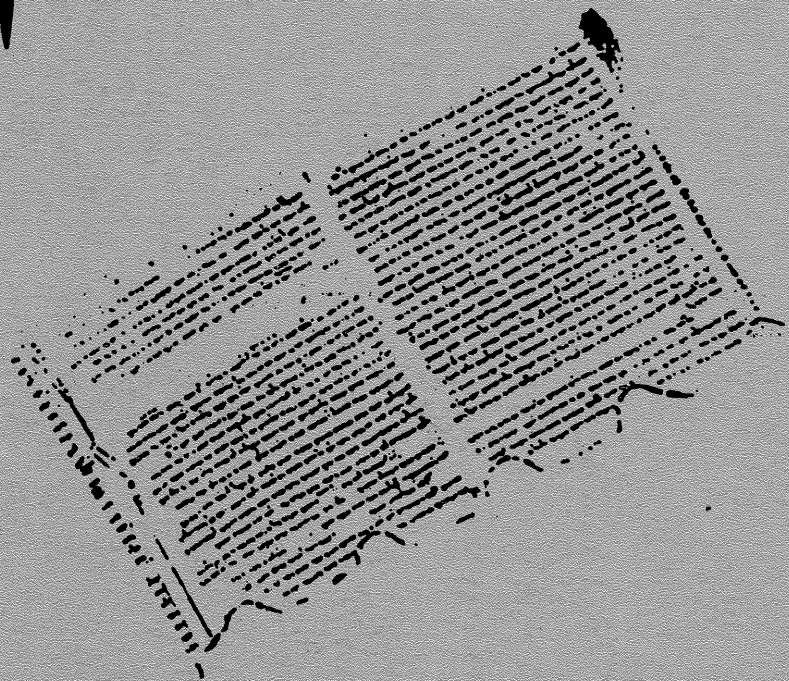


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CHARGE TO THE GRADUATE
of
BETHANY LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
May 15, 1981

Text: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." II Peter 1:19-21.

Dear friends in Christ, and especially, dear seminary graduate:

This is an unusual year in that there is only one seminary graduate. Last year the seminary graduated a class of five and next year we anticipate a class of seven. Prospects for subsequent years look good, which bodes well for an ample supply of pastors for our church body in the future.

You need not apologize, Dan, for being the lone graduate, especially if your attitude is that of the person who wrote,

"I am only one,
But I AM one.
I cannot do everything,
But I can do SOMETHING!
What I can do, I ought to do--
What I ought to do, I WILL do!"

As an individual pastor you have an opportunity to do much in the kingdom of God; you will touch the lives of many people with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You have worked hard and long to prepare for this day. After your college education you spent three years of classroom work at the seminary and you have completed your vicarage. You now stand ready to enter the pastoral ministry. As you look forward to this work the Apostle Peter, writing by divine inspiration of the Lord, wants you to know that you have a reliable word to proclaim, and that is terribly important in this uncertain world. Let us then briefly consider this morning,

"WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY"

Reliability is one of our big concerns in life. Unreliability is the cause of so many problems in our lives. All of us have experienced that we cannot always depend on people or things. Two years ago the Secretary of the Treasury addressed the Financial Writers Association where he said: "Reliable sources are no longer reliable. Those wonderfully complicated mathematical models of the economy have turned treacherous--they offer as many false leads as correct ones." His successor said virtually the same thing in another speech: "We are in a very unusual period where we more or less cast loose from economic beliefs we once held to be unarguable. We have cast off from a large number of these old moorings, and we have not yet found new ones." Recently a high government official remarked about the economic situation saying: "Anybody who isn't schizophrenic these days isn't thinking clearly."

Well, you have not been trained to solve the economic mess in our country, but you have been

trained to proclaim the Word of God. Wouldn't it be tragic if you did not have a reliable word to preach! We can live with unreliability when it comes to our temporal welfare, but not so when it has to do with our spiritual and eternal welfare.

Our text says, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." In the words preceding, the apostle tells of an experience which he, together with James and John, had on the mount when Jesus was transfigured before them. Had he been a Schwärmer he probably would have spent the rest of his life telling about that experience. Instead, he directs his readers to that "more sure word of prophecy," and that is a refrain that runs throughout Scripture. "Thy word is truth," says Jesus. Again, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And Luther remarks: "Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings."

In the theological world there are many today who do not hold to the reliability of the Scriptures. "Inerrancy" is a word that is bandied about these days and the prevailing opinion is that inerrancy applies not to the bare text but to the purpose for which the Scriptures are written. That's a far cry from our Lutheran Confessions which say, "We receive and embrace with our whole heart the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear fountain of Israel which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are judged," a far cry from Daniel March's description of the Bible in which he says, "It gives us the most reliable record of what has been and it affords us our only means of knowing what is yet to be."

Go, then, with courage and confidence as you

proclaim that more sure word or prophecy, given by inspiration of the Lord!

But not only do you have a reliable word to proclaim, but also a clear word. "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." Luther reminds us that this world is a "pitch dark place" but that in this darkness God has ignited a light. In this light we can see and walk along as we dwell here until the dawn comes and the day breaks. The psalmist said it long ago: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105)

That it is a clear word does not mean that there are not difficulties. The Bible itself acknowledges that there are "some things hard to be understood," (II Peter 3:16), but the way of salvation is so clear that a child can understand it. The Bible has been compared to a river, so shallow that a lamb can wade through it and yet so deep that an elephant can drown in it, meaning that the way of salvation is so simple that a child can grasp it and at the same time it is so deep that the most learned cannot fathom everything in it. Also, the Scriptures are not clear in the sense that our intellect can grasp them, but clear in the sense that they can be believed. For example, I cannot understand with my intellect how the words of institution as spoken by the pastor at the command of Christ at a legitimate celebration of the Lord's Supper can effect the real presence so that what is distributed and received is the true body and blood of Christ, yet I believe that it is true because the clear Word says so. And regarding the clarity of Scripture, Dr. Koren, a former president of the Norwegian Synod, said in his remarkable essay on the Inspiration of Scripture: "According to the Word of God

we have reason to be certain that many an unlearned man or woman, and by the world despised, has come further in the knowledge of God and His will than have the vast majority of the most learned pastors and professors. . . . Jesus has said to all, 'Except ye become as children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'" And didn't Jesus pray? "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes!" (Luke 10:21)

Not only is it disgusting, but also tragic when a liberal Protestant theologian received a standing ovation at a Lutheran college when he said regarding the clarity of Scripture: "We first must distinguish between what the apostles said Jesus had said and what he (Jesus) really said. Then we have to distinguish between what Jesus said and what Jesus thought he had said. Then we have to distinguish between what Jesus thought he had said and what he thought he had thought he had said." This same man explained the "everlasting life" in John 3:16 as meaning fullness of life in this world, not the blessedness of life in glory with the Lord beyond this life. That kind of scholarship we neither need nor want.

Finally, this "more sure word of prophecy" is not of private interpretation. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." In your seminary training you took a course in hermeneutics which is a study of the principles of the interpretation of Scripture. You learned the hermeneutical rule that Scripture interprets Scripture, that we interpret less clear passages in the light of very clear passages. Here again Luther gives us good counsel: "You shall not give your own interpretation. The Holy Spirit Himself must explain Scripture. Otherwise it must remain unexpounded."

God has not granted us the liberty to edit his Word; we are to proclaim it in all of its saving power and beauty. As you embark on your ministry, go in the conviction that you have a reliable and clear Word and proclaim it in such a way that your hearers will treasure that Word as did George Morris who wrote in his poem "My Mother's Bible":

"Thou truest friend man ever knew,
Thy constancy I've tried;
Where all were false I found thee true,
My counsellor and guide.
The mines of earth no treasure give
That could this volume buy:
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die."

by: Wilhelm W. Petersen
Seminary President

CURRENT TRENDS IN OLD TESTAMENT HERMENEUTICS*

In dealing with the subject of "Current Trends in Old Testament Hermeneutics," there are different ways in which this topic could be handled. A discussion of Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, edited by Claus Westermann and Bultmann's Essay "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," to which eleven scholars responded, would bring out the hermeneutical issues that would represent current trends. Another way of dealing with the topic is to discuss the components of the historical-critical method, which has rejected the traditional Lutheran historical-grammatical system of hermeneutics. There are, of course, variations in the use of the historical-critical method, depending whether one is dealing with Old Testament or the New.

The historical-critical method employs techniques and procedures which did not all come into existence at one time, but were the product of changes in thinking on the part of liberal scholars affected by the currents of their times. The historical-critical method traces its roots back to the Age of Rationalism. There are Lutheran scholars who claim that the historical-critical method can be traced back to Martin Luther, but this assertion has no basis in fact, that is, if one truly knows Luther's principles of interpretation and compares it with the components of the historical-critical method. Luther believed in the inerrancy and reliability of the Sacred Scriptures. Eric Kuhl,

*Delivered at Bethany Lutheran College, Nov. 20, 1980.

in Old Testament: Its Origins and Composition asserted about the origin of the Historical-Critical method:

Critical evaluation of the Old Testament in the true sense was first initiated at the beginning of the enlightenment. Under influence of this movement, churchmen tried to break away from the prevailing doctrine of inspiration. Their aim was to render the Church a service by leading the way to a better or more correct understanding of the scriptures.¹

Another German Old Testament scholar, Arthur Weiser, in The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development stated: "But the conception of verbal inspiration taken from Judaism stood in the way of scientific criticism."² Like Kuhl, Weiser also claimed that the really scientific treatment of introductory problems was not undertaken before the Age of the Enlightenment and Rationalism.³ The views of Hobbs in his Leviathan and Spinoza's Tractatus theologico politicus (1670), it is claimed, were only possible when the doctrine of verbal inspiration was overthrown by the pressure of rationalistic criticism. The way was opened when rationalism proposed to study Holy Scriptures by the same critical method as other literary works, a method used by Semler in his Essays on the unrestrained examination of the Canon, 1771-1775 and in his Aparatus ad liberadem VT interpretationem.⁴

It is interesting to note that the historical-critical method was adopted, fostered and sponsored by Lutherans from the very beginning of its employment as an exegetical technique. In 1965 Dr. Fred Kramer presented an essay before the Council of Presidents and the Joint Faculties of the LC-MS, entitled: "The Introduction of the Historical-

Critical Method to Lutheran Hermeneutics." Professor Kramer asserted:

Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791) is acknowledged as the father of the modern historical and literary criticism of the Bible. He was raised in pietistic surroundings, but drifted more and more into rationalism, although he despised the vulgar rationalists, and according to his own testimony at least desired to hold to the fundamental Christian doctrines.⁵

Dr. Kramer pointed out that while Semler had forerunners in the fields of historical and literary criticisms of the Scriptures, he is generally acknowledged as the man who helped these theories to triumph in the Protestantism of his age. Professor Kramer in his essay showed how Semler's rationalism affected his hermeneutics and his understanding of the canon, and how it influenced his grasp of Biblical doctrines. In his summarization Dr. Kramer evaluated the Lutheran Semler as follows:

From all this it is evident that while Semler thought of himself the foe of rationalism, who would defend Christian truth against the attacks of the vulgar rationalists, he himself gave up one article of the faith after the other, and played himself into the hands of the rationalists. Above all things Semler denied the divine inspiration of the Scriptures as a whole, brought in a conception of inspiration that differs not only from the exaggerated concept of orthodoxy but also from the claim of Holy Scripture itself.⁶

The results of the employment of the historical-critical method developed by the English deists, the pantheist Spinoza and the rationalists Lessing and Reimarus have been correctly outlined by Kuhl:

They changed the old conception of the authority of the Scriptures and especially the idea of inspiration: henceforth not the thing, but the men, the biblical writers, were held to be inspired. The Bible remains, it is true, the word of God, but now in the different sense that it was bound up with man, experienced and proclaimed by man, at the most diverse times linked with God by their piety and speaking and writing on His behalf: the books of the Bible are no longer regarded as self-revelation by God, but as historical records of revelation experienced by man or, better, as testimonies of revelation.⁷

Ever since Jean Astruc in 1753 discovered the alleged double strand of Priestly and Jawist traditions in the book of Genesis, Dean Farrar claimed that:

Criticism, both historical and philological, has been applied to every narrative and every section of Scriptures. Many of its results have taken their place among the valued truths; many of its assertions have been triumphantly refuted. It has overthrown false human theories, it has not shaken so much as the fringe of a single truth. But the notion of verbal infallibility could not possibly survive the birth of historic inquiry, which showed in Scripture as elsewhere an organic growth, and therefore, a necessary period of immature development.⁸

De Vries termed the eighteenth century as "a great century of progress in Biblical studies" and this progress was associated by him with the higher critical methodology. During this century traditional

church dogmas are said to have suffered severe shocks from which the church never recovered. The Lutheran Cyclopedia 1899 makes the following statement about rationalism: "Rationalism in its historic sense is that tendency of the eighteenth century, which mainly through the influence of Wolff and Kant made reason the norm of faith. In fact, rationalism ever existed as the reaction of the natural reason against the mysteries of faith. It touches the very foundation and center of faith."⁹

The dominant philosophy during the first decades of the nineteenth century was the idealistic philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831). Schleiermacher also dealt with the Gospels in practically the same manner as Reimarus. He also subjected Christian doctrine and the Bible to rationalistic interpretation.¹⁰ Under Hegel's and Schleiermacher's influence a number of followers of these men endeavored to reconstruct "the historical" Jesus.

