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### The Divine Call of the Christian Minister

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THE DIVINE CALL OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

Thesis submitted to the  
faculty of Concordia Seminary  
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degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

May 1, 1929.

Wm. F. Bruening.

## THE DIVINE CALL OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

Why could Paul tell Timothy, "If a man desire the office of a bishop he desireth a good work"? There must be a very good reason why he mentions this office as especially desirable in preference to other honorable vocations. Indeed, he did have a good reason, for Paul is not here voicing his own personal opinion, but he is writing what the Holy Spirit prompted him to say. It is God himself who is here speaking. It is He who shows us in His Word why this office is of such great value and consequently to be desired.

Of those who "lead the flock", i.e., the incumbents of the ministerial office, we read, "they watch for your souls." Hebrews 13,17. The duty of the minister, then, is to care for man's most precious possession, his soul. Of the great value of this possession the Lord Himself says, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matth.16,26. This alone would be reason enough why the office of the ministry is especially an important and worthy calling. Besides the fact, however, that the minister has this most responsible duty of caring for the souls of men, and consequently holds an office which is a "good work", there is another reason why the minister of the Word must feel that his calling is the most important occupation. He will be convinced of this fact, if he realizes that the office which he holds is a divine institution. He

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will indeed consider his office the greatest work, when he realizes the threefold fact, that God has created the office of the ministry, that God has called him into that office, and has placed him at the very place where he is, to carry on His work.

### I. The Divine Calling.

Every occupation or calling is divine in a wider sense. God has appointed man to labor (Gen.3,19), and has promised His blessing upon it. Eccl.2,24. The calling of the minister or pastor, however, is divine in a special sense, for the ministerial calling has been definitely instituted and established by God himself.

The ministry of the Word in the Old Testament, From the earliest time the Lord has had ministers of His Word. When sin entered into the world there arose immediately the need for the proclamation of grace, of redemption. With this condition of sin that need arose, and with its continuance that need has ever continued to exist. God at first dealt with man directly. He himself proclaimed the first message of grace, of redemption through the woman's seed, Gen.3,15. In the course of time, however, he chose to use instruments or means to deal with man. He called men, to whom he then conveyed His message, to carry His Word to man. Such messengers were called prophets. Their duty was to speak before the people (*προφῆτης* - *προφῆτις* - I speak before) what God commanded them to say. The first to whom this name prophet is applied is

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Abraham, Gen.20,7, though Noah even before him is called a "preacher of righteousness." 2 Pet.2,5. We find such prophets throughout the Old Testament times. Some influenced the people through their words and deeds only, e.g. Elijah, Elisha, etc. Others, however, also reduced their prophecies to writing. These writings have been preserved to us in Holy Scriptures. Jeremiah was thus instructed, "write thee all the words I have spoken to thee in a book." Jer.30,2.

The prophets did not inherit their office nor did they receive it by human appointment, but were chosen, prepared, and called by God. Moses was thus called by the voice of God out of the burning bush, Ex.3,1-4. Samuel received such a call while serving in the temple, 1 Sam. 3,1-20. In like manner the prophet Ezekiel was commissioned, Ezek.1-3.

The prophets had various duties. They were sent to reprove sinners and exhort to repentance, 2 Kings 17,13, they were placed as watchmen, Ezek.3,17, they were pastors, Jer.2,8, they were preachers of Christ and his salvation, Is.61,1; Luke 24,44. From these duties it is evident that they were true ministers of the Word, God's spokesmen to the people.

Besides the prophets there were also the priests, who were ministers of God. Jer.33,21. The priest was, like the prophet, God's representative to man, and, in a

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greater measure than the prophet, man's representative to God. The duties of the priests were mainly three: to minister at the sanctuary before the Lord (Num.18,5), to teach the people the law of God (Lev.10,11.), and to inquire for them the divine will by Urim and Thummin (Ex. 28,30). Of these three duties we are most interested in the second, for in fulfilling that duty the priest of the Old Testament was a forerunner of the New Testament minister of the Word. Though they had these other duties, just this duty of the priest, of teaching, or conveying the message of God's will to man, of bearing the message of God's grace to His fallen creature is emphasized in Scripture. We read, "the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at His mouth, for he is a messenger of the Lord of hosts." Mal.2,7. According to Lev.10,11 they were to be teachers, "that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses." Instructions are given to the children of Israel, Deut.24,8, "do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you." After the return from the exile, "Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation. .... and he read therein." Neh. 8,2.3.

The priest was the ordinary teacher, the prophet the extraordinary. The prophet often supplied the deficiency of the unfaithful priesthood, e.g. when they

introduced false worship into the temple and departed from the commandments of God.

The sons of Aaron were called to be priests and so the office of priest was held by members of this family only. God did not call each priest singly as He did the prophets, but the fact that a person was a member of the family of Aaron, and was able to meet certain physical requirements (Lev.21,17-21), qualified him. The priests foreshadowed the coming Messiah in symbols and types. In this manner also they were ministers of the Gospel. Thus both the priests and prophets of the Old Testament were ministers of the Word.

The ministry of the Word at the time of Christ. The last of the Old Testament prophets was John the Baptist. (cf. Mal.4,5 and Matt.11,13.14). His was a special call and a special commission. He preached, he baptized, he was a true minister of the Gospel. We hear his Gospel message in John 1,29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." With John ended the necessity of preaching of the Messiah to come. The Messiah so long foretold had made his appearance and brought salvation, and henceforth. the preaching of the Word should be a proclamation of the salvation which <sup>he</sup> had effected. It was the Messiah himself who, made arrangements for the spreading of the message of that salvation, for the preaching of His Gospel.

Christ himself was the true minister of the Gospel since he was the author of it. Had he come into the world, effected his salvation, given His Word, and had it recorded for men to read, he would have sufficiently arranged for man's salvation. But God had promised His people that they would always have ministers of His Word. "I will bring you to Zion and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Jer.3,14.15. This promise was not to be broken, the preaching of His Word was not to cease, and this prophecy was fulfilled when the Old Testament ministry was followed by the ministry of the new dispensation. God's people have now been brought to Zion, the New Testament Church (cf. Hebrews 12,22.23), and so we have the assurance that God will furnish the pastors. That this promise has been fulfilled in the Church is attested by New Testament Scriptures which show that when Christ ascended into heaven he gave certain gifts to the Church, "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Eph.4, 11. "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly, teachers." 1 C<sub>o</sub>r.12,28.

While on this earth the Lord himself instituted the office of the Word when he chose, called, and sent out his disciples. (John 15,16; Matth.10,1.5.) At first they were to preach the kingdom to the house of Israel.

Later they were commissioned to carry the Gospel to all nations. Matth. 28, 19. Besides the twelve disciples who received the commission to preach the kingdom, the group of seventy also, which were sent out in like manner, received that commission. Luke 10.

The "disciples" or pupils, became "apostles", or messengers as soon as they were sent out. To be an apostle in the strictest sense of the word it was necessary to have been an eye-witness of some of the events in Christ's life and a witness of His resurrection. For this reason Matthias could be chosen to take the place of Judas. Acts. 1, 15-26. Paul boasts of this qualification, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" 1 Cor. 9, 1.

There can be no doubt that the office of the apostles was a divine institution. We have the clear statement of Scripture which tell us that Christ called and sent the apostles, but can we say that this divine institution continued after the apostles were gone? This question may be met with a few counter questions. Does the Lord limit his promise in Jer. 3, 15? does he say, "I will give you pastors until the apostles have passed away"? Has He thus limited this His gift to the Church to any particular time? Has the need for the office of the ministry ceased to exist? Has the sinful condition of man changed and does man no longer need the proclamation of God's

grace? Would God who is so intimately concerned about man's spiritual welfare (Ezek.33,11) cease to supply those who are to look after that welfare? All of these questions must be answered with an emphatic negative. As the apostles continued the work of Christ, so the successors of the apostles were to continue the work of the apostles. We shall see later that the office of these successors was as divine an institution as that of the apostles themselves.

