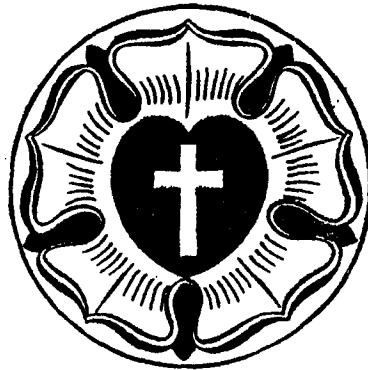


THE DIVINE CALL

and
TERMINATION
OF THE CALL



Church of the Lutheran Confession

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Accepted by the Twentieth Convention (1992)

of the

Church of the Lutheran Confession

"as a valuable form of counsel for the church."



INTRODUCTION

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OR "FORM AND ORDER"?

When we establish our practice in the matter of the DIVINE CALL, we need to recognize:

- A) What is determined by the Divine Word;
- B) What is determined by our collective judgment as a church of Christ.

Where the Word establishes doctrine, we pray for a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5-6). Here there is no room for a "latitude of theological opinion" (I Corinthians 1:10).

Where our procedures and customs, however, are governed by sanctified Christian judgment we may well differ among ourselves, yet submit to the majority opinion out of brotherly love and concern for good order in the church (I Corinthians 14:40).

How important that we distinguish carefully!

A.

What, in the matter of the DIVINE CALL, is **determined by the Divine Word?**

The historic Lutheran Confessions and our own Concerning Church and Ministry affirm and confess:

1. That God has instituted **the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the Sacraments;**
2. That this ministry is the privilege and responsibility of all believers;
3. That those who perform this divine ministry publicly, in behalf of others, do so by the authority of those who have called them or sent them;
4. That such public ministers are a gift of the ascended Lord to His Church;
5. That their call is, therefore, **a divine call**, the call of God;
6. That the highest standards of morality, fidelity and competence be sought in them, that the gospel ministry be not blamed.

B.

What, in the matter of the divine call, is **determined by Christian judgment?**

The history of the Church shows many variants in the **form and order** of public gospel ministry established by Christians in the exercise of their mandate to preach the gospel. Our Concerning Church and Ministry (Art.V, p.21) affirms that

"congregations may choose jointly to administer the Keys in whatever manner they deem effective, expedient and consonant with Christian love and good order."

It was not always so. Under the Levitical Law of Moses, every detail of form and order was prescribed by the Lord for the religious life of His people Israel. Our Lord Jesus, however, made no such provision for His Church of the New Testament. "Now that faith has come" we are deemed mature enough to make godpleasing choices in matters of form and order. Given the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Apostolic Word, rich in precept and example, we are fully equipped for the task. Indeed, we are warned (Galatians 5:1) to stand firm in this liberty and not let ourselves be burdened again by a yoke that enslaves. The church must remain flexible and adaptable if it is to meet the needs of changing circumstances.

Our historic Confessions give us a bold example of this freedom in practice. **"If the bishops either are heretics, or will not ordain suitable persons, the churches are in duty bound before God, according to divine law, to ordain for themselves pastors and ministers."** (Smalcald Articles, Art.72) The "divine law," of course, is the law of liberty described above. Appointment of a pastor by a bishop? Selection and ordination of a pastor by a church? Either way could be right, depending on the circumstances.

When European immigrants came to America, it became necessary for them to determine a "proper form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation independent of the state." C.F.W.Walther became the advocate of a congregational form of church government and showed, in his Theses, that such is fully in accord with scriptural principles. It was a revolutionary change in form and order made necessary by new circumstances in America, where church and state are to be kept distinctly separate.

We are in the process of evaluating the form and order of our provision, in the CLC, for public gospel ministry. Although a particular concern is "the termination of the call," that is a part of a larger piece:

1. What offices, or ministries, do we need to establish in order to fulfill our mission?
2. How shall these ministries relate to "the universal priesthood of all believers?"
3. How shall we exercise control over the ministries conducted in our behalf?
4. What procedure shall we follow in calling a pastor, teacher, or other minister?
5. What is our obligation toward those whom we call?
6. What is their obligation toward us?
7. How should a call to the public ministry be terminated should such action be required?
8. What conditions would require such termination?

