

# **The Divine Call of an Evangelical Lutheran Minister, and Some of Its Practical Features Considered in the Light of the Bible**

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We are, as everyone who thinks and has an eye or keen observation knows living in a lawless age. We are worse than the heathen, because they are a law unto themselves. Principles are idly and with a ruthless shake of the head and hand tossed away as a burnt out cigarette is tossed to the air. The question, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" can surely be asked by us, as often as the writer of the second psalm did. This question our age forces to our lips. The observation, "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us," this observation is ours also. We hear the slogans: Break away! Cast away! Be free! Do as you please! Listen to nobody! Down with every voice of authority! Either from heaven above or from God's messengers from beneath! Push, or pull with us, or get out of the way! We will make a new order and recreate the universe. Years ago one could see in front of churches and business places on the streets of our cities the old-fashioned hitching posts. To that point and post the horses were tied and anchored. We have pulled the posts, and now ride with wild abandon right past the new posts decorated with three lights! We have pulled the old posts of principles, brought in a lawless, reckless living in the world and in the church. This horrid and hideous world-condition has trickled through our church life and our synodical life.

We often admire the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a fine running machine, organized in full details. Some of this hierarchy would be a good gift of God, and the Holy Spirit expressly admonishes each church, "Let all things be done decently and in order." One can hear and see the ordered and trained ranks of the Roman soldier in the Greek word translated "order." Through Samuel God said to Saul: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold! To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." That is applicable to the conditions among us also, who are workers in the church of our Redeemer.

To me is assigned an essay on the timely subject of the so serious matter, the divine call of a Pastor into the ministry. This matter is "*zeitgemaess*," and very timely. This great gift of the Church of our Lord is and has been growing excrescences. It is being covered with the soft moss of self-help and self-will. It is being vitiated. It is being, like so many other things in the church, commercialized, made profane and profitable by individuals. We have cheapened it. We have not spared it. Ministers giggle about the divine call! Some think there is no such thing. Some say what they think. Satan's philosophy is plainly voiced in the word, "If thou be the Son of God, help thyself." And men who call themselves Christ's ministers do help themselves to positions within the church unabashed and unashamed, and make merchandise of God's heritage, bought with precious blood on that tree which stood a little higher in the midst of two thieves on Calvary. We have plenty of destructive criticism. It is high time to call for constructive criticism. We must destroy the bugs to save the rosebush. Let us repent and turn from our evil ways and

live. May God the Holy Spirit guide all earnest and sincere discussions of this timely and touchy subject. If guilty against the divine call, let us repent. If in the ministry by the regular and right way, then let us like Paul exclaim, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me trustworthy, putting me into the ministry. I obtained Mercy! And the Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." The subject, which we herewith have led up to, and which will expose great and grievous sins is as follows: The Divine Call (*vocatio divina*) of an Evangelical Lutheran Pastor considered in a particular and practical way from the side of them who call and from the side of those who are called. Many practical features will be mentioned and plainly nominated in the bond.

Let us in the first place lay down the foundation. Let us then follow and on this foundation build gold, silver, precious stones, gathered from the Holy Scriptures. Then let us go on and look at the wood, hay and stubble, the work of man's hand, which is accumulating on the good foundation. It shall be revealed by fire, the fire of God's Holy Spirit shall test every man's work, what sort it is. Right here is where many ministers and church members shall lose their reward, though saved as by fire. "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. 3:8. 12. 16.

There is such a solemn and sacred thing as a Divine Call! Seeing it so often as a divine comedy, some sincere ministers doubt its existence. It is here. It is there—in the Bible as clearly visible as the mountain tops in the sunset! Here in God's own Book, every Christian's handbook, Word of Life, it is taught and treated. In all books printed and published as Pastoral theology this subject is the first treated, sometimes at great length. It is the door to a successful ministry. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. "He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Jesus said this.

