

The Call to the Public Use of the Keys

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People who possess genuine treasures are known to enjoy occasions for concentrating on the beauty and value of those treasures. And such an age-old custom seems to serve a very good purpose. Unless a given treasure, however great its beauty or value may be, becomes the object of concentrated appreciation and esteem from time to time, it suffers the possibility of not being cherished as it ought be, perhaps even of being abused.

As our series of essays at this convention of our Synod concerning the *Ministry of the Keys* directs your attention at this point to the *Call to the Public Use of the Keys*, permit me to try with the Lord's help to turn this hour into an occasion for you, the assembled delegates gathered here, for concentrating on the beauty and value of that precious treasure in its setting among the vast array of treasures given to us as a church by Christ, the Lord of the Church.

I. The Divinity of the Call

For as many years as any one of us recalls hearing or speaking of the *Call to the Public Use of the Keys*, we are reasonably sure, he recalls hearing and speaking of its being divine. Let us, therefore, give our first consideration to that fact, that *the Call to the Public Use of the Keys is Divine*. Could it be said of any of us, however, that the divinity of the call has become a concept for us which we take for granted but do not know quite how to defend? Just a little stroll in spirit along some of the familiar paths of our Savior and His Apostles will indeed attest to the correctness of the doctrine of the divinity of the call.

The very first New Testament preaching was done under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Overjoyed at the circumcision and naming of his long-awaited son, and wanting to share the things he knew of the high calling of his son, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Ghost as he gave voice to his happy description of the new Elias. And when that same son began to fulfill his calling, once referred to by Isaiah of old as a "voice crying in the wilderness," he did so only after the "Word of God came unto him." This was an urging through the Holy Spirit that now was the time and place to preach. He began no sooner.

When even our Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, began His preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, it was in the messianically written words of Isaiah that He made His beginning: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach..." (Luke 4:18).

Then when the time was come for the Savior to pass the mantle of the preacher on to His Apostles, who was it other than He who gave to them the command: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," indicating that not only their *going* and *baptizing* would have their origin in His command but that they would continue in keeping with His institution when "*teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20)?

Disheartening as the work of those apostles and teachers must have been whom the Savior sent to thankless Jerusalem after His departure from the world, yet they, as well as their rejecting and abusive hearers, were given the assurance that that preaching was done by divine direction, for the Savior once said: "Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city" (Matt. 23:34).

Turning then to the apostolic period, we hear of the same origin of the call to the public ministry. It was no idea of Saul's, nor that of any of his friends or foes, that that learned pupil of Gamaliel and zealous persecutor of Christians should become a dedicated, lifelong preacher of the Gospel. That was entirely the working of the Savior who brought Saul low on the way to Damascus, even while he was about his wretched business of ferreting out Christians, and led him to the house of Judas. It was to that same house that the same

Lord Jesus directed Ananias to go to instruct Saul that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost as he accepted that calling to which he gave himself as a “living sacrifice” and which he “magnified” with such pride and joy, namely, the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. That is exactly what St. Paul declared later in his memorable sermon before Agrippa, that the Lord had said to him on the way to Damascus: “Rise, and stand on thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister...” (Acts 26:16).

Just as the call to the ministry first came to Paul, so did his assignments and those of his coworkers. When it was time for the beginning of his first mission journey, we read that “the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia” (Acts 13:2,4).

And as St. Paul received his ministry, so he passed the call of the holy ministry on to his coworkers. When he could no longer linger to work on the Island of Crete, he left his young coworker Titus in charge as pastor with this explanation: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:7). In a very similar way he dealt on other occasions when leaving behind congregations in which he could remain no longer. We read: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

Surely, you will agree that if we draw together even this modest gathering of examples from Holy Writ, we learn that the *Call to the Public Use of the Keys* was of divine origin in the day of our Lord as well as during the apostolic day. It is in keeping with that doctrine that St. Paul says: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (I Cor. 4:1).

At this point someone may feel the impulse to interrupt in order to point out that in our Scriptural account of the development of the call we have gone from the immediate call, that call which men received directly from God, to the mediate call, such which men received through the medium of their fellow Christians, either as individuals or as a group. Does that constitute a break in the story of the divinity of the call? Actually not.

Our dogmaticians have never distinguished between the immediate and the mediate call where their divinity is concerned, although they do distinguish between them in order to speak of the historic facts connected with the development of each. They usually make the point rather that the mediate call is no less divine than the immediate. And that that is indeed Scriptural follows clearly from the Scripture passages with the help of which we told the story.

While, for instance, St. Paul emphasizes rather frequently his immediate call, yet he says to mediately called elders at Ephesus that “the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28).

And to that doctrine, the divinity of the call, the Church of the Reformation adhered conscientiously. When speaking of the authority to call pastors, Luther wrote in his Smalcald Articles:

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 among the gifts specially belonging to the church he enumerates pastors and teachers and adds that such are given for the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.
(*Triglot*, page 523)

While the lines of Luther which I want to quote next were written in a context concerning the necessity of the call, yet they show how certainly Luther considered the call to the public ministry a divine one. He wrote as follows:

For a great work a *divine call* is necessary and not merely one’s own devotion or one’s own prompting. Even those who are *certain that God has called them* will find it hard to do and accomplish something that is worthwhile...For it cannot be otherwise: he who does something without *being called by God* seeks his own honor. (Ad Ps. 82:4)

And again we quote Luther:

Let the preacher of the Gospel be sure that he hath a divine call...This is not vainglory but necessary glorying, because he is glorying, not in himself but *in the King who sent him*, whose authority he desires to have honored and held in holy respect.

To these quotations of Luther let us add a few words from the pen of Melancthon in the Apology:

The ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promise...For the church has the command to appoint ministers, which should be most pleasing to us, because we know that God approves this ministry and is present in this ministry [that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men]. (*Triglot*, page 311)

After hearing all that we have to this point concerning the divinity of the call, it does not surprise us when we note that our Lutheran Church has clung to that doctrine through the ages. The doctrine has had its critics, to be sure. There have been those even under the banner of Lutheranism, who have tried by word or deed to dull the brilliance of this treasure. But were we to gather the quotations from recent and current Lutheran literature, which attest to the doctrine of the divinity of the call, we should have a sizable volume from the pens of familiar personnel and many beyond the circle of our acquaintance. For that let us thank our Lord that He has preserved the blessing of that doctrine among us.

But people who concentrate on their possession of a given treasure do not stop with their being fascinated by the beauty of that treasure. They are attracted too by its value. Not much of the value of any possession becomes obvious when one becomes aware of the need it satisfies. That is indeed true of *the Call to the Public Use of the Keys*. Let us, therefore, consider secondly

II. The Necessity of the Call

We dare not, of course say that the public ministry is in itself absolutely necessary. We have heard in the foregoing essay that all true believers are themselves priests. Together they make up the royal priesthood. When such believers read their Scriptures, speak to one another of their Savior, and Christian parents among them teach their children in their home, the work of the church is being done. The Holy Ghost is active to generate and sustain faith through such activities. In fact, such things are the Christian calling of all believers. The Word of God is a means of grace whether preached by the pastor, read by a parishioner, or recited by a child.

