

Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order – The Doctrine of the Call

[Presented at the Colonial Pastor-Delegate Conference, October 22, 1979]

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Article XIV: *Of Ecclesiastical Order*

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called.

The Doctrine of the Call

All Christians have a divine call

Every Christian has a divine call from God. In his explanation to the Third Article, Martin Luther stated it so beautifully and succinctly. “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord nor come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel . . .” By Word and sacraments the call to faith has gone out to every man, woman, or child who is a believer. “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, is faithful” (1 Corinthians 1:9).

All Christians have a divine call to proclaim the gospel

The announcing of God’s good news is not a “closed ship” affair reserved for a few educated theologians and ordained ministers. The exercise of religion is not something delegated only to the minister. It is a wide open challenge, privilege, and opportunity for every Christian to exercise their call as a royal priest of God to “declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

I will never forget the preaching of the gospel by a mentally retarded resident of Bethesda Lutheran Home, Watertown, Wisconsin. This boy had the habit of welcoming visitors with a most powerful handshake. You almost wanted to avoid the exit he patrolled to save your hand from another bone crunching experience. Am I ever glad I didn’t? One night he grabbed my hand and led me off to the empty dining room to show me around. Pointing out various points of interest in the room his finger came to a picture of Jesus the Good Shepherd. “That’s my Savior,” he blurted out. Not very extraordinary, you say. Maybe so, but it was the way he said it. Tears came to my eyes as I heard that mighty sermon delivered from a trusting heart. That boy was a servant of God carrying out his call.

My wife and I are blessed with two daughters, ages three and four. After Vacation Bible School this past summer, two little girls spent their mornings playing as usual, but also singing at the top of their voices: “This little gospel light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine,” and “Jesus loves me.” Far be it from me to tell them to cease from letting those beautiful words drift into the open windows of my unchurched neighbors. They have a ministry. They have a divine call.

An old man of 96 is spending his first year in an old folks home in Omro, Wisconsin. He begins his day by reading a portion of the Bible, and closes the day in the same manner. His prayers contain references to being tired and wanting to go home to his Savior. I remember being at his home at meal time. As youngsters, we felt he prayed too long at the table, especially with the smell of the evening meal warming on the wood stove filling our nostrils. He would pray for family, for the gift of the Bible, for his church, for his pastor, for students preparing for the ministry, for his country, and for protection through the night. That old man has a ministry. Over the years Grandpa has done a lot of powerful preaching with his prayers in answer to God’s call.

The ministry of the keys has been entrusted by God to the whole Christian church on earth

The previous examples illustrate God’s call to every member of his church to be an active proclaimer of salvation. To carry out that mandate, tools are provided. It is God’s keys – the gospel in Word and sacraments.

The ministry of the keys is none other than the authority to proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments, the authority to unlock or lock heaven by forgiving or not forgiving sin. The Roman Catholic Church falsely states that Christ gave this power to Peter alone. “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this

was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 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 16:17-19). He not only gave this power to Peter, but also to the other disciples. Almost the very same words are spoken to them in John 20:21-23. “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven’” (other reference – Matthew 18:18-20).

The authority to bind and loose, to preach, to baptize, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper did not end with those who heard it firsthand from Christ. His keys are not given to a special individual within the church or to a special class, but to all believers. The Lord’s command to make disciples of all nations and baptize concludes with the promise, “I will be with you always” (Matthew 28:20). The receiving of the Holy Ghost in Acts 1:8 was not only for Jews and European and Asian Gentiles but “to the ends of the earth.” His wish for observing his Supper was “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24). No cut-off point was ever given. The words of the Apostle Paul apply to all. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 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” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a).

Beyond our individual call to faith, some Christians are called by God to publicly represent his church here on earth. This call is the point of Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession and this paper. The key words to understanding God’s special call to service are “in the church” and “publicly.”

I. A Call is necessary (to publicly preach the gospel and administer the sacraments in the church)

I have no business presenting a paper on the doctrine of the call to this meeting of pastors and delegates of the Colonial Conference without the express invitation to do so.

The public ministry is a representative ministry. Every called servant represents Christ and a congregation or a group of believers depending on the calling group. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20). Article XIV states that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the sacraments unless he be regularly called. “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14-15a)

Acts 20:28 encourages servants to guard themselves and “all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” I have no call to stomp into the local French Roman Catholic cathedral and denounce their abuses of God’s Word no matter how much it burns me up inside. I must be content to give my witness privately to those who ask me and publicly warn those who have called me of the departures from God’s Word and prepare them to be ready to give their witness when challenged or opportunity is offered.

