in this work of calling others into this ministry. Again, we are involved. This is an inescapable fact.

The assignment directed to me indicated that in the course of present negotiations in pursuit of accreditation the need for this type of study was felt. As I understand it the need was felt to re-think the doctrine of the ministry so that we might re-evaluate and possibly re-shape our policies with regard to staffing D.M.L.C. Such a study should then also enable us to speak more clearly with regard to these matters as we carry on negotiations with an accrediting association.

Permit me to suggest two other possible needs for this study. There is the world-wide student rebellion against academic authority. We certainly can expect that this spirit will make itself felt in some measure and in some manner on our campus. If we are to cope with this sort of thing in a realistic and God-pleasing manner, we must have a good understanding of what the Lord says about the ministry and the call. A professor needs to be very clear with regard to his own call in order to teach the student to respect the call he may receive upon graduation.

I assume that there is a second additional need for this study. It is the ongoing need for a greater spirit of fear, wonder, and joy in our work as called servants of the word. I do hope that this study may lead not only to

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greater clarity in regard to the doctrine of the ministry, but that it may touch our souls and deepen our fear and wonder and joy as we strive to fulfill the high calling which the living God has extended to us.

A few words need to be said about the approach and the nature of this study. If a search for Scriptural doctrine is honest, it will always involve an element of adventure. All of us have convictions with regard to the ministry. Are we ready to put them to a real test? Are we ready to re-examine our convictions to see if they are founded totally upon the word of God? Are we ready to reshape our thinking and modify our convictions so as to conform more closely with the wisdom of God and the facts of Scripture?

A study of the doctrine of the ministry differs from many others in one important respect. The redemption of the world, for example, is an accomplished completed work of God. It was finished upon the cross. When we study this doctrine, we are studying something that God has already done. When we study the "Parousia" we are studying something that God shall do. When we study the doctrine of the ministry we are studying something that God is doing right now, something in which we are involved in the very moment in which we are making the study itself. In this paper we are striving to see what God is doing right now. We are striving to see how our ascended Savior and the Holy Spirit are carrying on this work of the ministry.

I. THE CRUCIFIED AND RESURRECTED SAVIOR CREATES, COMMISSIONS, PROMISES THE NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY.

The New Testament ministry has its roots in the Old Testament proclamation. Although this is as essential to the New Testament ministry as roots are to a tree, both for nourishment and stability, I have chosen not to enter

upon this matter in detail. Permit me to raise just a few questions as food for thought. Consider how Jesus showed the Emmaus disciples from Scripture that Christ must suffer these things and rise again. Was He only convincing them or was He also showing them how they should convince others, namely from the Old Testament Scriptures? When you find that the sermons and letters of the apostles live and breathe the Old Testament Scriptures, is this only because there was no New Testament, or is it because all New Testament proclamation of the Gospel must have its tap roots in the old? Isn't it characteristic of the Old Testament prophet that he not only knew he was proclaiming the message of God, but he also knew that he had been called to proclaim that message? Is there an essential difference between this and the call into the New Testament ministry?

The essence of the New Testament ministry is found, of course, in the well known words of our Savior most of which were spoken after His resurrection. We are referring to Matthew 28, Mark 16, John 20 and 21, Acts 1. I believe we should also include the institution of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps you may wish to think of these words as a command. I believe that the simple future in Acts one, "You shall be witnesses," shows that Jesus does more than command or even commission the New Testament ministry. He promises it. By his atoning death upon the cross, by His resurrection He has created this ministry. These words were spoken by Jesus, Who is the living God, the Creator of all things, Who has ascended into heaven and is now at the right hand of God where He uses all His power and authority in the interest of His Church. Thus He not only commands and commissions but He provides His Church with this ministry as He has promised.

The ministry is a life function of the Church. The Acts and the

Epistles show us that wherever you have living Church you have proclaiming church. The proclamation of the Gospel is given to her as a part of her. This proclamation is a life function of the entire Church. It is a function of each individual member of that Holy Christian Church.

The New Testament ministry is a ministry of the Gospel. The proclamation is a testimony to Jesus of Nazareth. The passages referred to above teach this. Baptism is a putting on of Jesus' death and resurrection. His body and blood are received in remembrance of Him. The Church proclaims Him and in doing so proclaims everything that He has taught. The disciples proclaimed Him above all as the crucified and risen One. Even the enemies of the Church refer to her proclamation as a speaking in the name of Jesus. This fact that the ministry is a ministry of the Gospel involves some restrictions that are often felt as severe. It also involves some far reaching implications which are frequently not fully recognized.