But beautiful and true as all of this may be, we are going to agree, to be sure, that the church is in need of more than that general ability to teach and such general activity of all the members of the priesthood toward one another. So that the Lord's command that the Gospel be preached to all nations might be fulfilled, so that the priesthood might be taught by such who possess an aptness to teach, so that the Sacraments might be administered in decency and order, and so that the pastors and teachers might be trained, the church needs the public ministry. And for that ministry the call is absolutely necessary. In Article XIV of the Augsburg Confession we read: "Of Ecclesiastical Order they, that is, our churches, teach that no one should publicly teach in the church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called" (*Triglot*, page 49).

At this point the criticism has been advanced that there are not many clear Scripture passages to support the necessity of the call. We shall need to grant that there are not many that speak specifically of that need, but when we note the prevalence of instances in Scriptures in which we read of the fact that the preachers of the Word did preach only after being called, many of which we quoted in connection with the divinity of the call, then it becomes very clear that that is as the Lord would have it in His church. And let it be said that we do have a few passages so compelling, cogent, and pertinent, that we cannot escape their force in that direction that

people serving in the public ministry would be completely out of place if they had not approached their important office by way of a proper call.

Think, for instance, of Paul's memorable words to the elders of Ephesus whom he met at Miletus: "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, which he hath purchased with his blood" (Acts 20:28). How, we ask, does the Holy Ghost make one an overseer of a flock other than through the call? Even a clearer passage still in that direction is Romans 10:14. There we read: "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?"

This Romans passage certainly makes a few points beautifully clear. For one thing, it shows us that the Lord of the Church literally restricted Himself to the "foolishness" of mortals, preaching when it came to His having His Gospel spread. He might have chosen angels to do that, spoken Himself from heaven, or moved people directly with His Spirit. He had on occasion done each of these things and with wondrous effect. But He wanted mortals to have a part in the beautifully reflexive activity of preaching the Gospel, thus growing in faith themselves as they preach to others.

By the same token, we hear furthermore, that He restricted Himself to the agency of the call in providing those who preach. For what does "except they be sent" mean? It means that men have indicated wanting them in their midst as messengers of the Gospel. And that is the call.

To all of this let us add the thought of Christ's saying to His preachers: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).

Adding that passage to our thinking at this point means to add the thought that when one preaches the Gospel one is in a sense taking Christ's place among men. Add to that the thought that one who preaches or teaches the Word is filling the role to which, as we learned above, the Savior chose to restrict Himself for the spreading of the Gospel. Then, surely, the question suggests itself: Who would want to be engaged in the public ministry without a call? What presumption it would be to think of serving in that capacity without the clear directive of a divine call! At this point we understand Luther well when he said:

For a great work a divine call is necessary and not merely one's own devotion or one's own prompting. Even those who are certain that God called them will find it hard to do and accomplish what is worthwhile, though God is with them and is granting His blessing; what, then, can those senseless fools do who undertake something without such a call and seek but their own honor and praise? The call and command makes pastors and teachers. (Ad Ps. 82:4)

When people who possess treasures find occasion to concentrate on the beauty and value of their possession, they do not stop as a rule with that experience. Their thoughts soon include consideration of questions like these: How may we derive the most benefit and pleasure from our possession? How may we show greatest care lest we damage or even lose our treasure? If such thoughts were ever in place where the possession of treasure was concerned, then that is indeed the case here where the divinity and need of the call to the ministry have been under consideration.

Ours is a day of generally small respect for that which is divine. Careful observers express sincere concern over apparent recklessness over against the cherished customs and institutions of the past. One observes great changes in thought and practice where the approach to ever so many goals is concerned. Because of these facts it alarms us, to be sure, to notice that some questions have arisen among us where the call to the ministry is concerned, and with such questions a number of fears have arisen concerning possible abuses of the call. These questions and fears may have arisen in part from the fact that at present our Synod finds itself confronted by some compelling reasons for some changes in external matters where the call is concerned. The many opportunities for expansion which we are experiencing at present, matched only by the great need we suffer for workers in the church, both men and women, have produced such a situation.

It seems that it was in part because of such a development that this essay was assigned. At any rate, your essayist was asked to include a study of a number of the practical issues involving the call at this time. For that reason let us at this point turn our attention to some of the

III. Questions Which Have Arisen Concerning the Call In Recent Years

1. Few will want to deny that our church is presently experiencing a day of unprecedented expansion. Our Synod is not only expanding her foreign mission fields and her home mission work into areas in which we have never worked before but she is expanding also within her congregations, her institutions, and her administration. Congregations are growing and striving to take new approaches toward the matter of winning the unchurched and toward managing their financial and other parish affairs more efficiently, while the Synod is striving to find new ways and means for expanding her educational facilities and motivating indoctrination and stewardship. The result of all this is that we have not only an increasing number of workers, but also an increasing variety of capacities in which workers serve.

The first question, therefore, which comes to mind under such circumstances is this: *Who among this great variety of workers has a divine call?*

Today we have pastors, assistant pastors, vicars, ordained professors, unordained professors, instructors, tutors, missionaries, executive secretaries, male teachers, lady teachers, teachers on a great variety of grade levels, from the upper grades to nursery school, full-time teachers, substitute teachers, Sunday-school teachers, choirmasters, elders in the congregations, officers of the Synod, our Districts and our conferences. Even that 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. It is hardly surprising that the question arises from time to time: Who of these people has a divine call?

In truth, that question can be answered very briefly. They all do. If you have not been able to discover up to this time in our essay what the definition of the call might be with which we are operating, then perhaps at this point you have come to note it. There are a lot of things which the call is not. It is not that inner calling of which some folks speak rather sentimentally, that conviction which some say they feel that they must serve the church. It is not a conferring of a kind of apostolic succession. It is no awarding of an indelible character. It is no way of assigning someone to a special estate, a special order or society. It is no setting of someone apart from others in a way that will last until his eyelids close in death. It is none of those things. It is simply this that a group of Christians, however great or small, their number matters none, has expressed the desire to have a chosen person to serve them in the public use of the Keys in one capacity or the other. And acceptance of that wish, fulfillment of it, completes the essence of the call.

Not all in the long list above receive formal calls, diplomas of vocation. Some are ordained, some installed, some inducted, some commissioned, some merely introduced and some are simply put to work, perhaps even without special mention. Be all of that as it may, as long as members of the church, in whatever way they have gathered to express themselves, have asked the services of these people in connection with either receiving or extending the Means of Grace, they all have divine calls.

2. At this point another question arises, to which some troublesome answers have been given, namely: *How do these many offices in the church rank, one over against the other?* Should not the call indicate in some way or other the rank into which the called worker should fit himself or herself? Again the answer can be stated very briefly and directly. There is no rank.

