

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

VOLUME 61 • NUMBER 4
DECEMBER 2021

Professor George Oliver Lillegard, continued

Why Have a Seminary?

Sermon on Matthew 20:1–16:
Proof for Grace Alone

Preaching the Gospel with Purpose

Sparkle Language: Attending to Style in Preaching

Chapel Sermon on Deuteronomy 10:12–13

Sermon on Acts 3:1–21: Faith
in Jesus Will Heal You

Book Review

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The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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Foreword

LSQ 61, no. 4 (December 2021)

THIS YEAR IS THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, which was established in 1946. The *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* through the year 2021 will include articles highlighting the history of the seminary. There will be articles concerning important events and significant individuals in the history of the seminary.

George O. Lillegard (1888–1965) was installed as a professor of religion and Greek at Bethany Lutheran College and as a teacher in the seminary in 1952. Before this time he had been a missionary in China and a pastor of Harvard Street (Cambridge, Massachusetts). The first portion of this essay was printed in the last quarterly. In this essay, the Rev. Joseph Abrahamson explores the early years of Lillegard’s life. The Rev. Abrahamson is pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Clara City, Minnesota.

In 1957 Milton Otto (1914–1982) joined the seminary staff and was named dean of the seminary in 1968. In the article, “Why Have a Seminary?,” Dean Otto explained the purpose and importance of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The Rev. John Moldstad, the president of the ELS, was suddenly called home to be with the Savior on January 29, 2021. Included in this quarterly is the last sermon he wrote. It was prepared for the decommissioning of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Escondido, California. In addition, this quarterly contains a paper on the importance of Gospel preaching. This

was an essay drafted by Pres. Moldstad for the Great Plains Pastoral conference and completed by his son, the Rev. Matthew Moldstad. He is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

In the essay, “Sparkle Language: Attending to Style in Preaching,” Dr. Thomas Kuster explores one of the classical canons of rhetoric and its application to preaching. The canon focusing on word choice, “*elocutio*”—in English, “style”—was selected. The function of this canon for preaching is carefully crafting wording to open the minds of the listeners to the message and make it stick there. Dr. Kuster is professor emeritus of communication at Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary.

Also included in this quarterly are sermons by the Rev. Paul Fries and the Rev. Aaron Ferkenstad and a book review by Professor Nicholas Proksch.

– GRS

Professor George Oliver Lillegard, continued

Joseph C. Abrahamson
Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church
Clara City, Minnesota

LSQ 61, no. 4 (December 2021)

Continued from Lutheran Synod Quarterly 61, nos. 2–3

Second Chinese Mission: 1921–1927

George worked with Rev. Rich. Kretzschmar, president of the Board of Foreign Missions for the Missouri Synod. The correspondence with Rev. Kretzschmar covers the issuing and acceptance of George's call, the financial arrangements, and initial information regarding travel. He had accepted the call with the understanding that he would stay in Lake View "until a successor has been installed."¹⁰⁵ Lake View had withdrawn from the merger church and was independent. Initial hopes were that they would be able to find a pastor for Lake View and leave by mid-January.¹⁰⁶

Among the letters from when the Lillegards were preparing to travel to China, one stands out as a bit odd. They had ordered a piano from Behning Piano Company in New York. The letter confirmed the order and that the piano was being shipped to China.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Letter to Lake View Lutheran Church, Oct. 4, 1920, Blumer, p. 106.

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Kretzmar, Oct. 6, 1920, Blumer, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷ Behning Piano Co letter of Oct. 16, 1923, Blumer, p. 111. Deborah Blumer's book is the best source on this mission. The majority of the letters from the second missionary journey to China are from Bernice. The Lillegards numbered the letters they sent to each other. When George and his family were leaving China on board the ship *The President McKinley* he noted that he had received letters "285-6" but that "282-4 are missing."

George worked to ensure that Lake View received a competent successor before he left. Vice President Brand suggested a young bachelor, Pastor Peter C. Krey, a 1919 graduate of Springfield Seminary who had not yet received a pastoral call. George wrote to him on February 17, 1921 to inform him that Lake View had extended a call to him, explaining the diverse ethnic mix of members: “The members are practically all Scandinavians, Norwegian still in the majority, Danes almost as numerous, and a few Swedes.” Services were held in English. Krey expressed some discomfort at speaking English and Danish. At which point George comforted Krey. On March 6, 1921 Krey accepted the call to Lake View. George installed Pastor Krey on Sunday April 17, preaching his farewell sermon.¹⁰⁸

The Trip to China

On Monday they packed, and on Tuesday, April 19, 1921 they began their trek to China. George was thirty-three years old, Bernice was twenty-three. Vice President Frederick Brand made the travel arrangements. The first leg was crossing the continental United States by train. The crossing consisted of only a couple planned stops. One unplanned stop happened in Denver when their train struck a stalled automobile. Nobody was hurt, but the new Cole Eight was totally destroyed. The Lillegards boarded the S.S. Tenyo Maru in the port of San Francisco on May 10 which set sail the next day. Their cabin was happily furnished with a Steinway grand piano. In one letter George noted that the “little” Norwegian Synod was growing, and he was hopeful that the reorganized synod would be able to support the mission work.¹⁰⁹ Their sea voyage took them to Honolulu, then to Japan, and then to Shanghai on June 5. While on board ship George was the only clergy and was asked to provide Sunday services. Bernice wrote to her mother about their arrival in Hankow, China on June 11.¹¹⁰ This location is only about a hundred and forty miles south of George’s previous posting in his first mission trip.

Hankow, China is one of several towns that grew and merged to become Wuhan City in eastern Hubei Province. A hundred years after the Lillegards arrived, the city of Wuhan would become famous world-wide

Blumer’s book is a wide selection of the surviving letters. My presentation will focus only on a few topics relevant to this period.

¹⁰⁸ Correspondence in Blumer, p. 114-124. Notice of the installation service is in *ELT&LS* 4:42, April 20, 1921, p. 670.

¹⁰⁹ Letter to his parents of May 13, 1921 from SS. Tenyo Maru, in Blumer, p. 133

¹¹⁰ Letters from the trip from Chicago to China are found in Blumer, p. 125-146. Brand’s letter regarding the itinerary is in Blumer, p. 117.

for the COVID-19 plague, commonly believed to have come from a live-animal food market in that city. The missionaries found the summers in Hankow to be too hot and unhealthy. During the summers they would go to Kuling. This is the modern *Lushan Mountain National Key Scenic Spots* in Jiujiang Shi, China and is about a hundred and ninety miles southeast of Hankow. The summer retreats in Kuling were also used productively for pastoral conferences.

Living in China

The particular post to which the Lillegards were assigned was the charge of Rev. Edward L. Arndt (1864–1929). Arndt, a Pomeranian immigrant to the United States, had graduated Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri at the age of nineteen in 1865. Self-taught he also took advanced courses at Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He served as a pastor from 1885 to 1897 when he became a science professor at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota. During his time as a professor, he also served as assistant pastor to St. Stephanus Lutheran Church in St. Paul. Arndt was dismissed from the college in 1910 after he refused to allow grade inflation for the sake of some sons of prominent members of the Missouri Synod. Having an interest in mission work, he founded the China Mission Society in 1912 through which he raised funds by means of publications. In July 1912 he was installed as missionary at New Ulm. He is described as “a man with strong convictions that often brought him into conflict with those who did not see things his way.” Arndt went to China and learned Chinese when he was forty-nine years old.¹¹¹ Arndt and others met the Lillegards upon their arrival and helped them get settled in.¹¹²

This was not the same mission society as before. George was bringing his new bride into a different mission area and a different set of personalities. Hopefully this would bode well for the teaching of doctrine and sound biblical Lutheran practice. But they were still moving into China, and this held its own problems.

The August 31, 1921 *ELT&LS* published an excerpt of a letter from Bernice about their arrival in China.

¹¹¹ Biographical information on Arndt from “Edward L. Arndt (1864–1929) Papers, 1864–1995.” *Concordia Historical Institute Blog*, Manuscript Collections Finding Aids, Arndt Collection Number: M-0005. August 27, 2014. <https://concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/m-0005/>

I would like to thank Mark Bliese, the Reference and Research Supervisor for the Concordia Historical Institute for his help in locating these sources.

¹¹² Letter from George to Kretzschmar, June 15, 1921, in Blumer, p. 146.

We have spent most of the time since coming here, shopping, unpacking, repacking for Kuling and in general getting things straightened out, besides visiting with the other missionaries. ---Shortly before we left Shanghai we heard that Ischang, a city a few hundred miles up the Yangtze, had been looted by disbanded soldiers, and some foreign property was destroyed. And while we were on the way up the river, Wuchang, the city across the river from Hankow, was also looted by soldiers who were soon to be disbanded. In both cases this was done, it seems, because they did not get all the pay they wanted or expected. Wuchang was badly looted, and big parts of the city burned. Many Chinese were killed, but no foreigners were molested. As a punishment some of the soldiers were taken up the Peking railroad a ways, and when the train reached to a town called Saiggan, the cars were riddled with machine gun bullets. About 2,000 were killed in that way according to reports. So you see China is far from being a quiet and restful place to visit. However, I think that things will be quieting down after this. At any rate we are safe enough here. There are a number of gun boats here, and just to-day a large U.S. cruiser came up to Hankow.¹¹³

Aside from the various threats due to volatile politics and crime there was also a very serious threat of disease in the area.

Some of the problems can be seen from a quick run through of the letters from the first six months of their stay in China. When they first arrived, George contracted a cold and had what they believed was a severe case of bites or the hives.¹¹⁴ When they arrived the fifty-eight year old Rev. Arndt was sick and weakening.¹¹⁵ The heat of June got to them within a week. The heat was oppressive, and they needed to head up to the mountain resort in Kiukiang.¹¹⁶ While still at the resort in August, Bernice reported that Rev. and Mrs. Gihring had very bad cases of dysentery.¹¹⁷ The Chinese used night soil¹¹⁸ to fertilize their gardens, which made it necessary to boil all water and cook all vegetables and wash all fruits.¹¹⁹ One missionary family had a member diagnosed with sprue, an early name

¹¹³ *ELT&LS* 5:9 August 31, 1921, p. 143-4. This letter seems to be written prior to Bernice's letter to her Mother from Hankow dated June 15, 1921, in Blumer, p. 143.

¹¹⁴ Letter 6, June 15, 1921 from Hankow, Bernice to her Mother, in Blumer, p. 144

¹¹⁵ Letter from George to Kretzschmar, June 15, 1921, in Blumer, p. 146.