The Lutheran scholar, J. G. Eichhorn, a Lutheran professor at the University of Jena, has been called "the father of modern higher criticism." He embodied the ideas of Herder and Astruc in his Einleitung in das Alte Testament (3 vol.), (1780-83).¹¹ With Eichhorn there began the period of the use of the historical-critical method that denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and substituted for its composition the "scissors and paste method." The period of literary criticism is supposed to have come to an end according to Weiser with Steuernagel's Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament. Until the appearance of Julius Wellhausen, Old Testament efforts had centered on the fragmenting and dissection of the Old Testament books with much of the historical literature declared mythical and unreliable.¹² For literary critics the Books of the Old Testament contained errors, discrepancies and contradictions.

in degree from other manifestations of the Near Eastern world.¹⁶

What is Biblical Hermeneutics?

Biblical interpretation concerns itself with the study of those principles which pertain to the interpretation of Holy Scriptures. The customary view of the past was that hermeneutics deals with the theory of interpretation and exegesis with the application of the theory of the text. In describing their relationship Ramm wrote: "Hermeneutics studies the theory of interpretation and refers to exegesis only to illustrate its point. Exegesis deals concretely with the text and refers to exegesis only to argue a point."¹⁷ One of the results of critical methodology has been to distill hermeneutics from the activity of exegesis itself. Some scholars have argued that the division of hermeneutics and exegesis is an artificial division. This generally is the stance of the so-called "new hermeneutics."¹⁸

Inasmuch as Holy Scriptures have to a large measure the same characteristics as other books, the same laws of general hermeneutics may be utilized in the interpretation of the Bible. The laws of thinking and logic that are employed in understanding the works of Homer, the plays of Plautus, the dramas of Shakespeare are also applicable to the understanding of the thinking and argumentation of Biblical authors. While the Holy Spirit employed human writers, the Bible at the same time has God for its author. The Scriptures claim to be inerrant, infallible in their contents and teachings. This Word of God found in the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments has been given by divine inspiration. Set forth in the Holy Scriptures are unique principles of interpretation which must be accepted and employed in the interpretation or

The concept of evolutionary development was applied by Wellhausen to the religion of the Old Testament in his Geschichte Israels, I (1878) and after 1882 known as Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels, I, 1. Wellhausen relied heavily on Grad and Kuenen. The Grad-Kuenen-Wellhausen views have influenced Old Testament studies up to the present time according to Weiser.¹³

The use of the historical-critical method was opposed by conservative theologians from the beginning of its adoption because it produced doubt, skepticism and unbelief.¹⁴ That the historical-critical method was a neutral method that did not operate with presuppositions that were hostile to the claims of Scripture as alleged by certain Lutherans is not substantiated by facts.

With the year 1880 there arose a new movement in Biblical studies, one that utilized the findings of non-Christian religions and was known as "the religions-geschichtliche Schule" (School of Comparative Religions).¹⁵ Members of this school began to avail themselves of the abundant light shed by archaeological discoveries, especially from Babylon and Egypt. Proponents of this school endeavored to show the cultural, religious, and literary dependence of the Old Testament on various nations of the Near East. For a time there was a pronounced tendency to derive everything in the Old Testament from Babylon, and its advocates were known as Panbabylonianists. This was followed by Pan Egyptianism; the latter was followed since 1930 by the alleged Ugaritic influence on the Old Testament. The School of Comparative Religions is active in the universities and secular colleges in our country and Canada. The School of Comparative Religions approaches both the Old and New Testaments from the perspective of evolution and dealt with the Biblical movements as not different in kind but only

exegesis of the Biblical text, many of which are rejected today by the practitioners of the higher-critical method.

Two types of valid criticism are used and accepted by the Biblical interpreter. These two types are: textual criticism and literary or high criticism. Lower criticism concerns itself with the establishment of the autographic text of Biblical books.¹⁹ Lutherans have always recognized the importance of textual criticism, inasmuch as copyists in the course of the centuries have made either inadvertant mistakes or, as sometimes the case may be, introduced deliberate changes into a Biblical manuscript.

In current hermeneutical practice the historical-critical scholars do not believe that in the present Massoretic text which we have is a reliable text.²⁰ In fact, it is claimed that between the time of the completion of the canon as found in the original MSS and our present oldest MSS many changes have been introduced into the text. Therefore, it is their contention that one cannot hold to the belief of the inerrancy and infallibility of the Biblical text. Siegried Horn, a Seventh Adventist scholar and archaeologist wrote: "On the other hand, the Isaiah scroll does not support the claims of those fundamentalists who believe in verbal inspiration and in a slavish unalterable transmission of the text throughout the ages, for it shows clearly that different recensions of Biblical books were in circulation before a Jamnia and that the scribes of the pre-Jamnia era had felt the liberty to modernize the text when they copied it. This applies not only to changes in spelling and the choice of modern synonyms for outmoded words and antiquated grammatical forms and expressions, but in some cases to alterations in the text which seemed to the scribes to need clarification in order to make the sense more meaningful."²¹

In response to this assertion it should be noted that the Isaiah Scroll from Cave I of Qumran is a poorly copied scroll copied by a number of scribes. Furthermore, the Qumranite community was a heretical sect, and even though three different types of Biblical text were found in the MSS-bearing caves, this does not mean that one ought not to start with the assumption that there was an inerrant and reliable text as it left the pens of the holy writers. It is the function and purpose of textual criticism to restore the autographic text. If God the Holy Spirit inspired the written Word, we can believe as Dr. Pieper contends that God would not have permitted His Word to become corrupt,²² so that the generations between Ezra's time (ca 400 B.C.) and the time when our first now available copies appear would be so mistake-riddled and so changeable, so that no person would really say about the Old Testament, "here we have books in which God has spoken to mankind in an authoritative manner." How can one argue for the content and meaning of a book if its individual words are in doubt and unreliable? Horn's reasoning delights scholars who do not want to be bound by Scriptural teachings and an authoritative Word of God.

Higher criticism or literary criticism is concerned with the more comprehensive questions involved in the writing of a book, such as authorship, historical background, authenticity, integrity, and unity.²³ In the last two hundred years Biblical criticism has been invaded by scholars and students who operate from an antisupernaturalistic bias and who hold to the assumption and presupposition that the Bible is replete with errors and mistakes. For example, since many books of the Old Testament are anonymous, it is only natural that the Biblical student will endeavor to determine the authorship of these books. Other questions, such as time of writing, purpose of writing, the unity of the book

have implications for a correct understanding of the meaning and message of a given Biblical writing.

Because of its antisupernaturalism and its refusal to accept the inerrancy of the Bible, higher criticism since the end of the eighteenth century has become synonymous with negative Biblical criticism. Dr. Roehrs wrote in 1954 Lutheran Cyclopedia "Today, however, the term higher criticism is usually not used in a neutral meaning. Most recent scholars who engage in this study ignore and directly deny the unequivocal statement of the Bible which bear on the questions of authorship and origin of the various books. Because of this negative approach to the Bible, the term "higher criticism" in conservative circles today has a connotation of unbelief and denial of the truth as set down in Scriptures."²⁴

Literary criticism as practiced by liberal scholars is the first component of any exegetical methodology which currently also includes formal criticism, traditional criticism, content criticism, redaction criticism and structural criticism.²⁵ Since the historical-critical method rejects miracles and predictive prophecy, it has developed wrong answers to many basic questions with which the study of isagogics or Biblical introduction deals. The opening books of the Old Testament were known as "The Five Books of Moses," and were composed sometime between 1525 and 1406 B.C. Till the end of the eighteenth century Jews and Christians, with few exceptions, had accepted the Biblical statement that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. But German scholars, influenced by a new development in classical studies, which questioned the Homeric authorship of the Iliad and Odyssey, questioned the existence of Troy and the Greek attack upon Troy,²⁶ prompted Old Testament scholars to claim that Moses had nothing whatsoever to do with the composition of the

Torah but that it was the work of Jewish priests in Babylonia, who put it together out of various documents, such as P, E, and D sometime around 400 B.C. Instead of the Pentateuch being Mosaic it was treated as a mosaic.

The Final Documentary hypotheses urged that there were contradictory accounts of the same happenings, that there were contradictory theologies; that much of the contents are non-historical and not factual because of the many miracles reported in the Pentateuch. All prophetic statements were rejected or interpreted as actually representing fulfilled history, which was given in the form of prophecy when actually Moses and the individuals set forth as reporting these events of which they knew nothing.

The higher criticism or literary criticism of the liberal Biblical scholars undermined the reliability of the Old and New Testaments. Jesus, who believed in the Mosaic authorship, therefore, shared in the misinformation and erroneous views of his day. Higher criticism adopted radical views about most other books of the Old Testament.²⁷ Isaiah was written by at least three different authors, David wrote none or only a few of the Psalms, Jonah was not a real prophet and his book was not a true account of what happened in the days of Jeroboam II, but the Jonah book was a propaganda writing composed in the fifth century B.C. to counteract the narrow views of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Form Criticism as a Component of the Historical-Critical Method

During the greater part of the 20th century form criticism has exercised a strong influence on Continental Biblical scholarship, though somewhat surprisingly it had until recently been a negligible

factor in American Old Testament studies. In Introduction to the Old Testament (1941), by Robert Pfeiffer, only a few pages are devoted to the subject. Samuel Sandmel, The Hebrew Scriptures: An Introduction (1963), makes no mention of the subject of form criticism, and has only a brief reference to Gunkel in one footnote. Herman Gunkel is the father of Biblical form criticism. Emil Kraeeling, who completely revised Bewer's The Literature of the Old Testament, does not utilize form criticism, but ignores it.

However, in European Old Testament studies form criticism has been prominent, especially as developed by German and Scandinavian scholars. It was from Europe that this new thrust in Old Testament studies came to America, especially as the results of the translation of European books into English and also because many American students have been studying at the European universities. James Muilenburg, formerly of Union Theological Seminary, New York City, has expressed the opinion that form criticism is an exegetical methodology that cannot be ignored and that used properly ought to be employed by exegetes in their work dealing with the literature of the Old Testament.²⁸

Just what is form criticism? Kendrick Grobel has defined form criticism as follows:

Form criticism, also known as form history (Formgeschichte), as category criticism (Gattungsgeschichte), and as tradition analysis, is a method of dealing with folk material, whether written down or not, which for some part of its existence was oral tradition. While patches of such material quite often occur within works properly called "literary," this method intrinsically applied to subliterary "small literature," "folk literature."²⁹

Eric Kuhl described this new approach in this way:

This methodology follows the smallest "units," examines them for form language and style, and then proceeds on the basis of a large quantity of comparative material, pointing out their Sitz im Leben and meaning, as well as their transformation in the hands of editors and collectors.³⁰

Form criticism as an interpretation, as an interpretative methodology, arose out of dissatisfaction with the results of Old Testament literary criticism which was characterized by the vivisection and constant division of Biblical books, thereby ruining the integrity and unity of the Biblical books as responsible writings. Herman Gunkel is usually credited with the sponsorship of this new way of dealing with Biblical literature. Gunkel and his friend Hugo Gressmann were the two outstanding earlier proponents of this new exegetical methodology and who applied form criticism to the Old Testament. Gunkel and Gressmann insisted that the Bible be treated as another collection of human literature. The earliest writings of Gunkel Schöpfung und Chaos and H. Gressmann's Der Ursprung der Israelitischen Eschatologie endeavored to show foreign influence on the Old Testament. From a confessional Lutheran point of view both men must be classified as strangers to true Biblical religion and theology. The formgeschichtliche school was concerned with finding extra-Biblical material with the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of the literary genres of the Bible. Gunkel in Die Israelitische Literatur proceeded to outline what he held was a presentation of the Old Testament's development as a history of literature. The form critical method has further been joined by attempts to determine the historical development of religious belief.