Since the pastor occupies a position of leadership in a congregation, also among the other workers of that congregation, he may seem to occupy a higher rank. That impression becomes even stronger when the congregation is large and the workers are many. Since it is true, however, that the ministry is essentially nothing more than the office through which the general priesthood of believers arranges for the execution of certain functions, the pastor is merely one member of the priesthood performing the important work of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. God wants all things to be done decently and in order, and for such order the congregation has asked the pastor to perform his duties.

Other workers in the congregation, for instance, the Christian day-school teachers, or the Sunday-school teachers, are other members of the priesthood, called upon to perform other duties. But nowhere is there any rank established. They are all on the same level, each doing the work for which he or she was called. If it appears that there is authority on the part of the pastor over against his coworkers, because of his place of leadership, then that is an authority for order and out of love. The cooperation which he receives from his coworkers is one given in love and again, for the sake of order. But coworkers they are. Each is working as a minister, as a servant, of the congregation, and as a servant to one another.

And what is true of the various workers of the congregation is true too of the various officers in the church at large. Our Savior's own words are most pertinent at this point: "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ" (Matt. 23:8-11).

There is much that might be said at this point by way of application. If workers in the church could but fully capture that truth concerning the lack of rank among them, we believe many a one in their circle would be more happy and more effective in his work. What a lot of obvious envy would no longer find its plane among us! What a lot of unworthy striving on the one hand and complaining about one's station on the other hand would disappear from our midst!

3. The answers to our first two questions have reminded us of the great variety of capacities in which our church's called workers serve and of the fact that among them there is no rank. All of this reminds us also of the fact that there are differing methods involved in the calling of these workers. That thought suggests our next question: *What is the proper procedure when issuing a call?*

When seeking an answer to this question, we do not find much by way of specific directive in the Scriptures. Where this question is concerned the church must operate almost entirely on the basis of Scriptures' one general admonition: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). That becomes especially true since in our day we have such a wide variety of capacities and areas in which our workers serve, as well as such a wide variety of settings in which calls for these positions are extended. Under such circumstances a clear-cut answer to this question becomes nearly an impossibility to present especially should one be expecting to hear it presented in one essay such as this.

In the earliest days of what we recognize as the ministry in the Scriptures, men were called directly to that high office, as we have seen in an earlier context. The Lord God asked the question of Isaiah: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Thereupon Isaiah replied: "Here am I, send me." And to that the Lord replied: "Go, and tell this people..." (Isa. 6:8,9). The case of Jeremiah occurred in much the same way. "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5). These were indeed instances of direct calls.

When now, for the sake of brevity, we move on at once into the very heart of the matter of calling in the New Testament, we surely recall the cases of the Apostles of Christ and of St. Paul, whose stories we rehearsed above. Their calls were indeed direct calls. We called them immediate calls before.

Although St. Paul took great and proper pride in his direct call and training, he may be thought of as the one who introduced still another practice. As he moved on from place to place, we note that rather frequently, after establishing a congregation in a given place, he appointed elders who were to carry on the work after his departure. In those cases the term elder referred to the preacher of the Gospel. Surely we all remember the reference to Paul and Barnabas appointing such elders as they departed from Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch on the way home from the first missionary journey (cf. Acts 14:23).

Still another instance which many recall in the case of St. Paul was his appointment of Titus for the congregation on the Island of Crete. He says himself in his letter to Titus: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Thus 1:5).

Since these instances occurred so late in the apostolic day and seem to be cases of leading clergy appointing other clergy, it has developed that there are those who maintain that that should be the manner of calling still, namely, bishops naming men to the positions in which they should serve.

We know, however, that another way of calling had been inaugurated by that time. When the disciples, the church, the faithful 120, wanted to fill the vacancy which Judas had left among the Twelve through his unfortunate end, we read in Acts that they appointed two candidates and then, making prayer their approach to the matter, they said: "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen" (Acts 1:24). And it was under those circumstances that "they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26). Their giving forth lots was, as far as we can learn, in greatest likelihood a way of balloting. That may be thought of as the origin of our mode of calling workers today in the more common cases, particularly at congregational meetings.

The instances in which St. Paul appointed elders, or that of his appointing Titus on Crete, are no argument in favor of the system of appointment by bishops. It has been very correctly stated that in those instances, too, prayers and balloting on the part of the congregations may well have been included. Paul's appointing or designating men did not necessarily exclude that. It is, furthermore, most difficult to assume that Paul would have acted in such a legalistic manner, giving no room for the prayers and wishes of the people. So then in most cases, at least on the congregational level, that is the way in which we call today.

But, you will recall, we heard of a great variety of capacities in which our church workers our ministers, serve. We heard, too, of the fact that the ways in which they come to know their calling vary almost as much. It seems as though we should have asked a preliminary question while talking about procedure relative to calling, namely: Who, according to proper procedure, is to do the calling?

In the essay which preceded this one you heard that the responsibility for the Ministry of the Keys rests with the whole church, the entire royal priesthood. Earlier in this essay, however, we heard that the public ministry is the office to which the church assigns that work which the whole priesthood cannot carry on effectively and in good order.

There, then, we have found the answer to this particular question. Wherever or whenever a group of Christians becomes aware of its need and intent for having a servant, a minister, in one capacity or another, that group of Christians, or priests, will issue such a call. They are the church for issuing the call, in so far that they are the group that knows the need which it desires to have answered through a called worker in the Lord's service. Such a group may be a congregation. Very often it is, especially where the calls of pastors and Christian day-school teachers are concerned. Frequently it will be the board of administration for some institution. It may also be a mission board. There are other possibilities.

But whichever the group may be, wise is the calling group that heeds the good order among us! When calling pastors and teachers we let the District officials perform the part that St. Paul performed in the instances referred to above, namely, the nominating of the candidates. The congregation, let it be said, is always granted the privilege to add its nominations to the list, but with the approval of the District officials. Who could hope to be in a better position to know both the needs of the calling congregation and the qualifications of the proposed candidates? Their experience with the work of the whole District even the Synod, places them in that position. Their acquaintance with the whole ministry of a given candidate under a wide variety of circumstances renders their advice invaluable where nominating comes into the picture.

And when the time for issuing the call comes, let no one in the congregation forget that calling a minister is a very important and solemn procedure. As in the case of the assembled 120 at the choosing of Matthias, let there be sincere and fervent prayer. If ever the gift and power of prayer may be trusted to avail much, surely it is here where the Lord's work is involved.

