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Foreword

In the Lutheran Church the liturgy is usually referred to as the “divine service.” (*Gottesdienst* or *Gudstjeneste*) The divine service is first and foremost God’s service to us. Here God serves us with Word and Sacrament, and, secondarily, we serve Him with praise and thanksgiving. In the divine liturgy we leave for a time our mundane workaday world and have a foretaste of heaven. We are caught up in the saints’ and angels’ heavenly worship all around the throne of the Lamb once slain. (Revelation 7:9-17) This is indeed the very portal of heaven, the gateway to the eternal.

One of the important parts of the divine service is the reading of the lections or Scripture lessons for the various Sundays of the church year. In this issue of the *Quarterly*, the first essay, entitled *The Path of Understanding*, presents the history of the development of the various lectionaries and their use in the Lutheran Church. The advantages and disadvantages of each of these lectionaries are pointed out. The author of this essay is the Rev. Alexander Ring of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington.

Luther restored the sermon to the prominence in the divine service that it held in the early church when men of the caliber of Augustine and Chrysostom filled the pulpits. The second essay in this issue, *Putting More Power in the Public Proclamation of the Word*, points out important techniques in sermon preparation and delivery. The essay explains that our preparation and delivery cannot add anything to the power of the Word. God’s Word has inherent divine power, but our lack of preparation can indeed hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. The author of this essay is the Rev. Michael Krentz of Holton Lutheran

Church in Holton, Michigan.

In the past year the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America made two historic ecumenical decisions. An evaluation of these decisions is found in Professor Juul Madson's article entitled *ELCA – Quo Vadis?*

Finally, in this issue of the *Quarterly* there is a review of the book *Justification and Rome*. The author of the book is the late Rev. Robert Preus and the book is reviewed by Professor Wilhelm Petersen.

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The Path of Understanding

*The Development of Lectionaries and
Their Use in the Lutheran Church*

by Alexander Ring

A little over a year ago one of the brethren posted to the listserv Koren ten reasons to abandon preaching from a lectionary. Knowing the pastor who made the post and appreciating his wry comments, as I read through the reasons I gave thanks to God that I was numbered among men with such wit and education that one of them could produce such a skilled parody of Free Church mentality. Leaving the lectionary behind would, among other things, he wrote, give you the freedom to encourage lay Bible reading, to shape and cast a vision for your church, to create rather than conform, and allow preachers to share what God is teaching them. *It sounds just like something from RIM, I thought to myself. I wish I was this clever.* Two days later the senior pastor at Parkland left on my desk a copy of the magazine *Worship Innovations* opened to that issue's feature article: "The Lectionary Captivity of the Church: Ten Reasons to Kick the Lectionary 'Habit.'" Of course, my first reaction was one of relief, since my ego was soothed that the ten reasons had been plagiarized and I was still as clever as I had always thought myself. Then my colleague paid for his folly of setting me off on a favorite hobby horse, having to listen all the next week to my exposition on the evils of abandoning the lectionary and church year.

It is not my intention to preach the same sermon to you, since a casual questioning of the clergy among our

fellowship would likely show that the vast majority, if not all of us follow a lectionary cycle in our preaching. Despite the title of the article cited above, we understand that the lectionary is not the iron-clad restrictive captivity some may attempt to portray. Even an extremist like myself realizes that events occur in the life of a congregation such as mission festivals, Christian Education Sunday, and anniversaries that compel a departure from the pericopal readings. Indeed, such occasional departures are within the best traditions of lectionary preaching, since the lectionary was never meant to be a forced march, but a path that each year would walk the Church through her festivals and visit the chief doctrines of the Faith. Occasional side trips only enhance the journey.

Thus like most customs and traditions within the Lutheran Church, the use of a lectionary as the foundation and guide for our preaching needs no apology. Rather, it is a custom that finds its roots in the earliest traditions of the church and has proven itself over the centuries. It is its casual abandonment by the Reformed and, unfortunately, some Lutherans, that warrants an explanation.

The History of the Lectionary

Christian congregations of the first century took their cues for the divine service from the worship practices of the synagogue, which used a lectionary to determine the readings for the service. This reading of Scripture was called the *מקרא*, which originally meant "calling together" but came to refer especially to the reading and sometimes teaching of Scripture.¹ While there was some variation in practice, usually there were two Scripture readings in each service. The first was from the Torah, divided into 150 parts to be read *lectio continua* in a three year cycle,

then a second lesson from the Prophets.² Some synagogues may have also used a three-year cycle for the reading of the Psalms. The lessons having been read, they would be preached upon by a rabbi. Perhaps the best example we have of this is from St. Luke 4:16-21, the account of Jesus preaching at the synagogue in Nazareth. The Isaiah scroll is handed to Him, and He unrolls it to the reading from the Prophets for the day, reads the lection, and then preaches on it.

That this practice was carried over into the worship of the Christian church is seen from references made to it, such as that given in 1 Timothy 4:13, “ἕως ἔρχομαι πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ.” St. Paul’s use of ἀνάγνωσις is very descriptive, since it is the word consistently used in the Septuagint to translate אָרָם. Thus the first part of the passage could also be translated, “Until I come, give attention to the lection.” As early as the 50s and 60s, Christian congregations began to supplement the readings from the Old Testament with readings from the writings of the Apostles. In passages such as 1 Thessalonians 5:27 and Colossians 4:16, Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and apparently aware of it, tells these churches that his letters are to be read in the service (again using ἀνάγνωσις, so perhaps “be lections”) then circulated to other neighboring congregations that they may use them as well. As the Gospels were written and circulated, they too were read in public worship. As is to be expected, the practice of reading Scripture was rather consistent. Justin Martyr (d. 166) wrote in his Apology, “On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president [presiding minister] verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good

things.”³

While the basic practice of reading Scripture and preaching from it was common, what was read, and how much, was not. In some places there was a continuous reading from Sunday to Sunday until a book was finished. Some areas of Spain and France used lessons made from a mosaic of Scripture, piecing together short selections from various parts of Scripture.⁴ Some churches used harmonies of the Gospels and read from them. And while some places read two lessons each Sunday, others read as many as four. Overall, *lectio continua*, the continuous reading of a book from Sunday to Sunday, seems to have been the prevailing practice in one form or another.

However, as the church year developed, the practice of *lectio continua* waned. Already in the first century the Church was celebrating Easter, which soon became the celebration of Easter and Pentecost, which soon became the celebration of Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany, which soon... well, you get the idea. By the fourth century the festival half of the church year as we know it (Advent - Pentecost) was generally established, complete with days set apart for commemoration of saints and martyrs. These festivals and commemorations required their own readings and thus interrupted the *lectio continua*. As the “interruptions” became less the exception and more the rule, *lectio continua* gave way to prescribed readings. So that the pastor would know what the prescribed reading was, bishops had indices prepared, which not only gave references but showed the first and last words in each lesson. An assigned portion of Scripture was known as ἡ περικοπή, the pericope,⁵ as it was the portion of Scripture “cut out” from the Scriptures for that day. Because books other than the Bible were sometimes used (e.g., lives of the saints, martyrologies, sermons or writings of noted preachers, etc.), many bishops and church fathers

also produced books called *comes*, sort of a pericope and sermon help book all in one. These books included not only the readings for each day, but often some commentary as well. Some *comes*, commentary and all, may even have been prepared so that they could be read during the service, functioning as Ante-Nicean church postils.

It was not long before books were prepared with the lessons actually written out, saving the step of having to look them up elsewhere; epistles written out in an *epistolarium*, the gospels in an *evangelarium*. A book with a complete set of lessons was called a *lectionarium*.⁶ Most of these were incomplete by today's standards in that they usually had assigned propers only for the festival half of the year, with a selection of optional readings and propers for the rest of the year to be used at the discretion of the pastor. The same was also true for the Epiphany season, since it wasn't until the fourth century that Christmas and Epiphany became distinct festivals.

The Historic Lectionary

What we know today as the Historic Lectionary comes to us from the *Comes Hieronymi* (Jerome). The date and authorship of this document is disputed; however, at the very latest it was written by someone in 471.⁷ Having the name of Jerome attached to it made this document influential on its own, but when it was included in the Leonine Sacramentary⁸ it became a standard text for the Western Church. Even then it provided assigned readings only for Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. The rest of the year was still covered by optional propers included in the *comes*, or by the whim of the local bishop or pastor.

Three hundred years later, Charlemagne decided to standardize liturgical practices in his domain, and as part

of this had his religious advisor Alcuin⁹ do a revision of the *Comes Hieronymi*. What Alcuin basically did was take the Gregorian Sacramentary, the current standard in Rome, and introduce it to Charlemagne's empire. This was a monumental step in church history, since it standardized worship in the Western Church and put everyone west of the Carpathians literally on the same page, at least for the festival part of the year. And because he was seeking to shorten the service, Alcuin introduced two major changes in the lectionary. First, he eliminated the reading of the Old Testament lesson. Secondly, he shortened many of the epistle and Gospel readings. Where earlier a lesson could have been as long as two or three chapters, now it was usually a single account from a gospel or a section from an epistle that dealt with a specific topic. There were probably several reasons for both these changes, but what is likely the main one was the decreased literacy of both people and clergy effected by the barbarian invasions.

The next major change to the lectionary would not come until the 13th century and the establishment of the last generally accepted major festival of the Church: Trinity Sunday. This festival soon came to dominate the second half of the church year, and with that came the establishment of assigned propers for the entire year. In itself this was not new; some places had actually established year-round propers as early as the 4th century. But the High Middle Ages saw the strengthening of both monarchies and the papacy, both of which liked to have unified practice. The era of *cuius regio eius lectio* was over, and with the general adoption of the Sarum Missal at the end of the 13th century the liturgical practice of the Western Church, year round, was governed by the Historic Lectionary.¹⁰

So well constructed and established was this practice that even during the upheaval of the Reformation it re-

mained intact. The Reformation never really asked the question "Should the lectionary be changed?" only whether it should be used. As might be expected, men like Zwingli and Müntzer abolished the use of lectionaries along with the observance of the church year. Calvin took a somewhat more restrained approach, abolishing both church year and lectionary but substituting a *lectio continua*, since he saw homiletical value in having some sort of assigned reading. The Lutherans, true to form, only wished to abolish or reform those things which obscured Christ or promoted false doctrine. The lectionary did not fall into either of these categories, and thus was retained with only slight revision by the Lutherans: They added propers for Trinity 25 and 26, eschatological lessons meant to connect the end of life with the end of all things. They also moved the commemoration of the Transfiguration from the fixed date of August 6 to the last Sunday after Epiphany, a fitting climax of the season which celebrates the manifestation of the glory and deity of Christ.

This is not to say there was not criticism from the Lutherans. In a letter to his friend Nicholas Hausmann in Zwickau, Luther described the liturgical service in Wittenberg and commented about the readings:

After [the collect] the Epistle is read. Certainly the time has not yet come to attempt revision here, as nothing unevangelical is read, except that those parts from the Epistles of Paul in which faith is taught are read only rarely, while the exhortations to morality are most frequently read. The Epistles seem to have been chosen by a singularly unlearned and superstitious advocate of works. But for the service those sections in which faith in Christ is taught should have been given preference. The latter were certainly considered more

often in the Gospels by whoever it was who chose these lessons. In the meantime, the sermon in the vernacular will have to supply what is lacking.¹¹

As critical as Luther's comments seem to be, they should be taken with a grain of salt. In light of the times he was perhaps over-sensitive to anything which seemed to detract from *Sola Gratia*. Indeed, in the end we see that even Luther took himself with a grain of salt, since despite his comments Luther himself prescribed the use of the Historic Lectionary in both the *Formula Missae* and *Deutsche Messe*,¹² and all Lutheran altar books continued in their use of it. Even the Augsburg Confession and the Apology testify to its official use in Lutheran congregations, when in speaking about tradition and the church the Lutherans stated: "Many traditions are kept on our part, for they lead to good order in the Church, such as the Order of Lessons in the Mass [i.e., the lectionary] and the chief festivals."¹³ "We keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of the lessons, prayers, vestments, etc."¹⁴ The next 400 years of Lutheran liturgical life (and that of the Roman Catholics and Anglicans) was governed by the Historic Lectionary. It served as the basis for our postils and devotional books, our hymnody and church music, and even until the mid 20th century was the index for every Lutheran hymnal.

To be sure, other lectionaries were prepared. In 1896 the churches of the Prussian Union known as the Eisenach Conference produced a lectionary, popularized in the United States by Dr. R.C.H. Lenski and his notes on the series. The Synodical Conference produced a series which was adopted in 1912. The Scandinavian Lutheran Churches produced a three-year lectionary in 1868.¹⁵ Yet often these were produced not to supplant the Historic

Lectionary but to supplement it, usually as alternate texts for preaching.¹⁶ The patterns and themes of the Historic Lectionary were maintained.

Advantages & Disadvantages

The fact that the Historic Lectionary has been in use over six hundred years is much to its credit. It means that there are plenty of resources for it, including many written by the Lutheran Fathers. Luther's Church and House Postils, as well as the sermons of Bugenhagen, Gerhard and Walther, all follow the Historic Lectionary. Devotional books such as that by Bishop Laache and Luther's Family Devotions followed the Historic Lectionary, with the intent that worship in the home would be an echo of what had been heard in church that Sunday, and that those kept from public worship (and in the 18th & 19th century, when these books were printed, that would for the most part have meant settlers in the New World) would have yet one more connection to the Holy Christian Church.¹⁷ Much of our hymnody was influenced by the Historic Lectionary, which is why a number of Lutheran Advent hymns mention the triumphal entry.¹⁸ This effect was compounded by the fact that Bach used its propers in composing his church cantatas. Six hundred years also means that there has been time to work out most of the bugs. Unlike other lectionary series (except those based on the Historic series), the propers for the day always match up with the readings, enhancing the theme for the day, and the lessons within each season flow together to create a seasonal theme. Indeed, of all the lectionaries the Historic is the most well-organized; there is method even in the seeming madness of the Trinity season.¹⁹ What is perhaps the greatest asset today is the fact that it is a one

year lectionary. If *repetitio mater studiorum est*, then here is where you will find the most *repetitio*. This is especially an advantage in our era of decreased biblical literacy.