When we determine our practice in matters of judgment, we put our form and order to the test:

Is it in accord with the spirit of the gospel and the Scriptures which touch on the subject ("scriptural")?

Is it "consonant with Christian love and good order"?

Is it practical ("effective and expedient")?

The findings and proposals of this study are submitted with these standards in mind. God grant that they be helpful!

PART I

WHAT LUTHERAN FATHERS HAVE SAID – A BRIEF SUMMARY –

1. A study of any aspect of the Divine Call, including its termination, must rightly begin with the doctrine of the Holy Ministry. The Lutheran Confessions and subsequent documents promulgated among Lutherans, particularly also in the Synodical Conference, contain many clear statements of this doctrine.

2. When Luther and his followers speak of "the Divine Call into the Gospel Ministry," it was clearly understood that the Ministry is based upon the scriptural doctrine of Justification. This is also true particularly of the necessity of the Ministry.

We observe this in the careful formulation of Articles IV and V of the Augsburg Confession. The key expression in both articles is "this faith." In Article IV, which speaks of justification, it is declared: "This faith God imputes for righteousness before Himself, Rom. 3 and 4." (Latin: *Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iustitia coram ipso, Rom. 3 et 4.*) And Article V begins: "That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted." (Latin: *Ut hanc fidem consequamur, institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta.*)

What this means can be summarized as follows: Since "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:7), the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel is evident. One Lutheran professor said it well: "Faith and preaching go hand in hand" (W. Schumann, "The Call to the Ministry," 1936).

3. Who is to do this proclaiming and preaching? The call to this work is for every Christian. "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew 28:19-20). It has been well said that "the division into clergy and laity is entirely senseless (when considered) on the basis of justification and regeneration...It is from that approach that Luther understood the doctrine of 'Kirche und Amt' ('Church and Ministry') and liberated the church of the Reformation from the pretentious hierarchy of the anti-Christ" (Schumann).

That the general Gospel ministry of the New Testament is universal among Christians is clearly taught in I Peter 2:9: "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" Therefore, negatively, we cannot speak of the divine authorization and permission to preach the Gospel as a special privilege of certain Christians only, as though they were a special class.

4. Scripture uses the term "Ecclesia" ("Church") when speaking of believers. In the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, we find believers spoken of as a "congregatio sanctorum" (a "congregation or gathering of saints"). It is the Church, in this proper sense, this "set-apart" people, these believers, who possess the ministry of the Gospel ("Ministry of the Keys"), and only they! There is only one Gospel ministry!

Note well: It is not the organization of Christians into a particular form, such as a

local congregation or synod, that enables those individuals to be called the Church; rather, it is their faith in the Gospel, brought about in them by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace ("this faith," "hanc fidem").

5. Although there is only one Gospel ministry, the Lord Himself has arranged for the legitimate calling of individuals into the public ministry. "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 34:11-12). Thus we speak of the Lord's ordaining the public ministry.

Luther spoke of the public ministry (i.e., the special call to proclaim the Gospel in behalf of the congregation of believers, "von Gemeinschafts wegen") as "another use" ("ein andrer Brauch") of the general Gospel ministry. In other words, it is another way that the individual Christian has of administering his office of ministry. By calling a particular individual to proclaim the Gospel in behalf of the congregation ("von Gemeinschaft wegen") the believer is in no way surrendering his ministry; rather, he is thus administering it in a way that pleases God, for God Himself instituted it.

Luther points out that this special public ministry is necessary for the sake of good order, lest confusion constantly arise when every believer wants to speak at the same time!

6. The Scriptures impose no rules or regulations regarding specific outward forms in which or according to which the Gospel is to be proclaimed. The Confessions also make it clear that Christians are not to judge one another on the basis of outward forms. All Christians are to proclaim the Gospel, and God instituted the office of the public ministry as a means by which Christians may carry out their calling, but believers are to exercise their Christian liberty in the external forms they wish to employ.

The "pastorate" (not a biblical term) is not to be identified with the term "ministry of the Gospel"; it is merely one of the forms (historically, rather than scripturally, developed) of the ministry. "'Ministry' is the general term, the genus. There are two species of it: the one, the universal priesthood (ministry) of all Christians; the other, the public proclamation of the Word by the commission of the congregation. Of the latter there are subspecies: the pastorate, office of teacher, professorship, etc." (Schumann).