The different forms of the ministry in the early Church. At this point a discussion of the various means whereby God made His will known in the early Church is in place, so that we may observe what forms the ministry of the Word assumed in the New Testament Church, and how it was continued after the time of the apostles.

We hear of prophets also in New Testament times. Acts 15,32; Matth.18,34; 1 Cor.14,29. These were either prophets like those in the Old Testament who had the gift of foretelling future events or they may have been only public expounders of the Word. An example of one who had the gift of foretelling future events we have in Agabas (Acts 11,28) who foretold a dearth. As the main duty of the Old Testament prophets was to preach the Word of God publicly we may infer that this was also the duty the New Testament prophets, and the foretelling of future events was rather an accidental than an essential endow-

ment. Insofar as these New Testament prophets had the principal duty to preach, to offer the Word, they were ministers of the Word and as such have their successors in the present day ministry. Insofar as they foretold future events they hold an extraordinary office which was discontinued with the change of conditions. The apostle as eyewitness, the prophet as foreteller, the miracle worker and speaker in tongues belonged to a particular time, and consequently disappeared when God no longer considered them necessary. These were extraordinary offices. The preaching of the Word, however, was not a temporary institution. The ministry of the Word is necessary for all conditions and times, and therefore has never ceased to exist. Just one instance that the apostles themselves were aware of this we find in Paul's commission to Titus to ordain elders in every city. Titus 1,5. We notice that Paul does not instruct Titus to ordain men to the extraordinary offices, but to the office of elder which, as we shall see, was a permanent office.

Another form of the ministry in the early church was the office of evangelist. Philip and Timothy are called evangelists. Acts 21,8; 2 Tim.4,5. There were others who did the work of an evangelist, but these are the only two who bear that title. Though all preachers of the Gospel are in the true sense evangelists (εὐαγγελιστῆς - a messenger of good tidings) which would include also the apostles, this name "evangelist" is reserved for those who were not regular apostles, who were not directly

called by the Lord, but who were appointed by apostles and acted as their helpers. They were assistants to the apostles. Since the office of apostle no longer exists, the office of evangelist as it was known in apostolic times has also become extinct. Insofar as the evangelists also preached the Gospel, they also have their successors in the present day ministry of the Word.

One of the ordinary offices of the early church was that of deacon. The deacons took charge of certain administrative work, especially the care of the widows and poor. (Acts 6; 1 Tim. 3, 8-13.) Though this was their particular work, we find that Stephen, one of the seven deacons elected by the church of Jerusalem, also preached. Acts 6, 10.

The other names given to New Testament forms of preaching are pastor ( ποιμήν , Eph. 4, 11), elder or presbyter ( πρεσβύτερος , Acts 14, 23; 1 Tim. 5, 17; Titus 1, 5 et al), teacher ( διδάσκαλος , Eph. 4, 11; 1 Cor. 12, 28; 1 Tim. 2, 7; 2 Tim. 1, 11), and bishop or overseer ( ἐπίσκοπος , Phil. 1, 1; Tit. 1, 7 etc.). Though these names are all different, the office is the same, viz. that of preaching. When St. Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he sent greetings to the "bishops and deacons." Phil. 1, 1. He here designates the two chief offices in the church. Had there been other offices he would hardly have omitted them. There was no difference in the

rank of pastor or elder and bishop as is clearly stated in our confessions, "Jerome, therefore, teaches that it is by human authority that the grades of bishop and elder or pastor are distinct.....by divine authority the grades of bishop and pastor are not diverse." (Concordia Triglotta p.523. Smalcald Articles.) Scripture uses these terms interchangeably. Acts 20,17, "he sent to Ephesus and called the elders (πρεσβύτερος) of the church and when they were come to him he said unto them.....(v.28) Take heed therefore unto the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (ἐπίσκοπος)." The apostle Paul exchanges these terms in Titus 1,5-9. He gives Titus the instructions "to ordain elders in every city," and then giving the qualifications for that office he continues, "a bishop must be blameless, etc." The name "elder" or "presbyter" had reference to the dignity of the office, whereas the term "bishop" referred more to the duties of the office. A present day parallel may be found in the misused term "reverend" as a synonym for "pastor" though in the former instance the word "elder" or "presbyter" was well-chosen. The terms "teacher" and "pastor" refer to a particular phase of that one office which will hereafter be referred to as the office of bishop. It was not until the second century that the office of bishop and elder became two distinctly separate offices.

The duty of the bishops, those who were to continue the work of the apostles, was to care for the flock of God (Acts 20,28), to watch in behalf of souls, admonishing, encouraging, and supporting (1 Thess.5,14), to labor in the word and doctrine (1 Tim.5,17). These bishops held the office of the ministry of the Word without an immediate call from God. They had received their call from God, through an appointment by men. It is to be noted that the apostles did not appoint men to take their place as apostles as Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas, but to only succeed them in their work. That work for which the apostles ordained successors had always existed, and since it is that work in which God is so vitally interested, the care of men's souls, He himself saw to it that it was continued after the time of the apostles. The office of bishop, then, which these successors held was no less divine than the apostolic office itself for it is to the elders, though they had no immediate call from the Lord, that these words of Scripture are addressed, "take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." Acts 20,28. According to Eph.4,11 the Lord not only gave apostles to the church but also pastors and teachers. Can it be denied on the basis of these passage that the office of the ministry continued to be a divine institution after the apostles

had passed away?

The office of the present day ministry is a divine calling. When the Lord was about to ascend to heaven He said to His followers gathered about Him, "Go ye and teach all nations.....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." Here he gave the command to all Christians to preach the Gospel. Here he instituted the office of preaching the Word for all times as can be seen from his concluding statement. This cannot apply to those only to whom he was speaking for they did not live until the end of the world. Just how this office is to be carried out in practice at the present time we shall see later, suffice it to say here that all Christians were made messengers of the gospel and the office of preaching the Word was here instituted for all times by these words of the Lord.

In like manner the office of the keys has been given to all Christians, to the entire Church. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be

unto thee as an heathen and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matth. 18, 15-18. This passage cannot possibly refer to the disciples only because of such terms as "thy brother" and "the church." "Thy brother" is a general term and so this is to be applied to all Christians, not only to the disciples. "The Church," here referred to, is the local congregation. Davis defines the word "ecclesia" here used as "an organized community acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>as</sup> their supreme ruler, and meeting statedly or as opportunities offer for religious worship." (Dictionary of the Bible, p. 141.) This definition might be modified in this that the "organization" is not essential to a Christian congregation. The "church" of Matthew 18, 17 or congregation, might more accurately be defined as an assembly of Christians of a locality who in brotherly communion gather about God's Word and Sacraments to exercise the rights and duties which, through the work of Christ, have been given to all Christians, e.g. establishing of the ministry, exercise of church discipline, etc.

It is evident that Matthew 18, 15-18 contains a general commission to the whole church of believers, to all congregations. But if the preaching of the Word and the office of the keys have been given to the whole church, to all

believers, how can we say that the office of the ministry as it is found with us today, exercised by certain individuals in the local congregation is a divine institution? Since the preaching of the Word is an ordinance of God, as has already been seen, would the manner in which it is carried <sup>out</sup> detract in any way from its divinity as long as it continues to be a preaching of the Word? If the president or head of an organization would give an order to the body and the body would delegate the duty of carrying out the order to one man or a group of men, would the ordinance thus carried out cease to be the ordinance of the head, because it was carried out by a few individuals and not by every member of the organization? Is the office of the ministry, then, less God's institution because the church to whom He has given this institution has delegated certain men to carry out these His plans, and perform those duties which His plans include in the name of the church which cannot as a whole church perform them, as will be shown later?