At the same time, because it is a one year series, it uses a limited number of texts. The Historic Lectionary grew during times when it was common to have services on days like Easter Monday, which may also explain why some lessons are now omitted.²⁰ Perhaps the most glaring omission is that of the parable of the prodigal son.

The Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW)

In 1956, only fifteen years after the production of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, Lutheran church bodies in the United States were seeking a revision of that book. In 1965 the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod resolved to appoint a commission which would work with other Lutheran church bodies to produce a new common hymnal, a contemporary heir to *The Lutheran Hymnal*. To that end, on February 10, 1966 representatives of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America met in Chicago and formed what would become the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW).²¹ It was later joined by representatives of the Slovak Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC).²² In pursuing the production of a new hymnal, the ILCW produced a number of worship resources for trial and use in congregations. These were distributed through the publication of a series entitled *Contemporary Worship*. *Contemporary Worship 6*, produced in 1973, dealt with the church year and calendar and introduced two new lectionaries. In this volume the com-

mission wrote:

In recent years...there has been a widespread restiveness with the appointed readings, a great deal of experimentation, and a desire for either reform of the pericopes or a completely new lectionary. This concern is not simply the product of change in society and church; it has deeper roots. It reflects a variety of influences in current theology, social-ethical involvements, developments in worship practice, and especially the influential biblical theology movement of recent decades.²³

In their discussion of revision there had been some debate regarding the merits of going to a multi-year series, "on whether loyalty to our heritage, conformity with world Lutheranism generally, and reverence for the Western lectionary tradition should prevail, or whether agreement with our sister churches in America demanded a three-year series."²⁴ The latter concerns prevailed. One of the outcomes of Vatican II had been the publication of the *Ordo Lectionum Missae* in 1969, the new three-year series that supplanted the Historic Series in the Roman Catholic Church. The next year the Protestant Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church and United Church of Christ adopted the *Ordo* as a basis for new lectionaries in their churches. Thus in September of 1970 the ILCW simply followed suit, expressing its preference for a three-year series. In 1971 the ILCW published a revised one-year series, and two years later published its *magnum opus*, a new three-year series, patterned after the Roman *Ordo*. The ILCW three-year series somewhat returned to the practice of *lectio continua* with the basic principle of assigning a synoptic gospel to each year. "Year A" focuses on the Gospel of Matthew, "Year B" on the Gospel of

Mark and "Year C" on the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John is used in all three during the Sundays after Easter and also serves to supplement St. Mark in Year B. In an effort to reintroduce the reading of the Old Testament, a First Lesson, usually selected from the Old Testament, was assigned to each Sunday and was to coordinate with the Gospel reading. The exception to this is the Sundays after Easter, where selections are chosen from Acts. Epistles were also assigned to each year to be read *lectio continua*, and thus no special effort was made to coordinate the Epistle with the Gospel selection.

In making selections, the committee asked itself a number of questions. Chief among them were:

1. Can this passage be expounded meaningfully today, can one preach relevantly on it?
2. Do the readings as a whole reflect the whole counsel of God?
3. Is the reading exegetically defensible? Are there textual problems in the Hebrew or Greek which render the meaning of a passage uncertain?
4. Is the reading ecumenical? How widely is it used to express past usage and current practice?²⁵

The committee also stated a "sensitivity to the hazards in certain texts" (e.g., misunderstanding in terms of anti-Semitism, if not carefully explained).²⁶

This series quickly became popular in Lutheran circles, evidenced by the fact that within fifteen years of its release Lutheran publishing houses were no longer producing worship materials based on the Historic Lectionary. As is the case with most common resources, there are now actually several versions of the ILCW lectionary in

print. It was adapted somewhat by the LC-MS for publication in *Lutheran Worship*, and also by the Wisconsin Synod (WELS) for publication in *Christian Worship*. The *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* uses essentially the same version of the one found in *Lutheran Worship*. For the most part the variations in the different versions are minor, often focusing on the length of the reading (e.g., Should we read all of St. John 9, or just selected verses?).

Advantages & Disadvantages

Upon publication of the lectionary in 1973, the ILCW itself pointed out what is often cited as its greatest advantage: a larger selection of texts, thus exposing a congregation to a wider range of Scripture. Many pastors welcomed the opportunity to preach on a new variety of texts. The general practice of *lectio continua* used in the series can give a congregation a chance to get the flavor of a book, which can especially be helpful in the gospels. And with the popular acceptance of the series there are now several publications of sermon helps and worship materials based on it.

The greatest disadvantages to the ILCW are its origin and length. The series was created by an inter-Lutheran group that is theologically liberal, and its theology often shows up in their selections for readings. In general, the ILCW omitted readings that speak directly of the deity of Jesus (St. John 8:46-59 is not in the ILCW) and of miracles done by the apostles, and often allows for the omission of readings that condemn sins such as adultery and homosexuality. The most glaring omission is the lack of any texts which deal with the judgment of sinners. Traditionally, these readings were used on the Second-Last Sunday of the Church Year, but now they are either omitted

or listed as optional. The one exception is the parable of the sheep and the goats, but this was likely retained because it presents a possibility for moralizing.

In fairness, I also examined the ILCW lectionary found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, where most of the optional, "offensive" material has been restored as part of the readings, and where the judgment day readings are listed for the Second-Last Sunday. If you are getting bulletins and worship materials from Concordia or Northwestern, you are using a version of the ILCW similar to this one.²⁷ However these cleaned-up versions essentially make optional readings primary, they hardly ever restore omissions.

And just as the brevity of the Historic Lectionary is both good and bad, so is the length of the ILCW three-year series. Parables and accounts that would have been heard every year are now heard once every three years, and if one follows the preaching cycle they are preached on only once every nine years. Also, except for most of the Sundays during the festival part of the church year, the thematic approach to Sundays has been lost. It should also be noted that the argument of "the more Bible, the better" is not without its fallacies. On the surface, this seems a good, even pious idea. But the motivation behind this was a Higher-Critical notion of Scripture: that within the Bible is contained the word of God, and the function of a lectionary is to insure that the classic texts are transmitted to the next generation.²⁸ This is quite a departure from Luther's doctrine of Scripture as *Was Christum Treibt* (what brings Christ to us). Furthermore, the trend in the use of the Old Testament in these lectionaries is toward seeing it as an independent lection from the "Hebrew Scriptures," rather than as a typological commentary on the Gospel reading.

The Revised Common Lectionary

As popular as the ILCW three year series is, it may become one of the most short-lived lectionary series. Two years after the formation of the ILCW, representatives of the ELCA, ELCIC and LC-MS had joined an ecumenical group called the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT). Composed of biblical, linguistic and liturgical scholars from various Christian denominations, this group intends to prepare worship texts and materials for use in North America, including lectionaries. In 1978 the CCT sponsored a meeting in Washington DC whose purpose was to form a committee which would reconcile the differences between the various denominational uses of the three year series. In 1983 it published the *Common Lectionary*.

The biggest change its members brought to the three year series was the revision of Old Testament lessons. Previous lectionaries had taken a typological approach to readings from the Old Testament, selecting texts with reference to their New Testament fulfillment. The CCT "raised serious questions about the Roman lectionary's 'typological' use of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures,"²⁹ and thus for the *Common Lectionary* proposed a pattern of semicontinuous readings, essentially independent from the Gospel Lesson. For Year A, twenty Sundays were devoted to readings from the Pentateuch, followed by three Sundays of readings from Ruth. In Year B fourteen Sundays were devoted to the life of David and four Sundays to Wisdom literature. Year C has ten Sundays devoted to Elijah and Elisha, and fifteen Sundays to the major prophets. According to the CCT, "The lessons are still typologically controlled by the gospel, but in a broader way than Sunday by Sunday, in order to make possible semicontinuous reading of some significant Old Testa-

ment narratives.”³⁰ The semicontinuous readings were not used on major festivals or during seasons such as Advent or Easter, and during the other parts of the festival half of the year some attempt was made to use continuous readings that enhanced the theme of the season. The CCT also included a Psalm in the lections, and adopted the practice of the Episcopal Church of replacing the “Sundays after Pentecost” with “Propers” keyed to the civil calendar (e.g., instead of the “Ninth Sunday after Pentecost,” you now have “Proper 11, to be used on the Sunday between July 17 and 23 inclusive.”).

The *Common Lectionary* was first used on a trial basis by a number of Lutheran and Episcopal congregations, and was officially adopted by the Anglican Church of Canada in 1985. Yet it also received a number of criticisms, directed especially from Lutheran, Episcopal and Roman Catholic sources. They noted:

1. There were still a number of insubstantial differences between the Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran lectionaries that needed to be reconciled,
2. Further efforts should be made to strengthen the relationship between Old Testament and Gospel Readings,
3. That confusion is caused within the congregation by the use of three unrelated readings, and
4. That the use of a Psalm and three lengthy readings in a single service is too much for the average congregation to embrace.³¹

In response to these criticisms, the CCT undertook a revision of the *Common Lectionary*, and in 1992 published the *Revised Common Lectionary*. The criticisms of Old Testament selections were answered by the production of

three versions of the RCL. There is a Roman Catholic version which at times uses readings from the Apocrypha for the Old Testament Lesson. There are then two Protestant versions, one in which the Old Testament lesson is matched to the Gospel lesson, and one with the semicontinuous Old Testament readings. Added to this were more stories of women of faith. The CCT also took the chance to further evaluate and eliminate texts which, "when taken out of their cultural and religious context of the Ancient Near East, may be misunderstood by late twentieth century congregations."³²

At this writing the RCL has been officially approved for use and essentially adopted by the Episcopal Church, the ELCA and ELCIC. It is the official lectionary of the United Methodist Church, Presbyterians, United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ. Because of its general adoption by the ELCA, the RCL is currently the most widely used lectionary in American Lutheran churches (Note which reading is listed first in your AAL calendar).

Advantages & Disadvantages

The advantages of the RCL are the same as those mentioned for the ILCW, with the addition mentioned by the editors of having a truly ecumenical lectionary. The disadvantages are also similar; however, with the RCL they are more pronounced. Its preparation was heavily influenced by higher criticism and liberal theology. Where the ILCW tended to omit or edit, the RCL simply does it. No sections that may seem anti-Semitic are used, such as St. John 11:45-53 or the stoning of Stephen. The sections that speak against homosexuality are conspicuously omitted, as well as verses that warn of false prophets.³³ So seriously flawed is the RCL from both a hermeneutical

and liturgical standpoint that it would be difficult to sanction its use in a Lutheran congregation. The LC-MS Commission on Worship has reviewed the series and is recommending against its use in congregations of that synod. The Wisconsin Synod has not made a statement for or against the RCL, and while it recommends the version of the ILCW found in *Christian Worship*, Northwestern Publishing House is currently considering making the RCL available on bulletins and bulletin inserts, especially for non-WELS accounts. And while at this writing neither Concordia nor Northwestern Publishing House has plans to officially switch to the RCL, its use is gaining momentum. If your church is currently using an ILCW lectionary it may be worth the effort to periodically examine the readings and see if they match what is printed on pages 199-201 in the *ELH*. If they don't match, it may be that the publishing house has for convenience sake (and, very likely, commercial reasons) switched over to the RCL.

Conclusion

You are as likely to find the perfect lectionary as you are to find the perfect Bible translation. It may be said of lectionaries, as of translations, that some are better than others, that inevitably you end up dealing with factors of taste and individual preference, and that even the worst of them is probably better than nothing at all.

Yet we should be aware of one other point of comparison: that just as there is no such thing as a theologically neutral translation, so there is no such thing as a theologically neutral lectionary. This is especially true of the three year lectionaries published in the last thirty years. Created by committees with definite theological leanings, these lectionaries often display an agenda which at times

finds itself at cross purposes with confessional Lutheranism. Considering this, one may find it worthwhile to re-examine the use of the Historic Lectionary. Its use was a tradition that united generations of Christians, and one which was perhaps too quickly cast aside. This is not to say that using a three year lectionary will not allow you to preach Christ crucified and thus consign your flock to hell. It is to say that these lectionaries have weaknesses of which we should be aware, and for which those who use them will need to compensate.

Which lectionary we use (or even whether we use a lectionary, for that matter) is certainly an adiaphoron, but this does not make it an unimportant matter. Thus in choosing a lectionary for use in the divine service, we should remember we are choosing a catechetical tool. A lectionary is to be more than a means to dole out parcels of Scripture, it is to be a path of understanding, a guide for both pastor and congregation through the whole counsel of God. Guided by the use of a good lectionary our faith is well-nourished and we grow in our faith and in our understanding of our Lord. God be praised for His glad tidings!

Soli Deo Gloria!

Appendix A

Organization of the Historic Lectionary

It is too bad that the organization and themes in the Historic Lectionary are often missed, since knowledge of them can aid in the work of the pastor and can aid the parishioners in their worship. The pastor who knows how the Sundays work together in a season can use that information effectively in planning the services and his sermons. The parishioner who is told the theme of a particular Sunday can begin to make sense of what the hymns, introit, collect, gradual and readings are talking about (This is especially helpful for children). The strong, thematic organization of the Historic Lectionary is perhaps its greatest asset, especially when it is often lacking in other lectionary systems.

Completely addressing the organization of the Historic Lectionary is out of the scope of this paper, but one example is not. In the Historic Lectionary, the Christmas and Epiphany seasons are connected and complement each other: Christmas focuses on God becoming man, Epiphany on the revelation that this man is God.

