

The Relation of the Pastor and the Church Council to One Another

[Essay read at the Milwaukee Delegate Conference]

by Paul Pieper

Seated at the right hand of God the Father, our risen and glorified Savior is engaged in enlarging and perfecting His Kingdom here on earth. "Teach all nations" etc. (Matth. 28, 19.20). "Go ye into all the world and preach" etc. (Mark 16, 15.16). "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5, 25-27). To that end He gives "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4, 11-13). There is no other way of building the church. To proclaim "the word of reconciliation" is the one duty of the church. It may not be unnecessary to repeat this in our day when the church is in danger of dissipating its strength and vitality in fostering all sorts of extraneous activities.

"To function properly," some say, "the church must be well organized; the better the organization, the better the functioning of the congregation." It may surprise the sponsors of such notions to hear that the outward form which the church assumes on earth is quite incidental, that nowhere in the New Testament Scripture do we find an injunction concerning any particular organization of the church. We read that the first Christians came together daily in the temple, that the apostles preached, that there was baptizing and the breaking of bread, prayer and fellowship, and that the church increased in numbers from day to day. Later on, as the work of the apostles took on greater proportions and the membership grew, the church saw fit to establish the office of deacons; other features were added from time to time, while some that had existed were dropped, as conditions warranted it. The gospel furnished the forms which became necessary. Thus it is also in our day. The organization of our churches sprang from the particular conditions and needs of our church. The form may change, the gospel remains the same forever.

A group of Christians forming a local congregation will establish in its midst, according to the authority peculiar to the church and vested in it by Christ Himself, the ministry of the gospel. For this purpose it calls men to whom it assigns specific duties. Thus we get pastors and teachers. As conditions warrant it, the congregation may see fit to assign other duties, as for instance, the management of the external affairs of the congregation and the proper conduct of church and school, to qualified members of the congregation. Thus we get our Church Councils and our School Boards.

Now it is of the greatest importance for the edification of the body of Christ that those who are placed in charge of the various functions of the congregation work together in the spirit of harmony and peace. My particular assignment is to set forth: The Proper Relation of the Pastor and the Church Council to One Another. In doing so, I shall, first, point out the duties of the pastor; then, the duties of the Council members; and, finally, how they are to work in harmony for the upbuilding of the church.

I.

The pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation, called by the congregation to carry out publicly, in the name of the congregation, in its particular field, the work of the ministry of the word. This includes the public proclamation of the word, administering the sacraments, watching over the souls entrusted to his care, counseling the inquiring, strengthening the weak, seeking the lost, reclaiming the erring, comforting the sorrowing, visiting the sick, ministering to the dying, ever having at heart, and praying for, the spiritual welfare of every soul under his care.

This is the most difficult, the most responsible, the most glorious work on earth and it is a true saying: “If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.” (I Tim. 3,1). This is evident from some of the titles given to pastors in the Scripture. For inst.: *hyperetes Christou*. The original meaning of *hyperetes* is an oarsman; then, one who does hard work. Pastors are *hyperetai Christou*. They have been called to do hard work for their Lord. They are to be devoted to Him wholly and to use themselves up in His service. Often we pastors begin to pity ourselves because of the long hours we have to put in in our profession and because of the demands made upon our time and energy, especially also, if the church at large makes a claim on our time and strength. Such self-pity is entirely out of place. The ministry was never intended to be a sinecure. We pastors have been called to be *hyperetai Christou*.—Another title given preachers is: *oikonomoi mysterion theou*. In this title the feature of work gives way to that of responsibility to a trust. An *oikonomos* is one who has been made the manager of a household. Everything has been placed under his control. The pastor is an *oikonomos mysterion theou*, a steward of the mysteries, that is, the hidden things of God. The hidden things of God are things which God alone can know but which He revealed to us in His word, the eternal counsel of God for the salvation of men, which mysteries have been committed to the church and whose management or administration has now been placed by the congregation into the hands of the pastor. This involves a tremendous responsibility. To be a steward, a caretaker, a manager of the mysteries of God! What an incentive to take our assignment seriously! What an indictment, if pastors were to be unfaithful in their task!—The high rank of pastors is contained in the name: *presbeuontes hyper Christou*, ambassadors, agents of Christ, men who are to represent the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Our country’s ambassadors are highly respected. We demand respect for them. An insult to an ambassador is considered an insult to the country he represents. What an honor to be representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! What a risky business for anyone to treat the ambassadors for Christ shabbily! Touch not the Lords anointed!—Another title: *episkopos*, an overseer, a superintendent of the church, a bishop. In Acts 20, 28 we read: “Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” The church is very dear to our Lord. “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it.” He wants His church to receive the best possible care and treatment from them who have been called to serve the church. As shepherds, pastors, they are to find the best pasturage for their sheep. Each sheep and lamb of the flock is to get its particular dues, the strong as well as the weak one, the obedient as well as the recalcitrant one. He is to keep a watchful eye on them, to protect them from all enemies and to watch that they do not stray away. And if one does get away, he is to go out after it and try to get it back into the fold. Such *episkopein* calls for real devotion to the Great Shepherd of the flock, demands diligent application to the Word to recognize the Shepherd’s will, entails love for the entire herd and a great solicitude for the individual sheep. It requires continuous alertness to danger and an untiring zeal for His cause.