¹¹⁶ Letter 8, June 26th, 1921, Bernice to her Mother, in Blumer, p. 153.

¹¹⁷ Letter 16, August 13, 1921, Bernice to her Mother, in Blumer, p. 180.

¹¹⁸ Human excrement collected by an organized group or family from out-houses and chamber pots during the night.

¹¹⁹ Letter 23, September 26, 1921, Bernice to her Mother, in Blumer, p. 188-92.

for what might be Celiac Disease. Because of her ill health, they were recommended to return home.¹²⁰ In October of 1921, when the Lillegards were to have moved to Shinan, they chose to stay in Ichang. George was again ill, with what might have been more than merely a cold. Bernice was pregnant, and there were hospital facilities at Ichang, not in Shinan. Rev. Gihring was still very sick of dysentery, making it impossible for him to do mission work. In November of 1921, Bernice suffered from a long spell of diarrhea.¹²¹ Parasites were a serious problem.¹²²

A few other notes of significant health issues from the following few years: George was diagnosed with malaria in October of 1923.¹²³ Erna Theiss, wife of missionary Henry Theiss, was dangerously ill from tonsillitis in December of 1923.¹²⁴ In February of 1924, Bernice wrote of their cook becoming ill, possibly tuberculosis.¹²⁵ In the spring and summer of 1924, Mrs. Bentrup became severely ill. The doctors thought it was goiter.¹²⁶ Baby Betty Ann struggled with malaria from early on.¹²⁷ Penicillin was not discovered until 1928, there were no antibiotics available. Sulfa drugs were not introduced until after 1935.

George himself was a moderate anti-vaxxer. In a letter to his sister Louise, he wrote that he did have some inoculations but that “The Lord did not intend that we should shoot ourselves full of all sorts of poisons in order to keep from getting sick.” He went on to describe the necessary caution about personal hygiene and food hygiene in such a dangerous area.¹²⁸

Lillegard Family Life in China: 1921–26

Here we will take a look into the living conditions and family experiences of the Lillegards. Below we will look at the mission and missionary work in a separate section.

It would appear that it was in Chicago, sometime in late December 1920 or early January of 1921, that Bernice and George lost their first baby. They were still in Chicago at the time getting prepared for the trip. There is a letter from Pres. Frederick Brand dated January 7, 1921 that open

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Letter 29, November 18, 1921.

¹²² Letter 225, to her Mother, from Kuling, August 22, 1926, in Blumer, p. 456–457.

¹²³ Letter to Louise, from George in Ichang, Hupeh, October 11, 1923, in Blumer, p. 331.

¹²⁴ Letter from Bernice to George in Ichang, December 3, 1923, in Blumer, p. 344.

¹²⁵ Letter 136 from Bernice to her Mother in Wanhhsien, Szechuan, February 14, 1924, in Blumer p. 372.

¹²⁶ Letter 156 to her Mother in Kuling, August 20, 1924, in Blumer, p. 418–420.

¹²⁷ Letter 186 to her Mother in Wanhhsien, June 4, 1925, in Blumer, p. 441.

¹²⁸ Letter of October 2, 1924, in Blumer, p. 421.

with these words: "I am very glad to hear that Mrs. Lillegard is mending. May our dear Lord restore her to her former strength."¹²⁹

It is possible that the first hints of Bernice's second pregnancy are found in a letter to her father on May 26, 1921. They were on the ship from Honolulu to Japan. She wrote:

I have a bad head much of the time. I don't know whether the continual motion of the ship is to blame, or whether the food is. Maybe it is neither. But we are getting tired of ship food. The ravenous appetite I mentioned in my last letter did not last long. I can't say the food is actually bad, but it isn't tasty. Often I study the menu and can find nothing that appeals to me, except olives & fruit. The names on the menu sound very fine, but the food is not so fine.¹³⁰

Hankow, June 1921

When George and Bernice arrived in Shanghai June 5, 1921, they were greeted by one of Rev. Arndt's daughters. Proceeding up the Yangtze by boat directly to Hankow, they arrived June 10, 1921.¹³¹

Kuling, Summer 1921

After some sleepless nights due to heat, they left for the Kuling summer mountain retreat, arriving June 27.¹³² The 1921 China Mission Conference in Kuling ran from July 10 to August 3.¹³³

Learning the complexities of a new location, especially a mission could prove a bit overwhelming. George and Bernice continued also to get reports from Lake View. But these reports became a bit complicated. George's young successor, Pastor Krey had written George and Bernice for advice about love, but he left out the name of the girl. Other correspondence must have made it obvious who she was. Bernice teased George's youngest sister, Ella, a bit in a July 2, letter, saying: "I should just like to know what you could tell me about Krey this very day. Has he been coming as frequently as ever and does he still gaze at Ella?"¹³⁴ Krey still did not share the name of his interest when he wrote a despairing letter to George

¹²⁹ In Blumer, p. 114.

¹³⁰ Blumer, p. 139, underlining original.

¹³¹ Blumer, p. 143, 151.

¹³² Date from George's letter to Krey, June 28, 1921, in Blumer, p. 156,

¹³³ ELT&LS 5:11, September 14, 1921 "Our China Mission Conference" p. 167-170.

The conferences will be discussed below.

¹³⁴ Bernice to George's Mother and Sisters, July 2, 1921, in Blumer, p. 160.

and Bernice on the topic.¹³⁵ In late July Krey sent a report on his work at Lake View to George and Bernice, in this letter he revealed the name of his crush as a postscript.¹³⁶ Some correspondence is missing. In January 1922 George refers to a letter from Krey dated October 5, 1921 on this topic, apologizing for the delay. Krey seems to have come to terms with rejection. George offered this younger pastor some interesting personal and pastoral advice:

Find some other suitable Christian young lady and cultivate her acquaintance. Often a man is as much in love with love or with an ideal as with a particular, concrete female, so that it is not hard for him to transfer his affection from one individual to the other, and that entirely honestly and wisely, without his ideals or his affections receiving any injuries. It may not seem to be true to the man who thinks himself very much in love with one person. But when the transfer has taken place, it seems the most natural thing in the world. After all, men and women are created so that there are any number of suitable combinations that can be made, and the old romantic idea that there is only one that can suit a certain other one is as dangerous as false.¹³⁷

Ichang, September 1921–February 1922

In September of 1921, the mission intended to send the Lillegards to a place named Ichang, modern Yichang, about two hundred and twenty miles west of Hankow [Wuhan]. And when Bernice came down from the summer retreat at Kuling to Hankow on September 6, she found that George, who had left earlier, was still in Ichang looking for a home. George and Rev. Gebhardt entered Ichang while the Szechuanese army was fighting the Northern government army. The Szechuanese army had driven the Northerners out. George and Gebhardt tried to render aid to the wounded but were unable. George used some of the time to retrieve some of his property which he had left in Kwangchow back in 1915. Also, when he left they had left their piano behind in Hankow because of the difficulty in transporting it up the mountains.¹³⁸ Ichang would be temporary, the main aim was to be a place called Shinan, Shihnan or Shihnanfu. This is modern-day Enshi City, about a hundred and forty

¹³⁵ Krey's letter of July 7, 1921 in Blumer, p. 173.

¹³⁶ Krey to George and Bernice, July 27, 1921, in Blumer, p. 174.

¹³⁷ George to Krey January 3, 1922, in Blumer, p. 176-177.

¹³⁸ Regarding going to Ichang and the piano, Blumer, p. 180; Regarding George house shopping in Ichang, Blumer, p. 85.

miles even further west from Ichang [Yichang].¹³⁹ Bernice then wrote to her mother announcing her second pregnancy.¹⁴⁰ Her pregnancy became the reason that the Lillegards stayed in Ichang rather than moving to Shihnan. Excited about Bernice becoming pregnant again, George wrote his mother on October 12, 1921 saying:

Has Bernice written you yet, I wonder, that we are preparing for a little Chinaman around the first of March? Bernice has been much better this year than last year, and has also been quite contented and happy, so that we hope everything will be allright [sic] this time. There is a Scotch doctor here, and a room in their hospital for the use of foreigners, so she will be taken care of allright. [sic] One reason we decided to stay here in Ichan was that she might have medical attention.¹⁴¹

In the same letter, George mentioned the troubled warlike state of things in Hubei province, noting that the wars prevented the boats from going further up river from Ichang.

Bernice arrived in Ichang on October 13, 1921.¹⁴² Of course, the piano from New York had to be unpacked.

Well, my heart almost lost a beat when they opened the piano. The front piece (on which the music stands) had been shaken loose. The lock was sprung and the piano open. We were pretty frightened at first, but *most fortunately*, we could find no damage to the inside (the works, etc.) and what scratches there were on the inside. And it is in as good a tune as when we left—which was a *little out of tune!* Not very badly out of tune tho'! And what a joy it is to have it!!¹⁴³

By November it had grown cold, and the house was hard to heat. But it was still lovely weather, and they enjoyed picnics.¹⁴⁴ George had to leave on November 10 to go to Shihnan.¹⁴⁵ Bernice described the war to her mother.

As I understand it, China is in the hands of two governments, so to speak. The Northern government has been the recognized one

¹³⁹ Bernice had noted this to her mother in Letter 13, July 26, 1921, in Blumer, p. 169,

¹⁴⁰ Letter 23, September 26, 1921, in Blumer, p. 190.

¹⁴¹ Letter, George to his Mother, October 12, 1921, in Blumer, p. 193.

¹⁴² Letter 25 to her Father, October 13, 1921, in Blumer, p. 196.

¹⁴³ Letter 26, to her Mother, October 24, 1921, in Blumer, p. 198. Underlining original.

¹⁴⁴ Letter 27, to her Sister, November 1, 1921, in Blumer, p. 202.