The Bible teaches us the absolute necessity of a divine call. To carry out and to carry on the ministry of reconciliation, to be able ministers of the New Testament, and to bring to sinful men the "ministration of righteousness, which exceeds in glory the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, we must have a call. St. Paul makes this point very plain in Romans 10:15, where he states "and how shall they preach, except they be sent, as it is written how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Again the Spirit speaks in Jeremiah 23:2 "I have not sent those prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." The Holy Ghost speaks in Hebrews 5:4, "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

In Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession under the heading "Of ecclesiastical Order" we read this sentence, "Of ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church, or administer the Sacraments unless he be *regularly called*."

Such a call received in a regular and right manner *is divine*. God calls the minister. We read in the book of Acts, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." The Greek verb used means to lead into green pastures. For it is a church which He has purchased with His own blood. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians we read, "And He, Christ the ascended Lord, gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. "Evangelists would find their equivalent today in our present missionaries, going about and around preaching and calling into existence new local congregations. Pastors and teachers describing the regular organized ministry of the Word of reconciliation which in all times has

remained the same, publishing the Gospel and administering the holy Sacraments. It is Christ risen and crowned with many crowns whose gift to the church the minister is. Again we read in Cor. 12, 28, "And God hath set some in the church first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversity of tongues." All regular pastors and missionaries are gifts of Christ from above to His church to keep it alive and to take out of the world a people for His name. So Christ fulfills His great promise, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." The preparation for the ministry through college and seminary is not excluded. They who are willing to prepare are trained for the ministry and then called by and through the church, which is Christ's medium and method, placing twiceborn men everywhere as salt and light. Christ has endowed the church with the power and privilege to place and prepare his messengers. It is the ascended Christ who makes men willing workers for Him, who works in them, who gives blessing and benefit to all studies, supplying the necessary gifts of the Spirit, adding to natural endowment spiritual endowment, opens unto them the sacred mysteries of the Kingdom and thus makes them all apt to teach; "Our sufficiency is of God." There are no auto-didactics in Christ's work and world, but they are, as He himself tells us in St. John 6, 45, "and they shall be taught of God." Christ stands by all of them, He created them and preserves them, never lets them fall from His divine hands, equips them with gifts and graces of His Spirit and fills them with joy to minister in the Holy place of the New Testament, making them daily more and more efficient and sufficient to make full proof of their ministry. This is vividly seen from the Book of Revelation 1:16 and 29, where it is written: "And He, the risen and crowned Christ, had in His right hand seven stars." Christ explains to John, who saw this vision, "The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks, the seven stars are the angels, messengers, of the seven churches and the seven golden candlesticks, which thou sawest are the seven churches." In Psalm 68:12 again the Holy Ghost reminds us that preachers are God's gift to the ungodly world, when we read, "The Lord gave the Word! Great was the company of those that published it." "Thou, O Lord, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." Ezekiel 33:7 has a classic statement for this divine call. Here it is. "So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the Word at my mouth, and warn them from me." The eloquent Isaiah wrote 41:27: "Behold! Behold them, the pastors, and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings." Matthew 9:38 the Master pleads, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." The weeping prophet Jeremiah speaks God's Word about the divine call writing 23:4: "And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they, be lacking, with the Lord." 1 Cor. 3:5 Paul sets the preacher in his place when He writes, "Who then is Paul? And who is Apollo? But ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. For we are laborers together with God." From these few quotations, picked here and there from the garden of God's Word, we plainly see that the Lord calls the true minister and makes His messenger. We are God's voice in the wilderness. We dare and can say, "Thus saith the Lord." God put us here. I speak for God in this place. Pastors are God's ambassadors.

The divine Call emanating from the ascended Christ makes the minister. Christ from the right hand of God keeps the vineyard. He always will provide the church with pastors who are willing workers and bring God's message. He makes them all sufficient "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Paul uses the word here in the Greek, which better translated means God qualifies us, makes us handy men, fit, measuring up to the standard, German "*geschickt*." Christ

works in and with the minister. Mark 16:29 we read, “And they, the disciples, went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following.”