Luther shows that since the Lord has told us Matth. 23, 8, "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren," we are all equal, have the same right, and therefore the same right of preaching the Word. It is then the only possible arrangement which does not militate against this statement of the Lord that those to whom this divine institution has been given should delegate such to carry

it out who have the common approval. (Sendschreiben an den Rath und Gemeine der Stadt Prag.1523).

But not only is the ministry a divine institution because the divine commission to preach the Word which has been given to all Christians has been transferred to certain individuals who carry out this commission in the name of all. God has also expressly commanded in His Word that the public ministry of the Word is to be established. It is not left up to the pleasure of the Christians whether or not they wish to establish this ministry which shall function in their behalf, but it is their duty, for Scripture expressly commands that regular ministers of the Word be appointed. St. Paul instructs Timothy, "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." 2 Tim. 2, 2. The office of the ministry did not originate in the congregations, but was established by the command of the apostles of Christ, and thus by the Lord's own command. Writing to Titus St. Paul says, "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." Tit. 1, 5. Instructing Titus to establish the ministry in the congregations of Crete, he calls the lack of this office in these places "something wanting", or more accurately, "something left undone". St. Paul speaking by command of

the Holy spirit shows Titus that the ministry is to be established wherever there is a Christian congregation. This is not a suggestion of the apostle but a command, "as I had appointed thee." The office of the ministry is then a divine institution because it also has the divine command.

That this is the doctrine of the Lutheran Church that the ministry as it is found with us today is a divine ordinance can be seen from this statement of the Confessions, "for the ministry of the Word has God's command and glorious promises, Rom.1,16..... For the Church has the command to appoint ministers." (Apology A. C. Art. XIII. Triglotta 311.) From this statement we see that the ministry is considered a divine institution because it has the divine command. That it is considered a divine institution because the Church has received the general command to preach, and holds the power of the keys, and therefore has the authority to delegate this commission and power to those whom it chooses, is seen from the following excerpt, "For wherever the Church is, there is the command to administer the Gospel. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to retain the authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers." (Smalcald Articles. Triglotta 525.)

That this public office has been given to the Church for all times is plainly evident from the statement in

St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "Unto us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. .... When he ascended upon high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." Eph.4,7.8.11. In enumerating some of these gifts the apostle continues, "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." Eph.4,11.12. Surely this is proof enough that the ministry as it existed after the apostles' time was a divine institution, was Christ's gift to the Church, and so this office will continue to be a divine gift or institution as long as the Church conducts it according to the principles of scripture. The ministry of the Word is then not a temporary institution of God, but was meant for all times, "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of reconciliation." 2 Cor.5,18. Here we are told that the ministry of the reconciliation is a gift of God, and as the reconciliation which Christ has effected holds good for all times, so the ministry of that reconciliation is also a permanent divine institution. This is also evident from a comparison of the apostolate with the ministry of the Word which succeeded it, or the present ministry of the Word.

The present ministry of the Word and the apostolate.

are essentially the same. Are the present ministry of the Word and the apostolate to be considered equivalents? If they are essentially the same then what Scriptures say of the one may be applied to the other. The apostolate is termed a "ministry", Acts 1,25, "that he (Matthias) may take part of this ministry and apostleship." That the present day ministry is a divinely intended continuation of the apostolate can be seen from the instructions which the Lord gives the apostles in Luke 12. To Peter's question, "Lord speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" (Luke 12,41), He does not give a definite answer but replies with another question, from which the disciples were to gather the correct answer, "to you first of all as stewards but generally to all servants in my house", for he adds, "blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." (v.43). Surely this last remark indicates that the Lord intended that there should be successors of the apostles in their work until he should come again.

The apostles and their successors are often placed on the same level in scriptures. This Paul, an apostle, places himself on the par with Apollos, 1 Cor.4,1.6, "Let a man so account of us as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God..... And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes." St. Paul calls Tychicus "a

faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord." Col.4, 7. Peter, though he is an apostle, calls himself an elder 1 Pet.5,1, "The elders which are among you <sup>1</sup> exhort, who am also an elder."

The apostolate and the ministry which succeeded the apostolate are essentially the same for the reason that they have the same task. Peter, an apostle is told to "feed" Christ's sheep (John 21,17), and he himself tells the elders the successors of the apostles, that theirs is this same task to "feed the flock of God." 1 Pet.5,2.

The purpose or end of the apostolate and the ministry which followed is the same, to bring people to faith and thus to salvation. St.Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Who then is Paul (an apostle), and who is Apollos (a successor) but ministers by whom ye believed." 1 Cor.3,5.

The Lord through the apostles has laid down the qualifications and duties of those who should follow them. Paul definitely outlines these qualifications, 1 Tim. 3,2-7. He there states that a bishop must be "blameless, ... of good behavior, ... given to hospitality, apt to teach, ..... must have a good report of them which are without." According to Hebrews 13,7.17 they should speak the Word of God and watch for souls. By sound doctrine they were to exhort and convince the gainsayers. Tit.1,9.

St.Paul was placed in the office of the ministry as a preacher by the Lord himself, "whereunto I am appoin-

ted (Acts 9, cf. 15) a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher". 2 Tim. 1, 11. He shows that Timothy holds his office by divine appointment, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee" (1 Tim. 1, 18), and he commissions Timothy to ordain others for the same office, "And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim. 2, 2. Thus St. Paul shows that between the office which he himself held and the office which Timothy should commit to others there was no essential difference.

The Lord in His Word gives rules for the relation of ministers of the Word and Christians, instructions which apply to all times, and He shows that He considers the transgression of these rules as sin and worthy of punishment. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for 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." Hebrews 13, 17. If the ministry here referred to would have been a mere human institution, the Lord would not have considered it a sin if it was despised. The same thought is expressed Gal. 6, 6, 7, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

To summarize:

The ministry as it is found with us today and the apostolate are essentially the same for the following reasons: The Lord designates the present-day ministry as a divinely intended continuation of the apostolate, the successors are placed on the same level with the apostles themselves, both the ministry and the apostolate have the same task and purpose, the apostles identify their office including its qualifications and duties with that of those who succeeded them, and finally, the Lord himself considers the office of the ministry as it existed after the apostolate of equal importance by demanding respect and obedience toward it.

From the foregoing discussion it is seen that the ministerial calling as such, also at the present time is a divine institution, having originated with priests and <sup>h</sup> prophets of the Old Testament, then continued by the institution of the apostolate by Christ himself which has a divinely intended continuance in the present day ministry which essentially is not different from the office which the apostles themselves held.

Quenstedt summarizes very fittingly why the public ministry is a divine ordinance, why the ministerial calling is a divine institution, not only in the Old Testament, and apostolic time but for all ages. He says: "Deus est auctor ministerii:

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- I. promittendo doctores ecclesiae, Jer.3,15; 23,4;  
Joel 2,23;
- II. dando, quod promisit, 1 Cor.12,28; 2 Cor.5,18;
- III. conservando ministerium usque ad consummationem  
saeculi, Eph.4,11;
- IV. ipso docendi munere fungendo, Heb.1,1;
- V. doctores ecclesiae necessariis donis instru-  
endo, 2 Cor.3,5."

(Theol. id. pol. from Hoeneke Dogmatik IV, 368, p.176).  
the

Now that, ministerial calling is a divine institution, how is this divine ordinance carried out today and how can one know at the present time when he is holding this divinely instituted office, when he is pursuing the calling ordained by God? The answer is, he must have a divine call.