Professors Schuetze and Habeck in *The Shepherd Under Christ* have included some useful quotes from Martin Luther on the necessity of a call.

Luther states emphatically, “I dare not preach without a call,” going even so far as to say, “I must not go to Leipzig or to Magdeburg for the purpose of preaching there, for I have neither call nor office to take me to those places. Yes, even if I heard that nothing but heresy was rampant in the pulpit at Leipzig, I would have to let it go on.” By saying this, Luther is not approving of the false preaching. He goes on to say: “A preacher must be sure that he is teaching and preaching God’s Word and that he is not dealing in doctrines of men or of the devil.” He recognized that the pope and bishops also had a call, but they did not have God’s Word and hence were abusing their call. To have a call without God’s Word is not enough. To have God’s Word without a call

is not enough. “Both of these points must go together.” However, he does not view the requirement for a call in absolute terms. In case of great emergency, whoever wishes may begin to preach the Word, “for it is one thing to exercise a right publicly, another to use it in time of emergency. Publicly one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church. In time of emergency each may use it as he deems best.” (22-23)

Permit another quote from Martin Luther which hits the nail on the head on the necessity of a call.

Though all of us are priests, we may and should not on that account all preach or teach and govern. However from the whole congregation some must be selected and chosen to whom this office is to be committed; and whoever holds this office is because of it, not a priest (like all the rest), but a servant, a minister, of all the others. And if he can or will no more preach or serve, he steps back into the common crowd, commits his office to someone else, and is now again no more than every common Christian. Behold, thus must the office of preaching, or the ministry, be distinguished from the universal priesthood of all baptized Christians. For this office is nothing more than a public service, which is delegated to one by the whole congregation, though all of them are priests together. (St. Louis Edition – Vol. 5:1037)

It makes you wonder whether all the religious rip-off artists criss-crossing the country and our television sets are there because a group of Christians called them to their ministries or because they were financially able to buy prime time in response to their own inner prompting. When questioned about their call, they usually answer, “I have personally been called by God.” Then they proceed to relate some supernatural event in their life. This impresses people. Along comes the Wisconsin Synod and its method of calling public servants, which involves divinely guided human decisions throughout made by responsible members of the universal priesthood where we too claim, “The Lord fills our vacancies.” The former explanation seems so authentic. Ours does not. No wonder individuals question the divinity of a call under the second set of circumstances. That leads to the next question.

II. Who calls?

A. God calls immediately

God calls. He may do this either immediately or mediately through his church to which he has given the power. Both are equally valid.

We have no problem believing the divinity of a call extended personally by God for a spokesman to proclaim his Word. Moses was unsure God had tapped the right man for the job to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. On the pages of Exodus 3 and 4 one after another of Moses’ excuses were removed by God. When Moses returned to the land of his birth there was no doubt in his mind he was on the Lord’s business.

Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet even before he was born. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

In dramatic fashion the Lord Jesus singled out Saul, the hater of Christians, for service in his church. Called by God, Saul became Paul, the greatest missionary in the New Testament church. Ananias was sent to Paul with the Lord’s call. “But the Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel’” (Acts 9:15).

Does God call in this manner today? It certainly is possible. God can do anything, anytime, anyplace. However, a direct call is not his usual means of operation in his church. When the apostles first went forth with the precious gospel proclamation “the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20). “So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the

Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders” (Acts 14:3). Signs and wonders were the distinguishing marks of an apostle.

Neo-Pentecostals and others want us to believe God’s process of calling is still immediate and still authenticated by miracles. I believe signs and wonders ceased when God’s New Testament was complete. No longer was it necessary to back up his spokesmen with miracles for now we have “the word of the prophets made more certain” (2 Peter 1:19).

Reports of signs and wonders today make me super careful and skeptical of those producing them because “the coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Scripture is sufficient of itself. “From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

For us to know the will of God perfectly and definitely eliminate an immediate call in our day is an impossibility. However, I would consider it the exception rather than the rule, especially after God placed the ministry of the keys in the hands of his church on earth.

B. God calls mediately

Jesus called his twelve disciples to a representative public ministry (Matthew 10:2-8). His final words to his disciples were his mission commission to continue preaching, teaching, and baptizing (Matthew 28:18-20). He did not want this divinely appointed service to his church to lapse with his ascension to heaven.