How unbecoming such a sacred business are some of the petty behaviors to be noted on occasion! We think of factions or cliques in a congregation who push a favorite candidate, of neighboring pastors interfering in the hope of choosing their conference neighbors, of relatives of a candidate, who happen to live in the vicinity, indulging in what has been called "string-pulling," of those members of the calling congregation who travel about to sample the sermons of as many of the men "on the list" as they can and then laud the one who

impressed them most with his oratory. What people who like to meddle in some of these ways often do not know is whether the whole ministry, the whole pattern of talents, of “their man” will fit the whole need of the calling congregation. He may impress in the pulpit, but will he be the best-suited candidate for the peculiar problems of the calling congregation? Will he work out well in the sickroom, in the Christian day school, in days of stress and strain in congregational affairs, in counseling, as well as in the days of many other needs? Oratory, being a good neighbor, moving close to the home folks, and a wide variety of other considerations do by no means guarantee that a given candidate is the right man. While on some occasions such meddling may have led to a fortunate choice, more often, after some time has passed, it becomes easy to see that such choices have ended in grief of one kind or another.

One of the most unfortunate abuses of the call which we can hope to hear of occurs when a candidate offers himself for a given vacancy, whether it is done openly or in a concealed way. One of the greatest comforts a properly called man has, when and if the Lord lets trying days come his way in a given ministry, is the knowledge that he is exactly where the Lord wanted him and not where he asked to be. Offering one’s self robs the call of that most comforting and reassuring blessing.

While still speaking of procedure in calling, we are reminded, of course, of the fact that there is another kind of calling in our church today, one for which we find no parallel in the Scriptures. We refer to the calling of professors, executive secretaries, directors of institutions, and others. For many years now our procedure has been to give the members throughout our Synod an opportunity to nominate candidates for respective vacancies in these capacities. After publishing such a list of candidates a given number of times in our church’s official publications, so that any objectors to a name on such a list will have their chance to make their feelings known, the respective board of the institution involved issues the call.

There are those who wonder whether our system for calling these men is they correct one. If they mean to ask whether it is just as Scriptural, we hasten to reply that it is just as Scriptural as any could be, since, as we mentioned above, Scriptures knew no parallel. There is much, however, to be said in favor of the system. It is one which gives consideration to the whole priesthood of our Synod. It uses a board in each case which has been duly elected from among the priesthood. It calls men from within that same membership. There is no point at which one could find reason to say that it is not a proper system. That is especially true when, as is obvious, every effort is made to follow the Lord’s directive that all things be done decently and in order.

In an effort to improve the effectiveness of this system of calling the professors at our colleges and high schools, it has been suggested that our boards might send out questionnaires to all possible candidates for each vacancy, asking about their training, favorite fields, etc. Those who make such a suggestion hope that their proposal would help the boards to find the right men for the various fields more surely and more frequently. They feel that men called with the help of such information would more often be found more at home in their field and more ready to continue to specialize in that field. We do not mean to give the impression that we consider our system beyond the possibility of improvement. Almost always there is room for that where we mortals act or devise. We believe, too, that the suggestion is sincerely meant. But we do not believe that the suggestion for the use of such a questionnaire is a very good one.

For one thing, enrollments in our schools are so recently and sharply increased, and our staffs are correspondingly small, because of our manpower shortage, that a great deal of specialization, even if it were to be desired, would not be possible. And, furthermore, the questionnaire does not seem quite in keeping with the doctrine of the divine call. While there are, no doubt, those who might handle it wisely, and we hope that we do not offend such, yet the system offers its distinct temptations for others. By the time a candidate has filled out such a questionnaire he has been given a shred of hope, or at least a suggestion, for a change. Such an experience could very easily work some damage to the measure of contentment and effectiveness with which the person involved has worked in the present assignment. And suppose one filled out such a questionnaire—one does find it very easy to imagine that it would be filled out as favorably as possible—and then received the call, only to meet with genuine difficulties in the new calling. How easy it is to imagine the unhappiness such a person would suffer when recalling that actually he had helped in the direction of his being called into that position!

If a suggestion is waited for at this point, let us suggest that there is nothing such a questionnaire could accomplish which could not be accomplished by an alert board for information concerning the talents and training of our men in the Synod, and with much less danger of embarrassment and temptation.

4. We have asked the question about procedure when extending a call. Now let us ask a companion question: *What is proper procedure and what are the proper ethics when receiving a call?*

Receiving a call is an important and solemn occasion in any churchworker's life. It seems there should be few among the people who have received calls who would not concur in that thought. It is an occasion when a congregation or board has placed great confidence in the receiver. They have asked him to give prayerful consideration to the possibility of being Christ's own spokesman in their midst.

It seems that it would be but self-evident that the receiver of a call would sit down at once to acknowledge such a communication, especially since in most cases, we dare presume, it arrived by the fastest kind of mail and by the most protected way of mailing. But we have seen it happen and have heard of other cases in which such an acknowledgment was anxiously awaited in vain for a long time. Needless to say, such behavior is most inconsiderate and unbecoming the sacred trust just placed in one.

Closely akin to such a lack of consideration and brotherly love is then the unreasonable length of time for which recipients keep a call before reaching their decision. That becomes especially annoying and improper when the reply which finally arrives is a negative one.

Surely, the decision involved is a vital one. That is granted. But one must consider the unsettled conditions which often result in the field from which the call has been sent. Unless one has rather definite information to the contrary, one might well assume in every other case that promptness is the best course. Often such calling congregations have already been in the process of calling for a long time, and long delays in reaching a decision in the maker of their call are little short of heaping insult upon injury.

Now it goes without saying that there are circumstances under which reaching a decision is especially difficult. But considerate correspondence in such cases, explaining what the situation is, will go a long way toward promoting a good spirit and understanding.

It is exactly during this period of deliberation on a call that one hears of quite a lot of other behaviors which must indeed strain the trust of many parishioners in the divinity of the call. You have, no doubt, heard of some such, too. There is the matter of traveling before the decision has been announced to inspect the physical plant and environments of the proposed field of work. Sometimes one hears of dealing with the calling congregation concerning the possibility of their increasing the salary offered, improving the parsonage, agreeing to pay for the TV antenna, or a wide variety of other considerations completely out of place before the decision has been announced, mind you.

Nor is that kind of behavior all directed toward the calling congregation. At times the congregation at which the called worker is still at home comes in for some abuse too. This is the congregation that has been giving the recently called worker its confidence in the past. They have every reason to expect consideration from the one who has spoken and still is speaking for Christ in their midst. Surely they should be asked to meet and express themselves in the matter of the call. Their expressions should be given earnest and prayerful consideration. If they find it possible to show that the present challenge matches the proposed one, unless there are some understandable circumstances to the contrary involved, it seems their expressions should be met with the pastor's remaining where he is.

And such sincere requests for the worker's remaining should not be met with levers on the part of the called worker. That is no time for talking about salary raises or eliciting long-delayed resolutions concerning the starting of a school, building a new church or remodeling the parsonage. Such things are all fine signs of progress, both internal and external, but if they must be obtained over the broken back of a congregation about to lose its pastor, they may turn into boomerangs.