It is erroneous to think that such forms of the public ministry as tutor, teacher, professor, synod president, etc., are not of divine appointment if the calling is done by a synod rather than by a local congregation. This is the case whether the synod acts by a vote of delegates at a convention or through a synodical committee. As stated before, true divine calls can be made only by those who themselves possess the Gospel ministry, namely believers. It makes no difference regarding the validity of the call what the particular grouping of such believers may be.

In his sermon, "That one should keep children in school" (Predigt, dass man die Kinder zur Schule halten soll"), Martin Luther discussed, in addition to other matters, individuals in the public ministry, and said of them: "I do not mean, however, the present religious profession in cloister and monastery...rather, I mean that profession which has the office of preaching and the administration of the Word and sacraments which give the Spirit and all blessedness...namely, pastor, teacher, preacher, lector, priest, one whom they call chaplain, sexton, schoolmaster, and whoever else belongs to such offices and (duties, roles)-a profession which Scripture indeed highly praises and extols."

7. It is only those who possess the Gospel ministry (i.e., believers) and exercise their prerogative through calling others into the public ministry that also have the right, under

God, to terminate the call.

Believers accept in faith what the Scripture tells them concerning the Divine Authority that lies behind the relationship existing between them and their called servants (ministers): "...Over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28) They will, therefore, seek the Lord's guidance and help, not only in calling, but also in terminating a call. They will desire to be scrupulously careful to do nothing that might cause either act to displease their Lord.

God Himself sets forth the qualifications of one who desires the office of a bishop (pastor). These qualifications are helpful to the believers who call someone into an office, as well as to those who are constrained to terminate such a call.

Historically, it has been taught among us that Christians may depose their pastor from office for (a) teaching false doctrine; (b) offensive conduct; or (c) willful neglect of duty. Later was added a fourth, namely, established inability to perform the duties of the office. Apparently, this last point involved advanced age or physical disability. No one would question the validity of the act of termination of a call in accordance with these points, performed in love for the Lord and obedience to His Word.

ADDENDUM: Some of our forefathers have used expressions which can either be easily misunderstood or are themselves of doubtful meaning, when they have sought to describe the situation that would prevail when it has been established through synodical discipline that a congregation has dismissed its pastor without Scriptural cause, thereby terminating his call contrary to the will of the Lord who "made him overseer" in that place. Some have written that in such a case no one can accept a call to serve that congregation, since before God (Latin: "coram Deo") the man is still the pastor of that flock. The writers have not said that before men or before the congregation the man is still the pastor. Self-evidently, since they who called have now rescinded the call, no call presently exists. Without a call there is no pastor, as Luther and the Confessions made eminently clear. What, then, did the writers mean to say? Their words can, in charity, be understood to mean that it was not the Lord who terminated the call. He gave no warrant or permission for the sinful act of the congregation, and the congregation must be dealt with. Until the congregation has repented of its sinful act in wrongfully deposing its pastor, no other man should accept a call to serve it.

In his Pastoral Theology, J.H.C.Fritz follows up his "before God" statement with: "Before such a congregation may again be supplied, a reconciliation must be effected: it must either recall (emphasis not in the original) its pastor or otherwise give satisfactory evidence of its repentance" (Fritz, p.62). If a congregation must recall, it is evident that Fritz regards the former call as having come to an end.

Because the "before God" statement can be misunderstood or is in itself not clear, it should not be used.

PART II

THE TERMINATION OF THE CALL

Our CLC Model Constitution, and the constitutions of our congregations, state four reasons for which a pastor, teacher, or professor may be dismissed from office. The fourth reason given is "established inability to perform the duties of his office."

It is understood that advanced age or sickness could disable a person, but there are more reasons under this fourth point for dismissing a pastor or teacher from office. Does a congregation, or a Board of Regents, have to put up for years with a man who does not possess the qualifications required by the Lord to be a public servant of the Word and is therefore incompetent? Perhaps he is not apt to teach, is tactless, lacks good judgment, or fails to be a spiritual leader at home as well as in church and/or school, and must say with Solomon: *"They made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept."* (Song of Solomon 1:6).