Here I wish to touch on only one aspect of those implications. Proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth the crucified and risen Savior, means proclaiming not only total trust in Him, it means proclaiming also total commitment to Him. Paul says II Cor. 5:14,15) "For the love of Christ leaves us no choice, when once we have reached the conclusion that one man died for all and therefore all mankind has died. His purpose in dying for all was that men, while still in life, should cease to live for themselves, and should live for Him Who for their sake died and was raised to life." Consider Romans 14:7,8 "For no one of us lives, and equally no one of us dies, for himself alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Whether therefore we live or die, we belong to the Lord." K. H. Rengstorf puts it this way in his book Apostolate and Ministry, page 50: "It is the office whose

single task consists in testifying to men of God's reconciling act in Christ and leading them to the point where they live for Christ on the basis of this act, and hence conduct their lives in the consciousness that it no longer belongs to them but to Him." Remember that if you have a divine call it is a call to proclaim the crucified Christ no matter what your speciality or department may be. It is a call to lead men to a full awareness of the fact that because of our redemption in Christ we can no longer live for ourselves but must live for Him.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ASCENDED SON FULFILL THE PROMISE OF THE MINISTRY IN THE LIFE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH.

The New Testament, especially Acts and the Epistles show us how this was done in the first century. We must assume that the Holy Spirit built the Church in other areas besides those mentioned in the N. T., but we must also assume that He worked in a similar manner.

Let us look at some references to see how the Holy Spirit chose and used people for the ministry of the Gospel. You can also say that these references show us how the Ascended Savior provided His Church with servants of the word.

The first chapter of Acts tells us that these were chosen men to whom Jesus showed Himself after the resurrection and spoke with them forty days of things concerning the kingdom of God. It tells us also how the disciples by a type of nomination and casting of lots chose Matthias to replace Judas as one of the twelve. To my knowledge nothing is said of his activity after this.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit so to speak steps in and really takes hold of building the N. T. church. From here on in it is very obvious that He is the one Who really is at work in the Church.

The seven deacons were elected by the congregation. The Apostles prayed over them. This apparently was a good way to "Call" men. Their work went beyond distributing material goods to the needy. Verse seven tells us that now the word of God spread more widely. God obviously used this action of the congregation for the building of His Kingdom.

The stoning of Stephen and the death of James are sharp reminders that the Lord Who gives servants of the word also takes them away. He may do so under circumstances which baffel us.

The calling of Paul is, of course, the most fantastic of all. His example shows us the total unworthiness of the person called. It shows on the other hand the fullness of the grace extended by Him Who calls men into His service.

Ananias received a call to do a specific thing, to come to Paul. Again we know hardly anything else about his other activities in the church.

Paul's first tour of preaching in Damascus was cut short by his enemies. At the moment Paul had a call to preach, but as yet he did not have a call to die for the Lord. That would come later and so he escaped from the city by night.

Perhaps we can touch on a few negative examples here. The sudden deaths of Ananias and Saphira teach men to respect the Holy Spirit. Simon tried to buy a call and was severly rebuked. The exorcists at Ephesus tried to do tricks in the name of Jesus and suffered physical harm and shame.

The Lord prepared Peter for a special service to Cornelius by means of a dream.

The church sends Barbabas to Antioch after hearing about the church in that city. Luke doesn't tell us how Barnabas was Called.

Barnabas and Paul take Mark along on the first journey. Again we have no specifics about a call. Luke refers to a number of general prophets and teachers at Antioch; whereas Paul and Barnabas had a special call to go to the gentiles.

On his second journey Paul picks up Timothy. I Timothy 1:18 tells us that there was some prophetic utterance involved in this call, but the entire matter remains vague.

Luke comes into the picture simply through the introduction of the pronoun, "We," as he tells of their experience at Troas.

Paul found Aquila and Priscilla at Corinth. Did Paul place them in Ephesus to get tent-making business established while he was away at Jerusalem? During the interim Apollos came to Ephesus and soon we have a small seminary. It appears that a lady did some, perhaps most of the teaching. Later in his first letter to the Corinthians Paul recognizes Apollos' ministry among them.

To the elders of the church at Ephesus Paul says that the Holy Ghost had set them to be shepherds of the church. We can't be sure as to how these men were chosen.

There are examples also of people whom the Lord used in an indirect way for the ministry of the word. One thinks of Mnason of Cyprus who provided Paul with lodging at Jerusalem or of Paul's nephew who told the commandant of the plot to kill Paul.

Going on to the epistles, one wonders whether Romans 16:1 indicates that Phoebe held a specific office in the congregation at Cenchrea.