## II. The Divine Call.

Necessity of a call. To determine whether a person is holding that divinely instituted office in the church today we may compare him with those who held that office in the Old Testament and Apostolic times of which the present office is a continuation. How did the prophets know when they had a right to take upon themselves the ministry of the Word? We hear the answer in Jer.23,21, "I have not sent these prophets yet they ran, I have not spoken to them yet they prophesied." Again, "The Word of the Lord came

unto me, 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.1,4-5. Isaiah tells us why he assumed this office in these words, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying..... and he said, go." Is.6,8.9. It is clear from these passages that a man became a prophet when God called him. Thus apostles were called by the Savior himself, Matth.10,5-7.

Of New Testament preachers in general we read, "how shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom.10,15. The same thing applies to the present ministry that applied to the priesthood of the Old Testament, "no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called by God, as was Aaron." Hebrews 5,4. It is the call, then, that makes the minister of the Word, whether in the Old Testament when God called immediately (vocatio immediata, e.g. 1 Kings 17,2; Is.6,8; Ezek.6,2), or in the New Testament when the Savior called and sent out His apostles (Matth. 10,1; Mark 3,14), or in the apostolic and early Church (Acts 20,28), or in the Church of today when the Lord no longer calls directly but through a mediate call.

The call of the present day minister. If the present day call is a mediate call what means does God employ in such a call, and how can the minister recognize such a call as divine? What is the call into the ministry today? This is the question whose answer we shall

now seek.

Very frequently a distinction is made between the inner and the external call, the former usually being preparatory to the latter.

The inner call may be considered that inner urge brought about by the love for the Savior which prompts a person to become a minister of His Word. This call may be brought about by various influences, perhaps the suggestion of the pastor, teacher, or parents, perhaps some critical point in one's life, perhaps the effect of some Scripture passage or some sermon. In every case it is brought about by the work of the "Holy Ghost through the Word. Such an inner urge for the ministry should never be lacking altogether as is indicated by the words of St. Paul, "If a man seeketh the office of the bisho he desireth a good work." 1 Tim.3,1. This inner urge is not felt alike by all. For some such an inner call may take place at an exact moment so that such a person can point to the exact time when he received the call,-others can not do so. The matter of the inner call is very much like the matter of conversion. Though some can point to an exact time when they learned to know the Savior, others cannot do so, yet those who are not able to point to the exact moment when they were turned to Christ away from sin are no less converted than those who can. In the same manner those who remember having received such an inner call

at a particular time are no more divinely called than those who have a certain desire for the office but one which has come to them gradually or at least unnoticed. Some may receive such an inner call very early in life which will then prompt them to begin the preparation for the office, for others such a desire may not be felt until after they have studied for a time, others may experience that urge when they are confronted with the external call of the church, and there are instances of still others who received the desire for the office only after they had been in the active ministry for some time. That such who have no desire whatsoever for the ministry should seek some other occupation is evident from 1 Peter 5,1.2, "the elders which are among you I exhort..... 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."

Besides the inner call an external call from the church is also necessary. Though the inner call is necessary for the proper zeal and effort in the work, yet it alone is not sufficient to authorize one to take up the work of the public ministry,-as is the teaching of the Quakers, Socinians, and Spiritualists,-for besides this heartfelt conviction that it is the Lord's will that he should serve Him in this holy office, the minister must also have a call from the church which he is to serve.

Gerhard expresses the proper relation of the two calls very clearly thus. "Concedimus, Deum interno impulsu at afflatu quibusdam hunc animum inspirare, ut nulla periculorum at difficultatum ratione habita ministerium ecclesiasticum suscipiant, quo pertinet arcanus ille impetus, quo ad sacrum theologiae studium quidam feruntur; concedimus etiam, requiri omnino a ministro, ne vel avaritia, vel ambitione, vel ulla alia vitiosa cupiditate allectus, sed sincero Deo amore et aedificandae ecclesiae studio ductus oblatum munus ecclesiasticum recipiat, quos affectus utrosque laude vel maxime dignos, si quis arcanam vocationem sano sensu appellare velit, non admodum repugnamus; interim tamen monemus, primo, ob internam sive arcanam illam vocationem neminem debere partes ministerii sibi sumere, nisi accedat etiam externa et sollemnis vocatio, ne anabaptisticis confisionibus at enthusiasticis revolutionibus fores aperiantur. (Gerhard, Loci Theologici, de Ministerio Ecclesiastico, par. 75, p.48.)

Thus our Confessions declare, "Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." (Augsburg Confession Art. XIV, Trig-lotta p.49.) As stated, such a regular external call must come from the church, and without it no person has the right to assume the office of the public ministry.

By what right, then, has the Church the divine authority to call,-how can the minister know that a call which he receives from the Christian congregation is divine?

The congregation has the right to issue such an external call. The entire divine right, authority, and duty of the Church to call ministers and consequently the divinity of the call lies in the first place in the fact that the office of the keys has been given to the Church. Matth 16,18ff; Matth.18,15 ff. We quote the words of our confessions: to show the church's possession of the office of the keys on the basis of these passages. "In all these passages (Matth.16,18 ff; John 21,15) Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles (and does not speak for himself alone, but for all the apostles), as appears from the text itself. For Christ asks not Peter alone, but says: Whom do ye say that I am? And what is here said (to Peter alone) in the singular number: I will give unto thee the keys; and whatsoever thou shalt bind, etc., is elsewhere expressed (to their entire number), in the plural Matth.18,18: Whosoever sins ye remit, etc. These words testify that the keys are given alike to all apostles, and that all the apostles are alike sent forth (to preach).

"In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the church, as many most clear and firm argu-

ments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys Matth.18,19, adds: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling. (For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it, just as it is actually manifest (Latin - for this reason) that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. And Christ speaks in these words: Whatsoever ye shall bind, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely to the Church: Where two or three are gathered together in my name. Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church; when He says: Tell it unto the Church.)" (Smalcald Articles, Triglotta, p.511). It is thus evident from Scripture that the keys of the kingdom of heaven belong to all believers, and consequently all believers ordinarily have the right to exercise them. This power of the keys is defined by our Symbols as "a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments." (A.C.Art XXVIII, Triglotta p.85.)

This office of the keys was given to Peter as re-

representative of all believers in Matth.16. For the Lord has asked the question, "whom say ye that I am?" Upon his confession of divine truth Christ says he will build His Church. For it is this confession which stands as a rock immovable even though individuals fall. As shown by the statement quoted from the Confession, all thoughts that this is spoken to Peter exclusively and personally are banished when Matth.18,15-20 is considered in connection with Matt .16,19, for there He says, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This statement follows the Lord's direction to go to the church as the final authority in church discipline. Thus Luther, "In diesem 18.Kapitel glossirt sich der Herr selbst, wenn er die Schluessel hat im vorgangenen 16.Kap. in St. Petri Person geben. Sie sind allen Christen geben, nicht St.Petri Person." (Erl. 27,364.) From the fact that the office of the keys has been given to every individual Christian, it follows that the Church, the communion of believers, has the right to call such as should publicly exercise this office. This may be summed up in the words of Klotsche, "Since the office of this ministry (of the keys) has been given principally and immediately to the Church it follows that the Church itself calls and ordains those who shall exercise this ministry." (Klotsche - Christian Symbolics p.181 ff.)

If, however, this office has been given to the whole Christian Church, by what right does the local congregation exercise it? Though the office of the keys is given to the whole Church, to all Christians, as is evident from the foregoing discussion based on Matth.18,15-18, it is also evident that in practice it must be exercised by the local congregation, for if the local congregation were not meant by the word "church" in Matth.18,17, the savior would have commanded an impossibility when He said, "tell it to the church", and designated the church as the final authority in Christian discipline. If the invisible church were meant here by ἐκκλησία, "neglecting to hear the church" would be a meaningless phrase, and the final step toward the erring brother could not be taken. That the word ἐκκλησία has the two meanings in the New Testament, a) the whole number of believers, the invisible Church, and b) a group of people gathered about God's Word, the local congregation, is evident, and there is no doubt that the latter is the meaning here.