This new approach proposed to examine the origin and development of individual religious ideas and expressions of piety and endeavored to delineate the changes that may have taken place.³¹

Since oral tradition is alleged to have preceded the writing down of the first documents, J. and E., one of the concerns of Old Testament scholars was to trace the pre-history of the Biblical books or documents, where a book is imagined to be a mosaic of different sources. An attempt has been made to determine the supposed changes through which the tradition went as a result of a new life situation. The geology of the text is an area where scholars are able to demonstrate their creativity by putting forth interesting theories as to what might have occurred on the way before the tradition or cycles of tradition were put into written form.³² Cultic centers, about which not too much is known, in form criticism assume a great importance as the creators of tradition and as places where older traditions were reformulated or re-represented.

In the Old Testament form criticism has been applied to the historical books, the legal literature, the poetry, the prophetic books as well as to the wisdom literature with results that have serious implications for the reliable interpretation of Old Testament literature.³³ Entire books of the Old Testament once considered as historical and that were formerly considered to report reliable facts have now been assigned to the category of myth, saga, legend, or midrash. By form critical methods numerous episodes about the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses, Joshua, the Judges, Samuel and Saul have been relegated to the unhistorical category and their historicity have been questioned, yes, rejected. Form criticism has questioned the origin of the Passover as reported in Exodus 12. Many historical episodes in the history of Israel

beginning with the accounts of Joseph's brothers entering Goshen, the exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, their wilderness wandering and conquest of the land, and the historical happenings in the days of the Judges, have all been portrayed as the creation of cultic centers and therefore historically dubious. Form criticism has caused doubt upon the integrity of the prophetic books as well as maintaining that within these books one must recognize that there is a distinction between what is the Word of God and the word of man. Only those portions of the literature are considered the Word of God when a saying or portion of text is introduced by the phrase "A saying of Yahweh," or "Thus says Yahweh." The respondent has shown what the implications of Old Testament form criticism are for the Old Testament Interpretation in A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, published in October, 1969, by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

Tradition Criticism

Another type of criticism which has been added as a new component to the historical-critical method is tradition criticism. This is also known by the term Tradition History or Traditio-historical Criticism. The German name is Traditionsgeschichte and is increasingly replacing the word Überlieferungsgeschichte (i.e., history of transmission). In English the word tradition criticism denoted both the process of transmission (Latin: traditio) and that which is transmitted (traditum), as does the word Überlieferung.

Traditio-historical Criticism is the study of the oral traditions during the period of their transmission. In this sense it is usually distinguished from other types of criticism, such as textual criticism, literary criticism, and redaction criticism. Professor Soulen observed that "since the

scope and methods of these disciplines are not rigid, particularly Literary Criticism and Form Criticism, it is not surprising that Tradition Criticism is variously represented as Form Criticism (von Rad) or as an extension of it (Klaus Koch), as reliant upon observations of Literary Criticism (Noth) or as basically antithetical to them (Engnell), as distinct from other methodologies (Wolfgang Richter) or as a special amalgam of them all (Magne Saebo)."

Soulen also claimed that there is no unanimity as to what is the focus of Tradition-historical Criticism.³⁴ However, according to this Methodist scholar, it is the history of oral tradition which constitutes the focus of this type of Biblical Criticism. To quote him again, "Sometimes this excludes compositional stages, but more often it includes the reconstruction of the whole history of a literary unit from its hypothetical origin and development and final redaction in its literary form. So-called "streams of tradition" also come under investigation, that is, the socio-religious milieus of the traditionists (e.g., prophetic and priestly circles) which gave shape and significance to certain bodies of tradition such as the festival rites accompanying the annual renewal of the divine covenant. Considerable conjecture has also been given to the geographical site of the origins of these various traditions, such as Shechem, Jerusalem, Bethel, etc. Other traditional historians focus not on specific units of Scripture or on particular oral forms but on certain idea, motifs, and their development."³⁵

Ivan Engnell of Uppsala (1906-1964) was a Swedish scholar who was an advocate of Traditions-geschichte, which he applied almost entirely to the final state of the history of a tradition.

He claimed that it was impossible to determine the original wording of the tradition or even establish the stages through which the tradition went. In his methodology he insisted on an analysis of the final end product of the tradition to determine compositional techniques, patterns, motifs, and purposes as well as establishing the smaller units of tradition as they were supposedly found embedded in the text. While doing that he called, at the same time, for the employment of other pertinent data, such as literary, idealogical, sociological, archaeological, and cultural. His views met with opposition and rejection by other scholars.³⁶

The Scandinavian School of Old Testament Criticism held that the Old Testament was not committed to writing until after the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Up till that time Mowinckel, Pedersen, Engnell³⁷ and others claimed that the materials later put in writings were handed on in blocks of oral tradition. Some Scandinavians, however, held that the tradition was rather firm and not subject to change as was held by Gunkel and the Leipzig School of Old Testament Studies. This of course contradicts the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, the Books of Samuel, and Kings, from which it is evident that the Old Testament canon began with Moses and Joshua writing materials which were the Word of God and were so also regarded by the Israelites.

Those of our hearers who would like to pursue this complicated subject further should consult the work by Douglas Knight, Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973) Tradition Criticism is especially identified with Gerhard von Rad (1901-1971) and Martin Noth (1902-1968) in Germany. In Scandinavia, Sigmund Mowinckel (1884-1965) was the great exponent of Traditionsgeschichte.

Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism, (German: Redaktionsgeschichte) has been described as "a method of Biblical criticism which seeks to lay bare the theological perspectives of a Biblical writer by analyzing the editorial (redactional) and compositional techniques and interpretations employed by him in shaping and framing the written and/or oral tradition at hand."

In New Testament studies redaction criticism developed after World War II as a reaction against form criticism. Dissatisfaction with most conclusions of literary Gospel criticism spawned New Testament form criticism. The latter has now been weighed in the balances of critical evaluatory scales and been found wanting. Out of form criticism has come redaction criticism. It would appear that more attention is now being given to redaction criticism as it applied especially to the Gospels in New Testament exegetical studies.

But what about redaction criticism in the area of Old Testament hermeneutics? Antecedents of redaction criticism as an interpretative methodology are to be found in the writings of Gerhard von Rad's work in the Pentateuch and in Martin Noth's Studies in Deuteronomy.

Also Noth's studies in the Former prophets, Joshua to II Samuel set forth interpretative techniques that might be classified as belonging to redaction criticism. Soulen has expressed the opinion that "Strictly speaking Redaktionsgeschichte as "the history of redaction" applied as a term more appropriately to OT research than to NT research, since the Gospels (except perhaps John) are the work of one redactor and not several redactors over a period of time as in the case with some OT writings."³⁸

Otto Kaiser, an Old Testament scholar, and Werner Kümmel, a New Testament scholar, have prepared for the Biblical student a book on exegetical methodology, originally written in German, which has been translated into English by Professor Goetchius. For the American volume Goetchius has written a brief introduction. This book is used at most seminaries which sponsor the use of the historical-critical method. Otto Kaiser asserted in his Old Testament contribution to this little handbook: "Every evaluation of an Old Testament text for the reconstruction of the history of Israel remains amateurish unless the text is examined beforehand from the standpoints of literary criticism, form criticism, and tradition criticism."³⁹ Exegetical Method, A Student's Handbook was published in Germany in 1963. Now in 1979 another type of criticism must be added to this already complicated exegetical methodology, namely, structural criticism.

Structural Criticism

The Fortress Press of Philadelphia, the official publication house of the Lutheran Church in America, has issued a series of volumes, called "Guides to Biblical Scholarship." These so-called guides set forth various aspects of the historical critical method. Up to now 12 volumes have been published, nearly evenly divided between the Old Testament and the New. The most recent book in the Old Testament Guides, edited by Professor Gene Tucker, is that by Daniel Patte, Professor of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, titled, What is Structural Exegesis? Patte claims that "structural exegesis" is a major recent development in Biblical studies--related to simultaneous currents in other fields. Any pastor, professor, or student who endeavors to understand this latest development in the higher critical methodology will find the explanation and illustrations very

complicated and difficult to grasp.

Just what is meant by structuralism? Soulen begins his two-page discussion with this statement: "Structuralism, like existentialism in earlier decades of this century, is a way of thinking about present reality in a range of intellectual disciplines so diverse as to preclude any single definition in terms of its usage within any one of them. At best perhaps, one can say that Structuralism--whether in linguistics, sociology, ethnology, mathematics, psychology, the physical sciences, philosophy, literary criticism, etc.--has as its primary intention "the construction of a theory of its object from which the fundamental characteristics can be deduced."⁴⁰

Both Soulen and Patte⁴¹ admit that the theory or set of principles used in structuralism in Biblical interpretation have been imposed upon the Bible from a number of outside disciplines. They have been derived from structuralist anthropology and structuralist linguistics. The two scholars in these two disciplines who are given credit for promoting structuralism are Claude Levi-Strauss in anthropology and Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics. Patte claims that structural methods when applied to Biblical interpretation "do not fit into the series of traditional methods. Text criticism, literary criticism, form criticism, and redaction belong together because they all assume a historical paradigm with a specific understanding of the biblical text. That is, they presuppose that biblical texts are to be seen primarily as sources for reconstructing some kind of historical process."⁴² But by contrast Patte informs his readers that the structural methods assume a linguistic paradigm, that is, that expression in language is to be taken as a fundamental category and not as an access to something else, e.g., history. Thus the very

introduction of structural methods in exegesis implies a shift in the exegete's preunderstanding of the biblical text."⁴³

Patte claims that the older exegetical methods are not adequate to carry out the exegetical task,⁴³ nor is structuralism per se' adequate to accomplish responsible exegesis. What is needed is a combination of traditional (in the newer sense) and structuralism. To interpret the Bible in our contemporary culture a new form of exegesis is needed which reformulates traditional method and also applies structuralistic methods to the exegetical process.

Heretofore Biblical interpreters who as a rule are theologians are not adequate to practice structural exegesis on their own, because the practice of structuralism is of necessity an interdisciplinary endeavor. The specialists in the following disciplines need to help the Biblical exegete: linguistics, sociology, philosophy, ethnology, mathematics, psychology, the physical sciences, literary criticism.

Structuralism claims that the object of structural exegesis is ultimately to form a theory of hermeneutics. Traditionally Biblical exegetes began with a set of presuppositions and principles which determined how the Biblical text was to be interpreted. Structuralism has completely reversed the process. Raymond Boudon, The Uses of Structuralism, stated that structuralism has as its primary intention "the construction of a theory of (its) object from which the fundamental characteristics of this object can be deduced."⁴⁴ Structuralism is not first of all concerned with the object of interpretation, namely, the Biblical text, but with the structure of language. While literary criticism is interested in larger units, structuralism concerns itself primarily with the sentence and smaller

units. Proponents of structuralism have set as their task to establish rules by which language functions and then to deduce therefrom principles for analyzing the structure of texts.

The word "structure" in structuralism is defined as "the theoretical model or system of inter-related elements (texts or text-parts) from which the content and function of the elements themselves are derived." This concept of structure differs radically from structure usually conceived of "as the internal organization of a text, its linguistic patterns, sequences as commonly conceived in recent form-critical studies."⁴⁵ Structuralism's idea of structure therefore is "trans-textual" rather than intra-textual. Thus the new understanding of structure is more than the sum of its parts. The whole determines the meaning of the parts. It does not require too much intelligence to realize that structural exegesis cannot in any way be harmonized with the traditional rules of Biblical interpretation. If this type of hermeneutics were to be employed in communication as practiced in our society today, or for that matter in any previous age, there would be nothing but confusion and chaos.

Both Soulen and Patte admit that structural exegesis is different in focus from that of previous historical methodologies, such as Classical Literary Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism, in that in structural exegesis the category of history is absent.⁴⁶

The Judaeo-Christian religion is an historical religion. Any system of hermeneutics that rejects the historical character of both Old and New Testaments therefore has eliminated what God has done for us and for our salvation and is guilty of substituting mythology for true theology. Structuralism

at best is an academic sport which has removed the possibility of answering life's most important questions: Where did man come from? Where did the universe come from? Why do men live? Is there any rationality to human existence? What can man expect relative to the future? What is the end of man? The Bible, Christians know, contains the only satisfying answers to these fundamental questions!

Structuralism is in its infancy stages and it is doubtful whether this type of hermeneutics will ever catch on, because of its complex nature and its underlying erroneous assumptions. However, the other types of hermeneutics are also to be eschewed, because of the devastating effects they have had on the history of Christian theology. The theological movements, usually referred to as theological liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, God-is-dead movement, neo-liberalism are victims of the historical-critical method; in fact, these newer forms of heterodoxy would have been impossible without the historical-critical method having been employed by the proponents of negative literary, form, redaction, and content criticisms.