In First Corinthians 1:17 Paul says that he was not sent to baptize but to proclaim the Gospel. Did the Lord perhaps indicate where Paul should put

the most emphasis in his ministry? Was this part of his call? In chapter three Paul speaks of himself and Apollos as God's agents each doing the work allotted to him for the purpose of bringing the Corinthians to faith. Think of the entirely different paths by which these two men came to this work. In chapter four Paul speaks of himself and others as underlings of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Note the plural.

In chapter eleven Paul speaks of women praying and prophesying. When they do, they are to wear a veil as a sign of subserviance to the man.

In a way Paul touches on the matter of rank in chapters 12, 13, 14. He speaks of apostles, prophets, teachers and then goes on to mention gifts and abilities such as healing, ecstatic speech, etc. In chapter thirteen he shows how the Christian lives with rank. Love does not make all men equal but it puts each in the service of all no matter what his rank may be. He rates the value of a gift or activity according to its usefulness for edifying the church.

In chapter fourteen Paul also says that the women are not to be permitted to speak in the public service.

In the closing verse of chapter fourteen Paul urges the Corinthians to use these people and their various gifts in a manner that is decent and orderly.

In chapter sixteen Paul tells us that on one occasion Apollos refused to go to Corinth although Paul urged him to do so. Was Apollos returning a call?

Second Corinthians as you know is a very personal letter. Paul says that he decided not to go to Corinth immediately because he did not want to inflict pain upon them. He left Troas early because he was troubled. Titus had not as yet come. In the very next verse he thanks God Who Paul says is

constantly leading him about. See how far Paul goes in defense of his ministry in chapters 11 and 12 where he says that he speaks as a fool.

In Galatians Paul speaks of God having chosen him for this work already from birth. He also speaks of the separate areas of concentration in his call and in that of Peter. Paul was to bring the Gospel to the gentiles, Peter to the people of Israel.

In Ephesians Paul speaks of Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God, as the head of the Church, as the foundation of the Church. The ascended Savior provides gifts for His church such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. The Church with all these servants of the word is like a human body. Through the proper activity of each part the body builds itself up in love.

The letter to the Colossians tells us that Jesus is the head of all creation and the head of the Church.

In First Thessalonians Paul speaks of being entrusted with the Gospel by God Who is continually testing our hearts.

In his first letter to Timothy Paul urges his co-worker to stay on at Ephesus. He does not command but beseeches. He tells Timothy that women are not to teach in the church because it would be contrary to the order God has set up from creation if a woman were to have authority over a man. In chapter three he speaks of a man longing for a position of service in the church. Would Paul object to someone indicating that he wished to serve the Church in a particular way, say as a pastor, or as a professor, or as a missionary?

In his second letter to Timothy Paul tells him to put the teaching in care of men you can trust, men who shall in turn pass this teaching on to others.

In his second letter Peter refers to Paul as his beloved brother. There doesn't seem to be any awareness of rank here.

A study of these and other pertinent passages leads to a doctrine of the ministry as it is spelled out by our dogmaticians. I think that Hoenecke's resume on page 186 of volume IV of his *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik* will serve our purposes. He says, "1. It is God's will that the ministry continue until Judgment Day. 2. Scripture presents the matter of calling through someone (This is in contrast to a direct call from God.) as a means or method that is confirmed by God. 3. As Church, the congregation has received from God the right and the duty to call. Thus the call extended through a congregation is a divine call in the fullest sense of the word. In the final analysis the basis for this is the fact that God has given His Church the ministry of the keys and the commission to call." This is very familiar ground. I do not believe that you intended this paper to include a review of these basic truths.

Permit me to add just one thing at this point. A study of the passages cited above can't help but impress one with the remarkable freedom with which the Holy Spirit operates. There is remarkable diversity in the way that He fulfills this promise of a New Testament ministry of the gospel in the life of the Church.

This gracious work of the Spirit and the Son touches the individual today when he receives a divine call.

The divinity of the call in the subjective, concrete sense is not a doctrine but a conclusion to which the called individual has arrived. We know that the Savior provides men, the Holy Spirit calls and uses men for the ministry of the Gospel. When you and I received and accepted our calls we had

come to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit was calling us to work in this particular place in this particular capacity. Because it is a conclusion and not a doctrine you and I must wrestle with our decision in answer to a call.

The divine call is in a sense a promise from the Savior and the Spirit. The Savior promises to use the individual to proclaim His Gospel to men. The Spirit promises to lead and guide and to give power to that proclamation. This means that we must remain students of the Scriptures through which He provides that guidance as well as the message itself. An awareness of the necessity and promise of the Spirit's work will keep us praying to Him for His blessing upon our labors.

The divine call is a call to involve the entire self in the proclamation of the Gospel. We are to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen again. This proclamation by its very nature involves more than just words. It incorporates a man's entire way of life. It needs to incorporate everything he does, says, thinks, and feels.