The call I serve to Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church of Orleans, Ontario was assigned to me by a committee of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod on Call Day, 1974 at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A group of believers, representing the church, sat around a table making God-directed decisions on candidates to fill existing vacancies. Visibly it looks very human. Yet, the Bible indicates God is at work in the calling process through his church. My call is from God.

No one assumes a proper call on their own. God does the calling in every case. “No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4).

Entrusted with the keys to heaven, Christians possess the privilege to speak for God and issue a call in his name. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

The Confessions summarize this right of the church to call, elect, and ordain ministers.

For wherever the church is, there is the authority (command) 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, which no human power can wrest from the church, as Paul also testifies to the Ephesians (4:8) when he says: He ascended, he gave gifts to men. And he enumerates among the gifts specially belonging to the church pastors and teachers, and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Hence, wherever there is a true church, the right to elect and ordain ministers necessarily exists. Just as in a case of necessity even a layman absolves, and becomes the minister and pastor of another; as Augustine narrates the story of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the catechumen, who after Baptism then absolved the baptizer. (*Tractatus* §67, *Triglot* 523)

There is no doubt that the calling of Paul was by extraordinary, divine, intervention. In numerous places Paul claims divine action in his call (Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1). Paul not only claims a divine call for himself, but also Timothy, and other co-workers who were not called directly, but mediately by God through his church. “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant...” (2 Corinthians 3:4-6a). “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart” (2 Corinthians 4:1).

The Holy Ghost separated Paul and Barnabas to do missionary work through the Christians at Antioch. The Antioch congregation commissioned them (Acts 13:2,3,4).

The elders appointed by the Ephesus congregation were not to consider themselves answerable only to their congregation but to God who placed them in their position. “Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20:28).

Archippus, an unknown to us, received his ministry from the Lord through the church. “Tell Archippus: ‘See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord’” (Colossians 4:17).

Both lists of New Testament servants recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 leave little doubt who is in control of calling. “And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets...” “He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe. 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” (Ephesians 4:10-12).

C. The good order of the public ministry is from God

It is not just expediency on the part of Christ’s church that we have the continuation of the office of the public ministry. It is incorrect to state that as the church grew in the 1st Century, the believers got together and on their own decided a public ministry was the best way of doing things, so they appointed ministers to remedy their needs. The order we have is God’s design, not man’s. “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33). “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

That comforts us. Imagine the confusion without this order. Church services would last for days if every Christian were allowed time to preach a twenty minute sermon. Picture the scene if two believers wanted to baptize the same child. How many Christians would do mission work in foreign countries without a system of support? Theological foundation, organization, and leadership are necessary to carry out the Lord’s commission to evangelize the world. He has beautifully provided.

To draw together our thoughts on why we believe the public ministry is a special, God-ordained way of exercising the New Testament ministry of the Word the following summary is reproduced from the Senior Dogmatics Notes ,:of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (p. 163).

1. The need for a call – Romans 10:15
2. The qualifications set down for it – 1 Timothy 3:1-12
3. The fact that those serving in it are special gifts of God to his church – Ephesians 4:11-13
4. The fact that those serving in it are appointed by God – 1 Corinthians 12:28
5. The fact that it is designated by various special names, e.g. “office of a bishop” – 1 Timothy 3:1
6. The fact that it is a means of livelihood for full-time servants of the Word – 1 Corinthians 9:14

III. Public service to the church can take on various forms

There is no direct word of institution for any particular form of the ministry. In his 1965 essay to the Wisconsin Synod in convention, Professor Erwin Scharf included the following forms:

Assistant pastors, vicars, ordained professors, instructors, tutors, missionaries, executive secretaries, male teachers, lady teachers, teachers on a great variety of grade levels from the upper grades to the nursery school, full time teachers, substitute teachers, Sunday school teachers, choirmasters, elders in the congregations, officers of the synod, districts and conferences... [This list] may not be the full list of all such who work among us in the public use of the keys, preaching, teaching, aiding, or guiding the precious activity of sharing the gospel. (Proceedings of the 38th Convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1965, p. 57)

The apostle Paul's words in 1 Timothy 5:17 show that others were called into public service to the church who did not labor primarily in duties we associate with a pastor. "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

The call meeting described in Acts 6 was held to choose seven men whose public function was to take care of the social services in the Jerusalem congregation so the disciples could concentrate on the ministry of the Word.

The lists of New Testament servants active publicly on behalf of the church of Christ include a wide range of duties beyond that of a pastor or teacher (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11-12). All of them have a divine call from God to a public ministry whenever Christians desire another Christian to serve on their behalf.