Shall such an incompetent person be allowed to harm the cause of Christ? Shall he be allowed to serve in the Church to the detriment of the Kingdom? Those who called him are a spiritual priesthood of believers whose duty and right it is to judge both the doctrine and life of their called worker and to dismiss him from office, if necessary. It is the "inability to perform the duties of his office" to which this portion of the study of the call and its termination is chiefly directed.

1. As stated above, every believer in Christ is a spiritual priest, entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, forgiving and retaining sin. When he discharges this Gospel ministry jointly with fellow believers in Christ by calling one or more qualified persons to perform these functions in his behalf, he does not thereby surrender his ministry as a spiritual priest, but carries it out in a manner that God Himself has prescribed.

Luther: "For although we are all priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office, but a servant of all the others, who are priests. When he is no longer able to preach and serve, or if he no longer wants to do so, he once more becomes a part of the common multitude...and he becomes a Christian like any other...This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching or the ministry and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all of the members of which are priests."

(Luther's Works CPH 1956, Vol.13, page 332)

A.Pieper: "It is necessary to differentiate between the public office and the individual priesthood, but the 'use' is an entirely different one. The individual priesthood is carried out by each Christian in Christ's and his own name alone...wherever he is alone and when he alone comes into consideration. As soon as others are present with him who are priests the same as he, immediately the congregational right goes into effect and curtails the outward exercise of the individual priesthood to a certain degree, namely, where the exercise would negate the same

rights of the other spiritual priest."

(Theologische Quartalschrift, 1917, pp 211–241; Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol.60, No.4, October 1963, p 249)

2. Although the public preaching and teaching ministry is in essence the same as the spiritual priesthood of all believers, and although all Christians are equal before God, yet they do not all have equal gifts and are not equally qualified to perform the various functions of the public ministry.

Romans 12:6–8 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Ephesians 4:11–12 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

I Corinthians 12:28–29 "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all workers of miracles?"

3. The New Testament gives examples of how men were called to function (publicly) in behalf of their fellow believers, but it does not set forth any specific procedure to be used in calling them, or in terminating their call, should this become necessary.

Examples of Calling:

Acts 1:12–26 Matthias called to replace Judas

Acts 6:1–7 Seven deacons chosen to provide for neglected widows

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders. We are not told whether they arranged for election by the congregation, or whether they appointed them. "Appoint" may mean to choose, or elect by raising hands.

Without a call there is no public ministry. A man may desire to serve in the public ministry, complete all the necessary study for it, but unless he is called, he remains only a candidate for the ministry.

Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, Of Ecclesiastical Order: "Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." (Triglotta)

4. The Lord has laid down certain qualifications for those who desire to serve in the public ministry of the Word. These qualifications, therefore, remain the standard for selec-

ting those who preach and teach in the church.

Jesus trained the apostles Himself. Today we use educational institutions for this training, especially our college and seminary. When a student has satisfactorily completed his required studies, the faculty presents him to the church at large as one certified for the work of the ministry. Since a calling congregation would scarcely know the candidate, his soundness in doctrine, or his fitness for the public ministry, it is the considered policy of our CLC to entrust the responsibility of determining the qualifications of its graduates to the college and seminary that trained them. Later, when the president of our church body provides a calling congregation with a list of candidates, he is, in effect, telling that congregation that every name on that list is that of a man fully qualified to fill the needs of the congregation.

(The seminary diploma of Johann Gottlieb Michael Hilgendorf was handwritten by Dr. C.F.W. Walther and dated July 3, 1871. It stated in German that Johann Hilgendorf "led a godly life at the seminary, that he had the necessary gifts for the office of the ministry," and above all, that he was "gesund in der Lehre," healthy (sound) in doctrine.)

Although a faculty may carefully monitor the students' performance in the classroom, and their general way of life, it happens that some slip through the screening process set up by the faculty. Likewise, a man may pass a colloquy with flying colors, and yet take up work in our midst as one unfit for the work to which he had been called. The cause of Christ and His Gospel should never suffer even the slightest blemish because of those who serve in the public ministry. The ministry exists for the benefit of the Church, not the Church for the benefit of the called workers. *"Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."* (II Corinthians 6:3)

5. The qualifications that the Lord requires of a called servant of the Word are that his conduct be above reproach, that he be faithful to Scripture, and that he in love serve those who called him, so that His believers, young and old alike, may grow in faith, be fruitful in every good work, stand firm against error, and be equipped to lead others to a knowledge of the truth.