And what are the matters to which a newly called worker will give consideration while trying to reach his decision? Basically there is just one. It is the matter of where the greater challenge awaits his particular combination of talents and experience. He will consider that one matter, however, in the light of some other considerations. Regardless of the magnitude of the new challenge he will give some consideration to the length

of time he has been at his present charge, asking himself especially whether the challenge which he once came to accomplish has been fulfilled. Not every stay needs to be a long one, not even in a larger charge. If that particular challenge for which he decided once to come to his present charge has been accomplished, then perhaps he is already free to accept a new one after a comparatively short stay. Perhaps the new challenge is asking him to put to use the same strong talent which made it possible for him to complete his work so soon in the former charge.

There are some other considerations, of course, which may under certain circumstances enter into the thinking of the newly called worker. Some of these may even be personal considerations. We think of matters like the relationship between climate and health, an honestly diagnosed lack of talents either for the challenge in the new field or for some newly developed or discovered challenge in the present field, or an intense though regretted personality clash limelighted by some problem in the present field. A new worker might solve such a problem very easily simply because of his being another person with another approach.

Most other personal considerations, however, are quite unworthy of the high purposes of the divine call. How one regrets on occasion being literally compelled to suspect the influence of the most unworthy of such considerations, for instance such as the following: advantages for the family in either the new or the former field, the convenience for advanced study for the worker himself in one or the other of the fields, or the opportunity to move to a more honored station in the visible church! This latter experience is often spoken of as a promotion, a term which ought be completely foreign to the vocabulary of the minister of the Lord.

There is one very helpful suggestion which ought be given very serious consideration by every called worker while deliberating a decision concerning a call. He will increase his own confidence in his decision and consequently his peace of mind perhaps even the confidence of others in him and his decision, if he seeks the counsel of respected brethren who happen to be acquainted with the situation and are known for their objectivity.

There is one more thing that ought be said while on this subject of ethics on the part of the person who has received a call. Though it is true that the basic influence toward accepting a new challenge should be the matter of going where there is the most work to do for the Lord, yet there is one readily understood and highly respected exception. We refer to the elderly pastor who has reason to hope still for some years in which his experience and devotion might be turned into blessed service in the kingdom, but who has come to realize that for reasons of age he can no longer care for all the duties of his former large parish. When a small parish shows the rare wisdom to call him to share with it his valuable services, let him with a clear conscience, yes, with a grateful heart toward the Lord of the Church, agree to accept the smaller assignment. Only the most unfair would judge him adversely for looking to a lighter burden.

5. There is another area related to the call in which several important questions have arisen. They result either from the great variety of capacities in which our workers serve nowadays, as we pointed out above, or from the great shortage of workers which we now experience. Such conditions bring it about that our workers are frequently asked to take on extra duties, while others see opportunities for venturing into desired fields not originally assigned to them. Perhaps we could get at this growing number of questions or problems best with the one leading question: *Is the call flexible?*

Here are some of the conditions under which that question may be asked. A congregation has grown faster than the pace at which plans for the future could be made. Additional services must be added. Or a new mission seemed the wise venture for a mother congregation before an additional pastor could be provided. A vacancy may have occurred for which the officials need to draft the services of a worker in the vicinity. The enrollment of a school has mushroomed and additional grades must be crowded into given classrooms. A wholesome interest may have developed for an additional choir in a large congregation and there is the additional responsibility for its directing. As a rule such evidences of "growing pains" are considered a happy experience because of their showing obvious prosperity in the kingdom. That is, they are considered that until the wrong person is asked to take on some extra duties. It is at times like that that we want to ask this question: *Is the call flexible enough so that the responsible people may ask called workers to add duties to the ones they already are responsible for?* There are ever so many times and places where recalling the letter of our call

wants to be paired with brotherly love. This is indeed one of them. Now surely, no one is going to ask of an essayist to produce a magic solution to the many problems which might result from such a long list of probable situations like that above. But might it not be said as something of a general guideline that here is an area where on the one side we should find much more readiness to go the extra mile than we sometimes encounter. We are in the service of the Lord! Who knows better than He what is being asked, how heavy the load, how long the day, how short the vacation! Who knows better than He, therefore, to whom to give extra strength, health, and patience! If we really believe that, we are not going to be quite so speedy at whipping out our call and reminding loudly that the call does not ask us to perform those extra duties.

But brotherly love happens to be like a coin with two sides. These are situations in which the people who do the asking ought consider more often and a bit more soberly that there is only so much that dare be asked of an individual, if good work for the Lord's people is to result, and health, a precious gift of our God, is not to be impaired. Nor should those who ask forget that their workers happen to be mortal sinners and that they are not mundane mercenaries of the first order if they seem ready to accept with proper appreciation and consequent new zeal a token of appreciation. It seems that if brotherly love and mutual love for the Savior are made the meeting ground on which these otherwise unhappy emergencies are solved, they would much less often grow into tension builders.

There is another question which comes to mind while in this area of the possible flexibility of the call. It is one which the people who assigned this essay asked the essayist to explore. It has to do with a comparatively new situation in our midst. Our Synod's educational institutions are growing in size and even in number. We are happy to note, too, that our area Lutheran high schools have increased to a good number and have been blessed in most cases with rapidly growing student bodies. All of this growth, in turn, has brought with it corresponding growth in the number and size of the faculties at these schools.

This last fact has called still another result into reality. There is at our schools an increasing number of unordained faculty members. In fact, there is already quite a number who have no more formal training in religion than the religion courses required by the Advisory Committee on Education for certification to teach in our schools.

Let us hasten to explain, however, before we go any farther, that that is not the problem to which we are inviting your attention. With this we merely mean to present to you the context of the next question. These people to whom we refer are performing a great service for us. We are happy that it has not been necessary to call all of the teachers for the positions involved from the pulpits and Christian day-school classrooms of our Synod. What is more, many of these people are much better equipped to teach certain branches than our pastors or parochial teachers would be. While these latter groups were spending long years of study at religion or even theological courses, these teachers from public circles were taking special training in their respective fields.

The question which has arisen has been asked because of the fact that at some of our schools all of these teachers have been encouraged, in some cases even asked, to take part in conducting devotions, even preaching sermonettes for chapel exercises. It has been asked whether this practice is in keeping with the call.

It seems quite certain again that no one will be waiting for me to quote some Bible passage to cover the case. Scripture, your essayist has found, is remarkably silent concerning many of the matters which his assignment has suggested his exploring. But there are a few Scripture references which in a general way make suggestions that might be taken into consideration at this point. We have seen that while the church was given the right to extend calls, the Apostle Paul was careful to point out that the church ought concern itself with the qualifications of the called ones. Who of us has not often heard Paul's careful list of such in his letters to Timothy and Titus. And among those qualifications you will recall is the one, "apt to teach." What would that imply other than that the called worker be properly trained for that which we ask of him! It would not seem that, let us say, a biology teacher, however well he may be trained in that field and properly called to teach in our school in that field, should be expected, if not also trained in Christian doctrine, to preach sermonettes to our inquiring young folks in their formative years. Another statement of St. Paul's comes to mind: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient" (I Cor. 10:23). Are not the religion courses and the devotions

foremost among the reasons why we have until now preferred, in our area high schools, to have at least a small representation of ordained men on each faculty! It is a good custom and should by all means be continued.