On Christmas we hear that God has become man, the following Sunday we hear how this is in fulfillment of God's promise. Not only that, we hear Simeon allude to Jesus' death, and the gospel lesson ends with a verse telling us that Jesus "grew and became strong." Christmas 2 then recounts the flight into Egypt. God is born, He is subject to death, and indeed in His weakness must flee Herod lest He be killed, all vivid testaments to Christ being "true Man." Then comes Epiphany, whose focus is really not so much that Jesus has come to save Gentiles, but that the glory of God is manifested in Christ. Magi follow a star to worship Him, the boy Jesus testifies to "being about His Father's business," then comes the first miracle, then the healing of disease, then the calming of the storm. Each account shows the divinity of

Jesus, each following one more than the one before until the full divinity of Jesus shines forth at His Transfiguration. Some years you also have an Epiphany 5, whose reading is the parable of the tares among the wheat, ending with Jesus saying He is the Judge of all the earth, who will cast the tares into the fire and gather the wheat into His barn.

Now compare this to the organization of the ILCW. The theme is retained for Christmas, but any coherent theme for Epiphany is lost. As you see from the selections, it is little more than a short version of the Pentecost season. Now, in fairness, we admit there is a tradition which celebrates the Baptism of Our Lord on the first Sunday after Epiphany, but again that pericope was used in connection with the historic lessons as another account in which the deity of Christ is manifested.

Sunday	Theme	Gospel
Christmas Day	The Word Made Flesh	St. Luke 2:1-14, The Birth of Christ
Christmas 1	The Promise Fulfilled	St. Luke 2:33-40, Simeon & Anna
Christmas 2	God's Gracious Protection	St. Matthew 2:13-23, The Flight into Egypt
Epiphany	The Visit of the Magi	St. Matthew 2:1-12, The Visit of the Magi
Epiphany 1	The Son of God	St. Luke 2:41-52, The Boy Jesus in the Temple
Epiphany 2	The Lord of Gladness	St. John 2:1-11, The First Miracle
Epiphany 3	The Savior of the Nations	St. Matt. 8:1-13, Jesus Heals a Leper and the Centurion's Servant
Epiphany 4	Lord of Nature	St. Matt. 8:23-27, Jesus Calms the Storm
Transfiguration	The Transfiguration of Our Lord	St. Matt. 17:1-9, The Transfiguration

	Series A Yr 1	Series B Yr 2	Series C Yr 3
Ep.	Mt. 2:1-12 The wise men worship Jesus	Mt. 2:1-12 The wise men worship Jesus	Mt. 2:1-12 The wise men worship Jesus
Ep. 1 Bapt.	Mt. 3:13-17 John baptizes Jesus	Mk. 1:4-11 John baptizes Jesus	Lk. 3:15-17, 21-22 John baptizes Jesus
Ep. 2	Jo. 1:29-41 John: "Behold, the Lamb of God"	Jo. 1:43-51 Jesus calls Philip and Nathaniel	Jo. 2:1-11 The Wedding at Cana
Ep. 3	Mt. 4:12-23 Jesus begins to preach	Mk. 1:14-20 Jesus calls the first disciples	Lk. 4:14-21 Jesus preaches in the synagogue
Ep. 4	Mt. 5:1-12 Jesus preaches the beatitudes	Mk. 1:21-28 Jesus drives out an evil spirit	Lk. 4:21-32 Jesus is driven out of the synagogue
Ep. 5	Mt. 5:13-20 Sermon on the mount: you are salt and light	Mk. 1:29-39 Jesus preaches and heals many	Lk. 5:1-11 The miraculous catch of fish
Ep. 6	Mt. 5:20-37 Jesus teaches true righteousness	Mk. 1:40-45 Jesus heals a leper	Lk. 6:17-26 Jesus pronounces blessings and woes
Ep. 7	Mt. 5:38-48 Jesus preaches love	Mk. 2:1-12 Jesus heals a paralytic	Lk. 6:27-38 Jesus preaches love
Ep. 8	Mt. 6:24-34 Jesus preaches: do not worry	Mk. 2:18-22 Jesus' disciples do not fast	Lk. 6:39-49 Jesus teaches true righteousness
Ep. 9 Transf.	Mt. 17:1-9 Jesus is transfigured	Mk. 9:2-9 Jesus is transfigured	Lk. 9:28-36 Jesus is transfigured

For further study of the organization of the Historic Lectionary, I would suggest trying to find these books ("try to find," because most are out of print):

Backer, Bruce R. *Lutheran Worship* (course syllabus). New Ulm, MN: Dr. Martin Luther College, 1988.

Gehrke, Ralph. *Planning the Service: A Workbook for Pastors, Organists and Choirmasters*. Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press. This may still be available.

Horn, Edward T. *The Christian Year*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press. 1957.

Lindemann, Fred. *The Sermon and the Propers*. 4 vols. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958. This is an especially good set, and well worth finding. His sermon outlines are often pietistic, but he does a great job showing how all the propers work together to enhance the theme of both the season and the Sunday. He also includes sermons by the Lutheran Fathers on the minor festivals.

Reuning, Daniel G. ed. *Church Year Workbook*. Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press. This may still be available; call the Concordia-Ft. Wayne bookstore.

Appendix B

ILCW/RCL Omissions and Editings

The omissions and editings are listed by year. In the chart are those common to both the ILCW and RCL. Below the chart are those which occur only in the RCL. If a reading is listed as omitted, it was included in a previous version of the lectionary and later removed, or was simply omitted from the reading, following the guidelines of the editorial board. The guideline is given in parentheses following the selection.

Sunday	Lesson	Problem
Lent 1	Gen. 3:1-7	Omits vss 8-15, thus you don't have God speaking to Adam & Eve. Even odder is the omission of 3:15. (vss 8-15 show up later at Proper 5 B)
Trinity Sunday	Gen. 1:1-2:3	While 2:3 is a natural ending, keep in mind that Historical Criticism sees the rest of Gen 2 as a second creation account. Note that RCL includes v. 4 in its reading. ILCW also provides Deut. 4:32-34, 39-40 as an alternate reading, though this is probably because it is shorter.
Pent. 2/ Prop. 4	Mt. 7:(15-20) 21-29	ILCW allows for the omission of v 15, "beware of false prophets." RCL simply begins at v. 21.
Pent. 21/ Prop. 23	Mt. 22:1-10	Omit last three verses of the lesson, where the king throws out the man without a wedding garment, and which contain "For many are called, but few are chosen." This certainly makes it a much easier text to preach on, but should we really be editing Jesus' parables? Moreover, the editing shows a higher critical understanding of the parable, trying to make it a parallel of Luke 14:16-24.

RCL Omissions and Editings

First Sunday in Lent, omit Rom. 5:12-15: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned – for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" (Is this to downplay original sin?)

Pentecost 14/Proper 16, omit Rom 11:13-15: "I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (Anti-Semitic?)

Omit Rom. 13:1-7: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible pun-

ishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

Omit Mt. 23:37-39: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Anti-Semitic)

Sunday	Lesson	Problem
Easter 2	Acts 3:13-15, 17-26	Omits v 16: "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see."
Trinity Sunday	Jn. 3: 1-17	It is odd that this reading should be used on this Sunday, since ILCW complained that the John reading was inadequate for Trinity Sunday.
Pent. 9/ Prop. 11	Eph. 4:1-7, 11-16	ILCW omits vss 8-10, which can lead to a misunderstanding of this text.
Pent. 16/ Prop. 18	James 2:1-10 (11-13) 14-17	Allows for the omission of the section that condemns adultery.
Pent. 20/ Prop. 22	Mark 10:2-16	Surprise! They include the Mark section condemning divorce.

RCL changed Pentecost 8/Proper 10 from Mark 6:8-13: "Calling the Twelve to Him, He sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were His instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but

not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.' They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." (It is likely that the missionaries calling a people to repentance was found offensive.)

Omit Eph 5:22-31: "Wives, submit to your husbands..."

Sunday	Lesson	Problem
Epiphany 7	1 Cor. 15: 35-38,	Omits vss 39-41: "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor." (Likely because this is a difficult section.)
Lent 3	Ex. 3:1-8a, 10-15	The only reason I can think that they omitted vs 8b is because of the hard names. But why omit vs 9? "And now the cry of the Israelites has reached Me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them." BHS doesn't list any textual problems. (Difficult passage?)
Pent. 4/ Prop. 6	2 Sam. 11:26-12:10, 13-15	ILCW & RCL omit vss 11-12, though this is probably to make it a more appropriate reading for the worship service: "This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"
Pent. 8/ Prop. 10	Lk. 10:25-37	Vss 23-24 were probably included by the early church to insure this parable was properly understood as showing our inability to do good and our reliance on the Gospel. Vs 25 is a natural starting point, but it also makes it easier for a moralistic interpretation of this parable. In fact, there is even a special collect for this day in ILCW & RCL: "Lord God, use our lives to touch the world with your love. Stir us, by your Spirit, to be neighbor to those in need, serving them with willing hearts; per..."
Pent. 9/ Prop. 11	Gen. 18:1-10a (10b-14)	ILCW allows for the omission of the last 4 verses, RCL simply cuts them. This is the section where Sarah is listening at the tent and laughs at the promise of a son. Note that many modern commentators on Genesis treat this section as an interpolation, and say it unfairly characterizes Sarah. So much for inspiration.

RCL OT reading for Christmas 1, 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26, is a rather odd choice for this day. I suppose the commission members saw it as a parallel to the reading concerning the boy Jesus, but this shifts the theme of this Sunday from being about Christ to being about children in the Bible.

For Lent 5 Series C, RCL substitutes Jn 12:1-8 for Lk 20:9-19 (The parable of the land owner). This is probably because the Lk account is directed specifically against the Jews and is highly messianic ("The stone which the builders rejected..."). Jn 12 is the account of Mary anointing Jesus' feet.

For Easter 2 Series C, the ILCW reading was Acts 5:12, 17-32. RCL is Acts 5:27-32. Very likely this is because vs 12 says the apostles were doing miracles, and vss 17-26 are the account of an angel freeing the apostles from prison. Remember, one of the RCL's objectives is to remove readings with "textual difficulties."

Also on Easter 2, where the ILCW had Rev. 1:4-18, RCL shortens it to Rev. 1:4-8. Vss 9-18 are St. John beholding the Risen Christ, testifying to His deity and His resurrection. "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

For Easter 4, the ILCW reading had been Acts 13:15-16a, 26-33. This was probably thought a bit anti-Semitic, and Acts 9:36-43 (Peter raising Dorcas from the dead) is substituted by RCL.

Easter 5, RCL substitutes a nice reading (Acts 11:1-18) for an anti-Semitic one (Acts 13:44-52).

Easter 6, RCL substitutes Acts 16:9-15 for Acts 14:8-18.

The Acts 14 account has Paul performing a miracle.

Easter 7, ILCW had Rev. 22:12-17, 20. RCL has Rev. 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21. That both should omit vss 18-19 (“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”) raises suspicions. But the agenda of the RCL becomes very clear with its omission of vs 15 (“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”).

ILCW reading for Pentecost 5/Proper 7 was Lk 9:18-24 (Peter’s great confession). RCL omits this reading.

ILCW Pentecost 6/Proper 8 is 1 Kings 19:14-21. RCL emends this to 19:15-16, 19-21. (Verse 14 states the Children of Israel forsook God’s covenant; vss 17-18 have God telling Elijah to kill the false prophets.)

Pentecost 7/Proper 9 RCL allows for the omission of Galatians 6:1-6 from the epistle reading, the section that speaks about dealing with one caught in a sin.

In the Gospel lesson for this Sunday, RCL omits Luke 10:11-12, probably because it speaks of the last day as a day of judgment (“It will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town [which rejected any of the 72].”).

Pentecost 14/Proper 16, ILCW has Luke 13:22-30, RCL substitutes Luke 13:10-17. Vss 22-30 speak of the last day as a day of judgment, Jesus saying, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow gate” etc.

Pentecost 20/Proper 22, ILCW has Luke 17:1-10, RCL shortens to 17:3-10. (Vss 1-2 are: "Jesus said to His disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.'") It may be they thought it an interpolation from Mt 18 (though UBS 4 doesn't note it) or that it seemed it didn't go with the section. Notably, Mt 18:1-10 (the parallel to Lk 17:1-2) is also omitted from ILCW and RCL.

Endnotes

¹Nehemiah 8:8 is a good example of this, as מִקְרָא is used twice in the verse, once with each meaning. “They read (וַיִּקְרְאוּ) distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading (בַּמִּקְרָא).”

²These weekly divisions were called *sedarim*, and you will find them in the right margins of the *Biblia Hebraica*. The beginning of each section is marked with ס. In Babylon it became a tradition to read through the Torah every year, and thus new divisions were set up, the *parashoth*. These are marked under the ס with פֿרשׁ.

³Roberts, Alexander & Donaldson, James, eds. *The Ante-Nicean Fathers*. American Edition. New York: Christian Literature Co., 1906. I. p. 186.

⁴This may be the origin of liturgical pieces such as the *Ave Maria*.

⁵Technically, a *pericope* is either an index of the readings for the church year (e.g., p. 199-203 in the ELH) or one of the selections therein, a *lectionary* is a book that has all the readings written out. Today *lectionary* is used with both meanings and *pericope* is relegated to use only in papers like this one.

⁶Today the lectionaries are not nearly as important to liturgical studies as to textual studies, since they played a huge role in the transmission of the New Testament text. Get out your Greek NT and notice how many times you see “*Lect.*” or “*l*” in the critical apparatus. Today some 2000 of these are extant, the second largest group of manuscripts.

⁷If you’re like me, for whom Early Church History is somewhat a blur, Jerome lived c. 342-420. Thus if Jerome did write the *comes* ascribed to him it could have a date as early as 382 (the date he began working as secretary to Pope Damasus). The importance of whether Jerome wrote the *Comes Hieronymi* is significant in that if it actually did come from Jerome it may be that he was simply copying an earlier lectionary, making the Historic Lectionary even more historic (i.e., is it a product of the Early Church or Early Middle Ages?). You may safely think of this as the liturgical equivalent of the Northern/Southern Galatia debate.