I Timothy 3:1-7 "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

Titus 1:6-9 "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

I Corinthians 4:2 "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

II Corinthians 6:3 "Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed."

1 Peter 5:1-4 "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The Lord laid great importance upon the office of the public ministry. He wants believers to appreciate the high calling of those who serve in this ministry, and not only to honor them for their work's sake, but to "obey"—that is, to follow their spiritual guidance, unless this guidance would be contrary to the Word of God.

The qualifications that the Lord set forth for those in the public ministry are not absolute, for if they were, no one could qualify. Rather, they are goals that those who seek to serve should strive for. Although all men fall short of the Lord's requirements, yet the Lord is pleased to use them to carry on His work.

6. The needs of the believers who call a servant of the Word to serve them determine the length of that call. A call may be terminated if the need no longer exists that led the calling body to issue the call.

Some calls are temporary, others permanent. For example, a vacancy pastor or teacher receives a temporary call, since he serves a congregation only until it receives a regular worker again. When that regular pastor or teacher comes, there are no stipulations regarding the length of his ministry stated in the call. His position is not like that of an official of our synod, whose term is for two or four years, and who must be re-elected if he is to serve longer. No, his call is without limitation. Various things can end it, however, but his call is called a "permanent call." It exists as long as the need exists.

A missionary's work may be terminated in a field that the Board of Missions no longer considers a viable area. A teacher's call may be terminated in a school where enrollment has declined and the need for the teacher no longer exists. In both cases, a call to another field is the most likely means of resolving the situation. Synod may have to provide temporary emergency support for such a worker.

7. When a call has been received and accepted, the most common reason for its coming to an end is that the called servant of the Word has received and accepted a call to serve in another field.

8. A call may also come to an end when the called servant of the Word finds it necessary to resign or retire.

A called worker may feel that he can no longer do justice to the work assigned to him in the call he received. He may consult with his brethren and/or synodical officials and ask to be considered for a smaller portion of the Church's work. Or he may feel that the best solution is to retire from the public ministry. He may then submit his resignation. If he retires, he may be classified in our CLC Directory as a SERVANT WITHOUT A CALL. Many may still refer to him as "Reverend," or "Professor," but he is no longer a pastor or professor. It is the call that made him that. Apart from the call there is no public ministry.

9. It goes without saying, that death ends a call.

10. If a servant of the Word teaches contrary to God's Word and continues to do so in spite of brotherly admonition, he must be told that he is no longer qualified to serve in the public ministry. Because of his false teaching, his call must be terminated.

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

Galatians 1:6-9 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

II Thessalonians 2:15 "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle."

I John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Romans 16:17-18 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

When a pastor, teacher, or professor finds it necessary to terminate his membership in a synod because it has adopted a false doctrinal position and will not change it, this does not mean that he has thereby disqualified himself for the public ministry.

It is not true that when a person who has, for conscience' sake, voluntarily resigned his membership in the synod of which he and those he served have been members, that his resignation alters the basis on which he originally was called, and that he must immediately and automatically resign his ministry. The basis upon which our ministerial and educational candidates, our pastors, teachers, and professors are installed, is their pledged allegiance to Scripture as the sole rule of faith and life, and to the historic Lutheran Confessions. That is the entire "basis" for their calls.

When a pastor or teacher withdraws from a synod, the body that called him is certainly entitled to an explanation, even as he is entitled to a hearing. If his reasons for his action do not stand the test of Scripture, then the calling body has the right to admonish him. If this should fail and he adheres to his error, it has the duty of terminating his call. If, on the other hand, the calling body will not hear him and considers him a false teacher, they will terminate his call. He will then have to bear the consequences of upholding the truth and count it all joy to suffer the same for Jesus' sake. But if the calling body finds his reasons for leaving the synod to be valid according to Scripture, then they have the clear duty to support and follow him. (Journal of Theology, Vol 1, #4, Oct 1961, Vol 2, #4, Oct 1962)

11. When it is established that a servant of the Word is leading a scandalous life, and continues to do so, despite admonition, he has disqualified himself from the high calling of the ministry. His call must be terminated.