We add to the confusion with the various methods we employ to put these called servants to work in the church. We ordain pastors, commission missionaries, install male teachers, induct female teachers, and some we just put to work with no fanfare. This is not to imply different degrees or ranks of servants. The very nature of public service is one of serving. It is done though to show the levels of responsibility.

In our Wisconsin Synod circles we are careful to convey the divine character of a call to a pastor or teacher. The same cannot always be said for the other public offices. More effort must be made to instill the divinity, the seriousness, the responsibility of the church's call to any servant of God be they church council members, Sunday school teachers, vacation Bible school teachers, organists, or what have you.

These other calls into a public ministry make for interesting discussion and thinking through. We will not have the pleasure to investigate each example here.

IV. Whom does God call?

A. God calls men for the pastoral ministry

For the office of pastor, God calls men to serve his church. Here Scripture is clear in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-38. A most uncomfortable and ungodly position arises for any woman to serve a congregation with God's plain prohibition staring back at them in black and white. I have no statistics at my fingertips, but my observation has been that women pastors don't last long in the parish ministry. They seem to end up in a branch of their church body's social ministries or education system. Rev. Pamela McGee served two LCA Loyalist congregations near Ottawa along the St. Lawrence Seaway at Riverside and Morrisburg, Ontario. She lasted barely four years. This rejection is not just society's "hang-up" with women ministers, but God's built-in prohibition.

An interesting question to ponder is whether women ministers have a divine call? Yes, they do, but their call is an abuse because it was received by circumventing the will of God in his Word. As the Roman Catholic Church's abuse of the call led to the papacy and eventually the Lutheran Reformation, it is my prayer the increasing number of women in the public ministry in other denominations will lead to their rejection and a return to sound, scriptural practices.

B. God wants His servants to be qualified

God's desired qualifications are recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. "The husband of one wife" hardly qualifies women for the ministry. "Apt to teach" and "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" certainly support our system of sound theological training.

A local Pentecostal preacher near the congregation I serve was a race car driver at 19 and a real "hell-raiser" by his own admission. As a teenager he never went to church. Then his older brother worked on him and he accepted Jesus Christ. By the time he was 22 he was a Pentecostal pastor after only two years of

Bible college. I seriously question his ability to hold fast the faithful word and I shudder to imagine how *unsound* his doctrine is.

God's qualifications must be maintained to remain fit for service in God's church. Neglect of duty, unfaithfulness, inability, false doctrine, or a scandalous life are reasons which disqualify a pastor from his call.

It is not improper for a congregation to ask their pastor to resign his call if illness affects his abilities to the extent the work of the Kingdom suffers. Hopefully a pastor will take that step himself. A congregation has not only the right but the obligation to withdraw a call from a false teacher. The Lord's standards of sound doctrine are firm. The Missouri Synod is making a fatal mistake when it refuses to revoke the calls of the false prophets at their schools. The Missouri Synod is cited solely on the basis of their situation occupying our thoughts in recent years. Let us not become complacent. May our synod live up to our Lord's expectations and "stand tall" even if it is immensely unpopular, humanly speaking, if similar situations arise.

Pastors are human and subject to temptation, perhaps more so than other Christians. If a pastor breaks the 6th Commandment, his sin can be forgiven; but his actions demand his immediate resignation from his call that nothing mar the high office he serves and create further problems because of outward appearances. After a time of demonstrating a God-pleasing life, he may re-qualify for the ministry. A district president could outline the procedure that is followed more accurately. I can't think of any examples right offhand and perhaps that is good. It would be difficult for a pastor to accept a call to another location without having his former sins follow him, but not impossible.

V. Proper calling procedure

At times our Wisconsin Synod is accused of possessing a parochial attitude toward most everything we do and stand for. When it comes to adhering to the Bible as our only guide, I'm rather proud of that description. The "in" thing in public ministry these days is to announce a dramatic visit from God in which a call was given to broadcast every morning for two hours in prime time, or build some multi-million dollar hospital that really isn't needed. Of course, these ventures take gobs and gobs of money God instructed them to get from you.