⁸A *sacramentary* was the altar book of the Middle Ages. It contained

a pericope, the propers for the church year, a number of masses and some other prayers. There were three very important sacramentaries produced: the Leonine, Gelasian and Gregorian. Even though they bear the names of famous popes (Leo the Great, 440-461; Gelasius I, 492-496; and Gregory the Great, 590-604), we don't really know who compiled them. Each, however, built on the one previous, and together they served to standardize worship practices in the Western Church. In the 11th century someone will get the bright idea to put together a portable version of the sacramentary and the missal will be born.

⁹Alcuin (c. 735-804) was an English cleric who served as an advisor to Charlemagne. He was a chief force behind the Carolingian Renaissance, which would set the stage for The Renaissance.

¹⁰Though it wouldn't be until the Council of Trent that the Roman Church actually enforced and stabilized its use.

¹¹Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*. American Edition. Helmut T. Lehmann, ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1965. vol. 53. p. 23f.

¹²cf. *ibid*, p. 68f.

¹³Article XXVI, ELH p. 21.

¹⁴Apology, XXIV.1

¹⁵This is the one in *The Lutheran Hymnary* and *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. You will notice the first year is the Historic Lectionary.

¹⁶A good example of this would be the *Perikopenbuch zur Ordnung der Predigttexte*, Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1966, which provided for six series of texts to be used as preaching texts in connection with the usual Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel lessons. A bit more accessible (and in English) is Ernst Wendland's *Sermon Texts*; Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House. 1984. On p. 10 he alludes to this same point.

¹⁷These are both excellent devotionals, well worth having not only for family worship but for sermon preparation, sick calls and faculty devotions. The Laache devotional is currently out of print (Kyrie Eleison!); however, Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux is working on a new

translation of it (Te Deum Laudamus!). The Luther devotional is actually a compilation of excerpts from the writings and sermons of Luther done by Pr. George Link in 1877. It has recently been translated into English by Pr. Joel Basely, and when last I checked was available from the Bethany Bookstore. Also worth mentioning is a somewhat abridged version of the Luther devotional entitled *Luther For the Busy Man*, printed by the Lutheran Church in Australia.

¹⁸Look in any Lutheran hymnal and it's likely to be a number close to 30%. "Come, Thou Precious Ransom Come," "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates," "O How Shall I Receive Thee," "Wake! The Welcome Day Appareth," "The Advent of Our King," "O Bride of Christ, Rejoice," "Rise, Children of the Kingdom," all make overt reference to the triumphal entry. This may not seem like a large percentage, but it was enough so that when the ILCW was planning its Advent readings it was forced to include this account as an alternate reading for Advent 1.

¹⁹See Appendix A

²⁰Some have postulated that the custom of having daily services may also explain this, but evidence would suggest otherwise. At a Lutheran city church the practice would have been: A Sunday morning mass where the pastor preached on the gospel lesson, then Sunday evening vespers where he preached on the epistle; on Monday and Tuesday he would have had matins and preached on the catechism, Wednesday matins would have been a series on St. Matthew or sometimes another synoptic; Thursday and Friday lessons from the epistles, then Saturday afternoon vespers preaching from the gospel of John. Thus the services followed more of a pattern than any pericope (cf. *Luther's Works* vol. 53, p. 68 ff). Plus, the weekday services were looked upon much like the daily chapel at Bethany College. While the entire parish was welcome, these services were conducted especially for the benefit of the students and professors.

²¹Our synod sent observers to this first meeting: Prof. Julian Anderson, Pr. Eivind Unseth and Mr. Stanley Ingebretsen. (1966 Synod Report)

²²Technically, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada had been part of these proceedings from the beginning as the Canada district of the ALC. Later when it became independent it joined the ILCW as an independent body.

²³*Contemporary Worship 6: The Church Year Calendar and Lectionary*. Prepared by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House; Philadelphia: Board of Publications of the Lutheran Church in America; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973. p. 13.

²⁴*Contemporary Worship 6*, p. 14.

²⁵*Contemporary Worship 6*, p. 16.

²⁶*Contemporary Worship 6*, p. 17.

²⁷The version in *Christian Worship* actually has some minor variations in readings.

²⁸In his book *Scripture and Memory: The Ecumenical Hermeneutic of the Three-Year Lectionaries* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), Dr. Fritz West expounds quite a bit on this, especially on the idea that Scripture and the lections are that which transmits the "communal memories" of the church.

²⁹*The Revised Common Lectionary: Consultation on Common Texts*. Wood Lake Books, Inc., Winfield, BC, Canada. 1992. p. 16.

³⁰*ibid*, p. 76.

³¹Evanson, Charles, "An Examination of the Revised Common Lectionary." Review for the LC-MS Commission on Worship. January, 1996. p. 6.

³²*The Revised Common Lectionary*, p. 78. Examples of these easily misunderstood texts would be those which deny the pastoral office to women, address the sins of adultery and homosexuality, and speak of false prophets.

³³See Appendix B for a complete listing of omissions and edits.

Putting More Power in the Public Proclamation of the Word

By Michael Krentz

Thesis Sentence: Sermon preparation and delivery can prove more effective when careful attention is given to the basic principles of successful oral communication.

Introduction

- I. The Preliminary Principles Necessary for a More Effective Public Proclamation of the Word
 - A. Begin the work with prayer.
 - B. Give conscious thought to the listeners and their needs.
 - C. Determine the subject or text.
 - D. Determine the purpose or purposes.
 - E. Formulate the central idea of the sermon in a single declarative thesis sentence.

- II. The Planning Principles Necessary for a More Effective Public Proclamation of the Word
 - A. Gather an abundance of materials for the sermon, concentrating on originality and freshness.
 - B. Write an outline for the sermon, selecting a method of development to structure the ideas.

- III. The Preparation Principles Necessary for a More Effective Public Proclamation of the Word

- A. Write the body of the sermon, giving special attention to structure, patterns of thought and language.
- B. Write the introduction of the sermon, incorporating elements of interest.
- C. Write the conclusion of the sermon, establishing a sense of finality.

IV. The Practice Principles Necessary for a More Effective Public Proclamation of the Word

- A. Carefully choose the method of delivery for the sermon.
- B. Incorporate the characteristics of good style into the sermon.
- C. Orally rehearse the sermon, concentrating on the vocal delivery, direct eye contact, proper gestures and good posture.
- D. Conclude the work with prayer.

Conclusion

Introduction

1 What a most wonderful and unique privilege we pastors have to publicly proclaim to God's people the saving message of His love in Christ! While our public proclamations are by no means the only way in which we spread the "Good News," they are the setting in which we reach the most people at one time. Thus, the task of sermon preparation must ever occupy the place of supreme importance in our work.

2 Regardless of how many sermons one has written, or how polished one might have become in sermon making and delivery, there is always room for improvement. Knowing the need for such improvement was obviously the force behind the wealth of papers previously written on this subject. The Rev. George Orvick delivered such a paper in 1963, entitled, "Life Situation Preaching." The Rev. John Jeske delivered a paper on a similar note in 1980 under the title, "Communicate The Gospel More Effectively;" and the Rev. Joel Gerlach delivered yet a third paper on this most important subject in 1994 using the title, "Revitalizing Our Preaching."

3 As long as pastors continue to preach the Word, the need to reexamine, to improve, and to "revitalize" sermon preparation and delivery will persist. What a crying shame that at times we do deliver dull, boring, and irrelevant sermons to our flocks, when it does not have to be that way. "Paul Scherer, in his homiletics textbook, *For We Have This Treasure*, says, 'The only thing in God's economy that can ever take the place of preaching is better preaching. And every preacher is capable of that. Not of good preaching. Good preaching may be quite beyond us. But better preaching. That is beyond none of us.' Any preacher can become a better preacher of the Gospel, if

he is of a mind to do better.”¹ This, and more, was probably behind the program committee’s suggestion of yet another homiletical paper along these lines.

4 Knowing full well that my own sermon preparation and delivery had room for improvement, and knowing the practical importance that such a paper could have for other pastors, I willingly consented to be a pawn in the process for sermon improvement. All of my reading and research has only reinforced my belief that any pastor can prove more effective as a preacher if he faithfully adheres to the basic principles of successful oral communication from first thought of next sermon to its final delivery during the worship service. In doing so, the pastor will be able to put more power into his public proclamation of the Word.

5 Please do not get me wrong on this point. I am in no way suggesting that any one of us, or anyone else for that matter, can add anything to the power of the Word. God’s Word has inherent divine power. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, said, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”(Romans 1:16) Without a doubt, I firmly believe that the Word of God is efficacious; that is, it can and does make an impression on the heart. The Holy Spirit, working through the Word, can and does convert sinners, giving them a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This fact is further confirmed in the Bible where the Prophet Isaiah writes, “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10-11)

6 “Fritz, in his book, *The Preachers Manual*, reminds us

that only the Holy Spirit can convert sinners and keep them in faith. This He does through the Word and Sacraments.”² Fritz then goes on to mention “things which the preacher does or does not do that hinder 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 the people; by not giving due time and attention to the preparation of his sermon; by failing to clearly present the subject matter of the text; by a poor delivery; and by not practicing what he preaches.’”³

7 To be sure, preachers can be both a hindrance and a nuisance to the Spirit as they publicly proclaim the Word. This ought not be. I believe that by following the basic principles of successful oral communication we pastors can prove to be less of a hindrance to the Spirit. It is from this angle that I have chosen as my theme “Putting More Power In The Public Proclamation Of The Word.”

8 What, then, are these basic principles of successful oral communication that, when followed, can help preachers to be more effective? They can be found in any college textbook for public speaking. Whether reading in a textbook published in 1959, or one published in 1997, or one published in any of the decades in between, the basic principles of successful oral communication have remained quite constant. For the purposes of this paper, I have grouped these basic principles of oral communication around what I have called the four “P’s”:

- I. The Preliminaries,
which for the pastor begins with prayer
- II. The Planning

III. The Preparation**IV. The Practice,**

which for pastors will conclude with
prayer

Thus, what you have before you is good, sound, practical advice that has been gleaned from successful, effective public speakers, teachers of oral communication, and homiletic professors.

9 Before we can even proceed to the first "P", the Preliminaries of our sermon work; we need to reacquaint ourselves with the whole field of oral communication and public speaking. "The term public speaking has come to be applied to the situation in which the single speaker faces an audience of few or many to express ideas which have been thought through carefully, organized with a specific plan in mind, and rehearsed for final delivery."⁴ With that definition, our public proclamation of the Word would certainly fall into the category of public speaking. The process of oral communication can be further defined as "a speaker, finding himself in a certain situation, originated a message which was transmitted over a channel to one or more listeners who then responded sending feedback to the speaker in the form of visual or verbal signals."⁵

I. Preliminaries

10 All of this introductory information leads us to the first "P", The Preliminaries. Within this first "P" we shall consider the elements of prayer, audience analysis, determination of the subject or text, determination of the purpose, and the composition of the thesis statement.

A. Prayer

11 The first “P” of the Preliminaries is prayer. Sermon preparation, like every other aspect of the pastor’s work, begins with prayer. Of ourselves we do not have the strength or the knowledge or the skill to start, continue, or conclude successfully such an important task as publicly proclaiming God’s Word to His people. So we pray. We pray for sufficient time to carry out this awesome task, for a thorough knowledge of our people and their spiritual needs, for the necessary enlightenment for a right understanding and proper application of Law and Gospel, and for the help to put forth our very best efforts so as to be the least hindrance to the Holy Spirit’s work.

B. Audience Analysis

12 Having finished our prayer, we set out to follow the first principle of successful oral communication: audience analysis. “Speech communication is a complex simultaneous interaction – mutual induction.”⁶ In other words, oral communication is always a two-way process. “The listener is always of equal importance to the speaker and makes an equally significant contribution to the successful sharing of material. Thus the listeners always and immediately exert a tremendous influence upon the speaker. In the past too little attention has been given to the listening part of this dual communication.”⁷

13 This, I feel, is a generic problem among pastors when it comes to writing their sermons. I have thought, “I am the pastor of this flock, my training in the seminary has made me both knowledgeable and skillful with regard to theology, the Word and sermon writing, I know my members and what they need.” Sitting at my keyboard, I begin to write a sermon, giving very little conscious thought to

those in the pew who will be listening to my sermon.

14 Any speech teacher worth his salt will certainly remind his students to analyze the audience as part of the preparation for a public speech. “What frequently is not clear – but should be – is the why of audience analysis. Any speaking with communicative intent is by definition designed to induce listeners to change their perceptions of some part of their concrete or abstract worlds. The question is not ‘How do I convey or transmit my perception of my world to my listeners?’ but ‘How do I induce the listener to alter his perceptions so that he will understand, feel, believe, and act as I have become convinced he should because, thereby, he or we will benefit?’ This is the essence of what textbooks term ‘audience adaptation.’”⁸

15 To many of us, those in the pews are often viewed only as a passive mass ‘out there’ at whom we direct our sermons. This a terrible misconception. “Listening is an active and influential process. Listening, when it takes place, is directed at speakers and speaking.”⁹ Thus a fascinating psychological interplay takes place between the listener and the speaker. “The student who can improve his understanding of this interplay – the complexities of motivation, perception, and behavior that comprise the communication process – will become a more effective communicator.”¹⁰

16 How do listeners perceive public speakers? What motivates anyone to listen to any public speech? What common behavior is likely from any group of listeners? These are good questions and have a direct bearing on our sermons and their preparation. Certain listener-related factors that influence reception of any spoken material have been identified. They are:

- ◆ speaker-image factors – how the listener sees the speaker

- ◆ listener-motivational factors – what motivates the listener to listen to the speaker
- ◆ environmental factors – those things in the environment that impact the listener's listening
- ◆ group-membership factors – those things about each individual in the group that impact his or her listening

The ordering of these groups is intentional and suggests important differences. "They range from the most changeable factors to those that are not likely to change in a speaking situation."¹¹

17 What "speaker-image factors," then, will be influencing our listeners? Any and every listener is looking for the same things in every speaker. They are:

- ◆ perceived friendship
- ◆ common ground
- ◆ authority
- ◆ trustworthiness
- ◆ the motivation of the speaker (purpose)
- ◆ the ability of the speaker (skills)
- ◆ the language of the speaker

From there we need to examine some of the seemingly irrelevant, but nonetheless potentially critical, listener-motivational factors such as:

- ◆ bodily comfort – are they comfortable?
- ◆ freedom from restraint – are they free to move?
- ◆ freedom from fatigue – are they rested?
- ◆ food – do they need food, has their hunger been satisfied?