But is the practice to which we refer contrary to the call? In itself it is not. If a board has assured itself of the qualifications of a manual arts teacher, who, though not formally trained, has through background and private study acquired the ability to serve as a chapel preacher, let that board ask him to serve in that capacity, if it finds a need for doing so which will be obvious to all who wonder. But to assume simply that a call to a Lutheran high school or college requires a man or even gives license to a man to conduct devotions makes of the call something which it is not. A call is never an effective substitute for training and qualifications.

By the same token, where such a need for help arises for leaders of devotions, let those who help out be duly asked to do so. To volunteer on one's own could be an undetected case of placing a veneer of nobility over a plain case of abuse of the call. We have treated the matter of choosing one's own place earlier in this essay.

It still seems right, for the sake of good order, that the representation of people on the staff, fully trained for such services, might be persuaded to let the religion courses and the devotions constitute their first service to the school. There are many other activities in which the other members of the faculty might find extracurricular ways of performing yeomen's services for their school.

While giving thought to the possible flexibility of the call, another question, closely related to the former, suggests itself. *Is the call flexible enough to allow a change suggested by the worker himself?* It goes without saying that there are some circumstances under which that could be understood. No one knows better than the person in the position himself if the climate in which he finds himself or the volume of duties which confronts him is injurious to his health. He would also be the first to know if some clash of personalities has made it completely impossible to work on with blessing, or if some family situation has met with similar results. But in such cases let the decision be the result of only most honest and prayerful deliberation. Here, if ever, the advice of responsible and objective brethren ought be generously sought.

But let us put the question a little differently. *Is the call flexible enough to allow a worker's own decision to change his kind of service in the kingdom?* May a pastor feel free to indicate that he would prefer to teach, or may a teacher feel free to decide that he wants to become a pastor? In the former case it seems one would become guilty of a pretty obvious violation of the call. Especially in a church body as small as ours, where men's talents, training, and inclinations have a way of becoming known without one's even realizing it and in which the custom has long been practiced to consider men in the preaching ministry for responsible teaching positions, it seems that pastor who would ask for a teaching position would be doing little less than giving dictation to the Holy Spirit. It seems that such a pastor would rather remember in faith what St. Paul tells us about the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints *according to the will of God*" (Rom. 8:26,27). It seems that that is where such a pastor would go with his wish and then leave all the rest to the omniscient will of the Lord of the Church.

The latter of the two possibilities mentioned is something else again. For that change, that of a teacher's changing to the ministry, we do have a planned procedure in our midst. If a teacher suffers a sincere and prayerful desire to preach the Gospel rather than to teach it if he longs devoutly for the privilege of comforting the sick and the dying, if he has an honest desire to counsel adults in their church life rather than young people alone, then let him take also this wish to his Lord in prayer while he surely seeks the counsel of responsible and objective brethren. If his desire turns into determination under such circumstances, then let him make diligent preparation and ask for a colloquy. When his colloquy is over, it has proved successful, and he receives a call into the ministry, let him accept that call with all the joy that a candidate from the Seminary accepts his first call. To engage in this procedure, however, for any other reason than going into the preaching ministry would create a picture very hard to understand according to the order of the call. Such behavior would allow the impression that merely being able to claim rank with pastors while not being one adds prestige and advantage. Such a thought militates sharply against what we have learned above about the lack of rank in the ministry.

While still speculating in the matter of the possible flexibility of the call, another suggested question comes to mind. *Is the call flexible enough to allow temporary calls?* Today we have a great number of

temporary calls in our midst. There are vicars, tutors, instructors, wives of Seminary students serving as Christian day-school teachers, substitute teachers, etc. Do all of these arrangements fit within the framework of the call? Our answer to that question is “yes.” And yet, if one asks whether temporary calls are proper, the answer to that general question would have to be: “That depends.”

We are quite sure that all of you, especially the older among you, have read and heard statements to the effect that temporary calls are a kind of disregard for the doctrine of the divinity of the call.

But we believe such statements were almost always written or spoken with a given context in mind. In most cases the authors were referring to the preaching ministry while at the same time they were thinking of temporary calls in the sense of trial calls. They were referring to instances in which congregations sought to protect themselves against needing to retain a pastor after they had had opportunity to learn that they did not like his services.

In such cases, surely, we would all agree with strongest disapproval of temporary calls. Such calls would tend to reduce a minister of the Lord to little more than a hired man and would indeed rob him of the courage to speak out as he should as God’s messenger. A very similar disapproval should also be spoken of such a practice when used where teachers are concerned. Who would want to be in the position of a teacher who must wait until May or June of each year before he or she knows for sure whether or not to plan for being in the same school the next year? Teachers in the public schools, where Christian principles are not the order of the day, are treated more considerately than that.

But now the temporary calls which we have among us today in such abundance are not of that nature. They are temporary because of such conditions which at once explain why they are temporary, in fact, the conditions indicate that only temporary calls would be possible in their particular cases. And in that there is no violation of the doctrine of the call. If a congregation is in need of assistance for its pastor and chooses to fit itself into the Synod’s program according to which our Seminary students receive valuable undergraduate experience, there is certainly nothing disorderly about that. And beyond disorder, what Scriptural argument could anyone advance against the arrangement? And if some congregation is in need of help in its school and chooses, since it knows of the temporary presence in its vicinity of some recommended young teacher, who would otherwise be idle, to call that teacher and not to call a teacher away from some other congregation in these days of shortage, what criticism could anyone advance against such a charitable practice? The only disadvantage one could see in the matter would have nothing to do with the call. It would be the likelihood of doing the school injury with such frequent exchange of teachers. But that is a common experience in many schools in our day for a variety of reasons. Such a congregation would have to be the judge of such a consequence itself.

But let it be repeated, temporary calls under other conditions, such which smack of trial or of the wish to terminate at will, are contrary to the good order, brotherly love, and above all, the admonition of God’s Word to be ready to hear reproof and correction where it is warranted.

There is a question which has often been asked in recent years. It seems to fit here while we discuss the possible flexibility of the call. *Is the call flexible enough to allow the church worker to divide his time between concentration on his high calling and seeking other income through gainful employment outside the field of his calling?*

Before we proceed, let it be said that this question is not included in the hope of our finding ourselves in a position to judge the matter. Where this practice is gone into, we believe, every case will have to stand or fall on its own merits and no two cases, perhaps, will be alike. But since the question has been suggested a number of times by such who became aware of the presentation of this study, let us ask it in the hope of finding some guideline or criterion by which to judge our own cases, if ours be such.