Thus we have the direct proof from Scripture that the office of the keys has been entrusted to all believers alike, to the church as the whole number of believers, and to the local congregation as a part of the church or a group of individual Christians.

An indirect proof that this authority belongs to the Church we have in the picture of the whole Church as

well as the individual congregation as the Savior's bride throughout Scripture. "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness." Hosea 2,19. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." John 3, 29. In speaking of the relation of husbands and wives and their duties toward each other St. Paul concludes, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Eph. 5, 32. St. Paul writing to the church of Corinth says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. 11, 2. Here the individual church or congregation is considered the bride of Christ. As the wife has authority over the treasures of the house, even though she submits herself to the husband, so the bride of Christ, the Church, has free use of the keys of the Lord's house, naturally in submission to His will. Since then, the Church is the bride of the Savior, the believers, who make up the Church, are proprietors of all that is in His house, also of His servants, the ministers of the Word. Thus it is that the real power and authority does not rest in the hands of certain men, but in the believers themselves as St. Paul shows 1 Cor. 3, 21, 22, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Of this relation of Christ

and the Church as husband and bride Luther writes, "Da-  
rum lasst uns auch lernen, als Christen (die ihren Schatz  
und Herrlichkeit kennen sollen), dieser Hochzeit ruehmen,  
troesten und freuen, dass wir durch Gottes Gnade zu den  
hohen Ehren kommen, dass wir sind und heissen die Braut  
seines Sohnes Christi..... So du nun also seine Braut  
worden bist, so hast du die Schlüssel, und bist die  
Frau im Hause und sitzt in seinen himmlischen Guetern."  
(Erl.18,312.)

That the church derives the right to call ministers  
from the fact that she is the bride of Christ is thus  
expressed by Baier, "Cui (ecclesiae), postquam plantato  
est, jus et facultas constituendi ministros competit.  
Habet enim sibi, velut sponsae, datas a sponso Christo  
claves regni caelorum, Matth.16,18; 18,17., ideoque, si-  
cut ejus est, aperire et claudere regnum coelorum, ita  
ejus est, constituere ministros, per quos aperiat et  
claudat." (Baier Compendium. Walther Ed.III, 689, 3,C.)

Thus if the Church is the bride of Christ she has  
full authority in His house, also to appoint the servants  
or the ministers who shall serve in it.

That the church has the divine right to call lies in  
the second place in the fact that all Christians are priests  
and have the right to appoint those who are to act in  
their name. That the minister must have a call if he is to  
hold the office of the public ministry, and that the call

comes from the congregation by divine right is based on the fact that all Christians are priests. St. Peter speaking to all Christian says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2, 5. "Ye are a chosen generation a royal priesthood..... that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness to his marvellous light." 1 Pet. 2, 9. The incumbents of the ministerial office in the New Testament are nowhere called priests because of such office, consequently the ministry is not a continuation of the Levitical priesthood. In the New Testament the whole nation of believers, the entire number of God's people, is a nation of priests. The priesthood of the Old Testament has for its antitype in the New Testament the whole number of believers, not the ministry. As the priests of the Old Testament brought sacrifices, so the Christian must bring spiritual sacrifices, Rom. 12, 1, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." As the priests of the Old Testament taught the people and proclaimed the will of God so it is the duty of every Christian to "teach all nations." Matth. 28, 19. The grace of God, then, and the commission to impart it to others is the glorious heritage of all believers, and it is then the right and duty of every believer to fulfill that commission. St. Paul

does not merely tell a certain class of people but all Christians at Colossae, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another." Col.3,6. Such exercise of this authority, especially through brotherly admonition, is very often spoken of in the New Testament. "Brethren if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from his way shall save a soul from death." James 5, 19.20. (Cf. also 1 Thess.5,11.14; Rom.15, 14; Eph.5,11.) All Christians have the right and duty of saving souls by employing the only means by which such salvation can be effected, namely through the Word of God.

The right of preaching then, belongs alike to all Christians, but this does not give every Christian the right to preach publicly in the Church. The priesthood of all believers must not be confused with the pastoral office. The relation of these two may be illustrated by a comparison with the government of the United States. In our country the sovereignty lies in the people, yet by no means is every citizen an officer of the government. So the Christian minister is that officer of the Church who exercises those powers originally vested in all believers. Although the means of grace, the only means through which salvation is brought to men, are the property of all believers, God has, as seen before, appointed a special office to administer these means publicly

and in the name of all. The believers transfer the functions of the priesthood to the ministry in the same way that the right of government of the people is transferred to the officers who represent them, namely by election. The Smalcald Articles apply the words of 1 Pet. 2, 9 in the following manner, "These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood." (Triglotta, p. 525.) How does the priesthood of all believers then differ from the office of the public ministry?

The differences between the priesthood of all believers and the office of the public ministry. Though the priesthood of all believers and the office of the ministry are similar in some respect, they have fundamental differences which are not to be confused.

They are alike in this that both are forms of preaching. Both are based on the redemption of the world through the blood of Christ and have the spreading of the message of this redemption as their sole object. Both presuppose faith on the part of the messenger, - both messengers have experienced sin and grace. Both kinds of preaching are bound by the Word of God (cf. 1 Pet. 4, 1), and both have divine power (cf. Rom. 1, 16). Both kinds of preaching make certain demands on the hearer. "If he neglect to hear the church" (Matth. 18, 17, spoken of the general priesthood), - "obey them that have the rule over (guide)

you" (Hebrews 13,17, spoken of the public ministry).

Both the public ministry and the general priesthood have the same end, the salvation of souls.

The public ministry, however, differs from the spiritual priesthood of all believers in the following points: The public minister must possess certain special qualities (cf 1 Tim.3,1-7; Titus 1,5-7), especially the aptitude to teach. "The same (that which Timothy had received) commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." 2 Tim.2,2. The ministers of the Word have the care of the "whole flock" which has been entrusted to him (Acts 20,28), whereas the Christian, the spiritual priest, has no specific charge. The Christian is to live by means of his worldly occupation, whereas the minister is to "live of the gospel" (1 Cor.9,14.), and keep out of earthly affairs. (Cf. 2 Tim.2,4.) The main difference, however, between the spiritual priesthood and the office of the public ministry lies in the fact that, whereas all believers have a general call, the minister of the gospel must have a special call.

Not everybody is to fill the office of the ministry, for to what disorder that would lead is easily imagined, and Scripture expressly instructs that everything is to be done decently and in order. 1 Cor.14,40. That all are not to be public teachers is evident from the words of James, "my brethren be not many masters (Greek - 'teachers!')."

James 3,1. For this office a special call is necessary, -  
"How shall they preach except they be sent." Rom.10,15.  
Luther distinguishes the priesthood of all believers from  
the office of the public ministry in the following manner,  
"Es ist wahr, alle Christen sind Priester; aber nicht alle  
Pfarrer. Denn ueber das, dass er Christen und Priester  
ist, muss er auch ein Amt und ein befohlen Kirchspiel ha-  
ben. Der Beruf und Befehl macht Pfarrer und Prediger."  
(Erl.39,255.)