¹⁴⁵ Letter 27, and Letter 19 to her Mother, December 17, 1921, in Blumer, p. 208.

and is located at Peking. I don't know anything about the Southern government. But the province of Hupeh is between the North and the South and makes a fine thing to fight about. South and western Hupeh has been the play ground for the two armies for several months now. Shinan has been in the midst of it. ... Mr. Gebhardt has written that he is quite safe and George says they are in no particular danger. But if conditions do not improve, he says they may leave Shinan for the present and try to bring Gebhardt back with them.¹⁴⁶

The Northern government Bernice wrote of was the Republic of China established in 1912. Sun Yat-sen served briefly as its first president. This government experienced several set-backs developing into a regional government by warlords, called the Beiyang government. It was, however, the internationally recognized government of China. Meanwhile, Sun Yat-sen had established the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). In 1921 Sun Yat-sen was leading as the head of the KMT. He had moved to the south to Guangdong province. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded at the end of July 1921, with Mao Zedong as one of the charter members. The CCP were members also of the KMT.¹⁴⁷

George got back to Ichang on November 27.¹⁴⁸ On New Year's Eve, Bernice wrote again of her pregnancy in a letter to her Mother from Ichang:

I have been in fine condition all the time and am sure we'll all be happy in a few months. I cannot realize that I am really to be a mother — it seems too good to be true. A year ago today (by day, tomorrow by date) I stayed home in bed — it was the beginning of my trouble. Am glad I have been spared that so far this time.¹⁴⁹

After finishing this letter, Bernice planned on playing for George on the piano they had shipped from New York. The soldiers had started to leave the area and the city was starting to become busy with normalcy. George wrote of the war in Shihnan and Ichang.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Letter 29, to her Mother, November 18, 1921, in Blumer, p. 205.

¹⁴⁷ George letter December 20, 1921, in Blumer, p. 211. Republic history [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_China_\(1912%E2%80%931949\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_China_(1912%E2%80%931949)); Beiyang government https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beiyang_government; CCP [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Communist_Party#Founding_and_early_history_\(1921%E2%80%931927\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Communist_Party#Founding_and_early_history_(1921%E2%80%931927)); Warlord Era https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warlord_Era; Zhili clique https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhili_clique.

¹⁴⁸ Report for Term Ending December 31st, 1921, in Blumer, p. 219-220.

¹⁴⁹ Blumer, p. 210.

¹⁵⁰ Report for Term Ending December 31st, 1921, in Blumer, p. 219-220.

Less than a month later, Bernice and George grieved again. Their daughter was still-born in the evening of January 20, 1922. George wrote to his mother:

B. wanted to write you, Mutter, but did not feel well enough, since she was rather expecting to give you the title of “grandmother” as her birthday present to you. We would have rejoiced very much if we could have sent you a cable to that effect, on your 50th birthday. Our best wishes anyway for a blessed and happy 50th year.¹⁵¹

Bernice wrote to her mother two days later:

I know you wonder why it happened. Would we knew, Mother! All we know is that God in His Wisdom has seen fit not to grant us a child yet. Maybe we are quite unworthy of such happiness and we both feel we received a lesson and must try to better ourselves—by His Grace. I need not tell you we feel keenly disappointed, but maybe another time all will go well.

George mentioned a rickshaw ride as a possible cause, but I must tell you that now all is over—well before that too, in fact — the doctor does not think so.¹⁵²

Shihnan, March 1922 to May 1922

There are letters of condolence from George’s mother, Rev. Rich. Krezschmar, Vice-President Brand as well as responses from George and from Bernice.¹⁵³ By March Bernice was feeling strong enough to go with George to Shihnan. At the same time, she looked forward to the summer conference and was expecting there to be some controversial issues.¹⁵⁴ They left Ichang on March 18 travelling by boat along the Yangtze to arrive at Shihnan on Saturday, March 26.¹⁵⁵

Except for their summer retreats, the Lillegards would live in this town until May 1923. Their home was over a school with a hundred students and which sheltered boys displaced by the recent wars. Both George and Bernice took sick shortly after their move.¹⁵⁶ In May of 1922, George

¹⁵¹ George to his Mother Jan 21, 1922, in Blumer, p. 221-222.

¹⁵² Bernice to her Mother, Jan. 23, 1922, in Blumer, p. 223-224.

¹⁵³ In Blumer, p. 225-232.

¹⁵⁴ Letter 45, March 3, 1922, in Blumer, p. 234-235.

¹⁵⁵ Letter 48, March 19, 1922 and Letter 49, March 28, in Blumer, p. 238-241.

¹⁵⁶ Letter 50, in Blumer, p. 242-245.

wrote Rev. Kretzchmar about Tang Tsu Mou and Yang Chun Fang as leaders of “robber bands” which troubled Shihnan.¹⁵⁷

At this point Pastor Krey wrote again, informing George that Lake View decided to join the merger church. Krey resigned the call. He could not join the merger church. Rev. Arndt of the China mission happened to be in Chicago to see Krey at this time.¹⁵⁸

Kuling, Summer 1922

George and Bernice left Shihnan arriving in Ichang on June 10. They had just barely escaped a raid by looting soldiers.¹⁵⁹ By June 28 they were in the summer mountain resort in Kuling living in Arndt’s house.¹⁶⁰ Bernice left for Ichang at the beginning of September. George would follow shortly after. They returned to Shihnan in late September.¹⁶¹

Shihnan, September 1922–May 1923

It was in January of 1923 that George reported the baptism of the first Christian converts in Shihnanfu.¹⁶² General Yang Sen was keeping the area secure and rather peaceful.¹⁶³

In March Bernice wrote to her mother: “Raise the flag of HOPE again! Yes, I’m very happy to tell you my hopes are soaring again. George and I look forward to the end of September or Early October....”¹⁶⁴

Kuling, Summer 1923

Near the beginning of June 1923, the Lillegards returned to the summer mountain retreat in Kuling. The summer conference, held there from July 4 through 17, was chaired by George. Up to this point, the mission had avoided any explicitly Lutheran identity in name or the way

¹⁵⁷ Letter of May 22, 1922, in Blumer, p. 256. Tang Tsu Mou was Mau Tze-tung [Mao Zedong]. Mao was active in this region during these months, a bit to the west but directly south promoting labor insurrections. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_revolutionary_activity_of_Mao_Zedong#Founding_the_Communist_Party_of_China:_1921%E2%80%931927.

¹⁵⁸ Krey’s letter of June 7, 1922, in Blumer, p. 259.

¹⁵⁹ George to his Parents, July 4, 1922.

¹⁶⁰ Letter 62, June 28 Bernice to her Mother is from Kuling. It contains some description of the chaos regarding which quarters were to be theirs, and the poor care of living quarters, in Blumer p. 261, see also p. 264 in George’s letter to his Parents, July 4, 1922.

¹⁶¹ George’s Letter to Brand, September 7, 1922, in Blumer, p. 267–269, and the following three letters in Blumer, p. 270–273.

¹⁶² In Blumer, p. 287–288. “Our First Christians in Shihnanfu” *ELT&LS* 6:37, March 14, 1923, p. 584.

¹⁶³ In Blumer, p. 289.

¹⁶⁴ Letter 94 March 8, 1923, in Blumer, p. 298.

they were promoting themselves locally. At that conference they changed this by adding the word Lutheran to the mission's name as a public confession of faith. They also resolved to give more thorough theological training to their local native evangelists.¹⁶⁵ General Wu Pei-fu had secured the region and even through Szechuan.¹⁶⁶ It did take some writing to keep their families back home from worrying about them with all the reports of war in the area.¹⁶⁷

Ichang, September 1923–December 1923

After the summer retreat George and Bernice moved back to Ichang. George planned to leave for Shihnan by mid-October 1923. The baby was due October 4. Bernice had been sick with a cold or something pretty steadily off and on since the spring.¹⁶⁸

Elizabeth Ann Lillegard was born October 8, 1923 in Ichang. Though there were several safety warnings, George still planned to travel to Shihnan around the 18 of October.¹⁶⁹ Bernice was not able to get home from the hospital until October 31. George reported that “she was in considerable danger.” But after she was able to return home, George left for Shihnan on November 2. George said of himself that his malaria was acting up again. Bernice wrote:

George left me after I came home (Fri. night) and I have had rather hard work keeping cheerful. George calls me *his* baby and I guess I deserve the name, because I certainly don't like to have him leave me. But I have Betty Ann to think of and as I get stronger I think I will get more used to the idea of being separated awhile.¹⁷⁰

George had been away for quite some time. Bernice not only had their new daughter to take care of, while facing a difficult recovery herself. But she had some other medical issues. It was a sad time for her, separated from her husband.¹⁷¹ There was uncertainty as to whether George could

¹⁶⁵ *ELT&LS* 7:17, October 24, 1923 “The China Mission Conference (Kuling July 4-17)” p. 259-263.

¹⁶⁶ Most from George's Letter to Ylvisaker May 11, 1923, in Blumer, p. 307-308. A report on the Conference in Blumer, p. 315-317.

¹⁶⁷ There are many examples of this throughout the letters, but particularly see George's letter to Bernice's Father of August 8, 1923, in Blumer, p. 321-323

¹⁶⁸ George to Ziegler, October 1, 1923, in Blumer, p. 324-325.

¹⁶⁹ Several articles of correspondence, in Blumer, p. 325-332.

¹⁷⁰ Quote in Letter 126 November 7, 1923, in Blumer, p. 335, the information here is from letters from Blumer, p. 331-340.

¹⁷¹ Letter to George, December 3, 1923 from Ichang, in Blumer, p. 344-345.

even be back with his family by Christmas, or whether Bernice and Betty Ann should come to Kweifu.¹⁷² George did arrive in Ichang on Christmas Eve. George's malaria seemed to be doing better. They would be moving to Wanhsien [north central part of the area of modern Chongqing], and this time they could take the piano!¹⁷³

Wanshien, Szechwan, January 1924–January 1927

After the end of two and a half months of separation, Bernice's outlook grew better. The Lillegards would live in Wanhsien from January of 1924 until they had to leave the country three years later in January of 1927. From Wanshien, Szechwan she wrote:

You may be sure that we are happy to be living together again anyway and to have the prospect of staying in one place for some time. We have been moving about so much the last three years that we have hardly felt that we had a home. We brought a piano with us from the States but have had little chance to use it, as it has been in Ichang all the time, while we have been in Hankow, Kuling, and Shihnan. We were settled in Ichang for only half a year.¹⁷⁴

Available correspondence for these last three years of George's second China mission is less extensive. A significant part of what is available focuses upon the novelty of experiencing their first child. In April of 1924, George and Bernice were able to move into their new home. George expressed concern over how Bernice was feeling. This may have been morning sickness.¹⁷⁵ In her own correspondence from that month, Bernice notes that she had been feeling off as well.¹⁷⁶

Kuling, Summer 1924

Bernice left Wanhsien on June 18, arriving in Kuling on Sunday, June 22, 1924. George arrived the following Thursday. A friend of theirs had been murdered in Wanhsien the same day Bernice left Wanhsien.¹⁷⁷ The conference took place in early August that year. By August Bernice was curious and concerned that she might have something wrong. She did not think she was pregnant, though the signs had been there since

¹⁷² Bernice to Louise, December 5, 1923, in Blumer, p. 346.