- ◆ self-esteem – how do they feel about themselves?
- ◆ commitment – how do they feel about what is being said or done?
- ◆ values and their hierarchies – what values do they hold and what are their priorities?

In audience analysis, then, one of the critical questions becomes, “What compelling desire of both speaker and listener can be satisfied by listener agreement to attend to, to learn, to believe, to act as the speaker intends?”¹²

18 “Environmental factors” also influence the audience. Physical things that impact a listener are sound, acoustical difficulties, color, odor, design, distance from the speaker, size of room. As speakers, we do have some control over all of these things.

19 Even less crucial than the physical surroundings is the “group-membership factor.” This will include such variables as age, sex, race, education, occupation, avocation interests, socioeconomics, political affiliation, cultural background, and the like. While as speakers we cannot control these things, they remain fairly constant among those who are our regular listeners.

20 Just as you and I prefer our own thoughts on this subject or that question, our listeners prefer their own thoughts. “The speaker cannot assume audiences will give him attention just because they and he are in the same physical place. It is the psychological meeting place that counts. So, speakers must learn under what circumstances listeners can and cannot be brought to prefer what is being said to what they carry in their own mind. Each listener first grants attention to your presence; then he responds to whatever feelings your presence arouses in him; next, he transfers his attention, tentatively, to whatever communication is initiated. Thus far he will go voluntarily; what happens after depends on whether the commu-

nication keeps him interested and favorably disposed to its source."¹³

21 While our listeners have come to hear us voluntarily, they still accept as legitimate our attempts to influence them. "Except in the most unusual circumstances, the listeners remain 'free agents,' reserving the right and the power to accept or reject anything the speaker says, or even the speaker himself. The speaker does not inform or persuade listeners. No one can inform or persuade someone else. All the speaker can do is to supply the listeners with the informational and motivational means – the climate – that will enable them to teach or convince themselves. The only means the speaker has of influencing the listeners is through their own selves, by so impinging upon their immediate perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors that the speech touches off 'inner springs of response.' To speak effectively you must meet the listeners where they are. You must recognize as well as you can their starting point of knowledge, belief, understanding, feeling, and degree of commitment toward your position. To discover, and respond appropriately to, the nature of the audience's influence-readiness is perhaps your most important problem in speaking."¹⁴

22 In other words, who are those people out in the pews to whom we are going to publicly proclaim the Word, and what makes them tick? That's easy. Our audience is made up of visitors and members of the church, all of whom are sinners from birth. All of whom sin every day in thought, word and deed. All of whom deserve to be punished by God for their sins and sinfulness. All of whom deserve to go to hell for their sins. At the same time, though, God loves all these sinners out in the pews. God loved them so much that he sent His only begotten Son to take their place. Jesus took man's place in life under the law, obeying it completely for them, and then, taking all those sins to

himself, was punished by God for those sins. Jesus died for the sins of those in the pews. God for Christ's sake has forgiven those who sit in the pews. Some of those in the pews have been brought to faith in this good news, recorded in the Bible, either through the washing of Holy Baptism or through the preaching of the Word itself. These believers have a new man within them which can do that which is right and pleasing in God's sight. Our message to them, then, is one of Law and Gospel. Law that rebukes them, showing them their sins, and convicting them. Gospel that assures them of the forgiveness of their sins and that God is at peace with them for Jesus' sake. This same Gospel then becomes the motivating force in their lives. We strive to get those in the pews to love God and their fellow man and to serve the Lord with gladness because He first loved them.

23 So we know these people. We know them all too well. We know their needs, especially their spiritual needs. We know what makes their new man tick and we know that they always will need Law and Gospel and that the Gospel must predominate. We know that they believe the Bible to be God's Word and that what it says is the truth. They believe that we are God's representatives to them and that we have the authority from God to forgive them their sins and to give direction from the Word to their lives. In that respect we know our audiences because we know the nature of man and his spiritual needs.

C. Determine the Subject or Text

24 Having finished our audience analysis, we set out to follow the next principle of the Preliminaries, which is to Determine the Subject. Since the task is to publicly proclaim God's Word, our sermons must be Scriptural. To try to have one sermon cover all of the Bible would be

ludicrous. Therefore, each sermon covers only a piece of the Bible, that is, a "text." According to Gerlach and Balge "'Text' is a term denoting a sentence, verse, or portion of Scripture which by itself constitutes a complete unit of thought."¹⁵ It follows, then, that a Scriptural sermon will also be a textual sermon.

25 Most of us are familiar with Professors Gerlach and Balge's textbook for homiletics, *Preach The Gospel*. There they write, "The preacher is free from any ceremonial law which would require him to use a text or to follow any specific course of texts. But he must exercise his freedom in a way that will help him carry out his responsibility to feed the flock of God. Assuming that his responsibility implies the use of texts, there are several options available. You may follow the course of texts chosen according to the church year: the 'Ancient' gospels or epistles, a series developed by others with reference to the church year, or texts of your own choosing that relate to the church year. You may choose a book of the Bible and preach through it serially, with or without reference to the church year, for as long as it takes to do that. You may develop a series addressed to a doctrinal or practical need of the congregation, as you perceive that need and seek to apply the Word of God to that need. You may simply select a text, week by week, on the basis of predilection, in a more or less random fashion."¹⁶

26 Following this preliminary can be very easy. The pastor will use the Bible, concentrating on a portion thereof, and, following one of several pericopes, preach on the Old testament, Epistle, or Gospel reading for the appropriate Sunday or from a text of his own choosing.

27 Once you have determined the text, read that portion of Scripture in English. For the most part, the main point or subject of the text will be easily discernible. When confronted with the task of choosing a subject or determin-

ing which aspect of a more general topic to stress, one communications professor told his speech students to observe the following guidelines:

- ◆ Select a subject about which you already know something and can find out more.
- ◆ Select a subject that is interesting to you.
- ◆ Select a subject that will interest your audience.
- ◆ Select a subject you can discuss adequately in the time at your disposal.¹⁷

Another authority sets forth two additional pieces of advice. "A fifth determinant of your subject may well be the occasion with its inherent limitations. Lastly, subjects for speaking ought to challenge the audience and the speaker. Something ought to be gained by both. There ought to be 'news.'"¹⁸

28 Observing the aforementioned guidelines should be easy. We already know something about the subject identified in the text and, by reading through the various books shelved in our libraries, we certainly will find even more information for our sermon. That which is in the Bible is inherently interesting to both us and our members because we are Christians with a "new man." Through our research of the text and related subjects, we will have no difficulty finding enough material to fill up twenty minutes. Being biblical, the information will be challenging and contain "news" for those of all ages.

D. Determine the Purpose

29 The foregoing readies us for the next principle: determining the purpose of the particular sermon. While our purpose is to preach the Word, correctly applying Law and Gospel, there is more for us to consider with regard

to purpose. "Given a subject, you must decide what sort of response you may legitimately seek from the particular audience you will address. For example, you must determine whether to inform, conduct an inquiry, reinforce, persuade, or entertain."¹⁹ For our purposes, we will divide persuasive speeches into three types: those that convince, those that stimulate (reinforce or impress); and those that arouse action. "The speech 'to stimulate' is one in which the speaker assumes that the audience's attitudes are much like his own but that these attitudes need to be sharpened, to be made more immediate and important to the listeners."²⁰ Every persuasive speech aims at influencing the opinions and conduct of an audience. A subject may be treated in many ways; how you should treat it depends first of all on how you want your listeners to respond to it.

30 All of our sermons will be both informative and persuasive in purpose. We want our members to grow in their biblical knowledge, to become convinced of the truths they have learned, to be stimulated in their lives of sanctification, to have their faith strengthened, and to be comforted by the Gospel.

E. The Thesis Sentence

31 Having picked our text, being aware of the general subject thereof, and knowing that our message will convict, comfort and motivate our listeners, we are ready to follow the next principle in *The Preliminaries*: To render the subject area and the speaking purpose into an explicit sentence or thesis statement. Once again, I feel that this is a particular weakness among pastors. We pick the text, we do the necessary research, and then sit down to write the sermon, having little or no direction or structure or unity in mind for our words.

32 It is imperative that you formulate a clear purpose statement for every sermon you prepare. "To be an efficient guide for you and your listeners, your central idea or specific purpose must be expressed in a concise sentence that specifies two things:

- ◆ the kind of experience you intend your listeners to have, and
- ◆ the essential content you will put into the speech.

In short, you need a precise statement of (1) your aim and (2) the range of subject matter you intend to cover in order to know what speech to prepare. Listening is not an especially efficient way of acquiring ideas, and listeners need all the help they can get if they are to extract the right ideas from public speeches. Careful attention to formulating purpose statements for speeches is important, not because a textbook says so, but because speakers and listeners are human beings having the fault that they expend energies inefficiently if they lack the kind of guidance a clear sense of purpose can give."²¹

33 A good sermon will be unified; it will be governed by a single idea toward which all other ideas and materials in the sermon should point. This central idea can be indicated by a number of different labels, but for the sake of convenience we shall use only one and that is a very common one – thesis. The thesis should be stated as a single declarative sentence.

34 Prof. Herbert Carson, in his book *Steps in Successful Speaking*, asks, and then answers, the question that is now on your minds. "Compose a thesis sentence? But why should I undertake to express my entire subject in a single thesis sentence? Surely the magnitude of my subject cannot be stated fully in this way. Perhaps not. Nevertheless, the attempt to express the entire subject in a single, un-

complicated sentence will be of immense value in preparing your speech. The thesis sentence serves you more than it does your audience. It ensures that you know exactly what you want to do with your talk. The thesis sentence provides a brief, clear statement of what you intend to say and how you intend to say it. Disciplining yourself and your ideas by forcing yourself to write such a statement can be valuable. What is constructed as a thesis sentence may not appear in the speech. When you begin the task of compiling a talk, however, that sentence can serve as a guide. It can be a measuring device by which you judge the relevance and clarity of all developing details included in the talk. The thesis sentence is a brief simplification of what will be said in the speech. As a sentence, it may even be dull. Where you are going, your goal for the speech, will be stated in the thesis sentence. It will be easier to reach that goal if you begin by stating it, by writing it in a sentence."²²

35 The thesis sentence defines the subject being discussed. As a definition it classifies and differentiates the subject so accurately that the resulting statement cannot be applied to anything else; that is, the resulting statement is peculiar and distinctive. Constructing your thesis sentence is one of the most important steps in preparing your sermon. If you have not crystallized exactly what you plan to preach in one carefully thought out sentence, you may end up confusing yourself as well as your listeners.

36 For myself, I found this to be the most difficult task, and still do. If I don't have a good idea of what I am going to say in a sermon, how will I know what kind of materials to read or supporting evidence to find? If I am not sure of what I am going to write about, how can I expect the people to be sure about what I will say? Without a doubt, formulating a thesis sentence for every sermon will help you become a more effective speaker.

II. Planning

37 This done, we can turn our attention to the second "P"; The Planning. Under this second "P" we will follow the principles of gathering the materials, which includes reading, researching and taking notes on the subject, and the making of an outline, at least a preliminary one.

A. Gathering the Materials

38 The first step in this area is to gather materials for the sermon. You must now discover varied and interesting materials to clarify, to add detail to, or to prove and reinforce your thesis sentence. "Fortify yourself with an abundance of material, much more than you will have time to use in the speech. If this is done, you will be able to select from the supply the most effective illustrations, quotations, facts, comparisons, and statistics. The first means of securing materials is to think. Second, observe. Third, communicate with others. Draw upon the information, experience, and wisdom of persons who are knowledgeable on your topic. Fourth, read. Read selectively, objectively, analytically."²³ Accomplished speakers spare neither energy nor effort in persistently searching for ideas and information.

39 We certainly will have no problem gathering material for our sermons. The text itself may suggest parallel passages. Word studies in the original languages may be done. Comparing other translations will help. The Lutheran Confessions must not be ignored. Pieper, Walther, Luther, are good sources of materials. Be sure to include in your search a look in commentaries, concordances, Bible handbooks. Our personal libraries are full of books that when read can render additional materials for our sermons.

40 As these books are being read, notes taken, and vari-

ous thoughts composed, we are in the process of creating a sermon. In all the exploratory activities that our sermons impose upon us, we ought never to forget that the purpose of it all is to extract what is necessary in order to create a communication that will be our own, a message designed for a particular group of auditors gathered on a specific occasion at a given time. "One does not gather a speech together; he gathers raw materials out of which to mold a speech – a new and unique thing. Research for speech making ends, and is well finished whenever the raw materials for an original, informed communication on a significant subject have been assembled in the interests of the audience that will hear it."²⁴

41 One of the points that is stressed in college textbooks for oral communication and that I am sure is stressed in seminary homiletics classes is the whole subject of originality. Any public speech, to be "good", be it sermon or otherwise, requires originality. Herein lies another major weakness of our sermons: lack of originality. We speak the words of others as if they were our own. Or perhaps we will read for our sermon one prepared by another. To make someone else's sermon our own is often harder than writing our own. So the question of what constitutes originality is a basic one which must be explored and clarified. One scholar answers that question quite well when he writes, "Possibly after you have begun thinking over your subject and have begun collecting information, and certainly after you have completed your reading and note-taking, you need time to contemplate and brood over what you have been putting into your mind. The person who goes through such an experience (as just mentioned) will come out with an original speech, though he may not be the first one in the world ever to have talked or written on his specific subject. He will produce an original speech because, first, his product will differ from any one of his

sources. It will be a compound brewed from diverse ideas and materials. It will not be a copy of somebody else's product, nor will it be a weak imitation in the shape of a digest or summary. Second, it will be his peculiar reaction to the many sources of stimulation to which he exposed himself. It will reveal his individuality."²⁵

42 Along with originality, the materials that we use must be fresh. Originality refers to the fact that the material has our own stamp on it, while freshness refers to the fact that, while this information may have been forgotten, we have brought it back to the minds of our people with a new and different approach. Where cobwebs may have formed in the minds of our listeners concerning a particular subject, what we say and how we say it is designed to remove them. The materials that we select for the sermon will help make it our own. Putting this material in our own words will provide originality. Writing the sermon in, and then delivering it in, our own style can only result in an original product. It is our handling, that is, the selection and application, of the materials before us that gives us the opportunity for originality. Our thorough study of the materials and the systematic arrangement thereof is key to originality.