Such is the calling and the rank and the work of the minister of the congregation, unquestionably, the most difficult, the most responsible, the most helpful, the most glorious work

on earth, an employment which will tax the energies and faculties of body and soul to the limit and command the full time of the pastor. Now "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." (I. Cor. 4,2). On the great day of accounting the minister will not be asked by the Lord of the church: Were you an outstanding preacher? a mighty pulpit orator? a popular teacher? a competent organizer? a good mixer? No! but the Lord will ask: Were you faithful? Did you always remember that you were my servant? in my service? that you were to seek my interests, my honor, my glory? In other words: Faithfulness is the quality which the Lord will inquire about on that great day. How pastors must importune God to keep them faithful!

Our members as a whole do hold their pastors in high regard. When they called them they promised that they would receive them as servants of Christ, that they would accept their preaching of the Word as coming from Christ Himself and render such preaching willing obedience. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Christians to do just this: "Know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (I Thess. 5, 12f) and in Hebrews 13, 17 we read: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch over your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Let us thank God that our people have this high opinion of us, their pastors, and never do anything whereby we would be giving the lie to our high calling or bring disgrace upon it. It would be unfaithfulness of the basest sort, were we to abuse our office for self-aggrandizement or if we failed to show the spirit of the Baptist who beautifully evidenced his attitude toward Christ, the only correct attitude, when he said: "He must increase, I must decrease."—It would be high treason, if under our *episkope* false doctrine would gain a foothold in our congregation either because through failure to study we would be unable to recognize it as such and to refute the error or because of earthly mindedness our vision would become blurred to see the error or because we were trying to achieve ends in the church which are foreign to the gospel of Christ.

Let us ever be mindful of our high position and rank. "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). This certainly means that we must take our preaching seriously, that if we expect the people to accept our preaching as a message from the Lord Himself, we may never step into our pulpits unprepared hoping that the Holy Spirit will put the right words on our lips when we are in a tight place. We have no promise for laziness. Any minister who relies on his own ability and his gift of oratory to hold forth on the pulpit for twenty minutes is showing very little respect for Him who died for the truth and very little regard and for the church which He purchased with His own blood. "Take heed unto yourselves." Let us not overlook this admonition and ask God daily for humility and zeal and wisdom to be faithful in our responsible position as ambassadors for Christ.

Of late prominent laymen have been engaged by groups within the church to lecture on topics which are of the deepest concern to all who are interested in the welfare of the church. We have heard them on the radio, they appeared on the stage of the Hall in the Public Service building. Among them have been a governor, a congressman, a business man and most recently the mayor of Park Ridge, Ill. These men speak with authority not on matters of business, statecraft and politics for which they would seem eminently qualified, but on religious subjects and their utterances are widely quoted in the secular and the religious press.—Well, is there anything wrong in that? Should we not be glad that the laumen are finally coming to the front? Are not all Christians priests and kings with the duty to show forth the praises of Him who has called them from the darkness to His marvelous light? There can be no doubt about the

Christian's duty of testifying in his environments, in that particular field into which God has placed him.—But it is an entirely different matter if someone undertakes to speak publicly as the mouthpiece of the church. There are at least two definite prerequisites for that: the one is, that that person must be *apt to teach*; and the other, that he *must have a call* to speak publicly for the church.

Not every Christian is qualified to speak in public as the voice of the church. There is too much at stake. Ordinarily the church exercises extreme care in presenting persons to the church who are “apt to teach.” What a long period of instruction precedes the presentation of theological candidates for the holy ministry. This is fully in accordance with the instructions of the Word of God. St. James (3,1) cautions: “My brethren, be not many masters,” that is, *didaskaloi*, teachers. And St. Paul warns Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.”