It has been aptly said by another that full-time calls to the high calling of the ministry should in every case be just that, high and full-time. The author of that remark meant that the calling of the ministry should not suffer indignity nor lack of concentration. Surely, no one of us, who has taken a careful look at all that could be done in our respective assignments, or even that which we wish we might accomplish, will deny the importance of concentration on our God-given tasks. It has also been said well by another: “The ministry will consider

anything which either directly or indirectly has to do with the preaching of the Gospel...it will, however, studiously avoid anything which has no connection with the ministry of reconciliation" (*The Abiding Word*, Vol. 2, page 481).

Consideration for sentiments such as those would seem to indicate that gainful employment alongside service in the church falls far beneath the dignity and order of the call, to say nothing of proper devotion to the high goal of the call.

Voices of defense have been heard, however, from time to time for this practice of employment on the side. Under some circumstances we should grant they are justified. There have, for instance, been times when it became almost a duty for members of the clergy to join in employment of one kind or another. We think of the days of World War II when labor was so scarce that public opinion in some communities made it nearly the patriotic duty of an able-bodied clergyman or college professor to help out in a defense plant or canning establishment. No one would find fault with such a practice.

It would likewise be hard to fault the church worker who in apparent honesty tells us that he simply must be gainfully employed on the side in order to take proper care of his family. Doctor bills, dental bills, bills with the optician, education fees, and provisions of food and clothing in the case of larger families can at times add up to an easily imagined need for such employment. Where such cases develop it should certainly be hoped that the congregation or organization responsible for the same would not look lightly on the matter. If such responsible parties look to the case of Paul's being permitted to support himself at tent-making for salve for their consciences, let them be reminded that the case is no analogy. At that early stage of Paul's ministry in Corinth he was serving in a community where his hearers were just being won for the Gospel and the indoctrination had not advanced to the point of stewardship. It was to that same congregation, however, that he wrote later in words like these: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). When Paul wrote those words he was undoubtedly thinking of something his Savior once had said on the same subject while sending out His Seventy: "In the same house remain eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

There is one attempt at defending this practice of employment which does not win our agreement however. It is the attempt of those who argue that every man needs some diversion and that their employment merely takes the place of such hobbies or sports in which others indulge. Since they seem convinced of that line of thought they see no reason why they should not choose the employment and live on a somewhat higher level where conveniences and pleasures are concerned. Their thinking is faulty on two counts. For one thing, there is a great difference between diversion and employment. The former is not nearly as arbitrarily demanding as far as schedule is concerned, nor does it cause people to wonder about proper regard for one of the passages quoted so commonly at the installation of a church worker: "A bishop must not be greedy of filthy lucre" (I Tim. 3:3). And on the other hand, while it may certainly be argued that hobbies and sports are frequently indulged in to the point of faulty excess by church workers and need careful scrutiny, their obvious helpfulness in preserving health makes them a much more understood reason for time away from duty. It certainly becomes much harder to understand the servant of the church who lets his high calling await his consecration while he works so that he and his family may live a bit more securely and comfortably.

6. One more question of major importance remains for us to treat in a study like this concerning the call and it seems fitting that we should leave it to the last. *Dare the call be terminated?* All of us will want to answer this question at once in the affirmative. Our readiness to do so will stem from the fact that we once learned that there are three conditions under which it is permissible to terminate a call, namely, when a called minister preaches or teaches false doctrine, when he in impenitence continues in a scandalous life, and when he willfully neglects his duty. True those are times when a congregation or board not only has the privilege of terminating the call of a minister, but doing so has become its duty. But are there conditions or reasons beyond those three because of which the call may be terminated, either by those who did the calling or by the called one? We believe the answer remains an affirmative one.

There are those who want us to agree that unless the call is terminated because of one of the situations referred to above, it must be regarded as being as permanent as the span of human life can permit. They refer to

St. Paul's reference in Galatians 1:15 to the fact that he was separated from his mother's womb for the work to which he was later called, preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. Curiously, they start at the wrong end of Paul's life for their proof. Furthermore, they fail to realize that that was not Paul's call. That did not come until the scene on the way to Damascus. Surely, God in His omniscience knows whom He would have in His service in advance and shapes the prospective servants' early lives in such a way that their later years of service should be all the more worthwhile in His kingdom. Surely the lives of a Paul, a Moses, a Matthew, and many, many others justify that thought. But that does not produce the thought that the whole lives of these workers were spent under the affect of the call.

No, the call is not some kind of indelible character for life which clings so permanently that it cannot end unless the worker has miserably lost the battle against abject blasphemy, slothfulness, or filth. Disappointing as it may seem to some, we find no direct support in Scripture for the statement that the call is permanent in that sense. Even the familiar passage in Luke 9:62 concerning the matter of removing one's hand from the plough does by no means exhaust its application on that point. It is a passage in which the Savior would encourage us all to continue steadfast in faithfulness of service and testimony unhindered by the lure of earthly surroundings and human associations in whatever walk of life we happen to be practicing our Christianity.

Surely, we agree that the Scriptures demonstrate the calling of those who preach the Gospel as something so precious in every way that they to whom the grace of such a call has been given ought cherish it with a whole heart and serve in it with a prayerful zeal and diligence which would certainly grieve to see the day of termination come. And that, we submit, is why the call is so generally thought of as being as permanent as life permits, all things being equal. And it is good that we should feel that way.

Earlier in this essay we referred to the words of St. Paul in which he sets down the qualifications of a minister. The list is long and thorough, both in his first letter to Timothy and in the letter to Titus. These are qualifications to which the calling congregation or board certainly gives much consideration when it places the call. Why would anyone assume that after the call has been issued and accepted that then such a congregation or board has relinquished its responsibility for respecting, that is, looking for those qualifications still? It is very true that the same Apostle Paul emphasizes the fact that the Lord looks for but one thing in His servants, namely, faithfulness. But should not that very faithfulness be found in the way the minister continues in the qualifications which once made him the person chosen for his call? If he was chosen for his call because he was "apt to teach," what happens when even most charitable and objective observers must admit that he has for one reason or another lost that qualification? If he was once chosen because of his being "sober" and "patient," what ought be done when because of some disagreement or pet peeve he has worn himself into a groove in which he is farthest removed from those divinely lauded qualifications sobriety and patience? And those are only a few of the qualifications in St. Paul's list.

The pity, when such developments come true is that the work done is often not only inferior, but the very purpose of the ministry seems to suffer defeat. Where the hoped for result is that people should be gathered and won, they are repulsed by the unfortunate atmosphere that has developed. And where the desired result should be that young men and women would be encouraged and inspired themselves, so that service be anxious to encourage others to join them on the way toward service in the church, quite the opposite seems to develop. What is a congregation or an administration to do when, in spite of every charitable effort to remedy the situation, such a condition were to continue? Should it permit the divinity of the call to become a reason for lack of courage to insist that the work of the Lord be done well? Surely, we are aware of the fact that the Lord has admonished us to "remember them who have spoken unto you the word" and "obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves," as well as "thou shall rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man." But would it not seem, in all brotherly love, to be the best way of doing all those things, namely, by being helpful in removing an unfortunate situation in which a loved and respected person appears to be harming the work of the church, those whom he should be helping, and even himself?