II Corinthians 6:3 "Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not

blamed."

I Timothy 3:2.7 " A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

The Lord requires that a servant of the Word be blameless in the ministry, that he should not give offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed. His conduct should not be such that any child or adult is led to stumble in his or her faith, or is caused spiritual harm. Scripture, not the world with its lenient views, must decide what a scandalous life is. Anyone who serves in the public ministry and is guilty of leading a scandalous life should be admonished. If he is penitent, determination will have to be made whether he can serve somewhere else where his reputation may allow him to do so without harm to the Church. It is certain that the body that called him will have the serious responsibility of deciding whether he has disqualified himself for the ministry where the scandal occurred.

12. When it is established that a servant of the Word wilfully neglects his duty and will not change his ways, his call must be terminated.

I Corinthians 4:1-2 "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

II Timothy 4:2 "Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

As a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God, it is required of a man that he be found faithful. He is to preach and teach the Word in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. When he consistently neglects these responsibilities, and does so in spite of admonition, and then defends and repeats his neglect, this is sufficient cause for his removal from the ministry. His unfaithfulness is a hindrance to the work of the Gospel. He is harming and depriving those whom he serves of the spiritual nourishment and guidance the Lord wants them to have.

13. When a servant of the Word displays the inability to perform the duties of his office, this also is reason for terminating his call.

The inability of a pastor or teacher to perform the duties of his office may occur for various reasons. If he is old and his hearing, eyesight, or strength is leaving him, and he just can't any longer do the work that is required of him in his call, the work of the Church will suffer. It is hoped that he will recognize this fact and resign. Those whom he serves will want to deal with him in all love and patience. But consideration for the man and his family dare not outweigh consideration for the welfare of the Church. The calling body will think first of asking him to resign. Only if he refuses to do so will they think of terminating his call. For the welfare of the Church, his call should be terminated--either by him, or by the calling body.

There is also an incompetence apart from that caused by illness or old age. It becomes evident when a man enters the public ministry, either through graduation from a college or seminary, or through a colloquy, and then shows that he does not possess the qualifications that God requires. This inadequacy does not become evident until the man is serving in the ministry and doing things on his own. The result is an unhappy relationship between him and those he serves, with a sad effect upon the Lord's work. Christian love and

good order must prevail when the matter is dealt with. It may be necessary for the call to be terminated for the sake of the spiritual welfare of Christ's flock.

"Apt to teach" is a requirement for anyone who serves in the public ministry, since he is a teacher in the name and in the stead of Christ. He should possess a sufficient knowledge of Scripture and be able to convey that knowledge to others simply and clearly. Without this basic quality, he cannot preach properly, teach the children, students, or adults, comfort the sick, etc. If he lacks this fundamental ability of being "apt to teach," he cannot serve in the public ministry and should resign. If he refuses to resign when confronted with his deficiency, it is necessary that his call be terminated.

Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I Timothy 3:2 "A bishop then must be...apt to teach."

I Timothy 5:17 "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

II Timothy 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

The following are some of the conditions that interfere with a God-pleasing ministry:

A) LACKS SOUND JUDGMENT Good judgment is required in all phases of life. It is especially essential that a pastor or teacher have sound judgment in his work lest he offer poor leadership, misapply Scripture, and make poor decisions, thus harming the work of the Lord again and again. Such a called worker should seek guidance from his co-workers. If he insists that his judgment is good and the evidence assessed by those who know and work with him find that it is unsound again and again, he cannot continue to work in the public ministry, but should resign his position. If he does not do so, his call should be terminated for the welfare of the Church.

B) IS TACTLESS It is not only what a pastor says and does that is monitored by others, but how he does it. The risk of "turning people off" or against the Gospel is not an insignificant matter. Precious souls can be lost eternally. The Lord requires tact of those who serve publicly in His Church. The testimony of the Gospel can be nullified by a tactless remark or action. The ability to preach and teach the Gospel requires tact. Note the tactful manner in which the Apostle Paul wrote to Philemon. If it is evident that a pastor or teacher lacks tact, this should be pointed out to him, and unless he can correct this deficiency, he should not continue in the public ministry. He should be asked to resign. If he refuses to resign, it will be necessary for the calling body to terminate his call for the spiritual welfare of the souls involved in his ministry.