Why the cautiousness? To prevent an unqualified person from speaking in the church. Only those who have proven themselves “apt to teach” are qualified. To be “apt to teach” means more than to have the gift of oratory; it means, to possess the knowledge of the doctrine and the ability rightly to divide the Word, that is, to be able to differentiate between the law and the gospel. The Governor of Minnesota, who may be a good governor, proved to be inept to speak for the Lutheran Church in that triangular national broadcast of about nine months ago. It is nice to have a consecrated Christian Congressman, but his high political rank does not enable nor qualify him to speak authoritatively on matters of Christian doctrine and life. When one later on reads the reports of what such persons said, one realizes not only that it would have been much better if they had kept silence, because they publicly revealed their ignorance, but also that they have done definite harm to the cause of Christ by their wrong and half-baked statements.—We deplore that the lay speakers on the rostrum of the Luth. Men of America in Wisconsin and the editors of their magazine speak in the name of the church. It takes more than a big mouth to be a *didaskalos* (a teacher) or a *hegoumenos* (a leader) in the church. Those who are not “apt to teach” should refrain from speaking publicly as the voice of the church.

The other prerequisite for public speaking in the church is that the speaker must have a *legitimate call of the church to speak*. A pastor is called to his particular church, which is a definitely limited field. The fact that I am the pastor of St. Peter's does not by any means give me the authorization to instruct the members of St. Jacobi. If the President of the Wis. Synod had a lot of money and got the notion to rent the Milwaukee Auditorium to speak as the voice of the Luth. Church to the assembled Milwaukeeans, he would be told quickly enough: See here, you have no right to do what you are doing. Who gave you the call to hold this meeting? And if he would also be the President of the Mo. Synod, he still would not have the right. That is not his field. His field is St. John's congregation. It is quite a different thing when the Wis. Syn. congregations of Milw. Co. ask him to preach the sermon on the occasion of the local celebration of the Wis. Synod Centennial in the Milw. Auditorium. Then he has a legitimate call to speak officially in the name of the congregations who called him. The same applies when he speaks or writes officially as the President of the Wisconsin Synod. From the Synod he has a legitimate call. It would be an entirely different matter, if the dart ball leagues of the Luth. churches of Milw. were to ask him to address their group publicly. If the President were to comply, he would be overreaching into a field of someone else. That group cannot extend a call, a legitimate call, because it is not engaged in the Lord's business. Nor could this group extend such a call without the knowledge and consent of the pastors of each congregation which has members in the leagues. Do these principles apply also to radio preaching? Does the preacher involuntarily instruct listeners who belong to someone else's flock? Luther once said something like this: “If I

were able to convert the whole world with one sermon and had not the call to do so, I would have to abstain therefrom.”

Those consecrated laymen who undertake to speak authoritatively in the church and who are engaged by unauthorized bodies to give out on topics which require the deepest thinking of our best theologians, should by all means remember the two mentioned prerequisites for speaking publicly in the church, viz., aptitude and authorization. There is a tendency today to change things in the church.” The clergy had their day in the first century of the Luth. Church, let the laymen take over in this second century.” Has the new slogan: “Disorganize the pulpit and unite the pew picked up momentum in our day? Let us do some sane thinking. Let us stick to the instruction of the Word and guard against confusion and error. Let no one become a busybody. Let no one speak publicly as the voice of the church unless he is apt to teach and has a call to teach.

II.

Since a local congregation is a tangible group, living in some defined area, as a rule owning, property (real estate, a church, parsonage, school, teacherage), it becomes necessary to have other officers in the congregation besides the pastor. The Church Council consists of men elected by the congregation to serve in leading positions, to watch over the doctrine, to see to order in the services, to act as custodians of the congregational property, and to assist the pastor in his work. Let us consider the Church Council as to its origin and its function.

Nowhere in the New Testament Scripture do we find a command to organize a Church Council. I said above that the outward organization in a congregation is something which grows automatically out of the preaching of the word and may be different at different times and in different localities. The gospel will create whatever offices become necessary. If we look for traces of the Church Council in the early church I think we can find them in Acts 6. In any case, the qualifications for the men needed at that time for a particular duty are desirable in our day for the men who are to serve on our Church Councils.