¹⁷³ Letter 132 to her Parents, December 28, 1923, in Blumer, p. 347-352.

¹⁷⁴ Letter to Backerud, January 21, 1924, in Blumer, p. 353-354.

¹⁷⁵ Letter George to Louise, April 9, 1924, in Blumer, p. 392-393.

¹⁷⁶ Letter 146 to Mama, April 29, 1924, in Blumer, p. 397-399.

¹⁷⁷ George to Bernice's Parents, July 5, 1924, in Blumer, p. 413-414, Blumer also includes a newspaper article about the slain man from the China Press on pages 411-412.

April. The doctor treated her for worms.¹⁷⁸ George had been sick with malaria and had seizures that spring and summer.¹⁷⁹ He took his 5th Year Language Exam on August 21, 1924.¹⁸⁰ They left the retreat at the end of August, returning to Wanhsien.

Wanhsien, Fall 1924

George received his diploma from Nanking University in October. He was the only missionary to have done so. In November Bernice's pregnancy is no longer undeniable.¹⁸¹

Ichang, January–February 1925

Marjorie Elise Lillegard was born February 1, 1925 in Ichang. The Lillegards had traveled down river in January so Bernice could be at the hospital.

She was feeling ready to get up this morning and talks about going back to Wanhsien with me in four or five days. But the doctor says she will have to stay at least ten days, of course. I plan on leaving for Wanhsien soon, taking Betty Ann with me, as I cannot very well spend any more time away from my station. It is soon a month since I left Wanshien.¹⁸²

Bernice and baby Marjorie left Ichang on February 15. By February 25, they were in Wanhsien entertaining guests.¹⁸³

Wanhsien, March 1925–January 1927

Sun Yat-sen, leader of the southern government and of the KMT, died March 12, 1925. Sun Yat-sen was a Congregationalist Christian. He had encouraged the Chinese Communist Party to support the KMT and had invited Soviet participation. His death left a power vacuum. Several leaders, including Chiang Kai-shek, worked to remove Communist Party members from the KMT. The internal struggle was fierce and bloody. Chinese-American Liao Zhongkai filled the vacancy left by Sun Yat-sen. But, being a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party, he was assassinated on August 20, 1925. He was eventually replaced in May of

¹⁷⁸ Letter 155, to her Mother, August 10, 1924, in Blumer, p. 415-417.

¹⁷⁹ "Kirkenyt: Missionaer Geo. O. Lillegard skriver i privatbrev den 15de juni." *ELT&LS* 7:56, July 23, 1924, p. 894.

¹⁸⁰ Letter 156, to her Mother, August 20, 1924, in Blumer, p. 418-420.

¹⁸¹ George to his Father, November 10, 1924, in Blumer, p. 426-427.

¹⁸² George to unnamed, February 1, 1925, in Blumer, 429-430.

¹⁸³ Letter 177 to her Mother, February 25, 1925, in Blumer, p. 433-436.

1926 by an Anarchist and anti-Communist named Zhang Renjie. Zhang resigned so that Chaing Kai-shek could lead.¹⁸⁴

That spring of 1925, the mission held a special Holy Week/Easter festival in Shihnan. George was looking to purchase property to build a chapel in Wanhsien.¹⁸⁵ The famines were ongoing in the area along with the struggle between the warlords. Betty Ann was struggling with malaria.¹⁸⁶ By June 1925 George and Bernice were contemplating leaving the mission for the United States.

There were several issues, but they boiled down to two strong personalities in Arndt and Meyer who, in George's judgment, were willing to compromise doctrinally in the mission field on a wide variety of matters. For both George and Bernice, those two leaders of the Missouri Synod mission were far from impartial when it came to how they dealt with the other missionaries in matters of expense, leave, and duties. One of the main theological debates that came to a head at this time was Arndt's choice to use the name of a well-known pagan god as the name for *God* rather than using a generic Chinese term for *god*. This would be like using the name *Zeus* to translate the Greek and Hebrew words for *God* rather than simply using the generic term *God*. This was known as *The Term Question*. More on this below.¹⁸⁷

These issues were part of the focus in the summer conference at Kuling in 1925. George and Bernice must have discussed the issues in great detail with each other. She was a keen observer of theology, competent in her evaluations on these topics, and clear in her descriptions of the issues in her letters to her father.¹⁸⁸

At the beginning of 1926, Bernice again wrote her mother about morning sickness without realizing what it was.¹⁸⁹ Pressures in the mission work, particularly from Arndt increased. By the time they were in Kuling in the summer of 1926, George had decided to leave the mission within a year. George believed that the fraternal spirit of the Missouri Synod members was not really fraternal to him. On the other hand, George and Bernice were "thrilled" by the venture our little Norw. Synod is making"

¹⁸⁴ See Zhang Renjie https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhang_Renjie#Relations_with_the_Nationalist_Party_and_Chiang_Kai-shek.

¹⁸⁵ Letter 181 to her Mother, April 15, 1925, in Blumer, p. 437-440.

¹⁸⁶ Letter 186 to her Mother, June 4, 1925, in Blumer, p. 441-442.

¹⁸⁷ George to his Father-in-law, June 17, 1925 in Wanhsien, in Blumer, p. 443-445, and Bernice's Letter 193 to her Father, August, 14, 1925 in Kuling, in Blumer, p. 446-447.

¹⁸⁸ See, again, esp. Letter 193.

¹⁸⁹ Letter 206 to her Mother, January 1926, in Wanhsien, in Blumer, p. 448.

when they heard of the purchase of Bethany Lutheran College. In respect to higher education in their context:

What counts with them [the missionaries] is that I have not attended their schools, etc. Even if I should join the Missouri Synod, the situation would remain much the same for me. So I can appreciate that it must have been rather unsatisfactory for our people to work with the Missourians in College and Seminary. **May the day be not far distant when we can have our own Seminary too!** From what I hear of the St. Louis Sem., I must say that I do not have much confidence in it.¹⁹⁰

In the same letter, he wrote hopefully of their soon to be born child. Laura Bernice was born July 5, 1926 in Kuling at the summer retreat. In her letter to her parents about Laura's birth, Bernice noted: "There is quite a feeling of suspense amongst most of us and it will be a relief to have Conference under way and begin to find out how things stand."¹⁹¹

That conference lasted more than three weeks. The Term Question was not settled. George and Bernice were promised Furlough the coming July. As far as mission station assignments, they were to continue at their station in Wanhsien.¹⁹²

The increasing economic fragility of the Northern [Beiyang] government in 1926 led to its collapse at the end of the year. The KMT's National Revolutionary Army began its northern expedition in 1926 to take advantage of the chaos during the decline of the Beiyang government.¹⁹³ Chiang Kai-shek led this southern government from July 6, 1926 to March 11, 1927.¹⁹⁴ The Chinese Civil War between the Communist Party and everyone else would last from 1927 to 1949.¹⁹⁵ By the end of 1926 the missionaries were caught in the middle as this great conflict began.

The Mission Work in China: 1921–1927

Now we are going back to June 1921. The previous section focused on the living situation and family life. Here we focus on the mission and missionary work.

From the time the Lillegards had arrived in China, the mission's summer conference in Kuling was the event at which the mission surveyed

¹⁹⁰ George to his Father-in-law, June 26, 1926, in Kuling, in Blumer, p. 449-451. Quote on p. 450. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹¹ Letter 223, July 20, 1926, in Kuling, in Blumer, p. 453-455.

¹⁹² Letter 225, August 22, 1926, in Kuling, in Blumer, p. 456-457.

¹⁹³ Northern Expedition https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Expedition.

¹⁹⁴ Chiang Kai-shek https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek.

¹⁹⁵ Chinese Civil War https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War.

and evaluated the work of the previous year. Here they discussed theological, material, methodological, cultural, political and other issues related to the work of the mission. Here they made their plans for the upcoming year and for longer term goals.

While the summer retreats at this location also served a vital rest time for the mission workers and relief from the heat of the summer in the lower altitudes, this conference was the heart and nerve center of the mission.

*The 1921 Kuling Conference: July 10–August 3.*¹⁹⁶

First Vice-President of the Missouri Synod, Rev. Frederick Brand was in China on an inspection tour for the mission board as its secretary. He served as the president for this conference. The conference identified some problems for the mission. These included widespread liberalism and religious indifferentism.

For many years it has been the accepted thing to work together with all denominations of the Protestant Church wherever possible. It is taken for granted that missionaries will look upon all other missionaries, from Holy Rollers to Catholics, as just as good representatives of the truth of God as they themselves. The result has been that false teachings of all kinds have found a strong footing in all the larger mission societies, not excluding even the Lutheran societies. They all have in their number men who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the vicarious atonement of Christ, and other fundamental doctrines.

The problem had only begun to be addressed the previous year and not very well. There was resolution at the conference: "That it would be necessary for us to separate ourselves from all other missions at present in China ... if we were to build a truly Christian Church. To yield to the devil of unionism and liberalism is to yield the whole work."

The issue of unionism was huge. Bernice noted this in a letter to her mother before the conference began. Writing about what she expected of the Conference:

It is enough to warrant a lively conference this summer, however. Things have been going on pretty much as they would here. And some, especially one, have even become quite unionistic. It seems hard for even a good Missourian to remain conservative here. Do hope

¹⁹⁶ The full report from George, acting secretary is in *ELT&LS* 5:11, September 4, 1921, p. 167-170 "Our China Mission Conference." My summary and quotations are from this document unless otherwise noted.

things will be straightened out at conference without too much fuss. George and I are not very keen about being in Hankow for several reasons. For one thing, George would like to be quite independent of the others, because he hopes the Norwegian Synod will be able to support its own mission in time. And if we remain in a place where there are unionistic tendencies on the part of one or two co-workers, there will certainly be more or less friction.¹⁹⁷

They made decisions concerning the organization, methods, and deployment to individual fields: Hankow, Shihnanfu, and to open a field in Ichang with hope of moving further west. The Lillegards were sent to Ichang. The mission would open a training school for evangelists and teachers at Hankow with Rev. L. Meyer in charge. Rev. Arndt would go on furlough. Four more young men were expected from St. Louis Seminary the next fall. George was elected chairman for the next year.