Honest scholars with a critical orientation have admitted to inability of the historical-critical method to help religious people to obtain from the Bible a kind of religion that would truly be helpful and soul-satisfying.⁴⁷ For the last one hundred years the theological position of many Christian churches have been weakened through the use of the historical-critical hermeneutics. Uncertainty and change have characterized the use of the various components of the new hermeneutics.

In 1961 Bright wrote:

.....it is impossible to make general statements regarding any phase of Biblical criticism

today without running the risk of oversimplification. The whole field is in a state of flux. It is moving, certainly, but it is not always easy to say in what directions at once. Even upon major points there is often little unanimity to be observed. As a result, scarcely a single statement can be made about the field that would not be subject to qualification. Indeed, perhaps the only safe generalization possible is that critical orthodoxy of a generation ago, with its apparent certainties and assured results, has gone, but that no new consensus has taken its place.⁴⁸

In 1963 Hans Wolff complained that the Old Testament was dead and was no longer preached from the pulpit.⁴⁹ Walter Wink claimed that "the historical criticism is bankrupt."⁵⁰ Thus he wrote:

Biblical criticism is not bankrupt because it ran out of things to say or new ground to explore. It is bankrupt solely because it is incapable of achieving what most practitioners considered its purpose to be: so to interpret the Scriptures that the past becomes alive and illumines our present with new possibilities for personal and social transformation.⁵¹

Wink claimed to be an ally of a group of scholars who have been found in liberal Protestant seminaries which have "gone to seed but, which by sheer abundance of seeds, flourishes everywhere in the land."⁵²

Any scholar, pastor, student or lay person who follows the different criticisms that are part and parcel of today's historical-critical hermeneutics will be unable to interpret Holy Writ correctly, because the principles of interpretation emphasized by Luther and utilized by the authors of the

Lutheran Confessions are totally incompatible with the former. Hermeneutical principles which are rejected and repudiated would be the following:

1. The Bible as the Word of God is infallible in the autographic texts as they left the pens of the holy writers.
2. A text of Scripture has only one and one intended sense.
3. Jesus Christ is the center of God's revelation as recorded in both the Old and New Testaments.
4. Scripture interprets Scripture.
5. The doctrines of the Bible must be based on clear passages, called the sedes doctrinae.
6. All hermeneutical principles employed must be in harmony with the principles of interpretation which the Bible itself sets forth.
7. Because the Bible has one Divine Author and is verbally inspired, it has an essential unity.
8. Scripture (not human reason, personal feeling, church, or tradition) is the sole norm and source of true doctrine in the sphere of religion and theology.
9. An exposition of a passage that does not agree with its parallels is untenable.
10. A real parallel can be indubitably established only when the Holy Scriptures itself testifies to this effect.
11. Rightly to interpret the Word of God it is necessary to distinguish between law and Gospel.

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OUT OF HER PAST -- THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD*

THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD IN 1913

PROLOGUE

Zion, Fairview, Concordia

The Church Council of the Norwegian Synod decided to call a general convention of the Synod in 1913 instead of the usual district conventions. This convention was held in Zion Lutheran Church on North Lyndale Avenue and 26th Street, near Fairview Park in Minneapolis. According to President Stub's own words it was a large and beautiful church. The convention began on June 11. The pastor of Zion Church was the Rev. Christian Anderson who held this pastorate from 1903 till 1916. The church was built during his pastorate. Later, Rev. Christian Anderson was pastor of Fairview Lutheran Church on North 31st and Colfax Avenue, only eight blocks north and west of Zion. Fairview Church was established by Pastor Anderson and the members of Zion Church, who for conscience' sake could not enter into the Merger of 1917. Remarkable it is that Fairview Church was established in 1916, even before the merger took place. Fairview and its pastor were along from the very beginning in the work of organizing the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod, formerly called the Norwegian Synod. And Pastor Christian Anderson became the third president of the Synod, 1926-1930.

**Installation V*

Here we would like to digress a little from our subject to give tribute to Fairview Lutheran Church and its pastor for the fine Christian manner in which they welcomed into their midst the students of the reorganized Norwegian Synod who attended Concordia College in St. Paul during those early years of the Synod. The writer of these lines remembers with gratitude the remarkable hospitality of members of this congregation. No matter how many of us students there might be at a service on Sunday morning, we were all invited to dinner at homes of members immediately following the service. We recall that there could be as many as ten or twelve boys from the College sitting about the well-laden table in the home of loyal members of Fairview Church, enjoying the best of food, and not least of all real butter, which was such a welcome change from the syrup or margarine, one or the other of which was the only spread given us for our bread at the College.

Concordia was both a high school and a junior college of the Missouri Synod. It was a preparatory school for Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri. Professor Oswald Overn, in his history of Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota, writes that it was early in the year 1919 that the "little synod" asked Concordia to receive its boys as students. And he says: "The Board of Concordia College was delighted to cooperate with the Norwegian brethren." The Synod then called Professor S. C. Ylvisaker, Ph.D., who had recently resigned from the faculty of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, because his conscience would not permit him to join the merger. He accepted the call and began his work at Concordia in September, 1919, "bringing with him eleven boys of Norwegian descent who intended to study for the ministry." The next year Concordia engaged another professor who had resigned from a professorship at Luther College "because for reasons

of conscience he had found it impossible to approve of the merger of the Norwegian Synod with more liberal church bodies." This was Mr. Oswald B. Overn, professor of Science. He was installed at the opening exercises of the College on September 1, 1920. The arrangement of the Synod with Concordia continued until 1926, and some Norwegian boys continued at Concordia after that date until they graduated. "In all there were forty-nine students from the Norwegian Synod who had this privilege of attending Concordia for a shorter or longer time under this arrangement. About one-third of them eventually became pastors." (Prof. O. Overn, History of Concordia College, page 22)

PRESIDENT STUB'S REPORT

But we must now return to the year 1913 and to the convention of the former Norwegian Synod in Zion Church.

Dr. Stub began his Report with these words:

Two years ago the Norwegian Synod had its general convention in St. Paul. At that time the Synod showed this confidence in me, who had been vice-president for six years, that it elected me president. I can assure the church body that I have regarded it as the object of my life to be spokesman for that church body which has chosen me to be that. According to my convictions the president should maintain rapport with the church body that he is to represent. It is the president's duty to carry out and further, as far as he can, the will and resolutions of the church body -- of course after conferring with, and in agreement with, the elected Church Council which represents the church body between the conventions of the Synod.

Among the reasons why the Church Council had decided to call a special convention of the Synod to take the place of the conventions of the five districts, President Stub mentioned the situation which prevailed at the time with respect to the union matter; and this, he said, would hopefully become evident to all after he had presented that matter in his Report.

Lutheran Herald

Then came the reports concerning deaths, finances, the pension plan, synodical schools, institutions of mercy, missions, English hymn book, and other matters. In connection with the report concerning Lutheran Herald, the English paper of the Synod, he reported as follows:

Regarding the editorship of our English paper, I received a letter from the editor, Rev. Theodore Graebner, pastor of a congregation of the Missouri Synod in Chicago, from which the following is quoted:

I hereby submit my resignation as editor of Lutheran Herald. When I accepted the position as editor four years ago I was the pastor of a small mission belonging to the Missouri Synod, just organized at Logan Square, Chicago. This congregation has grown from 250 to more than 900 communicants. To find time for the editorial work has become more and more difficult, and as my congregation is steadily growing at a rapid rate, I notice that it soon will be impossible to give "Herald" the careful work that the editorship of an organ for the Synod requires. I ask to be relieved of this position as of July 1.

In the Lutheran Herald of June 5, in which he publicly announces his resignation, Pastor Graebner writes:

In later years there has also within the Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies been an astonishing cultivation of the racial spirit to the highest degree. This spirit has become so strong that even one who through long time association has learned to love and wonder at the "tusend hjem" in the western home now finds himself more and more a welcome stranger rather than as a member of the family. The conclusion seems not to be unreasonable that a paper of the Synod, even if it be in English, would make friends for itself much more rapidly and have a much stronger influence for that which is good if it is edited by a real son of the Norwegian Synod and not by an adopted one.

The Norwegian Synod will undoubtedly agree with this reasoning, accept Pastor Graebner's resignation as of July 1, and elect an editor for Lutheran Herald from its own midst. The position is of great consequence, and it is important to find the right man. (Synod Report, 1913, P. 29-30).

Necessary Defence of the Synod against Attacks
of Certain Men within the Synodical Conference.

President Stub said:

Just as I looked upon it as my duty to give the Church Council an overview concerning the events which brought it about that I could not for conscience' sake keep still any longer concerning all the attacks that certain men of the Synodical Conference, in theological periodicals,

directed against the common reports concerning the Call and Conversion and Opgjør, so I also count it my duty to give the Synod as clear and straight forward information as possible concerning these things.

Since the church body had elected me as its official spokesman to whom belonged the duty, more than to anyone else, to defend the good name and reputation of the church body in matters of doctrine and confession, it became an unavoidable necessity for me confidently to stand up against all the unjust attacks upon the position of the church body.

We must above all not forget that after the district conventions of 1912, i.e., last year, the attacks no longer pertained to any individual person's work, nor to any committee's theses, but it pertained to documents that had been adopted by the church body. Ever since 1908 there have been public attacks upon the common reports concerning the Call and Conversion, one after the other, but publicly there has been no answer from our side. Since, in the meantime, these common reports and Opgjør no longer were any individual man's possession, nor any committee's, but the property of the Norwegian Synod, i.e., it pertained to what the Norwegian Synod believed and taught in those questions, then there had to be an answer.

These attacks of well-known men of the Synodical Conference were now interpreted by people, both in our church body and in other church bodies, as witnesses to it that the Norwegian Synod has forsaken its former position. They said: How can men in the German synods attack these common reports if the Norwegian Synod has not given up its old position?

In the meantime, I had decided to avoid an exchange of letters and let the matter rest until the meetings this year.

At the Convention of the Synodical Conference
in 1912.

Pres. Stub then spoke of what had transpired at the meeting of the Synodical Conference in Saginaw, Michigan, in August, 1912. He and Dr. Johannes Ylvisaker were present there. President Stub said that he there gave a defence for the fact that the Norwegian Synod had accepted the common reports and Opgjør. He talked about the attitude toward the Second Form of doctrine and delivered an historical account of this. He said: "The Norwegian Synod now stands as regards its consideration of the Second Form of doctrine where Dr. Walther and the Missouri Synod stood when the Election Controversy began. We have not changed our stand." He quoted Dr. Walther as having said that only this was objectionable with respect to the presentation of the doctrine by the theologians of the 17th century, that the expression, "God has elected in view of faith," is an unhappy choice of terminology. Dr. Stub went into great detail to show that Dr. Walther had taught that the Second Form was alright when taught in the manner that John Gerhard had taught it, but that it should be rejected when explained to mean that God has elected us because He foresaw our faith or our good conduct over toward grace, or when synergism is taught in connection with it. He referred to his own writings of 1881 in the matter and added that Dr. Koren, as well as Bishop Bang in Norway, had given their approval of it. After giving his historical presentation, Pres. Stub appealed to the Synodical Conference not to attack the stand which the Norwegian Synod and the Synodical Conference itself had taken earlier.

Thereupon, Prof. W. H. T. Dau of St. Louis spoke. He said that what Pres. Stub had reported was historical truth. But he was of the opinion that conditions had changed so that the Second Form had been misused, and he would urge us to purge from Opgjør that which was said concerning the Second Form.

Dr. Stoeckhardt then directed a sharp attack against the Second Form as false doctrine, directly against God's Word and the Confessions. He said that the Second Form and the Formula of Concord exclude each other completely. Dr. Walther had erred in his judgment of the Second Form.

Pres. Stub then quoted the letter which the Synodical Conference addressed to the Norwegian Synod. Since this has already been presented in our previous installment on "The Involvement of the Synodical Conference in the Union Matter of the Norwegian Synod" we do not repeat it here. Likewise, Pres. Stub objected to Prof. Schaller's presentation in the 1912 October issue of the Theologische Quartalschrift. (Reported also in the installment just referred to.)

Pres. Stub contended that the Norwegian Synod's men had been the object of public and unjust attack of great magnitude, and should he remain quiet as the spokesman of the Norwegian Synod? Then in Lehre und Wehre, which quoted from Amerika, there was an attack against Opgjør and upon him personally (See previous installment), and he did not wish to characterize it any further. It was an open declaration of war.