Every Christian is a preacher or teacher, mission-  
ary, in the world at large and advisor of his brother,  
but to be pastor of a congregation he must be called by God  
through the congregation which he is to serve. Though the  
means of grace are the property of all believers, God has  
for the sake of order, appointed a special ministry to ad-  
minister these means in the name of all. Does it not  
follow that the public minister must then be authorized  
by those in whose name he is to act? As long as there is  
no congregation, as long as this administration is not  
done publicly, in the name of others, every Christian has  
the perfect right to exercise the office of the keys  
and the functions of the priesthood originally vested in  
all believers, As soon as there is a congregation, how-  
ever, those who intend to administer these means publicly  
must be called by those in whose name they are to admini-  
ster them. Though all Christians have this power, only

those who are appointed by the congregation are to exercise that power. Luther expresses it, "wenn er (a Christian) ist an dem Ort, da kein Christen sind, da darf er keins anders Berufs, denn dass er ein Christ is.....auf's ander, wenn er aber ist, da Christen sind, die mit ihm gleiche Macht und Recht haben, da soll er sich selbst nicht hervor tun, sondern sich berufen und hervor ziehen lassen, dass er an Statt und Befehl der andern predige und lehre." (Erl.22,146.)

The necessity for such an arrangement for the sake of order is evident. Luther expresses it; "man muss einen Diener haben Denn wenn die ganze Gemeinde wollte hinfallen und taufen, so moechten sie wohl das Kind ersaeufen, denn es gingen wohl tausend Haende danach. Das tagte ganz nichts. Darum muss man einen Diener haben, der solches pflege anstatt der Gemeinde." (Baier Comp.p.692 - Postil Eccles.XI, 3070sq.) Leyser compares the church to a republic. Since the people of a republic have a common right and equal liberty, they elect their representatives, for the sake of order, to whom they then commit the authority originally vested in them. These representatives then act in their name. In the same manner the believers by the command of God, for the sake of order, elect ministers who publicly exercise the functions of the priesthood in the name of all. He says, "omn<sup>o</sup> ipsorum (believers) sunt....1 Cor.3,21. .... ordinis causa eligunt

certas personas, quibus demandant administrationem clavium regni coelorum,..... ut ita juxta doctrinam Pauli apud nos omnia εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τὰξιν , decenter et ordine fiant, 1 Cor.14, vers.ult." (Baier Comp. p.694. L.c.f. 1620 sq.)

Having shown that the rights and powers of the church are vested in each local congregation of believers but that the local church is not so constituted that it can act in plenary congregation, first of all because the women are barred from public speaking in the church( 1 Cor.14, 34), Professor A.L.Graebner continues, "There are, however some tasks enjoined upon the church which are of such a kind that they cannot be properly performed even by the entire assembly of the men in a congregation. Assemblies may deliberate, investigate, decree, impart admonition or reproof; but they cannot preach a sermon, or baptize a child, or administer the Lord's Supper to a communicant. Neither are all men in a congregation capable of preaching. And even if in an exceptional case a congregation were composed of men every one of whom had the natural talents and the acquired accomplishments requisite for preaching, or for administering the sacraments decently and in order, this would not entitle every one of them to the public performance of these functions. All Christians are priests, and therefore every Christian has the right and duty to bring the sacrifices of his hearts and lips and hands

before his God. But his spiritual priesthood does not empower him to offer up his neighbor's sacrifices of the sacrifices of an entire community of such as are like himself priests before God. . . . . Thus even on general principles it would appear that the exercise of the powers of the church is not at the arbitrary disposal of every member of the church. But Christ has not left it to the church to adjust this matter on general principles; he himself has established an order of things which his apostles and the early church have put into practice from the beginning, and which He has ordained for all time." (Theol. Quart. VI, 1, 18.)

It is the duty then of every congregation to establish the ministry in its midst and call men into this office. To summarize, the congregation has this right, authority, and duty for the following reasons:

1. The office of the keys has been given by the Lord to the local congregation which then must elect those who are to exercise this office publicly in its name.

2. All Christians are priests and consequently have the authority to appoint those who are to perform those public functions of that office which not every Christian can perform.

3. Ministers are servants of the congregation (cf. 1 Cor. 3, 5), and consequently the right to appoint those who are to serve belongs to the congregation of believers as

St. Paul includes in, "all things are yours." 1 Cor. 3, 21.

4. The congregation has the duty of rejecting false teachers, "Beloved believe not every Spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4, 1. The duty of rejecting the false teachers implies the choice of those who bear the truth.

5. God has through his Word commanded the establishment of the public ministry by the congregation. (cf. Titus 1, 5; 1 Tim. 2, 2.)

The external call then comes from the congregation which has the divine right and authority to issue such a call. What does history teach of this arrangement?

The call of the minister in the formative period of the Church and immediately thereafter. Were the first men who went about preaching the gospel called by the congregation? Was this arrangement observed from the beginning? Some, indeed, did not have a call from the congregation and the reason for this was that there were no congregations, the world was their field. These men received their appointment from the apostles to carry the Gospel everywhere, as missionaries. As soon as congregations had been fully established, however, the ministers were elected by the choice of the congregation as we shall show later.

During the formative period of the Christian Church

conditions obtained which did not exist later when congregations had been fully established, and thus arose the necessity of certain temporary arrangements. As soon as the formative period was over and congregations were fully established, God called the ministers of His Word through the congregation and only such held that office who had received such a call. That this was the practice of the early Church after the formative period can be seen from some of the early post-apostolic writings.

The first instance that we have of appointment to office by choice of the congregation was the nomination of Matthias and Joseph for the office of apostle to take the place of Judas, by the hundred and twenty Christians in Jerusalem. Acts 1,23. This was in reality the first Christian congregation. There is this objection, however, to applying this passage as a rule for appointing all ministers or officers in the Church, namely that Matthias, who was later chosen of the two by lot, was to hold the extraordinary office of apostle, being a witness of Christ's resurrection.

Later we have Paul's instruction to Titus, "set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city." Titus 1,5. There were Christian assemblies in these cities in which Paul during his short stay in Crete had not been able to arrange everything, e.g. the establishment of the ministry. Titus was to appoint

elders for these congregations which were not yet fully established. Later, when the congregations became fully organized, these elders were probably accepted by them as their pastors.

In Acts 6,35 we read, "look ye out seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business..... And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timen, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch." It is evident that here the congregation called or appointed these men to the office of deacon, which office has been previously described. Though these men were elected to the office of deacon, they did not restrict themselves to the duties which properly belonged to that office, for we hear of Stephen that he also preached (Acts 6,13), consequently assumed some of the duties of the elders or bishops. It is hardly to be believed that Stephen would have assumed these duties unless he had been assigned them by those who had called him as deacon, and if he did preach publicly without such a call it was as missionary in the city at large (Cf. Acts 6,14) and not in the congregation, as is reported of all Christians Acts 11,19.

One passage which is very often quoted in substantiation of the fact that the congregation chose its own preachers already at that time is Acts 14,23, "And when

they had ordained them elders in every church . . . . they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." The question whether or not this passage may be used, however, depends on the meaning of the subject "they". The whole chapter speaks of Paul and Barnabas and so the natural interpretation would refer the subject "they" to these two men. However, on the basis of the verb used,  $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ , it is held that these two men cannot possibly be meant since the original meaning of  $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\upsilon$  is "to vote by stretching out the hand", and it is hardly probable that Paul and Barnabas would have voted in this manner. This verb, it is claimed, presupposes a larger group of people, consequently the subject "they" must be referred to the people of the congregations. The verb  $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\upsilon$  evidently has this meaning in 2 Cor. 8, 19, "who (Titus) was chosen of the churches to travel with us." This is also the meaning in the spurious subscription to 2 Tim. 4, 22, "the second epistle to Timothy ordained ( $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\upsilon$  -  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\tau\eta\tau\alpha$  † first bishop of Ephesus", and the subscription to Titus 3, 15, "To Titus ordained ( $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\iota\upsilon$   $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\tau\eta\tau\alpha$ ) first bishop of the Church of Crete."