This knowledge and conviction that our Call is really divine will make and motivate each minister of Christ to seek God’s honor and glory most sincerely in all he does or plans to do. As Christ at one time said to the scribes and sinners, who always sought their own glory, “I receive not honor from men. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” Ministers dare not work for a synod solely and alone, for the upholding of a tradition and old habit, but to work always for the Christ through the church. The minister shall not let the oft repeated phrase—“*solī deo gloria*” be just an empty phrase or camouflage, a make-believe cant behind which lives the scoundrel and the hypocrite! “Not all crows make monks.” The gown is no guarantee of a sincere ministry. The divine call makes ministers diligent, faithful, circumspect in their calling. It gives good cheer and courage and fills the pastor’s heart with joy unspeakable and full of glory, when the fight is on and persecution chases him like bees. It gives him a good conscience, when the fight is on for the good old faith once delivered unto the saints. He will be satisfied with the church he has, and God has placed him in and over to shepherd and superintend. He will not, like so many unfaithful husbands do these adulterous days, cast longing eyes and wistful glances on another, and most sinfully desire another congregation, which is spiritual adultery. He will in all trials and testings say to himself and others, I am here by God’s appointment. He will comfort himself with this conviction, God made me a minister ! He will bravely and boldly meet the enemy, as Luther did of old. He will pray diligently for the guidance of the Spirit. He will pray for the sufficiency and support needed, and will receive, for Christ supplies all that need from on High. He will look up and cheer up. You cannot cheer up unless you look up to the hills from whence cometh our help! He will magnify his office. It will not be just a job. It will not be just a position, which makes him a living! He will not carelessly say things about the ministry, which are not true. He will never smile cynically and with a sinful smile say, there is no such thing as a divine call! He will never speak of the “poor minister.” The minister is never to be pitied, but to be envied. The minister, who chases dollars and dimes, laughs at the divine call! Do not forget it.

How important and impressive is such a knowledge and conviction of a divine call to the congregation! They dare and can say truthfully: This is the man of God. God Himself has placed him among us. He is our seer. He is God’s mouthpiece and messenger to us. And they will on their part and in their turn treat him always as the servant and slave of Jesus Christ, listen faithfully to his sermons, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which saves the soul. To them then the warning of God “touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm” will be a warning lived up to. They will always be conscious of the fact, God deals with us, Christ deals with us through our pastor and preacher. Such a congregation will avoid running after other ministers, who can throw the language, and who can put on the pretty pyrotechnics of speech and gesture. They will not prefer them over and above their faithful and sincere pastor at home! They will be fully satisfied with their less gifted minister, who is not so great and eloquent as another. They will be satisfied, even though their pastor is not an Isaiah with language resplendent with inspired poetry, but only is a weeping prophet like Jeremiah. They will not impede his work, but speed it and propel it. They will give him the needed support for the wants of the body, and last but not least, will not try in every underhanded and wicked way to get rid of him as the modern woman gets rid of her unwanted babes!