The Church Council had heard all this, as presented by Pres. Stub. And it agreed completely with his stand in this matter. Rev. Vangsnes had been deputed to write to the Synodical Conference.

In his letter Rev. Vangnes said that the proposed manner of proceeding, namely of sending a delegation to the conventions of the Synod in order to consider the matter would be a most unhappy thing and would only lead to new complications and would rather cause damage to the brotherly relations. Besides, there wouldn't be time for it. And pastors and representatives would surely shy away from it that a new controversy about these things should be brought in among our church people. On the contrary, the Church Council elected a committee of three that should confer with the committee of the Synodical Conference. This committee consisted of Pres. Stub, Rev. O. P. Vangnes, and Prof. J. Ylvisaker. Word had been received from Professors Dau and Pieper that they would be willing to meet with this committee. And Pres. Stub said that a meeting would be held after the Synod Convention.

Pres. Stub said that in the January, 1913, issue of the Theologische Quartalschrift Prof. Aug. Pieper of Wauwatosa "brought a new attack against us." He speaks of "denial of Scripture" on our part, that we "Norwegians stand on the same theological principle as do the real enemies of the Wisconsin Synod, and therefore we have become agreed with them and so have now become, like them, enemies of the Wisconsin Synod."

Then Pres. Stub said that in the face of these attacks it was good to see that Dr. F. Pieper in his last writing expressed himself concerning a list of chief matters in Opgjør and declares forthright that Opgjør excludes all synergism.

Report Concerning The Union Matter

At the beginning of this report Pres. Stub expressed himself to the effect that in order that people both

within and outside of the Norwegian Synod might put themselves into this movement that goes under the name of "the Union Matter," it was necessary to give an historical overview of it. "From this it will be evident that the Union Matter is not the affair of any individual man or men in any one church body, but it is a movement that has emanated from, and has been carried along by, the church people in the three bodies that have deliberated concerning it."

In this overview Pres. Stub went back only so far as to the year 1905. In that year the Hauge Synod issued an invitation to take up the matter of union between the Norwegian Lutheran Church bodies that were willing to deliberate with them concerning union -- including discussion concerning agreement in matters of doctrine, so as to reach union through unity in faith and doctrine.

Each of the three church bodies then elected a committee of five to represent it.

In 1910 the deliberations with the United Church stranded, but nevertheless the five districts of the Synod encouraged continuance and stated that the Two Forms of the Doctrine of Election which have been set forth, namely that of the Lutheran Confessions and that of John Gerhard, should not be divisive of church fellowship as long as one is agreed in doctrine.

The United Church in 1911 elected a new committee and sent a man with greetings to the Norwegian Synod. In this way they wanted to separate themselves from the judgment that had been made against our committee's theses concerning Election (that they contained un-Biblical and un-Lutheran doctrine).

The Synod also elected a New committee in 1911. Then came Opgjør and Resolution in February, 1912. Words can't express the joy over the fact that the committees of the Norwegian Synod and the United Church felt they had found a form of agreement about which they could rally.

In 1912 the Minnesota District accepted Opgjør unanimously, also the common reports concerning Absolution, Lay Ministries in the Church, the Call and Conversion; likewise Resolution, the last part of Opgjør. And in connection with this, the questions of Dr. Johannes Ylvisaker to the members of our Union Committee that were present were taken up and the answers given were accepted.

The questions were:

1. Is anything said in Point 1 of Opgjør that is essentially different from that in Point 3?
2. If one accepts the first point as it reads, does one then accept unreservedly also the Second Form of the doctrine as being the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Confessions concerning Election?

Answer:

To the first question we answer No.

To the second question we answer: We members of the Union Committee of the Norwegian Synod here present declare: In the First Point no form of doctrine is accepted, but the doctrine in the two forms.

Then follows the declaration of the Synod's committee:

The committee of the Synod accepts without reservation the First Form of doctrine as that of the Scriptures and the Confessions,

but can nevertheless acknowledge those as brethren in the faith who hold to the Second Form, viewed in the light of the Points of Opgjør that follow.

Pres. Stub reported that the United Church adopted the Common Reports, Opgjør and Resolution unanimously. The Hauge Synod likewise. And the other Districts of the Synod accepted Opgjør either unanimously or almost so.

At the meeting of the Joint Committee the Synod's Committee declared that it had no mandate to consider organic union, but would consider what could be done to further a good relationship and possible union. So the committee agreed to these points:

1. There shall be joint meetings and joint conferences of the pastors, and exchange of pulpits.
2. Each congregation shall remain in its present synodical membership.
3. On the mission fields the one church body is not to embattle the other, but a brotherly mind shall prevail.

Pres. Stub reported that no congregation of the Synod had sent in any protest.

The Union Committee regarded it as its duty to inform the people that a great change in relationship had now taken place, and that, by and large, a situation of brotherliness had been established.

The committee took into consideration a matter that had been brought to its attention; namely, that there are two cases of parentheses in Point 1 of Opgjør: "(The so-called First Form)" and "(The so-called Second Form)", which could be construed as though doctrine and form of doctrine were the same thing, and that one could without reservation accept both forms of doctrine. This was not the meaning of the Joint Committee.

In a writing to the United Church and to the Hauge Synod, Dr. Stub stated that one and the same person cannot accept both forms of doctrine without reservation. And so he proposed that the parentheses be eliminated from Paragraph 1.

Then, there was the judgment that the United Church's Committee had expressed over the Synod's doctrine -- this should be attended to. Dr. Stub said he thought it best to leave it to the United Church to express itself about this, though many in the United Church had been of the opinion that the election of the new committee and especially the acceptance of Opgjør should be viewed as an annulment of that judgment; and Dr. Stub said that not one of the many in the United Church with whom he had conferred agreed with that judgment. And he had every reason to believe that the consciousness that the United Church owes the Synod a direct disavowal of that judgment would find expression in a declaration of one kind or another.

Pres. Stub closed his presentation of the Union Matter with these words:

Let us diligently and earnestly bring this great matter which is of extreme importance to our people before the Lord in our prayers and intercessions. May He give us wisdom and good counsel and rule the thoughts of our hearts so that we may look away from all selfish interests and only seek to further that which we are convinced will be for the great benefit of our church and our people, and thus further the Kingdom of God on earth in the best manner.

ACTION OF THE SYNOD IN 1913

The floor committee of five men brought in -- first, a common report, consisting of four points; then, a majority report; and finally, a minority report.

A. The Common Report

1. The Synod expresses its joy over the result that has been attained in the work toward unity between the United Church, Hauge's Synod and the Norwegian Synod.
2. Just as the United Church at its meeting this year resolved to strike the parentheses in Paragraph 1 of Opgjør, so the Synod likewise resolves to strike them.
3. Since the district synods last year established a committee to deal with the union matter, consisting of the Synod's president and a member of each of the four districts in the east, and since the Minnesota District is not represented on account of Pastor D. C. Jordahl's departure from the district, a member of this district shall be elected to replace him.
4. The committee shall continue the work together with the committee of the United Church and the Hauge's Synod.

E. Hove. H. Halvorsen. Th. Nilsson. J. Hegg.
Martin Austin.

B. The Majority Report

1. The Synod resolves: a) That the manner of procedure proposed by the joint committee shall continue to be followed in the hope that we thereby may learn to know each other better and also remove possible misunderstandings. b) That

the power of the committee be enlarged so that the committee also take up for consideration with the committees of the other church bodies the question of possible future merger, either into one body or a federation, so that we may reach clarity concerning how they in the different bodies have thought such a union might be effected and also what requirements and what conditions would be posited.

2. The result of these deliberations shall be reported to the Synod by its committee.

H. Halvorsen. J. Hegg. Th. Nilsson. Martin
Austin.

C. The Minority Report

1. Since it has appeared that there are different understandings of certain points in the accepted theses, the committee is exhorted to deliberate with the committees of the other bodies about this, and seek to establish the right understanding of such points, so it may be evident that full agreement has been reached, or otherwise work to the end of removing everything that might hinder true joint church work.
2. The Synod expresses the earnest hope that God would bless the work of the committees so that it might have the result that the three church bodies might be able to work together in unity of spirit and in the bond of peace to the edification of the body of Christ.

E. Hove.

Action of the Synod: All of the Points of the Common Report and the two Points of the Majority Report were adopted. Both Points of the Minority Report were rejected. The count: 394 votes for the Majority Report; 106 for the Minority Report.

Recommendations concerning the
Communication of the Synodical Conference
to the Synod.

1. The Church Council had the right to a preliminary consideration of the communication of the Synodical Conference and to make known its opinion of it to the Synodical Conference.
2. The Synod expresses thanks to the Synodical Conference for the fraternal communication and the solicitude that it shows therein for the preservation of the unity of faith that has existed between these church bodies.
3. The Synod sanctions the action of the Church Council in the matter and the election of a committee to deal with the committee of the Synodical Conference.
4. The Synod expresses its hope that the Committee of the Synodical Conference might be able in the near future to deliberate with the Synod's committee and that the Lord will bless these deliberations so the fellowship of faith between these church bodies might be preserved.

Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 16, 1913.

E. Hove. H. Halvorsen. Th. Nilsson.

J. Hegg. Martin Austin.

Action: All of these recommendations were adopted.

Word from the United Church

- I. The United Church's annual convention resolves that the parentheses in Paragraph 1 of Opgjør be removed, provided that this change is ratified by the other conferring bodies.

T. H. Dahl
- II. In order to avoid misunderstanding and if possible to remove hindrances to the furtherance of

the work of union, we declare the following:

The theses concerning Election which were presented by the Synod's Union Committee before the joint meeting of the Union Committees, and concerning which our church body's Union Committee declared "that they contained certain teachings concerning Election which it could not accept as Biblical and Lutheran doctrine" (See the Annual Report of 1910, p. 47) -- these theses have never been placed before the United Church for consideration at any annual meeting; they have never been publicized in our church body's papers, and are therefore unknown to the comparatively great majority of our people. Consequently, it is not required that our church body should take up these theses for consideration and express an opinion concerning them since we have obtained a satisfactory expression of our doctrine of Election in Opgjør which has been accepted by all three conferring bodies. And just as the church body as such has not expressed itself earlier concerning the mentioned theses, so it has, as a matter of course, never passed any judgment concerning the same.

T. H. Dahl.

Word from the Hauge Synod

Pres. Dr. H. G. Stub, St. Paul, Minnesota.

God's peace! Your communication to the Hauge Synod through Pres. M. H. Hanson was referred to the Committee on Union. This committee presented the following recommendation concerning it:

On the occasion of Pres. Dr. Stub's letter to the Synod with the request for its declaration concerning Point 1 in Opgjør, in particular concerning a supplementary resolution of the Norwegian Synod to this Point, the committee moves that, since the Hauge Synod was not a participant when Opgjør was drawn up, the Synod does not find that it is required

or that it is proper for it to express itself concerning any advance re-editing or change of same.

This recommendation was accepted without change by our Synod.

With fraternal greetings, M. O. Wee,
Secretary of the Union Committee.

Excerpts from the Discussion of the Union Matter
on the Floor of the Synod

Prof. O. E. Brandt read:

"Petition in the Interest of True Unity of Faith"
(Bønskrift):

As children of the Norwegian Synod the undersigned heartily wish that Lutherans in our country, and that first and foremost the Norwegian Lutheran church bodies, should come to unity of faith on the foundation of the Scriptures and the Confessions. Such unity of spirit our church body by God's grace has always wanted, and we nourish the earnest hope unto God that it may be reached.

But exactly in order that this hope should not be disappointed, we are respectfully and urgently compelled to ask the Synod not to take decisive steps yet toward union with the United Church. We have several reasons for fearing that the unity of faith has not been attained which alone can make the right foundation for Christian cooperation. This our fear is built on the following facts:

1. The misleading first paragraph of Opgjør was accepted by the majority of the Synod pursuant to certain definite explanations concerning its meaning. But these explanations are not accepted by the United Church.

2. The United Church has not yet recalled the judgment which its former union committee passed on the doctrine of Election which was accepted by the Synod in 1910. According to all ecclesiastical and secular law a church body must be responsible for a judgment concerning the doctrine of God's Word on the part of the church body's rightfully elected committee consisting of its president, the director of its college, and the teachers at its seminary, which judgment has been publicized in the church body's annual report and official organ. We cannot acknowledge that the United Church has retracted this judgment by accepting Opgjør because the men who passed this judgment have all, with one exception, also accepted Opgjør; and nevertheless there have come from their midst statements which show that they have not changed their opinion concerning the Synod's doctrine.
3. There is much that goes to show that Opgjør has not been accepted in the same understanding in the two bodies. From leading quarters in the Synod it is declared that Opgjør represents our doctrine of Election as it is presented in "An Accounting" of 1884 and in the theses from 1910. From leading quarters in the United Church this is denied. Such, and other things, testify that Opgjør does not, with the desired clearness, confess the truth and ward off error.
4. It is a well-known fact that in certain areas of the United Church they still practice church fellowship and cooperation with those whom the Norwegian Synod must count among its ecclesiastical opponents.