Ichang would be regarded as the field work of the Norwegian Synod. A plea was made for women to enlist in mission work because social customs made it impossible for male missionaries to work among women in China. The conference expressed a hope to open a school for girls eventually.

The report closes with a note about the “unrest in the land, opposing armies are even now fighting a few miles from Hankow, and nobody can tell how long it will be before the confusion and chaos in the country will become so great that it will be impossible for any foreigners to carry on their work.”

As noted above, the plans changed for George and Bernice. They received word they were to go to Shihnan instead. But the move to Shihnan did not take place until after their miscarriage in January of 1922. George reported regarding the situation before they moved to Shihnan:

Our work in Ichang has as yet been unmolested by troublesome unionists. We were asked to join in the Missionary Conferences and Union Prayer Meetings, [sic] which the four other missions working in that city have been conducting. But when we explained our position, no objections were made, and the friendly attitude of the other missionaries has continued unchanged.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Letter 9, in Blumer, p. 159.

¹⁹⁸ *ELT&LS* 6:3 July 19, 1922 p. 41-45. “Report by Geo. Lillegard for Period from January 1 to May 31, 1922.”

The 1922 Kuling Conference

There were no minutes from the 1922 Kuling Conference in Blumer or in the *ELT&LS*. Blumer included a letter from George to Brand explaining some aspects of the conference minutes.¹⁹⁹ George chaired this conference.

Meyer and Arndt will have charge of the Hankow school. Meyer was to go on furlough the next year which made assigning manpower difficult. The mission acquired some property in Shihnan but lost it to the government. They still hoped to acquire property in each station for residences, schools, and a potential hospital. The mission requested a nurse. Gebhardt was elected chairman for the next year and George the secretary. George noted that the Catholic mission was moving away from the Hankow to a more rural area to avoid "some of the temptations of the big city." This is relevant in considering where to build the mission's theological seminary and schools of higher education. Some of the workers had hard feelings regarding which stations they were assigned. The Hankow station meant very little deprivation, the others much deprivation in comfort and lifestyle. The cushy stations were desired. Arndt returned to the mission in August with his family arriving later.²⁰⁰

George kept interest in the mission back in the states through publishing articles about China. His article "Social Customs of the Chinese Relating to Marriages and Funerals, and the Christian's Attitude to Them" was rather long and made for a good serial in the September, October, and November *ELT&LS*.²⁰¹

The issue of unionism continued as a dominant concern both at the mission and back at home. George informed the members of the Synod about the extreme degree of mixing of religions going on in various denominations on the Chinese mission front.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Letter dated September 7, 1922, in Blumer, p. 267-269. Summaries and quotations for the 1922 Conference are from this document unless otherwise noted.

²⁰⁰ *Concordia Historical Institute* Collection Number M-0005, See footnote 105.

²⁰¹ *ELT&LS* 6:13, September 27, 1922, p. 198-204; *ELT&LS* 6:15, October 11, 1922, p. 228-235; *ELT&LS* 6:18, November 1, 1922, p. 295-302.

²⁰² "Confucious' Birthday Celebrated at a Modern Mission College." *ELT&LS* 6:31, January 31, 1923, p. 486-488. George noted the problem of unionism in the merger church in "Den norsk lutherske kirkes maal." *ELT&LS* 6:13, April 4, 1923, p. 636-638. The merger church wanted to "to bring all Norwegians under one roof without asking too many questions about their faith and doctrine." George addressed this problem again in April with the article "Christian Harmony' and 'Unionism'" *ELT&LS* 6:14, April 14, 1923, p. 650-653.

But there was wonderful news to report which came out in March: “On the First Sunday in Epiphany, the Rev. A. Gebhardt baptized five adults and twelve children,—the firstfruits of our mission work in this part of China.”

George’s article introduced the Chinese people and reminded the American readers of the conditions of famine and hardship for the Chinese.²⁰³ George reported that the missionaries in Shihnan were working “together in full harmony with each other” reflecting on their agreement in doctrine and practice in their work. George was in charge of the orphan home for boys, teaching religion at the higher primary school for boys, chair of the local [Shihnan] conference which met three times a week. He would spend two or three hours per day learning Chinese. Most of his time was “devoted to the work of the Literature Committee.” The committee was reviewing the suitability of Christian and Lutheran literature already translated into Chinese. Bernice was teaching the women in the mission Bible history and catechism at the women’s catechetical meetings.²⁰⁴

*The 1923 Kuling Conference: July 4–17.*²⁰⁵

Arndt was not present, but the Concordia Historical Institute notes in the Arndt collection to CM-Binder #14, “The Lillegard controversy over the Chinese Term Question Continued.”²⁰⁶ The *Term Question* is the name given to a theological debate about which term in Chinese should be used to render the generic word for *god* or *God* from the original Biblical Languages (Hebrew אֱלֹהִים or Elohim and the Greek θεός or Theos). Two Chinese words were used, often inconsistently. The first was *Sheng-Di* (上帝), the second, *shen* (神).

Sheng-Di (上帝) was the personal name of an ancient pagan Chinese god in classic Chinese literature and folk tales. Like Odin in Norse mythology, Zeus in Greek mythology, or Ahura-Mazda in Zoroastrianism, the god *Sheng-Di* was the chief god of a group of gods.

Shen (神), on the other hand, could refer to any spiritual divinity.

The *Term Question* began when Jesuit Priest Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) used *Sheng-Di* as the translation for God. The Roman Catholics later

²⁰³ “Our First Christians in Shihnanfu” *ELT&LS* 6:37, March 14, 1923, p. 582-584.

²⁰⁴ “Personal Report for Period Closing Feb. 15, 1923.” *ELT&LS* 6:41, April 11, 1923, 644-649, remarks from p. 648 and 649. The women here were not the Chinese, but the single and married women assigned to the mission.

²⁰⁵ The report is found in Blumer, p. 315-317 and in *ELT&LS* 7:17, October 24, 1923, p.259-263. Summaries and quotations for the 1923 Conference are from this document unless otherwise noted.

²⁰⁶ Op. Cit.

rejected the term because of its pagan association. The discussion of this issue was not new with George's arrival in China. This issue is still central in Chinese as well as Korean translations of the Bible and Christian Literature.²⁰⁷ Though part of the underlying discussion of the activity of translating Lutheran literature into Chinese, the *Term Question* became an increasingly hotly debated topic in the mission. The two opposing parties on this issue were George Lillegard, who argued against using *Sheng-Di* because it would be like using the name *Thor* or *Zeus* each time the word *god* came up in reference to the True God. Edward Arndt favored the use of *Sheng-Di* and in the strongest terms rejected the questioning of this term.²⁰⁸

Up to this date, the name of the mission in Chinese was "*Hsin-I-Hwei*", which was a non-specific society name for most spiritual endeavors. It meant simply "The Faith-Righteousness Society." At this meeting the mission decided to use the distinctive name "Lutheran" in their name as a public confession.

The mission rededicated its focus on Christian education. They chose to increase the quality of education by employing only qualified teachers and to establish a normal school where those teachers could be trained. This would be attached to the middle school already in operation in Hankow. At this meeting they determined to establish a "Training-School for Evangelists a full-fledged Practical Theological Seminary, giving a course corresponding to the Springfield Seminary Course, so that the men graduated from it may be ordained as native pastors."

They determined to greatly improve the poor education of the native "evangelists."

At this meeting they introduced a desire and plan for self-sufficiency. That is, even though the mission would still need to depend in some degree upon gifts from abroad, the locals were being taught to become financially responsible for buying their own property and buildings.

The 1923 Conference decided to open three new stations: Shasi, Hupeh, on the Yangtze River between Hankow and Ichan; Kweifu, Szechwan, a hundred and ten miles above Ichang on the Yangtze; and Wanhsien, Szechwan, sixty-five miles further west. The mountainous region made this area difficult to access, so it was also an open field

²⁰⁷ See Oak, 2012.

²⁰⁸ While this topic is not the focus of this paper, one cannot help but cover some significant aspects of this controversy. This controversy was at the center of the translations of Biblical, Christian and Lutheran literature George and the missionaries were making for the Chinese church. We will give a few of the chief arguments advocated by each party below when chronologically appropriate.

for the mission as very few other Christian missions had ever been there. Wanhsien was the neediest field. Chungking had a great deal of missionaries, but Wanhsien, the third largest city in the area, had only five foreign missionaries. Due to the geography, this location was fairly safe from a military ground assault. George noted: "With a few armed men to guard the approach to this hill fortress, they are safe here—until the soldiers bring their new aeroplanes into use!"²⁰⁹

The Lillegards were assigned to Wanhsien. George was to scout out the area. This is the time of Bernice's third pregnancy, so their departure was delayed. The difficulties attending Betty Ann's birth in October were discussed above. The whole family did not get to Wanhsien until January.

George's review of Christian Literature in Chinese proved greatly disappointing.

[O]nly a small part of it is suitable for our use, since so much is vitiated by modern or distinctively Reformed tendencies. A Committee elected two years ago had reviewed much of this literature and now published a list of recommended books and tracts.

A great deal of work on literature needed to be done. They published a monthly church paper. They selected a group of books with highest priority for translation: "Schwan's Explanation, A Liturgy and Agenda, a Prayer Book, Walther's *Die Rechte Gestalt*, the whole Book of Concord, besides some briefer pamphlets." George viewed this translation project as "one of the most important tasks that lies before us."

Pastor Meyer left for the states on furlough after the conference. Chairman for the next year would be Gebhardt, and the secretary would be George.

George had two articles published in the September 26, 1923 *ELT&LS*. In the first he made mention of living conditions and political unrest. Of particular interest, though is the following note:

I had charge of the Orphanage, of the sale of Religious Literature, taught Religion in the Higher Primary School, and prepared a class of eight adults for baptism. A number of other catechumens attended this class but were not considered sufficiently advanced to warrant their being baptized at Pentecost. They will continue under instruction next autumn.

²⁰⁹ Undated letter from George, in Blumer, p. 357-359.

At this station, George and the other missionaries had insisted upon sound instruction for adults *before* baptism. For some today this kind of insistence might seem odd. But this has been the normal course for the Church from the records of the earliest Church fathers.²¹⁰

The second article was a report on the humanitarian efforts of the mission to aid the Chinese in their suffering from famine which was due both to weather and politics. George also described some kinds of training and education given to the orphans in skilled work so that they could eventually provide for themselves. In this note George reports:

Four of the boys were baptized on Jan. 7th. These were the deaf and dumb boy, the blind boy, and two orphans whom we have had going to school from the beginning and whom we hope to be able to give a good Christian education. On May 20th another little boy, whom we have prospect of keeping under our care for many years, was baptized.²¹¹

Here the employment of baptism on the feeble and young is made in the case of those for whom the mission acknowledged would be under their care and tutelage.