A divine call is a call to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in absolute terms. He is the only Savior. He saves completely. It is a call to proclaim that Gospel with all its implications, a call to lead men to a total commitment to the crucified One.

The divine call is a call to represent this Jesus Who shall return in visible form in glory and honor to judge all mankind.

As people who have accepted a divine call, as people who are involved in extending divine calls we need to be aware of the full dimensions of such a call. Such a call is cause for fear and trembling. It is cause for wonder and amazement. It is cause for exceeding joy.

III. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STAFFING OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE?

Through our church body the Holy Spirit has called us as His instruments. Through us, especially through the board of control, He calls men into the ministry of the Gospel here on the staff of our school. We have already seen that the New Testament examples demonstrate a remarkable freedom in regard to methods of calling men into this ministry. The Holy Spirit really says very little in regard to methods. He allows us a great deal of freedom. He has, however, given us certain guideposts within which He wants us to operate. Lets consider some of them.

There is essentially only one ministry. It is the ministry of the Gospel. We are to extend a divine call to those who are to be ministers of the Gospel. This should determine which members of our staff receive a call and which are engaged in some other manner.

The ministry of the Gospel belongs to the Church. All our procedures must respect this fact. We must have authorization from our church body for our procedures and for the call itself.

Our methods and policies are to be guided by Christian love. We are to seek the best interest of the person called, the students he is to teach, and the best interest of the pupils out in the synod whom our students shall one day teach.

Our calling procedures must be carried on decently and in order. Our church body has provided such procedures. They must be followed. They may be changed as circumstances change, but this too must be done decently and in order.

We are to live and work in the spirit of soundmindedness. I think our phrase, "Good Christian common sense," expresses the meaning of the term that

Paul uses. This certainly applies to our procedures in calling servants of the word.

The Holy Spirit states some of the qualifications for a call in the Pastoral letters. Some of these qualifications are of a personal nature. They are inherent in the call to proclaim Jesus with your whole life. Some of the qualifications are of a professional nature. If a man is to teach, if he is to be an administrator, he must have certain abilities. Certainly we are free to add other qualifications in a spirit of soundmindedness.

I believe that we are free to define limits of a call. We may limit a call as to time or to certain areas of activity as the circumstances may require.

Our procedures must recognize and respect God's order of creation. This applies especially to the matter of calling women to our staff. Paul says that the woman is not to usurp authority over the man. I believe that Paul does allow exceptions. He says the women are to wear a veil when they pray and prophesy. He permitted them to do this, but the veil was to signify that they still recognized their position subordinate to man. He expresses the rule. He permits exceptions, but he will not permit the exception to override the rule.

We are to think and evaluate all things spiritually. In this respect we are to be very different from the world. I think that this is perhaps where the question of rank fits best. The Church is not a classless society. Holy Communion for example requires that someone distribute the bread and wine to the others. Does this establish rank? It may be necessary to establish certain kinds of rank as an institution grows in size and complexity. Rank may be there, but we are not to see rank as the world sees it. "The kings of the

Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." (Luke 22:25,26.) A desire to eliminate rank may be a manifestation of the flesh rather than of the spirit.

We need to consider the matter of probationary status or a type of apprenticeship. I do not believe that Scripture speaks directly on the subject. I do feel however that it would not be in keeping with the general directives given by the Holy Spirit. We can only call for the present, for the here and now. In one of His parables the Lord speaks of servants who were faithful in a very little. Such a servant was given authority over ten cities. Perhaps the Lord will use the call we extend to a man as a period of probation and preparation for another call. He often does, but I think we must leave this to Him. To say that a man in such a probationary status does not have a call would only add to the confusion.

The Scriptures, the directives of the Holy Spirit must also determine our relationship to an accrediting association. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit exercises and allows a great deal of freedom. Certainly we may make use of such as association. Certainly we may make changes in deference to such an association. We may do so, as long as we do not lose sight of Who really is at work in this institution and as long as we follow the directives which He gives us in His word. We can not expect an agency of the world to fully understand what we are doing here or why we operate as we do. I don't believe that this need conflict with accreditation.

Conclusion

We must remember that it is the Holy Spirit and the ascended Savior Who are really building the New Testament Church. We must remember especially how the Spirit works. He exercises a remarkable, a divine freedom. For us good order means that we must have system and consistency. The Holy Spirit is not bound in this way. He is free to use and to choose according to His divine wisdom without apparent system or consistency and still all His works express order and beauty. In that wisdom and freedom He has chosen to use this little institution to service a small segment of Christendom for a short period of time. He has given us the responsibility to determine our policies according to His will so that He may continue to use us and the gifts He has bestowed upon us to extend His testimony to the crucified and risen Christ.

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