In connection with this matter of terminating the call another question comes to mind. What is a congregation to do when its pastor breaks fellowship with the body in which the congregation chooses to

continue its fellowship? What choice does a congregation have if its pastor has not been able to convince it that his reasons for breaking fellowship are justified by the Holy Scriptures? There is only one answer to that question. In breaking fellowship that pastor has actually terminated his own call. Where no fellowship exists there is no longer any call. In such cases no one dare fault the synod, whose fellowship the congregation involved enjoyed, for overemphasizing synodical affiliation if it failed to chastise or even stood by the congregation in her trying experience. In some such cases the congregation involved suffers an earlier experience which makes their choice all the more limited. On occasion the pastor involved loses one of the qualifications in Paul's list, that of sobriety, when he forsakes the Lord's command that he preach the whole counsel of God and concentrates in wearying fashion on only his one point, his differing in conviction with the congregation. And that has a way at times of resulting in the loss of still another of those golden qualifications, his patience when he determines not to wait for the congregation to get in step with him at the point where action is paired with conviction. When under such circumstances a synodical body seeks to be helpful in helping such a congregation with the enjoyment of the Means of Grace, it dare not be made to appear guilty of sinning against the call of that pastor, not even of being party to the termination of his call.

There are still other circumstances under which it must be fully understood if a call is terminated by the body which once extended it. It happens on occasion that a challenge in a certain field grows smaller. It may be that some major industry in such a community closes and people move away in great numbers. If the number of teachers at the congregation's school in such a case, or even the number of pastors serving such a congregation, must be decreased, then there should be the greatest amount of modesty and understanding on the part of the workers while the new arrangement is worked out concerning assignment of duties and termination of a call or two. Fortunately, in our day such terminations do not work the greatest hardships, since we are in such great need of workers in many other communities.

Before we leave the matter of the termination of the call we should look at it once more from the other side, the side of the called worker himself. May he under any circumstances terminate his call before it becomes absolutely impossible for him to perform any part of his duties? It has happened on occasion that an aging pastor, when retiring while still esteemed and able to do a small part of his work, has been criticized for interfering with the permanence of the call. We have heard of an aged pastor or two, who, after retiring under such circumstances have lived for a time with a troubled conscience concerning the possibility that they might have failed their Lord and His Church.

No one should know better than the minister himself, if he is diligent and honest, whether he is meeting the requirements of his call. And if he after prayerful consideration and, we mention again, counseling with the brethren, lays down his office, we must only respect him for his decision. His action becomes an evidence of his concern that the Lord's work be done energetically and well, that the ministry be held high in love and esteem. That latter reaction is usually the experience that the aged pastor then enjoys too, and most generously, as a rule. Fortunately too, those who retire with some energies and abilities for the work remaining find little trouble in keeping busy. Especially in our day of shortage there are frequently others in need of their assistance.

At this point we should like to bring this essay to a close. We have treated the call with respect for its divinity, its great worth, as well as a great number of questions concerning the manner in which we ought cherish it and avoid abusing it. Before closing, however, a few thoughts beg for expression. They have to do with three abuses of the call against which the church has ever needed to be on prayerful guard. They are old, common, and basic abuses, perhaps responsible for everything we have needed to talk about this morning.

One of these is the sin of the minister himself. Wherever and whenever the shortcomings, the sins of the called worker restrict him in his achievement or dull the effect of his work with offense, there he has abused his call. And who of us, to whom the grace of the divine call has been given, would be so proud this morning as to claim that he has not all too frequently abused his call in that way? May the gracious Lord of the Church help us all to approach His sacred gift among us in daily repentance! The called worker who has learned the joy of using Luther's sacristy prayer has found a rich source of comfort in that direction.

Another of the general abuses of the call which have been with us long is the sad lack of interest on the part of our people on far too many occasions for hearing the called ministers as diligently and gladly as they

ought or for studying at the feet of their called teachers. It might be said that here we have come to the one abuse from which stem all others.

Then let us combat that abuse mindful of exactly that last fact. That means that we will combat it with faithful preaching and teaching of the Word, together with correct administration of the Sacraments. To that let us rededicate ourselves with prayerful determination. Every other program, of revival, improvement of stewardship, dissemination of information, recruitment of workers, deepening of indoctrination, noble as they may be in the program of any church and much as they are indeed in keeping with the very suggestions of the Lord's own Word, will remain sounding brass and tinkling cymbal unless they are thoroughly rooted in humble, consecrated, correct preaching and teaching of the Gospel. Paul's familiar words ring as clear and true as ever: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). And faith is the source of every blessing in the church, of also every proper reaction to the call.

The other general abuse of the call, one which has come so sadly to the fore in our day, is the woeful lack of desire we find among our young people for preparing to heed the call into the service of the church. When we take note of the large number of our church's gifted young men and women who pass up the church's colleges each September for a much more expensive education in preparation for vocations which will busy them only with the affairs of this life, then we realize what a lot there is left for us to do, the present pastors teachers, parents, and elders in the church.

There is small comfort and even less defense for us in the fact that it has always been thus in the church. When an assignment committee must adjourn with many unassigned calls still existing throughout the Synod because there were not enough men and women available, and that happens in a day when opportunities for expansion are many and good, that becomes a call clear and loud for consecrated effort on the part of all of us to remedy the abuse.

May our Christian parents not only train their children at home in an atmosphere of love for the Lord and His Church, precious as such an atmosphere may be, but may they also stand ready to encourage them and help them toward the precious decision in more cases to serve the Lord directly! May our pastors and teachers in their humble gratitude for the grace shown them in their own call be moved to do all that becomes possible for them to guide gifted young people toward a similar call! And may the faculty members at our Synod's worker-training schools continue to realize that the young men and women in their classrooms are, next to the Gospel itself, the most precious commodity to possess for the work of the Lord's kingdom. Let them keep their sleeves rolled high as they work with their young students never losing sight of the pulpit and classroom whither the call would lead them.

It is not enough that we speak of the call as part of an order that leads to a cherished vocation. Nor is it enough to speak with deep regret of the number of calls which cannot be filled because of a lack of personnel, as though we were only concerned with satisfying needs or increasing the size of the visible structure of our church. It is rather of importance that we would show our young people that the call to the public use of the Keys is the order in which the Lord God has chosen to have His kingdom heralded among men throughout the world. It is an invitation which places them as a link between their own joy in the Savior and the opportunity for others to come to know that joy. Unless each generation comes forward in larger numbers to serve in the ministry, humanly speaking, we are preventing the kingdom from coming!

While cherishing the call as such a gift of grace, let us remember that after all is said and done, it is the same gracious Savior who gave the call who will also lead the men and women to prepare to accept the call. Realizing that, while we realize as well the great need for workers, let us do as the Savior bids us: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2b).