The Rev. David Brown D.D. in his commentary thinks the word is to be taken in the literal sense, "there is no evidence in the New Testament that the word had then lost its proper meaning, as this is beyond doubt its meaning in 2 Cor. 8, 19 and as there is indisputable evidence that the

concurrence of the people was required in all elections to sacred offices in the early ages of the Church, it is perhaps better to understand the words to mean, "when they had made a choice of elders i.e., superintended such choice on the part of the apostles." This is also Meyer's opinion.

The word  $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\iota\tau$ , however, was also used in the sense of "choose" without the idea of stretching forth the hand. Thayer shows that it has this meaning in the writings of Philo and Josephus, and he is of the opinion that this meaning is to be applied here. In Scripture we have the compounded word  $\pi\rho\sigma\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\tau$  used in this sense, "Him<sup>G</sup> God raised up the third day and showed him openly; not to all the people; but unto witnesses chosen before of God." Acts 10,40,41. The original meaning, "to choose before by stretching forth the hand" is out of the question here. Since we have this one case where the word has lost its proper meaning we can not insist that the word has the proper meaning in Acts 14,23.

Even if the word, however, has here the meaning "choose", it is not to be believed that St. Paul would have foisted his own personal appointments on these congregations without their consent, especially if we consider how strongly he emphasizes the congregation's superiority and right in 1 Corinthians 5. He there gives the Corinthians his own personal opinion and judgment (v.3), but he pla-

ces the final authority and judgment in the congregation (v.13). Though the passage Acts 14,23 refers the election of the elders to these two men, it may be easily understood to mean that the election was made through their suggestion or command or supervision. (Cf. Matthew 8,5 and Luke 7,3; Matthew states that the centurion came to Jesus whereas Luke states that he sent his representatives.)

On the other hand the proper meaning of *ἡγεμονία* fits very well into the situation and since the congregation had appointed men to other offices, e.g. that of deacon (cf. Acts 6,3), we may well accept the original meaning of the word and understand the passage to mean that elders were here appointed by the congregation under the supervision of the apostles.

When the congregations had become fully established, however, and when the bishops no longer served the church at large as the apostles. but an individual congregation, we have evidence that the congregations themselves elected or called their own elders as bishops, i.e. their pastors.

In the epistle of Clement written either about the year 67 A.D. or 98 A.D. we read in chapter 42, "Christ therefore was sent forth by God, the apostles by Christ. Both these appointments were made in an orderly way according to the will of God..They went forth proclaiming

that the kingdom of God was at hand, and thus preaching..  
....they appointed the first-fruits ((of their labors))...  
to be bishops having first prove them by the Spirit, to  
be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards  
believe," and in chapter 44, "They appointed those ((i.e.  
ministers, bishops): already mentioned and afterward gave  
instructions, that when they should fall asleep, other  
approved men should succeed them in their ministry.....  
those (successors) appointed by them (the Apostles) or  
afterward by other eminent men, with the consent of the  
whole church.....cannot be just dismissed from the mi-  
nistry." (Epistle of Clement ch.42,44.) The last state-  
ment has reference to a practice which should not be to-  
lerated, namely of depriving men of those offices to which  
they had been appointed by the church unless there was a  
just cause. This excerpt is a clear proof that at this  
time the bishops were approved by the congregation, though  
they may have been suggested or nominated by the apostles  
or other bishops.

From the Didache we have a similar statement, "Ap-  
point, therefore, for yourselves bishops and deacons wor-  
thy of the Lord.....for they also render to you the  
service of prophets and teachers." (Ante-Nicene Fathers,  
Vol.7, p.318.) The Didache dates from about 120 A.D.,  
consequently it was already the order of things at this  
early date that the congregations chose or called their

own ministers.

A statement of less authority comes to us from the Constitution of the Twelve Apostles which originated not later than the fourth century. "A bishop to be ordained..  
..... is to be ..... chosen by the whole people, who,  
when he is named and approved, let the people assemble,  
with the presbytery and bishops that are present, on the  
Lord's Day and let them give their consent..... and let  
the principal of the bishops ask the presbytery and the  
people whether this be the person whom they desire for  
their ruler." (Constitution of the Holy Apostles, VIII,  
sec.2,4. Ante-Nicene Fathers, VII, 481.) Though this re-  
ference shows that by this time there was a distinction  
between the bishops and presbyters, a distinction which,  
as proved before, is not found in Scripture, nevertheless  
we have here an indication that the ministers, regardless  
of their rank were to be chosen by the congregation.

With the rise of the hierarchy this arrangement was  
changed. We skip over that period during which the divine  
order was perverted, when the power of calling ministers  
was taken away from the congregation and put into the hands  
of a few. With the Reformation, however, the divine order  
was again restored, the power of calling was returned to  
the congregation, so that the Christian minister again  
received his call from the divinely appointed authority,  
the congregation.

Thus today in our church the minister receives his call mediately through the congregation. That this mediate call is no less divine than the immediate call of former times, can be seen from the following considerations:

1. God has promised that he will always furnish pastors. Jer.3,15.

2. Those who were mediately called in the New Testament are considered called or placed by God. Acts 20, 28; Eph.4,11; 1 Cor.12,28.

3. Such as were mediately called have God's promise. 1 Tim.4,16.

4. The present ministry is God's intended continuance of the apostolate, as shown before, and Scripture often applies to all ministers to the end of time what is addressed especially to the apostles.

5. God has given the church the command to establish the ministry and the right to call men into that office.

The mediate call from the congregation is divine in a wider and narrower sense. A call is divine in the wider sense if it has been issued by those who have the divine right and authority to call. Such a call is termed a valid call. As shown before the Christian congregation has that divine right and authority. Every valid call, or call which is issued by a Christian congregation

is therefore divine in a wider sense. The manner in which the call is issued by the congregation is not prescribed in Scripture. The manner of issuing the call may therefore vary, as long as the ultimate approval or call comes from the congregation. It is not necessary, for instance, that the congregation be immediately active in the election. Just as the individual Christians delegate the functions of the priesthood to certain individuals, so the congregation, a body of believers, may also delegate the selection or election of a minister to a single man or to a body of men. Thus it happened that there was a time when the state appointed or called the ministers by the tacit consent of the congregations. Thus it happens today when in our church a congregation or group of congregations delegate that power to a body of men, e.g. the college of presidents (cf. Synodical Handbook, p.29). If such a body then appoints, elects, or calls in the name of a congregation, as its agent, such a call in reality comes from the congregation itself, and if from the congregation, it comes from God who has commanded the congregation to establish the ministry for the public preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacraments in its midst.

How about a call to a mission field where there is no congregation? In what way is such a call divine? By what right does the college of presidents assign a man

to such a field? It must be born in mind that any Christian has the full authority to go to such a mission field of his own accord and preach the gospel by virtue of the fact that all Christians are priests. However, when such a missionary acts in the name of a synod, a group of congregations, such a missionary must have a call from the synod in whose name he works. That such a call eventually comes from the congregation is seen if we bear in mind the manner in which such mission work is done. Such a call also, because it ultimately is authorized by the congregation, is valid and consequently divine in the wider sense.