How does the Divine Call, which is a necessity, reach the pastor of Christ? There are two ways plainly mentioned in the Bible. There is the call God extended to man directly without medium and man.—There is a divine call delivered to man indirectly by the hand of man. God often called directly and chose his ministers. Moses, the man of God, was called miraculously from a burning bush which burned and was not consumed. Elijah and Elisha received direct calls from the Lord. Amos the cowboy preacher, writes: “I was no prophet neither was I a minister’s son, but I was a cowboy and a gatherer, a raiser of sycamore fruit, and the Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said unto me: Go! Preach unto my people, Israel!” The Apostles and Paul, who proudly prints in his highly excited letter Galatians: “Not of men, nor through men, but by Jesus Christ.” Why God did this is His way, which is higher than the way of man. It is His way, which we will never fathom. “God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform!” He needs no advice. Then we have the divine call coming to the preacher through men and the means of man. In such a way was called Aaron, Titus. Through Paul and Barnabas we read, Acts 14:23, “God appointed preachers for each missionary congregation, which they had called into existence through the Gospel.” And when they had ordained, the Greek word here used means to designate by stretching out, or pointing with the hands or hand, had ordained them elders in every church and had prayed with fasting that commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed. This is the order and the fine custom observe among us today. We need not look for a call any other way. Such a call is divine! For God guides the hearts of men, as He guides the brooks through the leafy woods to the sea, God guides according His will, guides the choice, influences the acceptance of such a call extended through human agency. Of course we know full well at this point, that we have enough experiences, where man and ministers thwart God’s plan and purpose and doublecross Him, as Rebekah did in presenting her pet to be blessed by the aged and blind Isaac!—Of this we will write at the end under abuses. Now we draw the biblical conclusion after all that is written so far “*ceterum censeo vocationem divinam esse.*”

God extends this divine call through the local church. The right and privilege to call a pastor lies first and foremost within the jurisdiction of the church. It is the church, which has the power of the keys. All power and authority of the glorious ministry is vested in the church. This is plainly and pointedly proclaimed by Christ the Head of the Church. He said: “Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the Gospel to all nations, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and Lo! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.” This royal command is clear and concise. It was not given to the apostles and disciples alone. This command is dateless. It is for all the age “until He comes.” For Christ added intentionally “LO! I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.” The apostles did not live unto the end of the world, but the congregation of believers will continue to exist unto the end of the ages. Not all believers are to exercise the public office of the Gospel Ministry. Luther already said “if everyone would preach, who would constitute the hearers? If all would preach there would be utter confusion and a Babel of voices like in a frog pond full of chattering frogs!” Our Smalcald articles confess: “For 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, to elect, and to ordain ministers.” This authority is a gift of Christ to the church, which no human power can wrest from her, as St. Paul testifies to the Ephesians through the divine Spirit in ch.4 v. 8: “He ascended, He gave gifts to men.”—There and then in that place Paul enumerates among to many and manifold gifts especially belonging to the church of God, the gift of pastors and teachers, and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.

Consequently, wherever the church exists, a congregation of believers gathers for His Name, there the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. In our Catechism we teach the same principle, when we expound the words: "It is the peculiar, special church power, which Christ has given His Church on earth." "Let all things be done decently and in order" pleads the Spirit of God, who is a God of order and not confusion.

Also a synod, which is a group of local churches, can call collectively. The Synod calls through the appointed and elected persons. They plant the missionaries, *Reiseprediger*, or the heathen missionaries, and also the teaching staff at our colleges and seats of training. In the Roman Catholic Church this power lies in the hands of the Pope, who through his bishops assigns the individual calls. In the Methodist church the presiding bishops present the places, and in the state church of Germany the so-called Consistorium.

The call is often extended through the representatives of the synod. Circumstances may arise, which make it feasible that the call power be delegated to a committee, or a church council. This custom prevails among us for instance, when the "*Verteilungscommission*" distributes the places at the end of each seminary year. It is not good custom, or not the right way for one man to do the calling. This can very easily lead to popery. One man can more easily be bought or influenced than a whole congregation. It is not right and leads to misuse of the divine call, when a pastor picks his own successor! This procedure lies open to censure and rebuke. This is nepotism and the direct road to it. Far wiser and more wholesome is the prevailing custom among us to grant to the whole congregation the inherent right to call and ordain. It is the safest and more excellent way. This rule is found practically in almost, if not all, constitutions of local churches. Women and children vote through their representatives, who are the husbands and fathers. This is commonly called the *ecclesia representativa*.