A. Examining New Testament call meetings

Isn't it nice to know that the typical call meeting held in a Colonial Conference congregation closely follows the most descriptive call meeting recorded in the New Testament (Acts 1:15-26)? Peter presided and described the vacancy that existed among the twelve disciples after the suicide of Judas. Candidates for the office had to be qualified by having been with the apostles since the time of John the Baptist. This guaranteed a candidate who studied at the feet of Jesus (Acts 1:21-22). Two names were presented: Joseph called Barsabbas 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" (Acts 1:24-25). It was an appeal to the Lord of the church to make known his choice through them, and it was at the same time a confession that the one who calls his public servants into their work is the Lord God himself and none other. The lots were cast and Matthias was chosen.

The calling of the deacons in Acts 6:1-6 is similar. The twelve apostles held the call meeting. Nominees were asked for who "are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). The disciples wanted to give their time fully to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They needed help with waiting on tables and looking after widows. The congregation cast their lots and selected seven.

We feel comfortable with these New Testament call meetings because they parallel our own call meetings. That authority, however, can be entrusted to a smaller group or even delegated to an individual with scriptural backing. Mission boards call missionaries to locations where we do not have congregations. This is proper, for their authority to do so has been given to them from the larger group of believers. A few references are listed to support this view. Under *χειροτονέω* the Arndt-Gingrich lexicon adds the comment: "On the other hand the presbyters in Lycaonia and Pisidia were not chosen by the congregations, but it is said of Paul and

Barnabas χειροτονήσαντες αὐτοῖς κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους (Acts 14:23 – “and when they had appointed them elders in every church”; p. 889b – Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon). Titus 1:5 is also cited (καταστήσης): “This does not involve a choice by the group; here the word means appoint, install, with the apostles as subject” (p. 889b – Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon). “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5).

We raise a few eyebrows when we hear of church bodies allowing a few officials at the top to assign and reassign calls to their ministers and priests. The archdiocese of Ottawa, about the size of the entire Wisconsin Synod, plays fruit basket upset with their priests about every three years, or so it seems. The system itself is scriptural as shown on the previous page. We reject the ecclesiastical hierarchy which has developed in the Roman Catholic Church because of their false understanding of Christ’s giving of his keys to all believers and not just Peter (cf. paragraph on the ministry of the keys). The apostles acted as individual call committees only on recommendation of the larger group of believers. To avoid problems let us leave the immediate responsibility of calling in the hands of the congregation wherever possible.

B. Abusing the call process

Improper calling methods and abuses abound outside the freedom of Scripture. No one should solicit a particular call by using their connections, influence or “pulling a string.” If efforts to secure a call are initiated for selfish, personal reasons and not for the greater glory of the kingdom of God, it is wrong. A pastor who campaigns for a position will never feel confident he is there because the Lord wants him there. In a call it is the Lord who through the church seeks out a man for a particular office, and not the other way around. The office seeks the man and not the man the office. Pastors who arrange their calls don’t end up with a perfect situation, but a most miserable ministry. The Lord knows where you are. He put you in your present call. He will come and get you when he wants you.

Groups of congregations, usually about ten, have a circuit pastor who serves as an advisor and the pastor’s pastor. If problems are evident in someone’s ministry or other valid reasons like health are present, he is the impartial third party to assess the matter. Then he can bring a name to the attention of those responsible for assembling call lists if he thinks it best.

C. Seeking a call

During the final preparation of this paper, the content was discussed with my Canadian colleague, Al Lindke. He brought up the question of Apollos seeking a call to Achaia. Apollos, a fervent student and defender of the Scriptures, came to Ephesus where Aquila and Priscilla took him under their wing and fully instructed him in the Word of God. Then comes his unprecedented behavior. “When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed” (Acts 18:27). The Lord did bless his ministry. In fact he was so popular that his name came up when Paul had to warn the Corinthians of their sacerdotal tendencies (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4; 12:3-6). When Paul wanted to assign him a second time to Corinth later on, Apollos hesitated. I suspect his personal magnetism was hindering the gospel rather than helping it in Corinth. He wisely declined. Later we find him assisting Titus (Titus 3:13).

It is conceivable that a pastor could offer himself for a call if his motives were devoid of any personal reasons and sprang from a heartfelt desire to serve his Lord. If our synod opens a mission in Moscow (please, dream a little with me) and unknown to anyone else, a pastor in South Dakota is fluent in Russian, his coming forward will be most welcome. Far better though to take it to the Lord in prayer. “The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit

intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Ghost doesn't need our help.