Another consideration of the valid call is whether it has been legitimately obtained, whether it has been acquired in the right manner. Such a call is considered a legitimate call. Every legitimate call is valid though every valid call, or one which is divine in a wider sense, is not always a legitimate call. When a congregation calls a pastor, however, and God's guidance is asked according to the example of the first congregation when Matthias was chosen to take the place of Judas, when God is thus called upon to help in the solemn manner of calling and each member is thereby reminded that he is helping to issue a divine call to a divine office, he will then be hindered from interfering in any manner which would keep the valid call from being also legitimate. If the

man to be called is aware of the fact that God is calling mediately through the congregation he himself will avoid such machinations which may keep the call from being a legitimate call. Dr. Walther, mentioning some of the things which are requisite for a legitimate call, says, "dazu gehoert vor allem, dass der Berufene sich nicht einge- drungen, eingeschlichen und auf krummen Wegen, durch Ue- ber redung, Benutzung parteilicher Gunst oder gar durch Bestechung, das Amt gesucht, sondern den ohne solches eigenes Zuthun an ihn ergangenen Beruf durch Anders dazu genoetigt, aus Gehorsam gegen Gott und aus Liebe zu dem Naechsten angenommen habe." (Walther-Pastorale p.36, An.2.) Such things which keep the call from being a legi- timate call are diligently to be avoided. However, even though some "wire-pulling" may enter in, nevertheless a call issued by the congregation, since it has the di- vine authority, is valid and must therefore be considered divine in the wider sense.

Objection is raised that mistakes are sometimes made, and that therefore the call of the congregation cannot be considered divine since God makes no mistakes. When, for example, a person who is altogether unqua- lified for a certain place receives a call there, the ques- tion is asked, "Does God make such mistakes?" When God acts immediately and directly he makes no mistakes, but when he acts mediately through man, he uses man as he is with

all his failings, and so if a mistake is made, it is not God's but man's error. The preaching of the Word is indeed a divine work, yet when God uses man as the means, are mistakes on the part of man absolutely excluded? When mistakes are made in the presentation of the Word can we say that God made them? Indeed not. In the same way even though some mistake is made in the matter of a call, as long as such a call comes from the congregation which has been divinely authorized to call, it is to be considered divine in the wider sense. Naturally such mistakes are to be corrected as soon as possible, e.g. if a person entirely incapable of using the German language is placed in an entirely German congregation. While such a person is holding the office in that congregation he has the perfect right to it by virtue of the divine call which he has received from that congregation. The congregation, however, should seek to make the correction immediately, so that the congregation may be better served and the pastor unqualified for that particular place be given another opportunity where he might serve more satisfactorily.

By right of its divine authority to call the congregation has also the privilege to revoke the call of a pastor who has become unable to serve. Though the call when issued by the congregation can not be limited in time, it may be terminated before death, e.g. in the

case of incapacitation in any form. Such a revocation of the call of a pastor must not be an arbitrary matter with the congregation, but like the call itself, must be based on Scripture. Such a revocation must be considered as divine as the call itself if it has been issued in the right manner, viz. by the congregation according to the rules of Scripture.

The call is divine in a narrower sense when the person called is convinced that God is calling him, when he recognizes the voice of God in the call from the congregation and considers it His will to accept. Though every call from a Christian congregation or its agent is divine, in the wider sense, the pastor must consider it divine for himself if he is to accept it. Not every call must be considered binding upon the person receiving it because of the fact that it is divine in the wider sense, for to what this would lead can readily be seen. There would be a continual change of pastors, and pastors much better suited to certain fields would be serving less satisfactorily in others.

To those already in charge of a congregation, the call which they hold should come first. The congregation which they are serving must release them from the obligations which by the call it has imposed upon them, before they are free to accept another call. Since a congregation which has called a pastor can alone release him,

it follows that he can not accept another call if the congregation under his charge refuses to permit him to go. If it is God's will that a change be made and the pastor informs the congregation that he is so convinced, then the congregation which extended the call to him which he possesses will usually be willing also to release him.

For the candidate the first call which is extended to him is somewhat different, for he has no congregation from which he must seek a release, and consequently the only thing which comes into consideration is whether he considers it God's will that he accept the call which has been assigned to him, - whether he for his own person considers the call divine. Though he can not be forced to accept any call on the basis that it is divine in the wider sense, just as no pastor already in charge of a congregation should consider it necessary to accept every valid call which he receives, and though he has the privilege to decline such a call if he does not consider it God's will that he accept, nevertheless he must be sure that his reasons are valid and that he is not prompted by personal and selfish motives. If, for instance, he is sure that he is not qualified to serve the congregation to which he has been called, he should not hesitate to make it known so that that congregation may call another who is qualified. The feeling of inner unworthiness, however, is no valid cause, either for the pastor or candidate

for refusing to accept a call. In fact, in receiving a call, every person who realizes the great duties and responsibilities involved will have that feeling of inner unworthiness and say with St. Paul, "who is sufficient for these things." 2 Co. 2, 16. As the inner unworthiness of Moses did not keep him from becoming a servant of the Lord, so inner unworthiness is not a bar to the present day ministry.

Only such are valid reasons for declining a call which according to Scripture would keep a person from qualifying as bishop for that particular place. It may even happen that some physical defect which would hinder a person in serving one congregation would not prevent him from serving another satisfactorily.

For the candidate when he receives his call, as well as for the pastor whenever another call is extended to him, there is only one thing to do, namely to ask the Lord, who governs His church and furnishes the pastors, for wisdom and judgment to recognize and to do His will .

After the candidate has received and accepted his call, he is ordained as a minister of the Word. Ordination is not a Sacrament as taught by the Romanists, nor is it at all a divine institution. It is merely a human ordinance whereby public acknowledgment and confirmation of the call is made and public testimony is given to the fitness of the candidate. According to our Confessions,

"ordination was nothing else than such a ratification."  
(Smalcald Articles, Triglotta, 525.) It is the call that makes the pastor, not the ordination. For that reason ordination does not take place at the graduation from the seminary so that all graduates are ordained, but only such are ordained as have received and accepted a call. (Cf. Synodical Handbook p.29.)

The laying on of hands often mentioned in Scripture sometimes took the form of an ordination. When the seven deacons had been chosen by the churches<sup>n</sup> they were set before the apostles; and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6,6), showing that they were publicly acknowledged as suitable men for the office to which they had been chosen. <sup>h</sup>is, however, was not a common practice, it had no divine command, and was consequently not essential to the ministry. No one can object to ordination on Scriptural grounds, but one is forced to object to the doctrine that it is essential for the ministry, for Scripture clearly teaches that it is the : call from the congregation that makes the pastor, and only the call which gives him the right to exercise the duties of that office, namely publicly to preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and exercise the office of the keys and discipline.

Since it is not ordination but the call which gives the pastor his rights and duties and the pastor is assured

that such a call comes from God, it follows that the pastor should value his call highly and derive great comfort from its divinity. Chemnitz enumerates the values of the valid and legitimate call as follows:

1. Since the office of the Word is the office of God, a person should be sure that God desires to use him in His service and that he is therefore a servant of God.

2. To the edification of the Church belongs especially divine government and protection. He who has a legitimate call can ask God for help with a clear conscience and expect an answer to his prayer according to the promise of Scripture.

3. The minister who has a legitimate call can be sure that God is present with His spirit and grace in his office and will work through him. He can be sure of the promise of 1 Tim. 4, 16, "thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

4. The certainty of a divine call will cause the minister to apply himself with greater zeal, faithfulness, and willingness and keep him from giving up too soon in the midst of adversity. This doctrine of the call will also awake greater respect and obedience toward this office. (Loc. thol. Part III, de eccl. 4.)

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Since the office of the ministry is a divine calling because God has instituted it, and since the specific call from the congregation is divine because it is

issued by those who have the authority and command from God, and since the minister in such a call recognizes the voice of God calling him to a certain place, - must we not wholly agree with the apostle that this office is a good work indeed, and eagerly to be desired? Because this is the case, there will always be those who will seek this office, there will ever be those whom God will prompt to enter the ministry to fulfill his promise that he will always furnish pastors, and thus it will continue to the end of time to the glory of His name and the salvation of souls.

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