By calling attention to the above mentioned facts, we honorably mean to further the right work toward unity, and we have the confidence in our brethren in the church body that they do not wish to lay a burden upon the conscience of any by deciding upon a common organization before it has been made evident that God Himself has laid the solid foundation for it in true unity of faith.

O. E. Brandt. Johannes Ylvisaker. E. Hove.

Prof. O. E. Brandt continued:

This Petition came into being upon request from many round about in the church body. It was sent to pastors and professors who we had reason to think were of this persuasion.

The document was a private matter, but it was not anonymous. Everyone who would get to see it should at the same time get to know who was responsible for it. If we did not write our name under every copy of it, we always sent along a letter which told who had authored it. "Petition" accentuates the Synod's old principle that there should not be talk of common work or union where there is not evident unity of faith. We wanted to spare the church body disunity and assure an open and temperate discussion of the union matter at the Synod meeting. We have a good conscience in this matter.

Pres. Stub then said that he had to have an opportunity to answer Prof. Brandt before one departed from the matter. (This comes later.)

Under the word "WARNING" there appeared in Kirketidende of April 30, 1913, p. 483, a strong warning against "Petition" under the names of Laur. Larsen, H. G. Stub, and the editor (Th. Nilsson). The

article says that this document has no signature and Dr. Laur. Larsen writes that he would earnestly warn against giving it any.

Pastor J. A. Thorsen:

The reason why they want the parentheses stricken is because they do not want the two forms to be counted equal the one to the other. But I understand it so that the two forms are placed on an equal plane whether one strikes the parentheses or not.

It states here that the doctrine of Election according to the First Form and the Second Form are without reservation placed side by side as equal. The First is God's Word's doctrine. The Second is not. I think it best that we say why we cannot place the First on the same plane with the Second. I am sure that if we strike the parentheses the two are nevertheless placed on the same plane.

Pastor R. O. Brandt:

That which especially made it clear to us that full unity of faith had not been attained between the Synod and the United Church is this that leading men of the United Church have expressed themselves in their church paper to the effect that they had a different understanding of Opgj r than we.

A man of standing in the United Church says in Lutheraneren of April 30th: "It is not against the doctrine that is found in Opgj r that Dr. Schmidt and certain others who have on occasion said a word during all these years have carried on the battle. The doctrine which has been expressed by men in the Missouri Synod, for example in the Report of the Western District in 1877 and 1879 is not the doctrine that I find

in Opgjør, and I am glad of that.... The truth is confessed in Opgjør and that is the main thing. It may well be that not all understand it in the same way. Dr. Stub finds Walther's doctrine in it. I don't find it there." And to this is added that Rev. S. Gunderson of the United Church and a member of their Union Committee that drew up Opgjør declared before our conference (Madison-Chicago Special Conference) that the United Church had not changed one tittle of its doctrine, neither had the Synod, and that Opgjør is a compromise. The members of our conference who are present can testify that this is true.

Since there are such entirely different understandings of Opgjør it has to be cleared up before one can deliberate about merger or even forming a confederation. Therefore I am in favor of the Minority Report which makes it the duty of the Union Committee to establish what the understanding of Opgjør is. I am not willing to go along with this that the old Norwegian Synod is dissolved and become just a saga.

Here the speaker was interrupted by one who declared that this matter was not before the meeting. And Pastor Brandt said:

Yes, it is, because the Majority Report authorizes our Union Committee to deliberate about union, and union means that the Norwegian Synod must be dissolved. I will not go along on this. If full unity of faith is reached I shall be along in forming a confederation, but I will not vote that the Norwegian Synod shall lie down and die.

Dr. Laur. Larsen:

I want to lay special emphasis on the congregational school.... This work toward unity that now is carried on gives me the greatest hopes. That is what shall help us to get a better school system.

Prof. O. E. Brandt:

What the United Church should have done is this: It should have submitted to the former Union Committee that it retracted its judgment of the Synod's doctrine of Election.

Dr. Joh. Ylvisaker:

Paragraph 4 of Opgjør says that one shall not weaken man's sense of responsibility in relation to the acceptance or rejection of grace. This paragraph is very misleading (without speaking of it that it is really wrong). It seems to want to give room for a good deal of synergism.

Rev. G. A. Gullixson:

I am one of those who are worried. When our committee recommends that there is nothing left to correct with regard to doctrine, then it makes me worried. When it is here moved that the committee shall continue the work and get a wider mandate, then I am worried. On the other hand, I would rejoice over Prof. Hove's motion, if it could be accepted. Then we would know what we are doing before we go into such an outward union. We have good reason to doubt that there is unity of doctrine. I want to beg both lay people and pastors to bethink themselves well before they bind themselves to this program. I am against delegating it to any committee to come with plans for an outward union under these conditions. But

if we can come to unity in the doctrine, then I would with joy await the day when we could be united with those other Lutheran bodies. But because I fear that we may be untrue to the call God has given us, therefore I will vote for the Minority Report, and I shall not be along in giving more authority to any committee as it now is. There is no divine command that we now shall go ahead with this. Let us bethink ourselves.

Prof. C. K. Preus:

One speaker asked: What shall people say if we do not go along with the recommendation of the majority. But the main thing certainly is not, what will people say; but what will God say? And God says in His Word, and He says it in that very word which just now was read at the devotion here today, that we shall be "joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1, 10). It is not sufficient for union that we have the same words; we shall have the same meaning, the same faith. And this it is that counts for us. Our conscience is here in trouble. God requires that we shall have the same mind, and that we do not have. We do not mean the same thing with the words of Opgjør. Stub and Kildahl do not hold the same meaning with regard to Opgjør. Stub finds Walther's doctrine in Opgjør, but Kildahl does not find Walther's doctrine in it. Kildahl himself writes this. Can they then have the same mind, the same doctrine?

The judgment of Pres. Dahl and the United Church's Committee concerning Stub holding to un-Biblical and un-Lutheran doctrine is reported to their annual convention, stands in their Report and in Lutheraneren, is sent out free to date from their publishing house, and is not retracted. How in all the world can it be said that they

mean the same, teach the same as we? Dear brethren! This we think is wrong. We cannot begin to work together with them as long as the situation is such. And we beg you: Give time! The love that has been talked about here should certainly extend itself not only to the young, but also to the old, tried friends. For us it is a matter of conscience to get this cleared up. But it cannot be any matter of conscience to you to hurry this way.

Rev. M. Thorsen:

I wonder if this assembly understands what it has done. In Opgjør it is stated that what the Book of Concord presents concerning Election is God's Word's doctrine, and then one goes ahead and accepts the Second also, namely what certain teachers in the church have come with. This "in view of faith" is the doctrine of Election according to Pontoppidan. This we shall remember. What are we doing by acknowledging both? We do this: We acknowledge what God's Word's doctrine concerning this matter is, and in addition something which some human beings teach, but which is not found in God's Word. This has been done and is being done. I am dissatisfied with this presentation and will never accept it in my life. I do not make men into gods. God alone can define what shall be an article of faith.

(Note: This Rev. M. Thorsen died in 1917. His older brother, Rev. J. A. Thorsen, became a member of our re-organized Norwegian Synod in his retirement. He died in 1924.)

Hon. L. O. Thorpe:

People are tired of this unnecessary strife, and if there is anyone who wants to keep on fighting, let him get a place by himself where he can fight.

Pres. Stub concerning the "Petition"

Dr. Stub's answer to Prof. O. E. Brandt's defence of the so-called "Petition" (Bönskrift) reads as follows:

I confine myself to the following: First, I will say that I do not doubt that the document was written with good intention. But one will nevertheless have to agree with me that the procedure that has been followed is new among us, and that it is not right.

The Synod has established a union committee whose president I am, and in this committee's hands it has been laid to do what it could to remove what there might be of difficulties as it saw them, and then come with a recommendation to the Synod. The committee has tried to do its best. It has put in much time and much effort for this cause.

It has not been the task of other men to take this matter in hand and send out a document in order to get signers for its consideration with complete by-passing of the committee elected by the church body....

When it is said that the document was sent only to such who were worried in their conscience on account of the union matter, I will ask: How could one know who had such worries in his conscience? No, experience shows that the document tried to get as many as possible to sign it, and this was done in a hurry and thoughtlessly.

I, as president of the Synod, did not know that such a document existed until I finally got a copy that was sent to me from a place far off.

What would one have said if I had sent out a document to the Synod's pastors and congregations to get signers, even if the document did

not contain anything other than exactly that which the Synod itself had decided in the union matter? I have tried to go carefully and cautiously to work in this matter. I have stopped hasty motions and have not wanted to bind anyone before the Synod meeting by getting signatures.

Therefore I say in closing: Such a thing should not be repeated in the Synod in the future. It doesn't work for good. It only damages trust and confidence and furthers party-spirit.

"In the Interest of the Truth"

In Kirketidende of February 12, 1913, p. 171 and 172, we find an article by Rev. Paul Koren, son of Dr. U. V. Koren. The heading of it is: "In the Interest of the Truth." Paul Koren says that Dr. Stub, in several of his later articles in Kirketidende, names Pres. Koren, and his presentation gives the impression that Pres. Koren was entirely satisfied with the earlier committee's theses concerning the Call and Conversion. Rev. Paul Koren says this is not correct. And he brings the quotation from his father that is found in this series of articles under the heading of "The Synod in 1912." (Vol. XX, #4, Dec. 19, p. 54)

Rev. Paul Koren found it necessary to write another article under date of May 7, 1913, under the heading "Again in the Interest of the Truth."

Adolph M. Harstad

(To be continued in Vol. XXI, #3)

SERMON PREPARATION AND PRODUCTIVE PREACHING

While every true Christian can and does serve his Lord in any honorable occupation, I can't think of a greater or more noble way to serve than in the direct work of the ministry. Just think of it! We pastors declare to God's people the wondrous message, "Fear not, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11. As pastors we proclaim to our hearers the words of our Savior from the cross after He completed the work of world redemption, "IT IS FINISHED." John 19:30. Again, the pastor proclaims the astounding news, "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." Matt. 28:6. I say, to proclaim publicly these great truths is the pastor's unique privilege.

There is no occupation where one has a greater opportunity actively to take part in and carry out the work our Lord Jesus would have His followers do, summed up in the Great Commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matt. 28:19.

But with this privilege and opportunity to serve the Lord as His servant goes a great responsibility. There is no more vital and exacting work than dealing with redeemed souls. St. Paul reminds us, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." I Cor. 4:2. This same St. Paul continues, "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!" I Cor. 9:16.

A great reward (reward of grace) awaits the faithful servant with the Lord's own "Well done, good and faithful servant," Matt. 25:21, and from the book of Daniel, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. 12:3.

Much of our life's work is involved in our primary task of preaching. I suppose the average pastor who serves forty years in the ministry prepares and delivers more than 2,000 regular Sunday sermons. Then add the specials, the wedding, funeral, and occasional sermons and you add another 1,000 or so which means he is "on deck" 3,000 times or more during an average ministry. Quite a bunch of sermons! A lot of hard work and preparation! No matter how experienced we get in the art of sermon making we can never feel that we have arrived at the point when we do not need improvement. When that time comes we won't have to worry any more about sermon preparation! We will be enjoying our eternal rest and participating in the heavenly scene.

It would be preposterous of me to think that I could contribute much to this group by way of help in sermon preparation. I claim no expertise in this field. All of you had seminary training in Homiletics. You all know how to preach or you wouldn't be here today.

I suppose it's true that each one of us was greatly influenced by his own Homiletics professor in the seminary. In my case it was Dr. N. A. Madson, whom I consider one of the best preachers in our Lutheran circles of our day. He had his own style and delivery that was decidedly unique. In his Homiletics class he laid down certain basic homiletic rules that I believe were sound and helpful

to both preacher and hearer. I see no reason to abandon them. Let me briefly review his simple rules that go something like this: The first step in sermon preparation is prayer. Every preacher realizing his human insufficiency knows that he needs divine blessing upon the work of sermon preparation. He needs the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit for the right understanding and application of the Word of God. He needs to pray with the Psalmist, "Give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies." Psalm 119:25. He needs furthermore to pray with Peter and John, "Lord, grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Acts 4:29. Our Savior Himself is our greatest example of prayer, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Luke 5:16. Again, Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Luke 11:9. It's true here also, "You have not because ye ask not." James 4:2. Diligent prayer is a must for sermon preparation. Hoyt, in his book, "The Preacher," says, "Take the work we have to do -- worthless without the ceaseless aid of the Holy Spirit." And, "The argument for prayer is unanswerable." P. 148.