*Who shall be called?*—The pastor must be a Christian! He must possess the right and living faith in His Redeemer! He must be a twiceborn man! Imagine a Nicodemus in the pulpit, who is not born again! He must not be a rubberstamp, a good yesser. He must be a guide to Jesus, numbered with us. It must be one to be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection. Everyone coming in contact with him must take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus. You can't change lives unless you have been changed. How we can find these things out? This is ascertained through examination, confession, testimony, colloquium. 1 Tim. 3:10 the Holy Ghost cautions "and let these also first be proved, tried and tested, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless." Chapter 5 verse 22 of the same letter we read "never be in a hurry to ordain a man, do not make yourself responsible for the sins of another man, keep thyself pure." Be on guard that not every Tom, Dick and Harry, who comes to you, or is dropped from the roll call of other synods or who ran away from the ministry, or who belongs to no synod and is without training, is ordained and placed among you. The preacher must be apt to teach, be blameless not sinless, fit. What a blessing is the honest minister sincere and trustworthy, loving Jesus! What a pain and poison a hired man who climbeth up some other way, who is after the filthy lucre and wants a job!

No pastor, wherever he be should be called away in an easygoing, I don't care what becomes of the church spirit. If the knowledge is on hand that harm will befall the people in the church after the pastor is gone, he should not go but remain. Ministers and missionaries in new *fields* ought not to be called away because the mission always suffers and is set back. It is not fair to make a ruling that only pastors of our synod dare to be called. The president of districts, or of the Mission Board, or pastors, who reside in the neighborhood of a vacant parish, may be approached for advice and instruction. In council there is strength. The Apostle did this, when

they came together, to elect Matthias. They talked it over most prayerfully. Titus gave advice how to supply pastors for the cities in the island Crete. Let us not in any way violate this good order and kill this helpful custom. Someone has said that humility, wisdom, and respect for the whole body of believers should prompt us to do this. It is one of those good church customs like fasting and bodily preparation in the Holy Communion. We are not only to seek the advice and admonition of Synod's officers, but also and above all follow the same, or sincerely and earnestly think through all their objections and weigh their words in prayer before we go out and play and practice our mistakes and selfwill. Keep your nose out of the other man's business.

For there are ministers, who should take a course in a school for at least ten years, which teaches them how to mind their own business. Ministers must be elected and not injected. They must not be thrown to a congregation, like Jove threw a king to the frogs in the pond, as the fable tells us. No official should be confronted in a congregation with the sudden remark: "we already have our man." We are told that.—Result?—Confusion. Confusion more confounded! Congregations often lose their pastors, because the wrong man was called and elected. The church is thus hampered, handcuffed and manhandled. Christian love demands a consideration of officials. What an abuse of God's order, when a committee goes from city to city and listens to this and that pulpiteer and then gets a sounding board for their expensive labors!—Are not the officials supposed to be acquainted with the qualities and qualifications of the pastors and the status of the various churches?—We are sure that they will act most conscientiously in these matters! Someone has said: "O Lord! If all parties and persons concerned would be more conscientious in proposing candidates and nominating them there would not be so much change and migration in pastorates and parishes, mission fields would not be so soon vacated, and this prematurely, and faithful pastors would receive appointments adequate to their God-given gifts." Let all concerned use pleasing circumspection. It is self-evident from these statements made that presidents and boards are to exercise extreme caution and religious care, and practice conscientious proposals. Let them be every minute on their guard, not to leave foxes into the vineyards, who destroy, not to treat the calling of the minister like the hiring of a laboring man from the idle marketplace, or move them as one moves the checkers and pawns on the board of play! Handle it not commercially as a cold stroke of hard business selling and directing with the intellect as the only guide and with friendship and favoritism the moving factor and the only impelling motive inglorious. God's Word and the Bible and earnest prayer must brood over it all and the Spirit of Christ must guard and guide against a man-made ministry. Let that be a lesson to all officials!—In Ezekiel 20 verse 1. 2 we read of the people in Babylon: "They came to enquire of the Lord and sat before me. Then came the Word of the Lord unto me." Jesus expressly tells His disciples that evil spirits depart only with and after much fasting and prayer, and with only much fasting and prayer good men arrive for the ministry.