The November 21, 1923 issue of the *ELT&LS* contained George's article, "The Official Standpoint of the Norwegian Lutheran Church on the Question of Fellowshiping with Non-Lutherans." George evaluated the merger church's position. This issue was important not only with respect to the merger church and its appeal to Norwegian Lutherans within the "little" synod. But the issue of unionism kept being a burning problem within the mission field in China and particularly at that time within the very Mission George was called to serve with the Missouri Synod. The merger church authors defended working with union movements like the Student Volunteer's Movement, and the Laymen's Missionary Movement.²¹²

²¹⁰ "From Mission in China." *ELT&LS* 7:13, September 26, 1923, p. 194-19.

²¹¹ "Report of Famine Relief and Orphanage Work" *ELT&LS* 7:13, September 26, 1923, p. 198-200.

²¹² "The Official Standpoint of the Norwegian Lutheran Church on the Question of Fellowshiping with Non-Lutherans" *ELT&LS* 7:21, November 21, 1923, p. 325-330. George had already discussed the Student Volunteer movement a few years prior: "The Student Volunteer Convention in Des Moines, IA" *ELT&LS* 3:34, February 18, 1920, p. 541-542.

*The 1924 Kuling Conference: July 16–August 12.*²¹³

Arndt skipped the summer conference. The Concordia Historical Institute finder's guide to the Arndt collection notes: "Lillegard continuously attacked Arndt and his literary work and wanted him to teach only at the seminary so he could be more easily controlled."²¹⁴

No doubt that was Arndt's perception. Arndt had completed some comprehensive Chinese language exams the year prior. But the level of his competency is not stated. George also completed his 5th year Chinese language competency exams in August of this year at the Nanking University.

Bernice wrote a letter after the conference in October regarding a Conference decision on language exams and regarding her observations on the level of study among the missionaries.

Last week George received his diploma from the Nanking University for having completed the five years' work in Chinese. I am glad, and I am sure he is, that he has been able to cover that ground. He is the only one in the mission who has done the required five years' work, even though there are others who have been here longer. They have been very lax about taking examinations or doing systematic study. They made new rules at the Conference this summer so now most of them have taken at least one examination.²¹⁵

Back in the states the seventh annual synod convention took place in June. The two main theological papers presented were "Guds ords kraft" [The Power of God's Word] by Christian Anderson, and "The Objection of the Norwegian Synod to the First Paragraph of 'Opjør,'" by J. E. Thoen. President G. A. Gullixson's address highlighted the uncompromising confession of Elector John Frederick of Saxony. George's brothers in America were focusing on the Word Alone and the need to avoid all compromise on doctrine and rejecting unionism in the clearest terms.²¹⁶

²¹³ The report is in *ELT&LS* 7:73, November 19th, 1924, p. 1154-1160. Summaries and quotations for the 1924 Conference are from this document unless otherwise noted.

²¹⁴ *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005. August 27, 2014. <https://concordiahistoricalinstitute.org/m-0005/>

²¹⁵ *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005. Which language school is not mentioned by the CHI notes. For George's exams see footnote 172 and also Letter 156 to her Mother, August 26, 1924, in Blumer, p. 418-420.

²¹⁶ SR 1924, G.A. Gullixson "Formandens synodaltale og indberetning," p. 6-16; "Guds ords kraft." Christian Anderson, p. 18-47; "The Objection of the Norwegian Synod to the First Paragraph of 'Opjør'" p. 47-65.

On May 5 George wrote to the 1924 synod convention addressing the needs in China, the danger of unionism pervading almost every aspect of mission work there and almost every organization, the weak support of the Synod for the China mission and mission work in general, and the need for doctrinal fidelity. "The history of the Christian church shows that Christians have all too often not succeeded in keeping up their zeal both for pure doctrine and for the preaching of the gospel throughout the world, the one suffering where the other was emphasized."

His hope was that "our little Norwegian Synod be marked in God's History if not in histories written by men, as one that was thus obedient throughout its existence to every jot and tittle of Christ's Word!"²¹⁷

The synod convention did re-focus on China that year. This included taking the focus off of India that year, urging all mission contributions to the Synod be given to the China field, encouraging support for the Missouri synod funds which made China their focus, and expending greater effort to bring China to the focus of congregation members.²¹⁸

On June 4 the *ELT&LS* published George's article "World Movements and World Conferences." He compared these large movements, particularly found in Reformed churches as modern towers of Babel, "Today, in their vanity, men propose to organize or to set in motion world-wide activities, by which the whole world may be brought under the influence of their ideas or ideals, while they incidentally 'make a name' for themselves."²¹⁹

He noted especially the World Lutheran Conference, the student volunteer convention, and others typically had representatives only from a part of or a few different constituents. But the purpose was to pretend worldwide consensus to gain large influence. George, ever mindful of mission work both in the world and at home stated:

Not by 'modern business efficiency,' not by modern advertising methods, not by the glare and blare of great conventions, is the world of men to be brought to kneel before the Lord of all in humble faith or abject fear, but by the work of such believers as are ready to dare all things, endure all things, suffer the loss of all things, for the sake of the Gospel, — even the loss of a chance to be a great figure, or a figurehead, at a 'World Convention.'²²⁰

²¹⁷ SR 1924, Letter p. 79-82, quotes from p. 81.

²¹⁸ SR 1924, Foreign Mission, p. 78-79.

²¹⁹ "World Movements and World Conventions." *ELT&LS* 7:49, June 4, 1924, p. 771-774. Quote on 771.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, quote on p. 774.

In the same issue of *ELT&LS*, George kept interest in the China Mission by describing the process of betrothal in China. This was to be one of the practical focuses of the summer conference in Kuling.²²¹

The conference in Kuling began July 16 running to August 12. Even without Arndt present, the *Term Question* occupied a great deal of time at this meeting. The conference decided to use the term *Shen* (the generic term for *god*) in their own literature from that time on. Unfortunately Rev. Gebhardt and another missionary, Rev. Schwarzkopf, and Mrs. Bentrup were ill and ordered home on sick leave.²²² A nurse did arrive at the mission. They hoped to have a hospital working in Shihnan. With such depleted numbers, a re-arrangement of deployments to the various stations was necessary. The Lillegards would be at Wanhsien.

From Arndt's view "Lillegard and his followers succeeded in forcing the closing of the Hwa Pu Kai Chapel and School."²²³

But the conference reported that it retained its focus on the training of teachers and preachers as one of the most important tasks in the mission. Plans for a middle school, higher middle school, and the theological seminary were revised. Some land was purchased for residential purposes, but the mission was "not engaging in the extensive and expensive building program that other Missions have carried out." The plans they made were for what they could determine were necessary structures to serve the mission. They also emphasized their work toward making the Chinese church self-sufficient. Dr. P. Kleid and Nurse Oehlschlaeger arrived at the mission and were ready to take up the medical work. The conference discussed and made plans for the medical mission and its provision.

The literary work was a principle reason for the discussions regarding the *Term Question*. George and the few other translators had made some progress:

A number of works have been translated and revised, and after undergoing a further revision, are to be published if possible during the coming year. Those most nearly ready for publication are: Luther's Small Catechism, Schwan's Explanation, Hanser's Christian Questions and Answers, Pieper's Doctrinal Tract, Walther's *Die Rechte Gestalt*, a Prayer Book, drawn from the 'Treasury of Prayers,' and a Liturgy and Agenda.

²²¹ "Betrothal in China." *ELT&LS* 7:49, June 4, 1924, p. 776-777.

²²² I could not find any indication that Gebhardt actually did go back home to convalesce. From what I could see he appears to have stayed in China the whole time.

²²³ *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder #15 (1924).

The Walther League had enabled the mission to establish a circulating library which would benefit all the evangelists and mission workers. At the close George emphasized that this mission is the work of all in the Norwegian Synod and the Missouri Synod.

The conference directed J. Fischer and C. D. Nagel to write a report to the Norwegian Synod concerning the work of the 1924 Conference.²²⁴

It was in the 1924 Conference and the discussions which followed it that the Term Question became an issue of controversy within the mission itself.²²⁵

The station at Shihnan held a special event over Holy Week and Easter 1925. The Lillegards used the occasion of a birthday party coinciding with Good Friday to throw a larger celebration to introduce the locals to the Gospel.²²⁶ By June Bernice reported that the famine was growing worse, more relief was necessary. But good news, eight adults, four teenagers, and five small children were baptized in Wanhsien. "Mr. Dzou destroyed all his idols shortly after he began attending meetings and I understand his wife was entirely won over by his arguments. She is a dear woman and I want to know her better."²²⁷

The 1925 Kuling Conference

Work in the Chinese Seminary continued. The controversy about the Term Question grew. Arndt became ill and was thought to be near death, though Arndt himself said those reports were exaggerated. He attended the summer Kuling conference, though he reportedly missed several meetings at the conference.²²⁸ George held regular services at the mission, but his primary focus was translating Lutheran literature into Chinese.²²⁹

Rev. Meyer had been on furlough back in the states. The mission board, in consultation with Rev. Meyer rejected significant decisions made by the previous Kuling Conference. Upon his return to Hankow, he began running things in ways that went contrary to the Kuling Conference. George expected a very turbulent conference this year, especially in respect

²²⁴ This letter of August 17, 1924 appears in *ELT&LS* 7:67 October 8, 1924, p. 1070-1071.

²²⁵ Also see *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder #15 (1924) notes.

²²⁶ Letter 181 to her Mother, April 15, 1925, Holy week in Shihnan, in Blumer, p. 438.

²²⁷ Letter 186 to her Mother, June 4, 1925, in Blumer, p. 441-442. *ELT&LS* 8:30, July 29, 1935 "The First Lutherans at Wanhsien, Szechwan, China." p. 467-469.

²²⁸ *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder #16 (1925).

²²⁹ *ELT&LS* 8:4, January 28, 1925 "From the China Mission" Letter from Nov 27, 1924, p. 55-57 and *ELT&LS* 8:12 March 25, 1925 "From China" Letter of January 28, p. 182-183.

to the Chinese Term Question. At this point George does complain to his father-in-law about particular persons and methods.