It goes without saying, a thorough study of the text is essential. A study of the original Greek and Hebrew is very much worthwhile. The study of parallel passages is important. By a thorough study you arrive at the nub of the text and from it you try to state the theme in a "catchy" way -- catchy in the sense that it arrests the attention of the hearer and sticks in his mind. My Homiletics teacher insisted on a short introduction that leads directly to the theme. With proper divisions and a conclusion the hearer is offered a handle with which to carry the sermon home with him.

Professor Madson, I recall, used two words again and again -- tekstgemaesz and zeitgemaesz -- textual and timely -- in sermon preparation. He insisted on preaching the text and not wandering all over. Of course, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel was stressed constantly. Preaching or moralizing about the Law would not do, but the Law was to be preached in such a way "that every mouth be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Rom. 3:19. Many times he quoted Dr. Walther, "so to preach the Law that it drives the greatest saint to despair; so to preach the Gospel that it gives the greatest sinner hope." Besides the Holy Scriptures, other tools or materials close by should be the Lutheran Confessions, the hymn book, Luther's works and Bible commentaries. Works of Walther, Koren, and Stoekhardt were highly recommended. Also recommended was the reading of secular literature -- Shakespeare, Milton, John Bunyan, books of poetry, Bartlett's Quotations, etc. Professor Madson urged the reading of current literature. He liked a "pithy" statement to arrest attention for next Sunday's sermon in his weekly announcement in the local paper, if possible.

Now we all know it is easier to learn how to do something in a classroom setting than it is to actually do it yourself. This is especially true with sermonizing. We pray, study, work, sweat, and sometimes agonize to come up with a theme, proper introduction, good divisions, and a conclusion. That's just part of it. To put it out, deliver it well, put it across in an effective manner is still another matter.

It goes without saying, whatever is produced in a Christian through a sermon is God's doing. We confess: "I cannot by my own reason or strength

believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." Fritz, in his book, The Preachers Manual, reminds us that only God the Holy Spirit can convert sinners and keep them in faith. This He does through the Word and Sacraments. According to the parable of the Sower, as natural seed does not produce the same results, even so the seed of the Word of God, when preached, does not have the same results. Some do not believe at all; some believe for a while, some believe and are saved. Even among those who are finally saved, the Word does not bring forth fruit in the same measure; some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. (P. 81)

You and I can preach until we're blue and can't produce one conversion; the Holy Spirit has to do that work. As preachers we are not responsible for so many conversions; we are held responsible for preaching the Word faithfully, both Law and Gospel, in an interesting, enthusiastic, imaginative, and productive manner. We as preachers should not attempt to use any other means than that which God has given to bring souls to Christ and keep them with Christ. The preacher cannot add anything to the power of the Word. Both Law and Gospel, being the Word of God, have inherent divine power. The preacher should not fall apart when he learns by experience that the Word he preaches is not accepted by everyone who hears it. The preacher has this promise and encouragement, that God's Word will not return void and that his preaching will not be in vain.

Having said this so well, Fritz goes on to add that beside this divine side there is also the human side, and it is this that is sometimes

sorry, and things which the preacher does or does not do that hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. And who of us is not sometimes guilty of doing this? Hindering the work of the Holy Spirit due to our miserable humanity can prevent the Word of God from striking the inner ear and so hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. To quote Fritz; "This can be done by not studying and not supplying the spiritual needs of his people; by not giving due time and attention to the preparation of his sermons; by failing clearly to present the subject matter of his text; by a poor delivery; and by not practicing what he preaches." (P. 82)

"How much more would a few good and fervent men effect in the ministry than a multitude of lukewarm ones." (Oecolampadius) (P. 84)

I'm quite sure that the program committee had this human side in mind when they assigned this paper on Productive Preaching.

In my research work for this paper I sought the help of some lay-men and women, mostly in our synod, people who in my judgment were mature Christians who would recognize a good productive sermon when they heard one. A few selected students at Bethany were chosen to take part in the survey along with a Homiletics professor and a few pastors. I was gratified by the response -- 35 of 50 actually responded to the question: "What, in your opinion, is a good productive sermon?" Most answers were very thoughtful. I believe knowledgeable and intelligent lay-men and women can judge a productive sermon and can offer some good insights and help to us, and that can mean better preaching on our part.

To prove my point, I would like to read and actually use as my outline for this paper the

following response from a woman who had been a member of one of my mission churches -- a wonderful and faithful Christian whom I learned to admire and appreciate and who had a good handle on Christian doctrine and life. She writes in one short paragraph, "A good productive sermon is a message based on Scripture, presented in accurate context, reminding me that I am a sinner and in need of God's grace and mercy, helps me to grow as a Christian, helps me to resist temptation, prepares me to be a willing and faithful witness, helps me to pray, not only for myself but others, leads me to share my God-given talents and blessings in service to others, and most important of all, leaves me with renewed hope and assurance of everlasting life with my Savior who died for my sins."

She says it all without the theological terminology we might use.

In contrast, a theologian named Farris Whitewell in his book, Power of Expository Preaching, put it this way: "An expository sermon is based on a Bible passage, usually longer than the verse or two, the theme, the thesis and the major and minor divisions from the passage; the whole sermon being an honest attempt to unfold the grammatical-historical-contextual meaning of the passage, making it relevant to today by proper organization, argument, illustration, application, and appeal." (Pref., P. vi)

For the most part, the people who responded did so with thoughtful and meaningful answers. Some thanked me for asking them as they were very interested in this subject; some had things to get off their chest. The names are confidential. The fact that I received 35 out of 50 responses

indicates a great deal of interest. Let the lay people speak to us preachers. Let's listen to them.

On the basis of the response I just read as well as all of the responses and other research from books, I submit that Productive Preaching is Bible preaching. Our people want sermons based on the Bible and only the Bible. Some good Methodist friends I had in Colorado proudly told me one day, "Our pastor is going to preach on the Bible for the next six months." It was obvious they were looking forward to this change of pace.

It is reassuring to note that our people understand the Law-Gospel concept. They want the Law preached in sermons -- not merely in a general way, "we are all sinners," "we all come short" -- but specific sins that "catch me in my sins in my home, in my marriage, in my relationship with my kids, my dealings in the market place, at the bank, at the gas station. Catch me in my unfaithfulness with the Word, my unwillingness to forgive others, my complaining, my lusting," as one brother put it. "This kind of law preaching," he continues, "unmasks me, gets behind my pretensions, diagnoses the terminal disease of the soul with which I'm afflicted. This is what Spurgeon calls 'a strong, stiff use of the pulpit.'" Another writes, "Preach the law so that it stings the conscience." Still another: "It seems our pastors generally seem unwilling to get very specific in the matter of sin." Another said, "Don't forget there are sins of omission as well as commission." Again, on specific law preaching, a layman writes: "I don't think a pastor should hedge on a subject because of perhaps stepping on somebody's toes. We know our pastor doesn't pick a subject to 'get at' one person, but if the shoe fits, we can put it on." My research elicited this remark from one: "What has

ever happened to hell? We don't hear it mentioned much any more." All my subjects understood there must be the proper mix or balance with the Gospel. One continues, "After having my sins -- my innermost, personal sins -- pointed out to me, then what I need is to have my ears filled with my Savior. I need to hear about that tremendous event at the Cross, of God dying in holiness for me in my filth. I need to be told that all of my embarrassing memories, the sordidness of my own words and actions, the shames of my guilty conscience that I carry inwardly, have been set right, have been expunged from God's recollection by the heroic work of Jesus. When Christ is preached to me like this, in a setting of life-after-death, of heaven, of eternal joy and peace, only then am I comforted. Then the preaching is 'getting through,' and I must have that kind of preaching. Nothing less will do." "No sermon dare be without the Gospel." "We need to know that all our sins have been forgiven in Jesus Christ." The way of salvation should be pointed out in every sermon. You never know when this opportunity will be gone forever.

A Christian needs to grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior. That growth should be an ongoing thing. The sermon can help the hearer grow by clear preaching of the text, using support passages, Bible history, and Bible illustrations. The productive sermon will furthermore encourage the hearer to conduct more private Bible study. We often deplore the lack of Bible knowledge among some of our people. The joke goes, "You can always tell a Lutheran because he goes to Bible class without a Bible." Dean Madson used to talk about getting past the 'kiddy car' stage in Bible knowledge. There is a Puritan saying, "You cannot give God's children too much of the Father's bread."

A productive sermon should help the listener to resist temptation. There is no end to temptations that come to us constantly. Each one has his own peculiar temptations in one way or another. Our Lord knew temptation. He was severely tempted in His earthly life. How did He handle temptation? Through the Word and prayer. Many of the people who sit before us on Sunday morning are people who have to struggle with temptation in many different ways. The Word of God as it is preached is helpful in resisting Satan's onslaughts. Many Christians are searching for help to overcome temptation. We need to help them. Our sermons can be a big help.

A productive sermon prepares one for willing and faithful witness. I was pleased to hear this point made by our friend in her appraisal of a productive sermon. It is abundantly clear our Lord desires that we be His witnesses. He commands, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," and the Great Commission comes to mind. People know they should witness more. They feel guilty that they do not witness more and use opportunities that come to them in the family, with friends and neighbors, fellow workers, business associates, etc. Often they fail to do so because of fear. They know what they believe, but find it difficult to articulate. The sermon can be helpful and productive in increasing their knowledge of the claims of Christ. It will, however, take another forum actually to show them how to do this and equip them by training for a one-to-one encounter of Evangelism, but the sermon can provide knowledge, encouragement, and challenge to do so.

Many people need and want help and encouragement in their prayer life. The sermon can provide valuable help to people by way of encouragement

and instruction in this great and powerful activity of faith. Also to be noted is that people need to pray for their pastor and should be encouraged to do so. This activity also can be productive in sermon making.

A productive sermon is one that encourages and instructs in the stewardship of life. I was very pleased to note my friend's mention of this as an important area of Christian sanctification that needs to be stressed. She writes: "to share my God-given talents and blessings in service to others." What a beautiful expression! I believe that the sincere, dedicated Christian wants to express this response to God out of gratitude. It seems that stewardship has received a bad name and is even bad-mouthed by some. It certainly need not be a subject to be ignored completely from the pulpit. To do this would mean failing to preach the full counsel of God. When I speak of stewardship I mean the stewardship of life -- stewardship in its broad sense. That is, stewardship of everything we are and have. Yes, stewardship of life itself. It includes something we probably haven't encouraged enough -- the stewardship of talents. Many Christians want to use their talents for the Lord, but have never been asked or permitted to do so. It is one thing to challenge people and tell them to be good stewards; it is another thing to show them how they can be better stewards. It goes without saying that we ourselves must practice good stewardship before we ask others to do so. Don't ask your people to do what you are not willing to do.

It seems to me we have been long on motivation and inspiration in our sermons, but I feel there is room for improvement in actually preaching stewardship. I wonder how many of our pastors

preach stewardship sermons. We need to preach stewardship of money also. God has blessed our ELS over the years. He has permitted us to exist. We have His pure Word. Opportunities galore, even in these troublesome days of runaway inflation, await us, opportunities for working, praying, providing the financial support to do the work our Lord would have us do. God give us the will and the enthusiasm to get on with and intensify our efforts during these latter days. I am gratified to note several of our pastors are stressing stewardship of Talents, Time, and Treasure with their congregations more by means of Personal Stewardship Interviews with every family unit in the congregation. During the second week in December, while I was on the road for Bethany, I stopped to visit a young pastor of one of our rural parishes. He was doing Personal Stewardship Interviews -- one after another, with members of his congregation. Blessing will come from this type of activity, I believe. This, in a congregation where to my knowledge they have never had a stewardship program or even a budget in their entire history of almost a hundred years. Sanctification needs to be preached also in its rightful place. A purpose of redemption is to produce from "new creatures" zealously of good works.

There are other areas of concern regarding sermons from lay-men and women. Pattison described "preaching as the spoken communication of divine truth with a view of persuasion." (P. 15)

Too often, I fear, our sermons are less than persuasive. Words like "dull," "drab," "hackneyed," and "threadbare" turned up in my survey to describe sermons. Some preachers, according to one response, "never get beyond about a dozen

stock Bible passages. They are so overused, I no longer hear them."