Let us remember the divine call finds its way to individual men through men and the human agency. Consequently we often smell the blood of man and find the B.O. of men on this call divine. We find the infirmities, mistakes and slips of human hands, hearts and heads. We shall enumerate now some of the abuses, some of the spots and stains often found on the divine call, the sword of the Lord.

A minister sneaks into the back door of a congregation, ingratiates himself with sweet manners and methods and with beautiful handshaking and simonized smiles like Absalom steals the hearts of a people and kidnaps a church for himself. He uses underhanded ways and means, unseen by man, and with hidden ways influences the people to call him, for he is the man for that place! This stands out with the boldness of shinning brass. This is intestinal fortitude. We will

not use the rougher word of the slang and the street. He says to them: "I'll make it go." A minister practices leapear tactics and proposes himself to a church. He thinks bigamy thoughts, for he is, while he has his own church, looking for another in the offing. Just like a married man, who would be looking for another wife, step out philandering, circumspeting for another wife, which always leads to divorce and disaster. What a shameful behavior in the sight of God and His churches!—Suppose a pastor feels himself slipping and failing in His church, has lost confidence among the people, the feeling pervading the air everywhere—You are a failure here, an impediment to progress. Such a person can confide this condition to his superiors, who must carry it as a "*Beichtgeheimniss*," and not peddle it all over the conference and the synod! Then let the official secure change and care for the cure. If a pastor emeritus, or a younger pastor, who has left the ministry, again wishes to enter the field of preaching service let him thank God, if a congregation expresses the wish to choose such a one, but it is far better and safer to announce this intention and affair to the leaders, and let them suggest the desired pastor to the respective church, which is vacant. No minister or ministers, who have neither right or business should make proposals to a vacant congregation. If they do, let them bear all the dire consequences! Do not promise any congregation that you will accept in the event you receive their call. No pastor dare receive a call from a congregation, which sends it from a selfish motive. For instance if the church privately feels him out with the question, will you come, if we send you the call? All the while it is evident that the sister congregation, which the pastor is serving, also its church-life, would suffer a severe jar, or incur a setback, if the pastor would leave! What an abuse!

A pastor will at times and in all places be always conscious of the holiness and solemnity of a divine call. Church and church officials, pastor and people, including the presidents of synods and districts, must live in practice, word and deed, a conscience void of offence against the divine call. Weed out all irregularities. Some one has correctly put it in the word: "How mean and small, cheap and ashamed must that pastor feel, who has directly or indirectly, solicited and cooperated in an improper manner to obtain a certain parish." What a cheap conception such a man must have of his Holy Office and the doctrine of the divine call, when he lets his wife decide for him. His wife coming first to see the city, or village and going through the parsonage comes out, enters the car of her husband, and then whispers to him "we cannot take that place, for it is full of modern inconveniences. That house has no indoor toilet, nor bathroom, and has no oak floors and no furnace!"—Good Lord deliver us!—Has it come to this?—Mischievous thou art afoot! How terrible and horrible it is when a father, who by the way, is also a professor in one of the Lutheran Schools, writes to his son! Do not accept the call, which is on your desk. Our son-in-law, your brother-in-law, is going to leave his place soon, and you are going to get his place! Then you will be nearer mother and me! And this has happened just so! Has it come to such a pass? Let us repent and return! Then this obedient son returned the call with home-made and sugared prevarications. Another pastor does not even send the calling congregation an answer to the call received. Verily it is a sin and an abuse, which, when it comes, is crying to high Heaven for judgment! Another abuse we find, when one pastor writes to another brother near by, or far away, when a parish is vacant, or writes to the supply pastor by airmail: Put in a good word for me. Work for me. Remember me, when candidates are proposed. "Make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this prison house."—Genesis. Others ask first, how much does that congregation pay? Is the salary a good one?—And the filthy lucre does its unclean work for another miserable abuse of the divine call. Then there is the abuse of nepotism, when congregations are handed around among the relatives and friends of the immediate families! Like a senator in Washington, finding jobs for his whole family tree. It is passed around among



relatives like an heirloom. They bring each other within telephone distance with each other. Are we guilty of such malfeasance and misdemeanor?—Any pastor guilty of the above-mentioned abuses, whether past or present, must repent in sackcloth and ashes, and go and sin no more!