When the Holy Ghost had been poured out upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, they preached the word with great power and in demonstration of the Spirit so that thousands of souls were converted to Christ and received baptism as a token of their faith. Just how large the congregation at Jerusalem was we do not know; we do know, however, that the work of the apostles increased from day to day, especially also since they personally attended to the distribution of food and clothing to the needy in the congregation. This latter took a good deal of their time and curtailed by just that much their real work of preaching. Because they tried to attend to both tasks, both suffered. The inevitable happened: “There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”

Some change in the matter of handling the *diakonia* had to be made. No one recognized this better than did the apostles. In fact, they were the ones who called a congregational meeting and laid the matter before the members for consideration. They suggested definite remedial measures. They declared: “It is unreasonable that we should omit preaching in order to serve tables. We have a larger assignment. Therefore elect seven men from your midst to take the care of the needy in hand and relieve us of this work, so that we may devote our whole time to prayer and the ministry of the word.”—The congregation recognized the justification of the request and followed the suggestion by choosing seven men for this position. They were then properly inducted into office with the laying on of hands and from then on they attended to the feeding of the poor. This arrangement proved highly satisfactory. The newly elected deacons did a good job

of serving tables, while the apostles were free to give themselves over entirely to their task with the result that they could preach much more intensively and extensively: large numbers of new members were added to the ever growing church and it was a matter of special joy when “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” as a result of the new arrangement.

Now we here point to the fact that the need of the church called for the introduction of the office of deacons. Other needs in the church were similarly met. Our Church Councils, no doubt, sprang up from our particular church needs. Now, although the duties of our Council members are different from the duties of the almoners in the early church, yet the qualifications for Church Council membership are the same as those of the deacons of the early church. They should be “men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.”

Which one of these qualifications would we care to dispense with in the case of our Church Council members? We have to have just that sort of men in our Church Councils today. Could we tolerate anyone in our Church Council who is not of “an honest report,” that is, who has not a good reputation in and outside of the congregation? Could a congregation afford to have as a Church Council member one who is known to be a toper or a dead-beat or one who habitually uses curse words or one who is known to live on outs with his wife or one whose children are known to be high flyers? Such a person, instead of being an ornament would be a detriment to the church, a disgrace for the church and he would cause the name of Christ to be blasphemed among men. Even as in those days we need in our Church Councils men of good report, unrepachable men, men who are generally respected in the congregation and in the community as honest, upright characters. Those on the outside are all too quick to slander the church if a man of doubtful reputation is a member of a Church Council.

Furthermore, the men on the Church Council should be men “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.” This requirement should not be overlooked when the time of electing Council members rolls around. Quite frequently congregations have a hard time of getting a slate of candidates for the Church Council. In desperation they reach for any member who qualifies as a “man of good report,” but in many cases his spiritual knowledge is sadly lacking. It is not enough just to have a certain ability to run things and to get things done. That is desirable, but much more to be desired is that a Church Council member is well grounded in the Scripture, in the wisdom from on high, that wisdom which only the Holy Ghost can give through the word. That is meant when we say: a Church Council member should be a man full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

There is a reason for this qualification. In the service for the induction of newly elected members the inductees are told among other things: “You are to see that the gospel be preached in its purity, in accordance with the sound Lutheran faith.” If a man is not acquainted sufficiently with the doctrine how will he be able to judge whether it is being preached in purity and in accordance with the sound Lutheran faith? One who had had the least experience once on a Church Council will appreciate how important it is that a man on the Church Council be imbued with the Holy Ghost, that he have a special measure of wisdom from on high, that such wisdom be his possession and that it permeate his thinking and his judgment. I call your attention to the disciplinary cases which arise and where a special measure of the Holy Ghost is necessary.

These qualifications should be definitely sought in those who are to serve in leading positions in the church. Even if their work consisted only in “serving tables,” only such who measure up to these standards should publicly function in the church, lest the church become an object of derision and blasphemy on earth.

To the Church Council is assigned even today the work of “serving tables,” by that I mean such things which pertain to the external management of the affairs of the congregation. They are the custodians of the congregation’s property. They are the legal representatives of the congregation and are to keep the property in a state of good repair. It is their business to point out to the congregation that the church or the school or the parsonage or the teacherage are in need of repairs, that near installations or replacements of one sort or other have become necessary. In case of a building project they usually are the building committee. For such work our Church Council members are usual especially well equipped, in most cases because of their business dealings much better than the pastors. As a rule the pastor is the chairman of the Council. When such congregational matters are under discussion, the pastor must not presume that what he suggests in respect to repairs must be accepted by the members of the Church Council. The congregation never intended to make the Church Council the pastor’s rubber stamp. Rather than insist pigheadedly on his opinion in these external matters, the pastor should suffer even a pet scheme of his to be wrecked when the Council members are of a different opinion. Let the pastor stick to his knitting, i.e., his preaching, and permit the Council members to do the work for which they are especially qualified, viz., to serve tables.