If Meyer's strangle hold on this mission can be shaken off, so that we can have some prospect that our work can be run in the future on right, Lutheran lines, instead of the disgraceful way it has been run hitherto in Hankow, I shall want to stay. If not—if something radical is not done to put a stop to the loose way in which things are done there in Hankow, I simply must get out. I have honestly been highly ashamed of my association with this M.S. China Mission at times. When I think of how the M.S. boasts of being the only true Church and then consider how its work in China is built up on the foundations laid by Haugianere, Methodists, Congregationalists, and what not, I get sick in the 'tummy.' The proselytizing and the unionism which Arndt and Meyer have indulged in down in Hankow has given our Mission a bad name all over the country, and it is a wonder to me that the Anti-Missourian Press has not gotten a hold of it and given them a good raking over for it. . . . We can be affiliated with the M.S., without being responsible for all its dirty linen. But we cannot be members of its Mission, without being directly responsible for conditions in that mission. I have done what I could these four years to set things straight. Things will have to either bend or break this summer. It seems to me that four years is about long enough. Anyway I have had enough.²³⁰

Bernice expressed similar sentiments to her father from the conference at Kuling. She was particularly disturbed at how George had become the focus of many personal attacks and gossip.²³¹

The same issues of unionism and laxity in doctrine were also the concern when George's home church body, the Norwegian Synod, who met in Convention June 11–17, 1925. J. E. Thoen addressed the Synod on the need in maintaining pure doctrine and doctrinal discipline if the Synod were to make progress in synodical relations.²³² H. Tjernagel highlighted not only the need for missionary zeal, but that this zeal be grounded in the true doctrine.²³³

²³⁰ George to his Father-in-law, from Wanhsien, June 17, 1925, in Blumer, p. 443–445.

²³¹ Letter 193 to her Father, from Kuling, August 14, 1925, in Blumer, p. 4467–447.

²³² SR 1925, p. 83–85.

²³³ SR 1925, 85–88.

But work for a general moral and social uplift is not Christian Missionary work. Such work may, as stated, be and is pushed with vigor by many errorists who are quite indifferent as to the word and teaching of Christ. And they who can fraternize with such on the mission field, in great missionary conventions and otherwise, how can they with St. Paul say: "the love of Christ constraineth us?" For Jesus says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14, 15. One of his commandments is this; "Beware of false prophets." Math. 7, 15. Another is this: "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." ... When we speak of missionary work we do not mean the kind of work just alluded to and which may be called secular missionary work.²³⁴

M. F. Mommsen addressed the synod on "Fostering Fellowship and Co-operation with Orthodox Synods; Avoiding False Alliances at Home and Abroad."²³⁵ At the same time, the *ELT&LS* addressed the topic of unionism in many articles.²³⁶ George highlighted the issues of unionism through the *ELT&LS* by using the example of the Norwegian Lutheran Church's National Christian Council.²³⁷

One of the serious problems discussed at the 1925 Kuling Conference was schooling and teachers in Hankow at the Mission Schools. Several male school teachers at the Mission schools engaged in brawling and attended brothels.

Strenuous efforts were made last year to get all the wives of our workers and students to come to Hankow to live.... It is to be feared that these young men have made a practice of visiting brothels, this

²³⁴ SR 1925, p. 87.

²³⁵ SR 1925, p. 90-95.

²³⁶ "The Objections of the Norwegian Synod to the First Paragraph of 'Opjør.'" J. Thoen, *ELT&LS* 8:2, January 14, 1925, p. 22-29; "Hvorfor Den norske Synod ikke kan vare med paa Forening med 'Opjør' som Basis." J. Thoen, *ELT&LS* 8:15, April 15, 1925, p. 228-234; continued to 8:17, April 29, 1925, p. 259-265; continued to 8:19, May 13, 1925, p. 291-299; "The 'Austin Agreement.'" J. Thoen, *ELT&LS* 8:18, May 6, 1925, p. 275-286. "Concerning the Origin of the Norwegian union Theses." S.C. Ylvisaker Editorial, *ELT&LS* 8:20, May 20, 1925, p. 315-319; "Dr. Pieper on 'Opjør.'" Translation of part of Pieper's review of SR1924 focusing on Thoen's synod address on Opjør, *ELT&LS* 8:22, June 3, 1925, p. 342-345; "Unionism" [part 1] By F. Pieper, *ELT&LS* 8:34, August 26, 1925, p. 530-536; par 2 8:36, Sept, 9, 1925, p. 566-575; part 3 8:40, October 7, 1925, p. 628-632; part 4 8:42, October 21, 1925, p. 662-667; part 5 conclusion 8:44, November 4, 1925, p. 692-696; "Our Norwegian Brethren." a reprinting of a *Lutheran Witness* article from Oct. 6 in *ELT&LS* 8:44, November 4, 1925, p. 698-700.

²³⁷ *ELT&LS* 8:46, November 18, 1925, p. 729-736; concluded 8:48, December 2, 1925, p. 759-761.

being quite the approved thing among Chinese who are away from their families, especially when in a place like Hankow.²³⁸

Several serious issues addressed by the 1924 Conference were upended: of the management of personnel at the schools, the decisions the conference had made to promote Confessional Lutheran identity, the rejection of unionistic practices, and particularly the use of a false god's name in their literature. Arndt and Meyer on one hand, Lillegard and much of the rest of the conference on the other, were not on good terms. Notes from the Concordia Historical Institute state: "It appears that Missionary Arndt left Kuling on Saturday, August 29."²³⁹ Arndt had noted that because he, Arndt, demanded the continued use of the term Sheng-Di, George considered him as part of "the class of 'syncretics, heretics not fit to partake of the Lord's Supper, instruments of the devil raising dissension in the church and fit only to be classed with Judas....'"²⁴⁰

For George, it was a matter of clear doctrine and conscience. Already in his experience, there were Chinese who believed that the God of Scripture was the same as the ancient Chinese god Shang-Di:

There can be no question but that the use of the word Shang-Di is a source of great weakness in the work of the Missions, that it has aided and will aid the syncretistic tendencies that are growing so strong in most Mission Churches in China, that the introduction of the term Shang-Di into the Bible will be marked in future Church Histories as the beginning of the decadence of true religion in Protestant Missions in China. The missionary body has come to general agreement on the linguistic questions involved in the Term Question, as noted above. (II A.) But the increasing liberalism and indifferentism in the missionary body has permitted the word Shang-Di to remain in the Bible, contrary to the judgment of the majority, because to the 'modern missionary' today it makes little difference what God is called,

²³⁸ Letter of September 15, 1925, *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder 16, Document CM 1463, photocopy of typewritten letter from George. He also reported the attempted rape of their family servant by one of their teacher/evangelists. These events made the decision of the Roman Catholics to relocate their seminary and schools outside the urban areas understandable.

²³⁹ *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder 16 (1925) Documents CM 1460-1462, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.* There is some unclarity on the precise dates of some of this discussion.

Shang-Di, or Jupiter, or Brahma, or Buddha, or Jehovah,—They all ‘mean the same thing.’²⁴¹

From this summer conference on, the debate would grow more serious and bitter. The conference decided to continue discussion in the 1926 Kuling Conference when, it was hoped, the Board for Missions Director Rev. Brand, would be present. George and his colleague, Rev. Gebhardt were selected to prepare theses to guide discussion. According to George’s notes, the 1925 Kuling Conference did not refer the issue to a board or any faculty for adjudication. The mission board chose to go against the 1924 Kuling Conference resolution regarding the name of the mission and the Term Question. In December of 1925, the Mission Board submitted the Term Question to the St. Louis faculty.²⁴²

The 1926 Kuling Conference

Missionary Arndt had prepared a number of papers on the Term Question following the 1925 Conference. In January of 1926, George and the other “Shen brethren” also submitted a statement and papers to the St. Louis committee.²⁴³ George had recommended to the Missouri Synod mission board that Arndt be removed from the mission for cause and for health. George’s main issue with Arndt appears to have been unionistic practices. The use of Sheng-Di as insisted upon by Arndt was a significant, but not isolated symptom of what George identified as unionism. The issue of Arndt’s health was contested by his son in his biographical notes.²⁴⁴

George addressed the issue of unionism in China again on the pages of the *ELT&LS*. Again, he did not mention the difficulties he was facing at his own station.

²⁴¹ George’s Letter to his Missionary Brethren March 10, 1925, “Document I” in George Lillegard 1930, p. 13-14

²⁴² George Lillegard 1930, p. 24, 27, see Lillegard’s Document IV and V.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Missionary Edward Lois Arndt’s son was Edward J. Arndt (a.k.a. Edward *Hans* Arndt: perhaps *J* for *Johann* then *Hans*?). And, on the St. Louis Faculty Committee was Prof. William Arndt (see Bretscher 1957), who was not related to Missionary Arndt. *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005 CM Binder #18 (1926), p. 14. It should be noted that George’s published copy of Graebner’s Letter of May 10, 1926 is abbreviated. George left out Graebner’s 3rd section where he pleaded with George to “restore fraternal relations” with Arndt and others. The issue mentioned by Graebner is also George’s concern about unionism. George published his book on the Term Question in 1930. Arndt died April 18, 1929 in China. The issue of Arndt’s practices were significant to the life and practice of the mission, but they were not germane to the Term Question itself. “Document V” in George Lillegard 1930, p. 28-28; and CM Binder #18 (1926) Document CM 1710, p. 2.

We have a unionistic spirit among the Christian Missions, even the more orthodox, which is not to be surpassed in any other part of the world. We find Chinese Christians passing from one denomination to another with a sublime indifference to the differences in their teachings,—equalled only by the indifference that the missionaries themselves too often show over towards the question of real convictions of their converts.²⁴⁵

Along with the Term Controversy, the threat of war was growing larger as the summer conference grew nearer.²⁴⁶

Back home the 1926 convention of the Norwegian Synod was held at Rock Dell, Belview, Minnesota from June 23 to 29. Holden M. Olson's introductory paper was titled "Unionism."²⁴⁷ John Hendricks wrote "The Curse of Unionism in the Early History of the Lutheran Church of America."²⁴⁸ H. M. Tjernagel presented his paper "The Curse of Unionism in the American Lutheran Church of Today."²⁴⁹ The report from the foreign mission committee noted:

Important questions are being discussed at this time affecting particularly the China Mission, and the representative of the Norwegian Synod attended a plenary session of the Foreign Mission Board of the Missouri Synod, June 16–17 to take part in the discussion. Director Brand is now on his way to China where he will meet with the conference of missionaries and deliberate further.²⁵⁰

In June George did not yet know what direction the Foreign Mission board or the St. Louis faculty would take. In a letter to his father-in-law, he had decided he should leave the mission if the mission were required to use the term Sheng-Di. The mission was looking forward to the visit of Director Frederick Brand at the summer conference.²⁵¹ Rev. Brand was expected on Wednesday, July 21.²⁵² Brand brought the St. Louis faculty committee's first response and read it to the Kuling Conference.²⁵³ The

²⁴⁵ *ELT&LS* 9:20, May 26, 1926, p. 317-320, quote from 319-320.