We believe that one of the grossest and greatest mis- and ab- uses of the divine call, which is always condemnable, and never condonable, is the condemnable action of busybodies, meddlers among pastors, who feel called upon to propose candidates for any and every vacancy. Refer the matter to the right and regular place, to the men, who have been called and chosen to handle this matter. It is just sordid and sinful to find yourself face to face with a congregation, who has already called so and so, because he or they said he is good and the man for the place. If the established order would be observed more religiously, the conscience of pastor and congregation would rest more easy and quietly. Then there would be less misfits in office, and more fine fits, more dynamite, where it is needed. Many would be spared the chastisements of God, errors and inconsistencies would be fully avoided. The divine call is also misused shamefully and most disgracefully, when a pastor uses a call received to force his congregation to raise his salary, threatening to leave, if this is not forthcoming, or intimating this most dramatically. Then the congregation most truthfully peddles it all over the town, our minister stayed, because we raised his salary, we bought him! Fine business! “Simon offered them money, saying give me also this power to give the Holy Ghost.” But Peter said unto him, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Acts 8:19. 20.

Who is to decide when the pastoral relations are to be terminated? Both pastor and people have a voice and a veto here. The pastor has no right to sever or end his relations with a church, whenever he pleases. Suddenly like a thunderbolt from a clear, blue sky announce after the benediction: You have heard me for the last time! I am through with you! I resign! This is not only rude, but ruthlessly pagan. Neither has the congregation the right to depose, or dismiss the pastor *ad libitum*, at pleasure, whenever whim or wrath chooses to do so. Such a relation is sacred and must be severed decently and in order. We can conceive of nothing more distasteful and unbecoming to the church of God than an ouster order from the court. Imagine a sheriff putting the stubborn preacher out of the parsonage and parish! Police sent in and invited to keep order in a meeting! It happened in Corinth and Paul writes: “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?” 1 Cor. 6:18. Release from the call must come from the Lord through the same channel by which it came. How much expense could be saved in investigation and how much travel avoided and meetings omitted, if the latter principle would be carried out. Every call that a minister receives should be submitted to his people for deliberation and action, not to a few persons in the congregation, or council, but to the church assembly. There is an exception. Suppose the pastor has just accepted a call and is installed only a few months, or a year, a call to him would be unlikely to reach the church. Do not commercialize the received call. Some day they in your parish will say: Go! For we cannot and we will not vote any more salary. And then? Expose! Brethren! These things ought not to be.

In accepting and rejecting, or better returning a call, only God’s Word and Holy Spirit filling the conscience must guard and guide against excess, or abuses will freely and fully follow. How can God’s will be ascertained? His pleasure be discovered? This is mutual. It will come from the congregation and pastor. The weal and the woe of the kingdom of God will always be the deciding factor. Will the flock benefit by your leaving? Will it suffer? Am I a present

impediment? A weight or a wing? Am I needed? The writer remembers a brilliant pastor, who was great in the pulpit and out of it, sermon maker and a Seelsorger, who, as the years came and sent, found out that he was unable to keep pace with rapidly developing English work in the parish, and he voluntarily stepped out and dropped the mantle on younger shoulders. He went to a smaller congregation. He did not say: "This is my cow and I am going to milk here until I, or she is dead. I'll dare anybody to put me out!" or similar horrid remarks often heard from the lips, which should have grace and preserve unimpeached the doctrine of sound words. "'Tis true, 'tis a pity ! It's a pity, 'tis true!"