B. The Outline

43 This, then, brings us to the final part of the second "P": The making of our outline. To this point, you have thoughtfully chosen the subject and text, painstakingly gathered the necessary materials, consciously selected the purpose, and deliberately wrought the thesis sentence. Now you are ready to take another careful step toward a more effective sermon, that of making an outline. An outline is the most effective means of organizing your material. Good organization is essential to effective speak-

ing for three reasons: "It will allow you to say the most in the time that you have; it will permit your audience to follow you more easily and retain what you say; and it will minimize the risk of forgetting what you plan to cover."²⁶

44 The next step is to select a method of development to aid you in constructing your outline. Prof. Lawrence Mouat compares preparing a speech to building a house. "The basic elements are analogous in several respects. Deciding to make a speech with a specific purpose in mind is like deciding to build a house suited to your specific needs. Before you start building a house, however, and even before you start ordering your materials, you must prepare plans and specifications. You do not order concrete until you know you are going to use concrete and how much of it you are going to use. Similarly, before you start composing a speech, you must prepare a plan. Planning your speech, then, is the organization of your ideas – which you will later develop more fully into a logical pattern so that you will accomplish the specific purpose of your speech."²⁷

45 He continues, "No matter how successful an architect is, he doesn't dare to neglect his working papers and blueprints, even if he were to build the house entirely by himself.... You must do likewise. Not until you put your plan on paper are you sure you are doing what you want to do in order to accomplish your specific purpose.... The plan is the skeleton of your speech; the outline of your plan gives you a picture of this skeleton."²⁸

46 As in house building, so also in speech writing there are standard plans. According to almost any textbook on oral communication, the standard patterns commonly used in structuring ideas in speeches include:

- ◆ chronological - step by step or first, second, third, etc.
- ◆ spatial - right to left
- ◆ topical - a series of related topics
- ◆ ascending and descending orders - top to bottom or bottom to top
- ◆ causal - situation to cause to effect
- ◆ problem solving - problem to solution
- ◆ principle/application - theory to practice

47 The procedure for constructing an outline is very important. While there are many different ways to do it, I have found the following way to be most helpful. First, write your thesis statement, making sure that it is a complete and exact formulation of what you wish to say in the sermon. Second, write out your outline, stating your main points or parts in order. Be sure to use complete sentences and only one sentence for each point or part. State the sub-ideas or points under the main points or parts in order. Write them as complete sentences as well.

48 In order to achieve maximum effectiveness in the statement of your main points, keep in mind these characteristics of good phrasing: conciseness, vividness, and parallelism. State your main points as briefly as you can without distorting their meaning. A straightforward declaration is easy to grasp. Whenever possible, state the main points of your speech in attention-provoking words and phrases. Whenever possible, use a uniform type of sentence structure and similar phraseology in stating your main points.

49 Another woeful fault of sermons is their lack of structure, unity and coherence. Without some kind of outline before us, our thoughts can only be aimless and without point. Without some kind of outline our thoughts will be more or less random and haphazard. Arranging a list of random thoughts is essentially constructing an outline. If

you know pretty much what you want to say, then put that down in outline form.

50 In preparing our sermons, a major concern must be with organization, structure, arrangement – more or less synonymous terms for the control that we can produce by attention to the overall pattern. “Attention to organizational patterns does more than assist in the creation of the speech. It helps at the moment of presentation. Again there is no magic formula, and many factors are involved in the adjustment, but a speech that has coherent patterns of organization will be easier for you to recall, producing an additional pay-off at the time of delivery. Obviously we can err when preparing a speech, but if it seems to develop in coherent fashion for the speaker, the chances are good that it will make a similar impression on the audience. That is an important goal. Think of your own response as a listener; when you attend a lecture or some other public speech, don’t you find it easier to stay with the speaker when the speech progresses in a systematic manner? We generally respond more positively to speakers who appear to be in command of the speaking situation, and so there are broader implications in the fact that attention to structure can assist in the act of presentation.”²⁹

III. Preparation

51 With outline in hand, we now are ready to proceed to the third “P”: The Preparation. This entails the actual writing of the sermon that is to be delivered. Every sermon, like any public speech, will have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It doesn’t take a genius to know that the body of the sermon will be the longest, the conclusion the shortest and that the length of the introduction will vary depending upon the circumstances.

A. The Body

52 You are seated at your computer, fingers poised over the keyboard, or you are at your desk, with pen or pencil in hand, ready to begin the actual composition of the sermon. You know what you want to say and you have the research available with which to say it. The actual composition of the sermon is just one more crucial step in the whole process. It is the careful development of your organized ideas with your selected materials into a smooth, finished product.

53 There are many methods by which we can clarify or amplify our thesis sentence.

They are:

- ◆ comparisons and contrasts
- ◆ definitions and descriptions
- ◆ examples and explanations
- ◆ exclamations and questions
- ◆ narration - anecdotes, fables, stories, parables
- ◆ quotations and testimony
- ◆ repetition and restatement
- ◆ figurative language - similes, metaphors, analogy
- ◆ statistics - facts and figures
- ◆ humor

54 All the while you are writing the sermon, watching carefully your structure, patterns of thought, and language, you must also make sure that you have elements of interest. The factors to keep in mind are those basic desires which influence and motivate people. Include details which are:

- ◆ specific
- ◆ vivid

- ◆ familiar
- ◆ unusual
- ◆ humorous
- ◆ controversial

55 Such details give a sermon vitality. It is one thing to establish or develop the ideas of a sermon. It is quite another thing to select only that material which will hold the attention of your listeners. People pay attention to things that interest them. What, then makes for interest? "1. There is interest in the unusual. 2. There is interest in the exciting. 3. There is interest in the personal."³⁰

56 To be effective in developing the body of the sermon the main points must be explained, clarified, and made interesting. To help maintain attention, "plan your supporting materials so that they utilize proximity (your material has personalized meaning to the listener), vivid concreteness (your language evokes images in the minds of your listeners), significance (your language deals with genuine important matters or with appeals to significant human wants), variety (your discussion has diversity in kinds of supporting materials, motive appeals, imagery, and so on), and perhaps humor (your attempts to amuse possess freshness, relevance, and appropriateness)."³¹

57 At this point, you have completed the body of the sermon. Some speech professors prefer the body of the speech to be written before both the introduction and the conclusion. I have not found that way conducive to my best sermon writing. However you choose to write your sermons, there is a wealth of insight available for the successful composition of introductions and conclusions.

B. Introductions

58 We now turn our attention to the preparation of the

introduction. Do not lag at this point. Do not think, because you have worked hard to produce a well-organized compilation of materials, that your introduction can be prepared casually. "Every speech, whether long or short, must have a beginning and an end. Too often speakers devote all their time to choosing and arranging the main ideas of a talk and do not plan to open and close it effectively. Admittedly, the development of the main points deserves the major share of your preparation time and must be worked out before you can sensibly plan how to introduce and conclude your remarks. But it is foolish to leave the introduction and conclusion to the inspiration of the moment, for all too frequently the result is a dull or hesitant beginning and a weak or indefinite ending. The impact of your speech always will be greater if you plan in advance how to direct your listener's attention to your subject at the outset and how to tie your ideas together in a firm and vigorous conclusion."³²

59 The attention of the audience must be maintained throughout a sermon, but capturing this attention is your principal task at the beginning. Unless people are ready to attend to what you have to say, the most interesting and useful information and the most persuasive appeals will be wasted. "A good introduction, then, should accomplish at least three things: (1) it should gain attention; (2) it should secure good will and respect for you as a speaker; and (3) it should prepare the audience for the discussion that is to follow. To help gain these ends, there are a number of well-established means for developing the introduction of a speech, including:

- ◆ Referring to the subject or occasion
- ◆ Using a personal reference or greeting
- ◆ Asking a rhetorical question
- ◆ Making a startling statement of fact or opinion

- ◆ Using a quotation
- ◆ Telling a humorous anecdote
- ◆ Using an illustration.”³³

60 How long should the introduction be? “The appropriate length of the introduction varies considerably, depending upon the circumstances involved; however, a serviceable estimation of the length of the typical introduction is about 10% of the entire speech. The substance of the introduction likewise depends upon the total situation; in general, the introduction serves as a bridge between the initial reaction of the listeners and the speaker’s major ideas.”³⁴

61 But, alas, some of our introductions do fail to get the job done. With an ever increasing awareness, we must try to avoid the common faults of introductions. “There are three faults to which introductions are particularly liable: inappropriate length, lack of interest and lack of warmth. Avoid long introductions. Get to your point as soon as reasonably possible. Avoid an introduction that is long, dull, and cold. Seek instead a brief, interesting and pleasant opening.”³⁵

C. Conclusions

62 The introduction and the body of the sermon complete, we are now ready to construct an impressive conclusion. In the conclusion we must establish a sense of finality. We must let the audience know that we have completed our remarks. We do this by restressing the theme and its parts.

63 Conclusions are to be short and sweet. “When concluding the speech, avoid the same faults that plague many introductions: long, dull, unfriendly. Be brief in concluding, even while maintaining interest and personal

warmth.”³⁶

64 How short is short? “The nature and length of the conclusion depend upon the circumstances involved. In general, the length of the conclusion may be about 5% – or somewhat more – of the total speech length, and the functions of the typical conclusion are to crystallize the thought of the speech, and promote the proper mood.”³⁷

IV. Practice

65 Now we are ready for the fourth and final “P”: Practice. Practice involves what method of delivery to choose, the elements of style, and the importance of rehearsal.

A. Method of Delivery

66 You have written out your entire sermon. Your manuscript has been typed into the computer or written on paper. Perhaps you wrote out your sermon manuscript in long hand. Now it is time to think about your delivery. In thinking about one’s delivery, we should go back to keeping in mind our listeners. What do they want from us? Nothing more than what we would want if we were in their shoes. “Listeners want a speaker to be spirited and forceful. They want him to be obviously eager to share his ideas with them. Perhaps this concept is covered best by the terms – animation and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the catalog of similar terms is extensive, including pep, vitality, life, sparkle, vigor, freshness, and buoyancy. Such qualities are attractive to the typical auditor and, therefore, he tends to respond positively to them. In contrast, negative qualities in the speaker, such as weakness, flatness, and dullness, are unattractive to the average listener, who will react apathetically to the speaker. To be a dynamic speaker, you must be a vital, alert person with an

absorbing interest in your subject, a sympathetic awareness of your audience, and a keen eagerness to communicate your message to your particular audience."³⁸ We can all become better in this area as we become more skillful at using and applying the basic principles of successful oral communication.

67 Now we are ready to determine what mode of delivery we will use for our sermon. Shall we memorize it word for word, or shall we read from the manuscript, or shall we speak extemporaneously? In the first mode of delivery mentioned, the sermon is written out word for word and committed to memory. In the next mode of delivery, the manuscript will be read word for word. In the final mode of delivery, while the sermon has been written, either word for word or in detailed outline form, the words spoken, which may differ from those that were written, convey the main thoughts and ideas of the sermon. "A proper use of this method will produce a speech which is nearly as polished as a memorized one and certainly more vigorous, flexible and spontaneous."³⁹

68 In this connection, should you memorize your sermon? If the word memorize means to you verbatim recall, the answer is no. You should aim to stamp in, to assimilate, a sequence of ideas. What you memorize is a pattern of thought. What you should avoid is any attempt to memorize words, deliberately and consciously. If you try to memorize by rote, your attention is on remembering language and not on the ideas carried by language. Know the outline of your sermon so thoroughly that it has become a part of you. If your sermon is really an essay, mail copies to the members and stay home. If your sermon requires a boring vocal delivery, send each family a tape recording and do not bother to enter the pulpit. "The power of a speech lies first in the thorough preparation and second in the living presence of a capable and

vital speaker.”⁴⁰

B. Style

69 In thinking about delivery one needs to think about something called style. Your style is your manner of expressing yourself. It is what gives your sermon character and personality. Just as we made a conscious choice in the selection, arrangement and development of our thoughts both for the outline and in the composition of the sermon, so we make conscious choices in the selection and arrangement of words to express our thoughts. I bring style up at this point because I feel it fits better with a discussion of what we say rather than what we write. When we speak extemporaneously, what we say, at times, will be different than what we have written.