C) LACKS SELF CONTROL A pastor or teacher dare not lose his temper in his dealings with those he serves or with the public. There is no place in the public ministry for one who wants to fight physically with others, or tries to shout down those who oppose him and his words. The preaching and teaching of the Gospel are harmed by such outbursts of temper or lack of self-control, therefore a called servant of the Word is not to be strong-headed, but patient, peaceable, and willing to turn the other cheek to those who make life miserable.

If a pastor lacks this quality, and refuses admonition, it will be necessary to terminate his public ministry of the Word.

D) IS DOMINEERING If a pastor or teacher, instead of being an example to the Lord's flock, seeks to lord it over them, he makes himself unfit for the work of the ministry. If he wants all things to proceed only according to his direction, he has forgotten that in matters not decided by the Word of God, his opinion is not to be imposed on others. He needs to be reminded that there is no place in the church for one to lord it over another. Such domination alienates people so that they will not hear or heed the teaching given from Scripture. If his domineering attitude is pointed out to him in Christian love, and he does not change, he should be asked to resign. If he will not resign, the calling body will find it necessary to terminate his public ministry of the Word, lest he do serious damage to the Lord's work.

E) SEEKS TO MOTIVATE WITH THE LAW INSTEAD OF THE GOSPEL It should be evident to every Christian that the Law kills, but the Gospel motivates, and that seeking to build the Kingdom of God by the Law is sure to bring fatal results. Only the Gospel creates and strengthens faith, and leads believers to a life of godliness. A pastor or teacher who emphasizes the Law, and seeks to motivate those he serves with it, should be made aware of his improper procedure, since he thereby fails to rightly divide the Word of truth. If he refuses to put aside his false manner of motivation, it will become necessary to remove him from the public ministry.

In the above points (A-E) in which a pastor fails to measure up to the Lord's qualifications for the public ministry, those who called him and all who deal with him should in patience and love seek to help him. It may be possible that the problem in some instances grew out of opposition to the pastor or teacher's procedure. In other situations it may be opposition to the truth which he presented. Since the Lord has told us that in these last evil days we can expect that men will not endure sound doctrine, great care must be followed in resolving the problems that become evident in regard to the call and the termination of the call of a public servant of the Word.

14. The mechanics of terminating a call rest completely within the realm of Christian love and judgment in dealing with this matter. If a calling body finds it necessary to terminate the call of a servant of the Word it may seek assistance from the synod or others. It will also make the reason for the termination clear to the called worker, and to the entire fellowship. This latter responsibility is handled through the office of the synodical president. A person who has been removed from office will not be eligible for a call to serve elsewhere in the synod unless the responsible officers of the synod are convinced that the man has recognized his deficiencies and expressed his intention to overcome them.

The deposed pastor has the right of appeal, and the action of the deposing body thereby is evaluated by the synod through committees of appeal or by the entire group in convention. Even if the termination is judged to have been unscriptural, the action stands. The deposed pastor or teacher could serve that group again only if he is called there again.

Since only the body that called the pastor or teacher has the authority to terminate that call, a synod cannot invade or overrule that body's action, even as it cannot invade or overrule a congregation in the exercise of Christian discipline. Neither can the synod, during an appeal process, recognize the deposed person as a pastor or teacher, lest it overstep its

call and become "*a busybody in other men's matters.*" *1 Peter 4:15* (Cf. Concerning Church and Ministry, Theses IV and V, page 18)

Also to be considered in this connection is the fact that there is no scriptural basis for the teaching that a pastor whose call has been terminated without proper scriptural grounds is still in the eyes of God a servant of that calling body that dismissed him. Therefore we reject this teaching.

When a calling body dismisses its pastor or teacher, a unanimous vote is required only if it is so stated in the bylaws of the constitution, or if a resolution to that effect is adopted in the meeting. To have the responsible body speak with one voice is desirable, but it is not a scriptural requirement, and therefore cannot be made an absolute requirement.

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