VI. Deliberation of a call

The deliberation of a call is of intense interest to us as pastors and to congregations who extend calls. It is a soul-searching, heart-throbbing experience to go through. We want to reach God-pleasing decisions. Briefly stated, there is one overriding criterion for accepting or declining a call – "Where can I better serve the kingdom of God?" Or stated another way – "Under which of the two calls (the one I am serving or the one I have received) does the Lord want me to serve?" "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

It is wrong to assume every call to a larger congregation must be accepted because of greater responsibility. Last March I returned a call to a congregation of over three-thousand souls because consultation with family, friends, and fellow pastors brought me to the conclusion I could better serve the Lord on the mission field.

Personal gain should never enter the deliberation of this high calling. A pastor is entitled to a decent salary but not necessarily a higher salary. Respect for the pastor and his office are required to efficiently minister, but not always greater prestige.

An uncle of mine is a pastor in the American Lutheran Church. In their circles they have the practice of bringing a pastor in for a visit with the calling congregation to see if they are compatible. Avoid it. A pastor is called to preach and teach, not to see if the parsonage is adequate or the people accommodating. The Lord doesn't always call for compatibility's sake. The covering letter which accompanies the call should be sufficient to fully explain the spiritual needs and problems the pastor being called is to address himself to. It goes without saying the covering letter should not hide any problems either.

The old-timers in the synod often refer to the dubious situation that existed a generation ago with the line, "The Holy Ghost calls into Milwaukee, but not out." Perhaps personal considerations of the flesh were influencing pastors to accept calls to Milwaukee, the heart of the synod, but not out of its friendly confines. This problem does not exist today.

Trial sermons and preach-offs are a lousy way to select a pastor. The public ministry is complex and diversified and the needs of most congregations demand more than good preaching. A good preacher may be a terrible teacher. A great administrator may be deficient in the pulpit. The Lord knows best what He needs in every congregation. Selfishness has no part in the calling process on the part of congregation or pastor. Examples could go on for pages, but the overall principle has been stated. Another assignment at this conference will offer ample opportunity to discuss individual concerns.

VII. Ordination and the call

Sunday evening, October 7, 1979 found all the WELS pastors serving in Ontario; brothers Lindke, Pfothhauer, Zarling, and myself participating in the ordination service of Roy Hefti, new missionary to Toronto, Canada's largest metropolis at three million inhabitants. Naturally, our people wonder how the doctrine of the call and ordination hitch up. One lady made the comment after the service, "Now, I can call him 'Pastor Hefti.'" Could she before? Yes! In this case Roy Hefti's recommendation by the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for assignment verified his qualifications. His call conferred the office to a specific responsibility. The moment he expressed his willingness to serve the call assigned made him their pastor.

Ordination is a liturgical form to confirm the legitimacy of the call and ask for God's blessing. The service of ordination publicly declares the call was properly executed and the recipient properly qualified. The apostles conducted an ordination service for the seven deacons after their call meeting (Acts 6:6). Likewise Saul and Barnabas were commissioned in a special service after being called as foreign missionaries (Acts 13:3). The

Smalcald Articles speak of ordination as a public ratification (§70, *Triglotta* 521) and not a sacrament as the pope's boys insist.

About three years ago I went to a lecture by Rev. Richard Wormbrand, a Jew turned Christian who spent fourteen years in prison for his beliefs in Romania. There is no denying his sincerity. However, he calls himself a Lutheran pastor. In the question and answer period afterwards I asked him to state where he studied, where he was ordained, and where he was called to. He mumbled something about a university professor and then appealed to the crowd to judge for themselves whether he was qualified. I don't doubt his Christian convictions, but I still wonder if he ever received a call to do anything. Of course, my question was denounced as a communist plot to erase his ministry behind the Iron Curtain. Well, I am not a communist and I do not believe Richardk Wurmbrand is a true Lutheran pastor.

VIII. Faithfulness to our call

Having received a call, a pastor will faithfully serve. Scripture passages are plentiful to fortify us in weak moments. "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" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Strong unions that misuse their power, high wages, lack of incentive to take pride in one's work say the faithfulness of many people in today's work force. Hut a pastor doesn't dust put in forty hours for the company. A pastor labors for the Lord and it really isn't labor, but love.

God is not a boss who never comes around to check up on his employees. He is our constant companion calling us through his church, sustaining us with his faithful Word, and providing us with a retirement plan that is out of this world. A pastor can faithfully serve every minute confidently believing Philippians 1:13, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (also 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Corinthians 3:5,6).

Conclusion

Article XIV: *Of Ecclesiastical Order* appears short and straightforward. Continual study by pastors and laypeople will render its application the same.

To God alone be the glory

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