70 We must choose our words carefully. The man who tells the hardware clerk that he broke the do-hickey on his what-cha-ma-call-it and needs a thing-ma-jig to fix it has expressed his meaning rather vaguely. The characteristics of good style are accuracy, clarity, simplicity, propriety, economy, force, a striking quality, and liveliness. “No matter how accurately a word or phrase may express your meaning it is useless if the audience cannot understand it. For this reason, expression not only must be exact, but also be clear and simple. Never use a longer word or less familiar word when a simpler one will do. Use short words; use simple words; use words that are concrete and specific; use words with meanings that are immediately obvious.”⁴¹ A glaring fault in many sermons is the use of too many words. “By economy we mean the right choice of words, in the right amount and best order for language intelligibility. We mean economy of the listener’s attention.”⁴² Some pastors become fond of complicated and unfamiliar words. Avoid a mouthful of un-

usual words which can confuse and – worse yet – lose your hearers. “Besides being accurate and clear, your language should be appropriate to the subject on which you are speaking and to the situation in which your speech is delivered.”⁴³

71 We now return to an explanation of the other characteristics of good style. “Force: A good speaking style has drive, urgency, and excitement. It compels the listener to pay attention through its strength as it propels ideas forward. Striking quality in speeches comes from the ability of the speaker to combine words in euphonious combinations, his ability to give poetic turns to wordings yet keep them prose, and his ability to paint word pictures which stir the listener’s emotions. Force, economy and striking quality contribute to liveliness in oral communication. Liveliness, then, comes from animation, conflict, actuality, suspense, and proximity. It comes from the use of present tense and active voice. It comes from economy in wording, more simple rather than complex structuring, from vividness in imagery, and from any other resource of language that sets moving images before the minds of the listeners.”⁴⁴

72 In looking back on what we have said concerning the nature and characteristics of style, you may be moved to say, “That is all very well, but what can I do to meet the demands for sound management of language in speaking? What sort of program for long-range improvement should I follow? We advise you to:

- ◆ Become language conscious. Sensitize yourself to good and bad uses of words. Discover your faults in grammar and those points of style where you seem to be the most limited. Ferret out such weaknesses as want of vividness, poor syntax, use of cliches. Listen carefully. Read widely.
- ◆ Increase your speaking vocabulary. Make conscious

efforts to extend the number of words and phrasings at your command. Reading will help. So will writing.

- ◆ Write. By expressing yourself on paper you will learn to make conscious word choices. Writing will increase your vocabulary and the accuracy with which you use words.
- ◆ Rewrite.⁷⁴⁵

C. Oral Rehearsal

73 This brings us to the next and final part of the fourth “P”: Rehearsal. Hours have gone into reading and research and much effort has been put into formulating the outline as well as writing the sermon. It is at this point in the whole process that we are prone to hinder the Spirit’s work in yet another way. Our sermons will be mediocre at best if we do not take the easiest step of all – that of practicing the delivery of the sermon. This is one more place where we can improve in our sermon preparation.

74 You have heard the old adage, “Practice makes perfect.” Well, our sermons and their delivery will never be perfect this side of heaven, but there is much that can be improved. To be good at anything requires practice and lots of it. For this to happen, we must have our sermons written far enough in advance of the service to give adequate rehearsal time. Only through rehearsal will we gain the familiarity with the ideas and materials necessary to enable us to deliver the sermon in a clear, interesting and impelling manner.

75 When publicly proclaiming the Word, our task is to stir our listeners to thought, not to invite them to remember our pitch, loudness, rate and gesture. Our sermons are not performances, and we cannot afford to let our listen-

ers regard us as performers. “If nobody notices delivery, it is good; if delivery is talked about, whether in praise or in censure, it is to some extent deficient.”⁴⁶

76 Just as there is a difference in sermons as to content, so there is a major difference in delivery. There is good delivery and, then, there is delivery that is not so good. “When delivery is good, listeners will often describe the dominant quality of the delivery as spontaneity. They may know or suspect that the speaker had prepared, but it doesn’t sound as if he had. Voice and gesture do not show signs of artificial manipulation.”⁴⁷

77 What happens when you speak in everyday life? You get an idea and you say it. You don’t get an idea, carefully frame a sentence that is grammatically correct and beautifully balanced, and then speak. You don’t decide that a particular sentence requires a downward inflection of the voice, or that you must pause at one place longer than you do at another place. Not at all. You get an idea and you start talking. “You think as you speak; and the vocal inflections and gymnastics are at one with your thought. Utterance, accordingly, is genuine and spontaneous.”⁴⁸

78 Tried and true methods exist on how to be a more spontaneous speaker. Rehearse aloud. Reading over your outline or manuscript a dozen times is not so beneficial as speaking two or three times. There is sound advice in the three old rules for public speaking: practice, practice, practice. Do not rehearse until you have finished your sermon manuscript or outline, for not until then is your sequence of ideas clear and complete. Use the rehearsal to:

- ◆ Get acquainted with the general pattern of ideas.
- ◆ Polish the details.
- ◆ Practice transitions.

79 Good delivery helps the listener to concentrate upon what is being said; it does not attract attention to itself. "Delivery should be viewed as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. During public speaking the message is the most important thing to be exhibited. It is more important than you are. You should be direct. Look the audience in the eye. If you look at the audience they will look back at you. You should punctuate and support your ideas with your body and your voice. In speech making, gestures, pitch changes, variations in vocal rate and volume, pauses, shifts on posture, and walking take the place of the commas, italics, exclamation points, and question marks in written communication. You should focus the attention of the audience. It is not enough merely to gain attention at the outset of a speech; you must maintain it by constantly directing attention to the stimuli playing the most important roles in stirring up meanings in each moment of discourse. You are remiss if you allow your audience to wander."⁴⁹

80 Good delivery includes eye contact. Eye contact here referring not to a fixed gaze just above the heads of the listeners or at a point on the back wall, but rather to a looking directly at the faces of the people; now at one, then at another. "The importance of eye contact as a specific factor was established in a study by John Willis in 1961. He found that speakers who were rated as sincere looked at the audience an average of 63.4 per cent of the time, while those who were rated as insincere maintained eye contact only 20.8 per cent of the time. You will hear all kinds of advice about how to maintain good eye contact, but the only way it can really be done is to look people in the eye. When you are facing your audience, look directly at each person; as soon as the person you are looking at returns your glance, move on to the next one. Don't focus over the tops of people's heads or stare off into space.

The audience may admire your firm jawline, but your far away gaze won't make them feel that you are really in touch with them. Remember you are talking to people, not just projecting your voice into the room."⁵⁰

81 If you are looking at your audience and seeing them, you may be aware that your listeners are looking at you rather than shifting their eyes restlessly about, or fixing them on the pages of a covertly placed book or some other reading material. You may discover that their faces are alive with interest, and no longer bear that stoney mask of polite attention. Or a frown, a grin, a nod or shake of the head, may be the sign telling you that some idea has struck its mark.

82 There are many things that distract from our sermons. From our experience in conversation, we can point to things which divert us as listeners from the message being spoken. They may be some:

- ◆ unusual features of dress or face which momentarily command attention
- ◆ mannerism of posture, movement, or gesture
- ◆ bothersome trait of speech, such as long pauses, frequent pauses, rapidity of utterance, indistinctness of speech, novel pronunciations, "Uhs" and "ers"
- ◆ sign of indirect communication, such as dullness of tone, immobility of face or body, averted eyes
- ◆ quality of voice or gesture which we interpret as insincerity or lack of interest in us
- ◆ unrecognizable word or phrase

83 Good delivery also includes a good speaking voice. A good speaking voice will be (1) pleasant to listen to, (2) communicating the speaker's ideas easily and clearly, and (3) capable of expressing the fine shades of feeling and emotion which reveal the speaker's attitude toward self,

subject, and listeners. “Technically, we refer to these three properties as quality, intelligibility and variety. The intelligibility or understandability of your speech normally depends upon five separate but related factors: (1) the overall level of loudness at which you speak, (2) the duration of sounds within the syllables you utter, (3) the distinctness with which you articulate words and syllables, (4) the standard of pronunciation you observe, and (5) the vocal stress you give a syllable, word or phrase.”⁵¹ Other elements of a good speaking voice are:

- ◆ pause – the momentary hesitation after a word or phrase
- ◆ rhythmic expression (phrasing and blending) – the way a group of words is put together.
- ◆ pitch – the highness or lowness of the sounds
- ◆ tone – the emotional attitude conveyed by the speaker

“Speaking too quickly can mar intelligibility, and speaking too slowly can decrease impact. Maintaining the same rate for an entire speech, can result in a monotonous delivery. Speaking loudly enough is not sufficient. You must speak loudly enough to be heard easily.”⁵²

84 A person who uses variety in speaking will be close to achieving animation, to being vital. Yet some pastors who seem to understand all the vocal techniques never come alive. They lack the final spark that can set fire to their listeners. “Animation and vitality are related not only to voice but also to movement and gesture. In most cases, if you have control of the various techniques discussed so far, and if your thorough preparation has given you confidence, and if you are sincerely interested in your subject, you are well on your way to being an animated speaker. Choose a topic about which you can be enthusiastic. Vo-

cally express your enthusiasm. The audience will then empathize with you and your enthusiasm. These vocal goals should be worked toward by the speaker. Speaking loudly enough and clearly enough are not sufficient. You must be aware of the need for consciously selected emphasis, for meaningful variety, and for an animated and vital manner. If you can even partially accomplish all these goals, you should be an effective speaker."⁵³

85 The effectiveness of your speaking depends both on what you say and on how you say it.

- ◆ Without solid content, you will not have anything worth communicating.
- ◆ Without effective delivery, you cannot transmit your thoughts clearly and vividly to others.

Just as a pitcher, with the placement of his fingers on the ball, can throw a fastball, curve or changeup, so you can give your speech strength and vitality by the manner of your delivery. Since our listeners both see and hear us, consideration of delivery involves two elements: the use of our voice and our physical behavior in the pulpit.

86 Ideas prompt not only speech but gesture as well. But gesture cannot aid communication unless the body is free to respond to the idea. "Hence, poise is necessary if the speaker is to gesture spontaneously. Basically, poise simply describes behavior that is efficient; it is movement that fits a particular situation with economy and without obtrusiveness; it is, in brief, activity which is fully adaptive. Like good speech, poise in behavior is never noticed. Like poor speech, behavior without poise is conspicuous because of its inadequacies; it may be random, needlessly repetitious, gratuitous, or awkward. Good platform behavior, accordingly, is bodily activity that fits the communicative situation."⁵⁴

87 There are two main reasons for the use of bodily action:

- ◆ Be selfish – help yourself to feel relaxed physically and aid your own process of communication
- ◆ Be selfless – help your listeners by providing them with a point of focus and by giving them a visual indication of your ideas

88 Gestures are needed to clarify or to emphasize the ideas in our sermons. By gestures I mean purposeful movements of some part of the body – head, shoulders, arms, or hands – to reinforce or demonstrate what is said. Although you can perfect your gestures through practice, you will obtain better results if, as you practice, you keep three characteristics of good gestures in mind:

- ◆ relaxation
- ◆ vigor and definiteness
- ◆ proper timing

“Avoid stiffness. Good gestures are alive and vigorous. Put enough force into them to make them convincing. Poor timing is often the result of an attempt to use ‘canned’ or preplanned gestures.”⁵⁵

89 Just as gestures are important to good delivery, so also is one’s posture. Are you erect? comfortable? alert? Does your position seem natural, or does it call attention to itself because it is awkward or unusual? Give the impression that you are awake and “on your toes.” The eye instinctively follows a moving object and focuses upon it. We can often awaken a sleepy group of worshippers by simply moving about in the pulpit. As long as your movement is natural, easy, and purposeful, it will help you hold attention, maintain interest, and convey your thoughts

more clearly.

90 Good delivery is the product of rehearsal. I do not believe that any pastor can present his sermon, short or long, with maximum effectiveness without rehearsal. Professional speakers have “built-in” rehearsals, as they give the same speech over and over again. We pastors do not have this advantage. Each worship service brings with it a new sermon. By taking the time to orally rehearse before every sermon, we can, however, reduce the likelihood of disconcerting breaks in our thinking, improve the clarity and accuracy of our statements, smooth out our delivery, acquire more self-confidence, and put more vigor into our messages.

91 Oral rehearsal is nothing more than insurance. “It is control over content that contributes most to control over self; both kinds of control are established and enhanced in oral rehearsal. Listening is an integral part of the public speaking experience. That any but haphazard listening takes place is the product of deliberate and organized effort.”⁵⁶

D. Prayer

92 The work of preparing the sermon for the next worship service is now over. All that remains, before one tucks himself into bed the night before the service or before the people start to arrive for the service, is to say one last prayer, a prayer of thanksgiving, as well as a prayer for power. First of all, we will want to thank the Lord for giving us the time, the energy, the enlightenment, and the motivation for producing a Bible-based message for public proclamation. Then, we want to ask the Lord to bless our efforts. Finally, we will pray that, as the Spirit speaks through us and our words the Gospel may “have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ’s

holy people.”

93 Before this paper draws to its conclusion, one last point needs to be made. *“If you want to improve in effectiveness as a speaker, you must be willing to face the fact that there is no easy way to bring it off except by working at it. Almost everyone who faces a speaking situation cares about doing it well, but many speakers seem unwilling to make changes or follow advice for improvement except on their own terms.”*⁵⁷ Our sermons can all stand improvement. That improvement can and will come when we follow the basic principles of successful oral communication.

Conclusion

94 These principles of successful oral communication were grouped under four major headings entitled, “The Four ‘P’s”. Under the first “P”: The Preliminaries, we began with prayer, gave some thought to our members and their needs (audience analysis determined the subject or text), determined the purpose (to inform and to motivate), and formulated in a simple yet precise manner a thesis statement.

95 Only after completing the first “P” did we proceed to the second “P”: The Planning. In this stage, we followed the basic principles of gathering, reading and researching the materials. Before any research, or at least in the early reading and research, an outline is necessary. Before proceeding to write the sermon, however, the full and complete outline must be written.

96 The preliminaries over, the planning completed, we followed the principles of the third “P”: The Preparation, which is the actual writing of the sermon. While some may be able to write the sermon from start to finish, in-

roduction to conclusion, it may be helpful to write the body first and then carefully construct both the introduction and the conclusion.

97 With three "P's" behind us we proceeded to the fourth "P": The Practice. Any practice must incorporate the basic principles of good style, good delivery and oral rehearsal, keeping in mind the importance of the speaking voice, gestures and posture.

98 By following these basic principles of successful oral communication, we can Put More Power Into the Public Proclamation of the Word by being less of a hindrance to the Holy Spirit. May God bless our efforts to become more effective preachers.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Endnotes

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⁷ Thomas Lewis, *Speaking and Listening*, p. 23.