On the other hand a congregation will not feel insulted, or flattered, when the pastor receives a call. They will gather together with the pastor prayerfully considering the call from God's angle. Lay aside all selfishness. They will not say: "We have a good pastor and there is none such. Where will we get one just like him?" And then after he is gone throw mud instead of bouquets! Then say: Good thing he went, we have a better one. This new man beats him completely. Paul and Barnabas left Antioch, and did far more work for Christ in the broad field of missions! All gifts of the Holy Ghost are given to every man for the common good. Read 1 Cor. 12, verse 7.—When external reasons, such as a beautiful church building, parsonage and other things comfortable are allowed to give the deciding vote, then and from that moment the pastor has surrendered to the flesh and has become disobedient to the heavenly vision, immediately has conferred with flesh and blood. The ministry will be blamed, its glory spotted, in the eyes of the outsider and unbeliever, and the godless world, which sees the minister's work traded or treated as a job, where comfort, or money, or ease decides. Let every pastor solve or settle the final word of acceptance on his knees in the quiet chamber of prayer and with tears. After the decision has been reached and published let the fellow-ministers be silent and refrain from giving all kinds of self-made reasons, why he accepted and went, which is breaking the Eighth Commandment with their tongue and tattle, which advances wild and weird reasons, why the brother left and arrived. It is not right. That the ministry be not blamed. "Blessed are they that stick, for they shall succeed."—Blessed is the pastor, who is always ready to follow the Master. He will ever work with a good conscience, with comfort and with sweet confidence and great courage, that comes to him from the earnest conviction: I am here! By God's appointment. In His keeping, under His training. For His time.

Never range the ministry among the many other secular alternatives. Then you miss the appointed door. Your vision then is horizontal, like that of Lot "who lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere." Your outlook then is that of the man of the world. It is the Judas motive, "how much will you give me?" Let our vision be vertical. Like David. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. Like Abraham, to whom God said. "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward—I will give it unto thee. The assurance of being sent is the vital communion. The absence of the divine call eviscerates a man's responsibility, will tend to secularize his ministry, commercialize his calling from end to end, and make the ministry a fine place and profession, where he can hide and sleep and be lazy without getting caught. The ministry can cover a multitude of sins.

And now, brethren, in conclusion. One Roman senator used to close all his speeches in his senate with the words "*ceterum censeo Carthaginem delendam esse,*" which words we will change to *ceterum censeo vocationem divinam esse!*—And we will repeat it on every occasion, and never talk sinfully and with a smile of the divine call. He who enters through the door of the divine call and vocation into the ministry will surely apprehend "the Glory of his calling." He

will be constantly wondering, and his wonder will be a moral antiseptic, that he has been appointed a servant in the treasuries of Grace to make known “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Study St. Paul’s letters and you are impressed with this wonder, which Paul constantly wonders over. Next to the infinite, passionate love to his dear Savior, “who loved me and died for me,” he states, Paul’s wonder is that he was made minister of salvation and the grace of God! From the hour of Damascus, from the time he was called from the bright light, which blazoned around him on the dusty road unto the day of his martyr’s death he is always wondering over his divine call! “Unto *me*! Who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given! That *I* should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. For this cause *I, Paul*, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of grace of God, which is *given to me* you-ward! Whereunto *I am* ordained a preacher, and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. The Gospel of the Blessed God, which was committed to *my trust*—and *I* thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath *called me* for that He enabled *me*, for that He counted *me* worthy, trustworthy, putting *me* into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy!”—Do you not from these quotations feel a sacred, burning wonder in all these ejaculations and exclamations?—He is proud of His office! Oh! The Head and the Heart of the Church, Jesus Christ our Lord keep the ministry unspotted from the world for you and me. “Be ye clean! Be ye clean ! Ye that bear the vessels of the Lord!” Selah! Think it over! Amen.