Some pastors take altogether too much extraneous work upon themselves, work which could be done just as well and perhaps better by a member of the Council or some other member of the congregation. A pastor will prove himself to be a wise manager, if he knows how to turn work over to others. The theory expressed is good, but it does not work out so well in practice. The essayist personally pleads guilty of doing many things which really should be done by someone else in order to allow him time for his real work. However, to get the work done properly, expeditiously and with the least commotion, it is easier and more profitable for the congregation if he does the work himself. There is danger that one job after the other is piled on the pastor and after a while his doing them is simply taken for granted. True, the Church Councils provide their pastor with time and labor-saving mechanical devices such as a typewriter, a mimeograph, an addressograph, a tape or wire recorder, etc, with the result that the pastor is frequently so busy in his office with mechanical things, that he spends much time in the service of the congregation, it is true, but not in the real work to do which he has been called. The pastor’s work is not to serve tables. That is the responsibility of the Church Council.

But there is other work to be done by the Church Council members besides “serving tables,” namely, to come to the aid of the pastor in looking after the spiritual health of the congregation. It may be wholesome for us all to listen closely to what is said when the newly elected Council members are inducted into their office. Here is a paragraph from the service which claims our attention: “You are to assist the pastor in the care of the sick and the needy, in the cultivation of peace, harmony and love among the members, in the promulgation of the general welfare of the congregation, and in the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom at home and abroad.” These spiritual duties of the Council members call for a large measure of the Holy Ghost and wisdom indeed. Our church today is face to face with serious problems. Certain matters of doctrine and practice should be discussed in the Council meetings. Just to mention a few: Boy Scoutism, Lutheran Men of America in Wisconsin, union matters. How important that Council members get an insight into these matters, discuss them, look upon them in the light of the Word of God, form their opinion of them and then take a God-pleasing stand concerning these movements which so seriously affect the church.

Surely then the office of the Church Council member is important and the congregation should exercise great care to get men with the aforementioned qualifications into these leading

positions of the church. This is in accordance with God's will and conducive to the edification of the congregation.

If pastors and Church Council members thus measure up to the required and desired specifications, what a team they will form! What a power for good they will be!

III.

The Church Council members promised on the day of their induction into office and sealed this promise with a handshake, that they would work together with the called servant of the word, i.e., the pastor, for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Christ. In the achievement of this goal they are primarily interested. Both acknowledge the same Lord and Master and they look upon each other as brethren. Both are in the service of the congregation, both are to look after its welfare. The matter of the proper relation of the one to the other then ought to solve itself.

In all spiritual matters only one authority is acknowledged in the church. "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." The Word of our Lord is decisive in all matters of faith and life. Once the Scripture has spoken, all bow in obedience, and the issue is decided. Only thus can a congregation claim membership in Christ and all will be well with such a congregation. This attitude toward the Word of Christ is taken for granted in our midst.

In all matters of policy, the thing in question is carefully investigated, properly evaluated in the spirit of the gospel and decided by the law of brotherly love to the best interests of the congregation. Here pastor and Church Council should strive to present a united front.

Untold harm may be done to a congregation, if pastor and Council clash on a matter of policy. It may happen that for carnal reasons members of the Church Council refuse to endorse a policy promulgated by the pastor. Let me become specific:

After much instruction and labor a pastor has finally gotten a congregation to the point where it has asked the Ladies' Aid Society to refrain from all sorts of money making schemes, such as, running a restaurant, a bakery, a candy kitchen, a stationery shop, a department store or what have you, all in competition with the merchants on the street who are held to procure a license for their business and to pay taxes. In his instruction the pastor displayed the patience of a saint. Now these things have been done away with and contrary to expressed fears the congregation is making headway in every respect.—But there are a few diehards and this dissatisfied group enlists the interest and services of several Council members to reopen the question of sales and bazaars and over the warning of the pastor the Church Council sponsors the plea and as a result the doors are thrown wide open to all manner of money making schemes. The soul-care (Seelsorge) of the pastor has been interfered with and much valuable upbuilding has been torn down again. Such disunion between pastor and Council does not make for spiritual growth in the congregation; on the contrary, all indications are that great havoc will result therefrom.