Some sermons seem to lack real effort in preparation. They are unimaginative, stale, stilted, say the same old things in the same old way. To be sure, there will be times when we get caught, due to press of duties, that simply make sermon preparation time short. But that will be the exception rather than the rule. We will not fool our people with shoddy preparation and hastily thrown together sermons for long. Nothing endears a pastor to the congregation more than good sermons. Our people know a good productive sermon when they hear one.

To preach a fresh, imaginative, interesting, timely, textual, helpful, relevant sermon, saying the same old things in new ways, does not come easy. Good sermon preparation comes hard. It always has; it always will.

We will attempt to do better if we remember what Brenz, a contemporary of Luther, known as being a good preacher, once remarked: "I never mount the pulpit without being stirred with a new and greater awe and concern since I realize I am preaching before God and the angels." Oh, that we would think of this every time we entered the pulpit!

The group I solicited for help in preparing this paper suggested that productive preaching means using plain but dignified language that keeps the audience in mind and is not preached over their heads. "While people may be flattered to be preached to in deep, theological propositions, they get little out of it but frustration," wrote one of our correspondents. Luther has something to say about this: "Osiander possesses

eloquence, follows an outline, and adheres to the rules of rhetoric, but he doesn't instruct the people. On the other hand, Dr. Link and Master Veit instruct them. Today, Master Mörklin pleased me very much when he preached. He instructed the common people about the duties of wives and maid-servants . . . The people can take this home with them, but nobody understands a sermon that is turgid, deep, removed from life. I spoke about this to Bucer in Gotha and suggested that he and Osiander should refrain from erudite preaching. Philip doesn't need to be instructed, and I don't teach or lecture for his sake, but we preach publicly for the sake of plain people. Christ could have taught in a profound way but he wished to deliver his message with the utmost simplicity in order that the common people might understand. Good God, there are sixteen-year-old girls, women, old men and farmers in church and they don't understand lofty matters! If one can present fitting and familiar comparisons (illustrations), as Link can do in masterful fashion, the people will understand and remember. Accordingly he's the best preacher who can teach in a plain, childlike, popular, and simple way. I prefer to preach in an easy and comprehensible fashion, but when it comes to academic disputations watch me in the University; there I'll make it sharp enough for anybody and will reply, no matter how complicated he wants to be. Some day I'll have to write a book against artful preachers." (Luther's Works, Vol. 54, pages 283-284)

Again, we quote from Luther, "Rector Bernard von Dolen, minister in Herzberg, complained bitterly about his arrogant auditors who despised the reading of the catechism. Dr. Martin (Luther) was greatly disturbed and fell silent. Then he said, 'Cursed be every preacher who aims at lofty

topics in the church, looking for his own glory and selfishly desiring to please one individual or another. When I preach here I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present, but at the hundred or the thousand young people and children. It's to them that I preach, to them that I devote myself, for they, too, need to understand. If the others don't want to listen they can leave. Therefore, my dear Bernard, take pains to be simple and direct; don't consider those who claim to be learned but be a preacher to unschooled youth and sucklings.'" (Ibid., pp. 235-236)

Once again from Luther, "I esteem those to be the best preachers, which teach the common people and youth most plainly and simply, without subtilty or enlargements. Christ taught the people by plain and simple parables." (Five Minutes Daily with Luther, p. 17)

St. Paul gives preachers good advice when he writes in I Cor. 2:1-5, "When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

When we get into the pulpit we are not ordinarily preaching to our peers. They may understand theological propositions and detailed explanations, but how about the average hearer? We will not be effective and get through to people

by being incomprehensible. "God works through His Word by means of our understanding. Listeners may be impressed, but are not edified by theological jargon and complex explanations." Remember that in preaching the listener has no opportunity to go back to re-read or ask for clarification," writes a thoughtful responder. We do not have the luxury of instant flashback. We run it by them only once.

The productive preacher knows the skills of "audience adaptation," that is, he will tailor the timeless message to his hearers and their times. Illustrations and good stories can be helpful to enable them "to take the message home with them." Study Jesus' own methods of frankness, story telling, figurative language, nature study and precision. Listen to the Master converse with the woman at Jacobs Well in John 4. St. Paul fits his message at Antioch at Pisidia, using Old Testament references to the audience. On the other hand, St. Paul at Mars Hill took a different approach to match his message with his audience.

Sermons that relate well to people "lean on characters of the Bible relating their sins to my sins, their forgiveness to my forgiveness, their dealing with God to my dealing with God," as one put it. Still another writes: "It is also interesting to the hearer to touch base with the powerful underlying emotions of the people of the Bible, such as anger, fear, guilt, despair, sorrow, joy, love, peace, the destructive anger of Cain, the guilt of David, the agony of the Cross, the joy of the Resurrection."

Productive preaching has to be centered in the hearer's ability to retain what is said.

To help the listener retain what was said, one young pastor wrote: "I like to provide an outline to be followed, and to provide the sermon text in the hands of the listener (either printed in the bulletin or found in the Bible in the pew). I don't think we read the Word enough, and it is good for us to see the printed Word of Scripture before us. My assumption is that with the added visual aids (outline and text provided), retention of major thoughts is enhanced." That's a good practical and helpful suggestion.

Application in a sermon is important. People want a sermon that is life related. We have the example of our Lord's sermons. Note how Jesus applies the Word in His discussion with the pair of disciples on the way to Emmaus. First, He explained the meaning of the words of Moses and the prophets. Secondly, He applied the words of Himself. The result to His hearers: "Did not our heart burn within us?" (Luke 24:32)

One wrote: "A good productive sermon is one that is well prepared, that is, proper exposition to the text with application to life in our times and well delivered, that is, it should be preached -- not read." We were taught in Homiletics class that a sermon should be preached, not read. "Eye contact" with the audience is very important; not just a passing glance, but preaching to them as individuals. There was no objection to having a few notes on a page or even a manuscript, if we didn't read it.

Delivery should be lively -- forceful, enthusiastic. It should give evidence of the preacher's own personal conviction. Regarding this point my survey pointed out: "For preaching to be effective, the Word's impact on the preacher should be evident.

The main goal of the Word is, of course, to create and sustain faith. If the listener does not see the difference the Word is making in the life of the preacher, the Word will appear to be sterile and lifeless. The listener will then see no reason why he should be affected by the Word since the preacher does not appear to be moved by it. Preaching can have a personal touch without being subjective." Isn't it that which makes preaching different from other types of communication?

"Preaching is a proclamation of God's Word as it affects the lives of both preacher and hearer." Certainly a sermon should reflect a personal conviction of the preacher with the text. We should show an eager desire to share the text and theme with our hearers.

One thing our people will not have is any semblance of phoniness on the part of the preacher. That point came through loud and clear. Nothing put on, affected, or theatrical is productive. Their message to preachers: Be natural, be yourself. The heart of the preacher must be involved. Longfellow wrote: "A sermon is no sermon in which I cannot hear the heart beat."

While relevance is often an overworked word, there is need for being relevant. One wrote: "God's truths are timeless, but the world in which we live changes constantly. We can observe, for example, how the Apostle Paul in his letters always taught the central doctrines of Christianity, but did so in a manner that took into account the particular strengths, weaknesses, and needs of his immediate audience. Relevant preaching strives to proclaim the changeless Gospel to sinners, individual human beings so that this Gospel relates to their attitudes, their knowledge, their needs, and their aspirations. Relevance can, of course, be overemphasized. But the Word, itself,

could not be more relevant to our lives than what it is. The preacher's task is to make that application known."

It was not surprising to note that our people express concern over the youth of the church. Some feel our sermons should help them more than they do. The Reformed are making inroads with our young people with their inferior and sometimes disastrous message. How can we support them more? Our young people at home or at Bethany will soon be out in the world exposed almost fulltime to secularism, humanism, atheism, and all the rest of it. They need to be fortified in their faith. We have what you might say, 'the last shot at it' for a majority of our young.

Most important of all, and this point was brought out abundantly by many, "Christ-centered" sermons are what our people want to hear. The Law must be preached in all of its thunder and lightning, but the Gospel must shine through in all its glory and brilliance, as another great modern-day Lutheran preacher knew how to do. Let's listen to Dr. Walter A. Maier of Lutheran Hour fame: "Once you regard Jesus as the apostle did, in that intensive focus which beholds only 'Christ and Him crucified,' you need nothing else to help you discover a cheering, sustaining answer to every problem of life. When your soul is cleansed, your conscience stilled, your heavenly Father reconciled, then are you prepared to meet the best or the worst that life may hold for you. Let the avalanche of human miseries sweep over you; if you know the Crucified, you will hear His sustaining 'Let not your heart be troubled.' Let whirlwinds of disaster blow the high towers of your hopes into shapeless ruins; over the wreckage Christ's voice will ring clear: 'Behold, I make all things new.' Let the ravages of

incurable disease, the feebleness of old age, the terrors of approaching death shake the foundation upon which life itself rests; your Savior's stabilizing pledge declares: 'Thou shalt be steadfast and not fear.' Let sin and hell raise their charges against you; if you have Christ as your 'Advocate before the Father,' you need nothing else to assure you of God's pardon." The Best of Walter A. Maier, (P. 97)

Our friend ended her paragraph on Productive Preaching with these words: "... and most important of all leaves me with renewed hope and assurance of everlasting life with my Savior who died for my sins."

I'd like to quote again in full her description of a productive sermon: "A message based on Scripture presented in accurate context, reminding me that I am a sinner and in need of God's grace and mercy, helps me to grow as a Christian, helps me resist temptation, prepares me to be a willing and faithful witness, helps me to pray not only for myself but others, leads me to share my God-given talents and blessings in service to others, and most important of all, leaves me with renewed hope and assurance of everlasting life with my Savior who died for my sins."

And I add, in order to preach this way we need constantly to sharpen our skills in the art of sermon making. We need to pray fervently; study God's Word; keep our audience in mind so we are on the same frequency as they are -- preach timely and relevant sermons that will benefit them. We need to work on our delivery so we do not diminish an otherwise good sermon and render it less effective by poor delivery. It seems to me that we need to put in more time and effort on delivery. It will be time well spent. If an audience is

disinterested or listless or if church attendance is poor, maybe we should take a look first at ourselves and ask why? What can I do to write and deliver better sermons, timely and textual sermons? Ask, am I hindering in some way the work of the Holy Spirit by not applying myself to the fullest? If I am "too busy" to spend time on sermons, then my time has to be reordered. We of all people should be good stewards of time and talent. We as pastors, above all, will be called into account on the last day.

It is not easy to write good effective and productive sermons using good language, avoiding words and phrases which most people do not understand. To be sure, it takes time and work. There is such a thing as native ability, born preachers, but all must work at these skills to improve them and refine them.

As pastors we too are flesh of flesh. We have to battle the natural urge to be accepted and popular; to satisfy the "itching ear" by saying what people want to hear, to refrain from confronting popular sins and practices, to build monuments to our "ego." But Jesus said, "I seek not mind own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John 5:30. With John the Baptist we should say, "He must increase; I must decrease." John 3:30. Let our motto be: "Remember the message -- forget the preacher." The message is divine; we are human.

The story was told of Spurgeon: "An American was visiting London at the time when two of the most talked-of preachers in that world metropolis were Joseph Parker and Charles H. Spurgeon. He went to hear both of them. After hearing the brilliant Parker in his pulpit at the City Temple, he spoke to one of the ushers as he left the place of worship: "What a wonderful preacher you have here."

On the Sunday following, after having heard Spurgeon in his Tabernacle, he said to the usher on leaving, "What a wonderful Saviour you have here." (Quoted in Preaching to Preachers, Norman A. Madson, P. 5)

It is harder than ever to be a preacher today. The radio and TV church, all kinds of cultural and social opportunities beckon our people, when once the church was the center of life. Transportation makes running away for the weekend easy; prosperity makes it possible. All these factors make it harder for today's pastor. Yet the Lord calls for faithfulness on our part. We are not responsible for results. We are responsible for effort. The pastor has the words of Christ before him, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34) Christ's work carried Him through Gethsemane and Calvary. He stopped only to say, "It is finished." "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (I Cor. 4:1-2.)

God grant us faithfulness and steadfastness in our work for more productive preaching.

I would close by quoting from Spurgeon, the British preacher, regarding the glory of the Gospel ministry: "Brethren, to me the pulpit is a throne, and when I am in full swing, with the Lord Jesus Christ as my subject, I would not change places with the seraphim . . . when I speak on these themes, my lips drop pearls and diamonds. Brethren, when we declare unto you the Lord Jesus, we sail upon a sea of sweetness." (Source not verified)

To God alone be all glory!

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-- Paul G. Petersen

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