⁸ Holtzman, 14.

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¹⁵ Gerlach, Joel and Richard Balge, *Preach the Gospel*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982) 15.

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²⁰ Walter, Otis and Robert Scott. *Thinking And Speaking. A Guide To Intelligent Oral Communication*, (Chicago: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Inc., 1975) 24.

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²² Carson, Herbert. *Steps In Successful Speaking*, (Princeton, New Jersey: D. VanNorstrand Co., 1967) 69.

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²⁹ Vohs, John and G.P. Mohrmann. *Audiences, Messages, Speakers. An Introduction To Human Communication*, (Chicago: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Inc., 1975) 80.

³⁰ Mouat, 28.

³¹ White, 13.

³² Monroe, 183.

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³⁴ White, 232.

³⁵ Carson, 122.

³⁶ Carson, 127.

³⁷ White, 280.

³⁸ White, 24ff.

³⁹ Monroe, 35.

- ⁴⁰ Carson, 151.
⁴¹ Monroe, 164.

⁴² Wilson, 269.

⁴³ Carson, 151.

⁴⁴ Wilson, 270-274.

⁴⁵ Wilson, 280.

⁴⁶ Bryant, 132.

⁴⁷ Bryant, 132.

⁴⁸ Bryant, 132.

⁴⁹ Wilson, 292.

⁵⁰ Hasling, 86.

⁵¹ Monroe, 82.

⁵² White, 69.

⁵³ Carson, 178.

⁵⁴ Bryant, 140.

⁵⁵ Monroe, 73.

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ELCA – *Quo Vadis?*

by Juul Madson

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is a recent amalgamation of several Lutheran church bodies, one branch of which, the ALC, traces some of its American heritage back to the same roots as does the ELS. Because of the association that once existed between our forebears and some of theirs, ELS members may have more than a passing interest in events taking place in what was once the NLCA, then ELC, then ALC, and now ELCA. That the gulf between the two branches has widened appreciably in recent years is highlighted especially in the historic ecumenical decisions reached by the ELCA assembly of last summer in the City of Brotherly Love.

The first decision there in the realm of the doctrine of Justification paves the way for a return to the Roman Catholic Church. The sixteenth century Lutheran Reformation registered a break from the Roman Catholic Church primarily because of an irreconcilable difference in the doctrine of justification, the article by which the church of God stands or falls. But in a vote of 958-25 the assembly in Philadelphia last year declared that the strictures of the Reformation against this doctrine of Rome no longer apply. This in spite of the fact that the Roman Church has not departed from its own censure of the Lutheran position, a censure officially set forth in damning terms in the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*. Nor does the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* support the suggestion of change for the better when it defines justification in these terms: "Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of

the inner man.”

Perhaps more appealing to a great many ELCA members was the approval, by a vote of 839-193, of “full communion” with three Reformed churches: the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church (USA), despite the fact that these churches deny the real presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar and deny to the Sacraments the right and the honor of being called Means of Grace. Though the decision of full communion does not propose any sort of merger of the churches involved, and calls for further implementation, the declaration tarnishes even more seriously the right of the ELCA to be called truly Lutheran.

The fact that the same assembly rejected a motion to extend the hand of fellowship to the Episcopal Church is not to be construed as an omen of hope for stemming the tide of “ecumania.” The rejection of this proposed agreement by only a narrow margin, and mostly for other than truly doctrinal reasons, should serve to remind us of the need for our renewed concern for continued faithfulness to the Word of God in both doctrine and life.

Conclusion

There surely remains a remnant of God’s people within even unionistic and heterodox church bodies who are not pleased with—and often very troubled by—such developments as those above that eat away at the vitals of Christ’s church and threaten to obscure the true Gospel beyond recognition. Therefore we have additional reason to hold firmly to, and to defend with all the grace and knowledge our Lord places at our disposal, the true heritage of the Lutheran Reformation, that the remnant may be helped to see that this option is there also for them.

Let us continue to appreciate the words with which Dr. Franz Pieper is reported to have frequently impressed upon his seminary students the message of their future ministry: “Machet hoch die allgemeine Rechtfertigung! (Hold high the [doctrine of] general—or objective—justification.)”

Book Review:

Justification and Rome

by Wilhelm W. Petersen

Robert David Preus, *Justification and Rome*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997. 141 pages.

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Justification and Rome is the last work from the pen of Dr. Robert Preus. He finished this book shortly before his death on November 4, 1995. It is certainly a timely book, since the 1997 Church Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) voted 958-25 to adopt a "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" which states that the differences in the doctrine of justification between Catholics and Lutherans are no longer a cause for division and that the condemnations of the 16th century concerning the Lutheran doctrine of justification no longer apply to present Roman Catholic teaching on this topic. In other words, a consensus between the Lutherans and Catholics has been achieved!

The Foreword, written by sons Daniel and Rolf Preus, sums up the timeliness of this book: "When it appears to many that convergence has occurred between Rome and the Lutheran Church on the meaning of the Gospel, the church needs a candid and competent analysis of the situation. This study does more than simply restate the respective positions of the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church of the 16th century when the polemical theological context yielded a clarity of doctrinal

presentation on both sides. It also examines the pertinent materials of our generation on the same issues when the desire for consensus has led to language designed to obfuscate the doctrinal difference. Preus cuts through such obfuscation, explains clearly where Lutherans and Roman Catholics have equivocated, and, in the process, presents to the reader a succinct and honest evaluation of the current Roman doctrine of justification.”

In his Introduction, Dr. Preus adds that “the most important and vexing issue which has confronted Lutheran and Roman Catholic relations and discussion since the time of the Reformation is the doctrine of justification. It remains the major controversy separating western Christendom for over four and a half centuries.” He goes on to say that “any attempt at rapprochement between Lutheran churches and Rome might well begin with a serious attempt to find consensus on the article of justification. Second, to establish true and meaningful consensus on the doctrine of justification will involve serious study of the topics of sin, Law, Gospel, redemption, repentance, church, Sacraments, eschatology, and all the articles of faith which are integral to and interrelated with the entire body of doctrine.” But Preus correctly observes “that after all the many Lutheran/Roman Catholic negotiations and dialogues, the controversy has not been settled, at least not in the sense of unequivocal meaning being attached to the key words making up the doctrine of justification. But there has been a settlement of a different kind. The settlement is an amalgam of the old Lutheran and Roman Catholic definitions, or rather, a pasting together of the two disparate sets of definitions – sort of like a treaty. Neither side gives up its set of definitions and meanings. The treaty provides that the Lutheran and the Roman Catholic will no longer battle over words, meanings, and definitions, but each will keep his own.

And this is the agreement, the settlement, the consensus. After four and a half centuries the two church bodies have debated and conversed and fought to a draw. Neither side wins over the other or loses to the other.”

The stated purpose of this timely book is “to diagnose as precisely as possible the historic *status controversiae* between Rome and the Church of the Augsburg Confession on every substantive aspect of the doctrine of justification.” It also ventures to evaluate some of the various efforts of Lutherans and Roman Catholics to reconcile their differences and achieve consensus or “convergence” on the doctrine. And this Preus does in masterful fashion.

The two primary sources that Preus uses are the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* and the *Book of Concord*. He also draws on *Examination of the Council of Trent* and *Loci Theologici* by Martin Chemnitz. In addition, he examines current selected documents, such as the *Catholic Catechism*, published in 1991; *The Condemnations of the Reformed Era: Do They Still Divide?* edited by Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg; *Justification by Faith, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII*, edited by T. Austin Murphy and Joseph Burgess; *On Justification, Document No. 3, Fourth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation*, July 30-August 12, 1963, Helsinki, Finland; *Outmoded Condemnation? Antitheses between the Council of Trent and the Reformation on Justification, the Sacrament, and the Ministry – Then and Now*, the Faculty of Theology, Georgia Augusta University, Göttingen. A thorough analysis of these pertinent documents shows that Preus has done his homework.

Interestingly, Preus points out the sad fact that a consensus of justification does not exist among Lutherans. The 1963 Lutheran World Federation meeting at Helsinki proved this sorry fact. This reviewer recalls an article in

Time magazine at the time of the Helsinki meeting in which the author expressed amazement that the Lutherans could not even agree on the heart and center of Lutheran theology. After Helsinki no effort was mounted to regain consensus.

Preus opines “that the Lutheran churches’ inability to find consensus on the article of justification and the relative indifference of the churches belonging to the LWF to follow up on the matter indicated to Rome—and to the Lutheran churches themselves—that future efforts at rapprochement with Rome could be carried out on the basis of minimal doctrinal agreement, or even agreement to disagree. After all, if the Lutheran churches belonging to the LWF could not find consensus among themselves, they could scarcely be expected to find consensus with the Roman Catholic Church as they negotiated toward mutual recognition and church fellowship. Modern efforts to reach mutual recognition and fellowship with Rome on the basis of meaningful consensus were doomed from the start, at least from the side of the Lutherans in the LWF.”

The tragic result of this persisting identity crisis and doctrinal drift among the Lutheran churches is, in their conversations with Rome, the *Joint Declaration* and its proclamation that “a basic consensus between Lutheran and Roman Catholics exists regarding the faith content of the doctrine of justification.” Whatever differences remain are “compatible with each other.”

Another observation Preus makes is that, beginning with Helsinki, the biblical basis for the doctrine of justification has been passed by in all the studies and dialogues on justification. This is ironic in light of the fact that *Justification by Faith* and *Condemnations of the Reformed Era* and *Joint Declaration* all stressed breakthroughs and new insights resulting from the use of the historical-criti-

cal method among many Roman Catholic theologians and among even more of the Lutherans. This has made a strong impact upon the way in which the conversations concerning justification have turned. If the historical-critical method has demonstrated that there is no theological unity in the New Testament, then the many admonitions in the New Testament to teach the pure doctrine cannot be applied. If there is no unity of doctrine in the Scriptures, there can be no unity of doctrine in the church, which bases her doctrine on the Scriptures; and all the striving and struggles for unity of doctrine in the past have been unachievable and hopeless quests. Such a state of affairs understandably affected the Lutheran/Roman Catholic efforts toward consensus.

We also need to remember that the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546 pronounced an official curse on the Lutheran doctrine of justification, a curse that stands to this day. This anathema reads as follows: "If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is inherent in them; or even that grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God; let him be anathema." In other words "let that person be accursed who believes that he is saved by grace alone through faith in Christ." Rome went for the Lutheran jugular in that official condemnation.

Justification and Rome consists of fourteen chapters: 1. The Centrality of the Doctrine of Justification and its Hermeneutical Role 2. Recent Dialogues between Lutherans and Roman Catholics on the Doctrine of Justification 3. The Basic Structure of the Article of Justification 4. The Context of the Doctrine of Justification 5. Sin 6. The Bondage of the Will 7. Repentance 8. Grace

9. Justification, *Propter Christum*, and the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness 10. Faith, Justifying Faith, and Faith Alone 11. The Object of Justifying Faith 12. Faith's Part in Justification 13. Justification by Faith Alone, and 14. Conclusion: Some Necessary Comments. Preus touches all the bases.

All of these chapters are excellent, but chapter nine is especially revealing. Preus correctly observes that "the reality of Christ's righteousness is at the very heart of the Lutheran doctrine of justification." Quoting from Luther's commentary on Galatians, he shows how masterfully Luther brings two closely related motifs together, namely Christ's imputed righteousness and His "blessed exchange" with us whereby He took upon Himself our personal sins and gave to us His personal innocence and victory. Preus shows that the doctrine of imputed righteousness is repudiated by Rome. (Trent, Ses. VI, canon 10) This doctrine does not fit Rome's doctrine of infused grace, infused righteousness, and infused faith. Quoting from Quenstedt, Preus shows what Rome thought of Luther's doctrine of imputed righteousness. Luther was severely criticized as "insane and demented," a "spectrum of his brain," a "masked righteousness," an "encrusted righteousness, similar to the incrustation on whited sepulchers." Preus rightly laments that "it is very disappointing to observe how little attention the Lutheran participants in the dialogues on justification have given the doctrine of the imputed righteousness, to say nothing of the reality of the imputation. It is especially disappointing in the light of the strong emphasis in the various statements on the importance and reality of renewal, at times regarded as a part of justification."

What a far cry from the Lutheran doctrine of justification! This reviewer will always be grateful for what he learned in his confirmation instruction, namely "that to

be justified means that God by grace imputed to me the righteousness of Christ, and acquitted me of the guilt and punishment of my sin, so that he regards me in Christ as though I had never sinned.” (*Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*) That same *Explanation* states that “We must always firmly hold and teach this doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith because it is the chief doctrine of the Christian religion; it distinguishes the Christian religion from false religions, all of which teach salvation by works; it gives enduring comfort to the penitent sinner; and it gives all glory to God.”

Preus states that Chemnitz in his *Loci Theologici* and clearly throughout the *Formula of Concord* keeps the article of justification central to the preachment and confession of the church and quotes from the *Loci* what Chemnitz says about this central doctrine of Scripture:

This article is in a sense the stronghold and high fortress of all the doctrine and of the entire Christian religion; if it is obscured or adulterated or set aside, the purity of doctrine in other articles of faith cannot possibly be maintained. But if this article is kept pure, all idolatry, superstitions, and whatever corruptions there are in other articles of faith tumble down of their own weight.

Dr. Preus has left a wonderful legacy in his book *Justification and Rome*. We would encourage our readers to purchase this book and “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it.” You will be led to a deeper understanding and renewed appreciation of the doctrine of justification and will see more clearly the soul-destroying error of Rome’s doctrine of justification.

We conclude the review by quoting the blurb which

appears on the back of this book: "Dr. Preus articulates the Lutheran and Catholic doctrines of justification, which have been on a collision course ever since Rome's anathema at the Council of Trent. He also shows that the 'convergence' has not resolved the *status controversiae*. This book is informative and stimulating and should lead to a greater appreciation of Luther's words: 'Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised.'"