Or, if a Church Council, after having received instruction in the matter, allows a group within the congregation to engage an outside speaker of whom they are not at all sure that he will speak the same language their pastor speaks and does that, possibly without informing the pastor, who is the responsible head of the congregation, the Council is overriding the duly called servant of the word and is straining the relation between pastor and Council to the utmost and further cooperation becomes well-nigh impossible.

Or if a pastor has set forth the naturalistic and self-righteous principles of Boy Scoutism to his congregation and to his Church Council and has shown that this group cannot be tolerated in its midst, the Church Council, however, for ulterior motives and pointing to congregations

which have troops, opposes the pastor and over his head sponsors the investiture of a Scout troop in the church and the congregation adopts the Church Council's suggestion, there is only one thing the pastor can do, namely, to resign, since the congregation together with the Church Council has refused to render obedience to the Word of God, a sin of which the pastor may not become guilty.

Or, if a foreign group, calling itself Lutheran, I mean the Lutheran lien of America in Wisconsin, a unionistic group with unbiblical principles, forces its way into our congregations by exerting pressure especially on some of our Council members who are business men and sends them letters inviting them to come to their meetings and to do so in spite of the warning of their pastors, this group is certainly undermining the position of the called minister of these congregations, and if any of the Church Council members, yielding to the pressure from the outside big shot "Lutheran" business men and industrialists, speak against the pastor in favor of this alien group, they evidently become guilty of doing damage to the vineyard of the Lord and they have thereby disqualified themselves as Church Council members.

God knows how difficult it is to build up a congregation along strictly Scriptural lines and how easy it is to tear down again what has been so laboriously built up. If a congregation has to acknowledge that its pastor is pursuing a correct Scriptural course in the building of the Kingdom, that he is not resorting to all sorts of carnal schemes but that he is hewing straight to the line, then that congregation, then, above all, that Church Council should back him up wholeheartedly and let their pastor know that they are with him, so that he may do his work with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for the congregation.

It is always bad for any Church Council to oppose a faithful pastor. But what if he did make a mistake? Yes, the pastor may be carried away by a false zeal, he may commit an error in judgment. The Church Council should not let that pass by. However, they should not pounce upon him and oppose him publicly, but they should be of assistance to him by helping him to see his mistake and urge him in a kindly spirit to admit his fault and to make amends. That is showing the correct attitude.

Like the Church Council members the pastor too is to be very careful not to do anything whereby the upbuilding of the Kingdom would be hindered and the relation with the Council members would become strained.

If, for instance, a pastor should speak derogatorily of the parochial school and back up his fault-finding by sending his children to a public school even though a parochial school is available, he surely would be causing damage to his congregation and to his Council either by causing resentment of his attitude in the hearts of his well-informed, strong members or by strengthening the weak Christians in their own opposition to the Christian school.

Or, if a pastor sponsors all sorts of extraneous affairs in his congregation and leaves his people under the impression that what he is doing is the real work of the church and the correct way of building the Kingdom, he is giving them a most superficial conception of church work, even as he himself has become inexcusably superficial.

Or, if he is slovenly in his pastoral practice, officiating at any and every wedding and at any and every funeral, and then makes his members believe that he is following the broadminded and big-hearted way of Christ, he would become guilty of wearing a pious cloak to cover up his ungodly practice and of misdoctrinating and mistraining his Church Council and his congregation, causing almost irreparable damage to the church.

Or, if a pastor is careless in his conduct; if he fails properly to prepare his sermons and gives the general impression that he does not take his holy office too seriously, he is giving

serious offense and straining the good relations which must exist for the edification of the congregation, in fact, he is making himself impossible in the ministry.

Or, finally, if a pastor lords it over his Church Council and insists on obedience even in such things which are not established by the Word of God, he makes cooperation impossible and either embitters the members of the Church Council by forcing them into submission or by sponsoring open rebellion. Such a pastor is a tyrant instead of being a shepherd and he certainly is a misfit as the head of a Christian congregation.

“One is your Master, even Christ; but all ye are brethren.” “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity,” in unity of spirit and purpose! There is need of the most cordial relations to exist between the pastor and the Church Council members, based not so much on personal friendship as on a recognition of their high calling in Christ. The feeling of mutual responsibility, the joy of working together at the great assignment of building Zion, the keen perception of having been called to be something to the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, all these considerations must fill both pastor and Church Council members with the greatest zeal to work for the cause of the Lord in the spirit of unity and love. May God grant that this fine relation between pastor and Church Council members exist and flourish in all our congregations.