²⁴⁶ "Wars and Famine in Szechwan" *ELT&LS* 9:24, June 16, 1926, p. 275-276.

²⁴⁷ SR 1926, p.30-43.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44-51.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51-59.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79. Doctor S.C. Ylvisaker was the representative, see text at footnote 99.

²⁵¹ George to his Father-in-law, from Kuling, June 26, 1926, in Blumer, p. 449-451.

²⁵² Laura was born July 5th. Letter 223, Bernice to her Parents, from Kuling, July 20, 1926, in Blumer, p. 453-455.

²⁵³ George Lillegard 1930, p. 34. The Faculty Opinion is printed as "Document VII," p. 31-34.

Kuling Conference started during the last week of July lasting into late August.²⁵⁴

Earlier in July the KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party) launched the Northern Expedition. This military advance came to Hankow by September.

In September George wrote of the Red Army's incursion into Hankow and how the mission was locked down in separate locations. All but a few were preparing to leave China.²⁵⁵ Despite the grave disagreement, Bernice and the children sheltered with the Arndt's in Hankow in September. Most westerners were now beginning to try to find refuge from war or go home.²⁵⁶ Back in Wanhsien there had been shelling. One shell had knocked down a wall of the mission school compound there. The KMT had besieged the city of Wuchang, across the river from Hankow. Bernice could hear the bombs from the Arndt's place. George had been away with Brand for almost three weeks trying to evaluate the situation with the mission.²⁵⁷

The St. Louis faculty issued their second opinion on October 2, 1926. It was basically a re-statement of the position they took in their first opinion: that Sheng-Di was appropriate to use for God even though it was the name of a particular false god in the Chinese pantheon.²⁵⁸ The mission had a short conference in Hankow on October 11, 1926, but it seems to have been mostly logistical.²⁵⁹ Right after that conference, George expressed his exasperation to their family:

If we find this mission an impossible place, do you think there would be any chance of us getting a call at home, or of the Norw. Synod being willing to send us out to China independent of the Missourians? The Term Question may prove the deciding factor. But even apart from that, I must confess that this mission, with half-crazy Arndt still in it and going strong, and with its infallible Board in St. Louis, is getting so on our nerves that I doubt it is worthwhile trying to work in it. 'Life is too short' for such continual scraps as this mission is bound to

²⁵⁴ Letter 225 Bernice to her Mother, from Kuling, August 22, 1926, in Blumer, p. 456-457.

²⁵⁵ "War in China" *ELT&LS* 9:44, November 3, 1926, p. 595-597.

²⁵⁶ Letter 226 Bernice to her Parents, from Hankow, September 7, 1926, in Blumer, p. 458-459.

²⁵⁷ Letter 228 from Bernice to her Parents, from Hankow, September 21, 1926, in Blumer, p. 460-461.

²⁵⁸ George Lillegard 1930, p. 37-40.

²⁵⁹ Letter 230 to her Parents, from Hankow, October 11, 1926, in Blumer, p. 466-467. The St. Louis Faculty second opinion still had not come by October 16 as indicated by a letter from George to his parents of that date, in Blumer, p. 469-70.

have so long as Arndt is a member and the Board pursues the policy it has indulged in the last couple years. I have done my best to show how impossible Arndt is, and have also tried to show the Board how impractical it is to run a mission in China from an office-chair in St. Louis, but things have gone from bad to worse, and unless a distinct improvement becomes evident in the near future, I shall consider it my duty to 'shake the dust of this mission off my feet.' Bernice says to tell you that she 'is through with China.' ... We would appreciate whatever news of the situation and prospects in the Norw. Syn. you could give us. I am very glad that Dr. Y. agrees with me on the Term Question, and with his help it should not be difficult for me to set our Norw. brethren straight on the question.²⁶⁰

Somehow during all the displacements that took place during the wars around them George found time in November and December to write a significant scholarly reply to the St. Louis faculty.²⁶¹ The Term Question would occupy George's immediate attention for several years after his relationship with the Chinese mission ended.²⁶²

Evacuation

As the Lillegards came out of the 1926 summer Conference at Kuling, they had been promised the possibility of furlough in July 1927.²⁶³ In early September Bernice and the children received shelter from the Arndt family in Hankow. The missionaries experienced great difficulty in finding safe travel from Kuling to Hankow.²⁶⁴ While the family was at the Arndt's, George went with others on a scouting trip to evaluate the situation in the mission stations. Bernice related that their home town of Wanhsien had seen particular trouble.²⁶⁵ George had been away for nearly three weeks. Bernice expressed discouragement and concern over the situation. She expected to be able to return to Wanhsien on Thursday September 23. But while she was writing this another bombardment began across the river from Hankow in Wuchang. "I hear some big bombs now, but we've heard more or less right along. They've besieged the city for over two weeks.

²⁶⁰ George on board the S.S. Kiangwo, October 16, 1926, in Blumer, p. 469-471.

²⁶¹ George from Wanhsien, December 26, 1926: "Document X 'An Examination of the papers on the Term Question Prepared by the Concordia Seminary Faculty.'" in George Lillegard 1930, p. 40-53

²⁶² In 1930 he published *A History of the Term Controversy in Our China Mission*, a collection of documents from the controversy from 1925-1930 with annotations.

²⁶³ Letter 225 to her Mother from Kuling, August 22, 1926, in Blumer p. 456-457.

²⁶⁴ Letter 226 to her Parents from Hankow, September 7, 1926, in Blumer, p. 458.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, note added September 8, 1926, in Blumer, p. 459.

Today they let the women and children out, according to report, so there may be some lively shooting tonight. Guess they're beginning right now."²⁶⁶

Bernice had been sick a few times in September of 1926, but she needed to purchase groceries while they were available. She had received a telegram instructing the ladies and children to stay in Hankow. But while she was out shopping, the servants had followed her instructions so the kids had been loaded on the steamer that was scheduled to depart for Wanhsien. She was able to retrieve the children and wait for a different trip.

This forenoon I took a trip to Jardines and inquired about steamers. The Kiangwo is due to leave at daylight Tuesday morning [September 28]. There are steel plates along the decks outside of the cabins, so it should be quite safe from rifle fire at least. ... They said Monday would be time enough to book.

The consulate was advising against anyone going up river.²⁶⁷ By mid-October George was still not back and Bernice and the children were still in Hankow. George had been away for five weeks. George wrote en route to Ichang from aboard the S.S. Kiangwo:

We went on board this ship, the 'Kiangwo' Tuesday evening and left Hankow Wed. 10 A.M. We were not fired on at all the first day and night and had gotten five hours beyond Yochow, on Thursday, when we met the British gunboat 'Bee' and were ordered back to Yochow, 'until further notice.' Steamers had been fired on at a pace about 18 hrs. above Yochow, and they wanted that matter attended to before permitting steamers to travel.²⁶⁸

The family arrived in Ichang October 19, 1926.²⁶⁹ Then, after military delays, they arrived in Wanhsien on Reformation Day, 1926. They had feared that baby Marjorie was affected by dysentery. George saw an apothecary on a British gunboat and acquired medicine for her. Each of the family in turn got sick that September through November.²⁷⁰

In December 1926 and the first part of January 1927, rampant looting was taking place. George had heard that Americans were ordered out of

²⁶⁶ Letter 228 to her Parents from Hankow, September 21, 1926, in Blumer, p. 460-461.

²⁶⁷ Letter 229 to George from Hankow, September 23, 1926, in Blumer, p. 462-465.

²⁶⁸ George to the family, on board the Kiangwo, October 16, 1926, in Blumer, p. 469-471.

²⁶⁹ Letter 231 to her Parents from Ichang, October 27, 1926, in Blumer, p. 472.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, and Letter 232 to her Parents from Wanhsien, November 18, 1926, in Blumer, p. 473-474.

the area of Wanhsien, though they had not received direct communication from the Chungking Consulate.

We are packing some of our goods so that we would be ready to make a quick getaway, if that should prove necessary. We have been advised to do that by the British Captain. Since it would take a month or two to evacuate all the 600 or more Americans and British in this province, we are not planning on leaving here earlier than in February some time, even if we should get the consular order to leave that the British Captain reported was on the way. We want to stick it out as long as possible, and so long as the gunboats are here and the American steamers are running, we might as well stay here too. We are all quite well at present. The mission work is slowing up a bit, owing to the near approach of the Chinese New Year's, but otherwise things are as usual.²⁷¹

It seems a rather strange thing to say "but otherwise things are as usual" given the strained situation in war. The war itself, the noise of it, the dislocation, the hiding, the expense for necessities had all come to be the new normal for the missionaries.²⁷² But it was not to remain for long. On January 14 the American Consular Service in Chungking issued orders urging "all Americans west of Chungking to withdraw from Szechwan immediately." The consul further ordered "American women and children in Chungking proceed immediately to Shanghai." "Leave only enough men to look after property."²⁷³

Back in the states, the January 5 edition of the *ELT&LS* published part of a letter from George sent the previous November.

We just received a card dated November 26th from Pastor Geo. O. Lillegard in Wanhsien, China. He greets friends and acquaintances

²⁷¹ George to his Missionary Brethren, from Wanhsien, January 14, 1927, in Blumer, p. 475-476.

²⁷² If you will pardon the use of this expression. But it highlights how quickly a population can adapt to new and terrible circumstances without really recognizing how different their political and economic situation is from just a year or two previous. This is important for pastors to recognize and not be caught up in the political shifts. The two generations born after WWII looked down upon pre-war Germany wondering how any people could be so misled to tolerate such horrible politics so quickly. I think it would be fair to point out that any generation can be quickly led down a path of accepting war, sedition, bloodshed, political turmoil and totalitarian measures in very quick order given a party or nationalistic spirit where the group asserts the need for control in crisis because it is for the best of all and we are all in this together.

²⁷³ Walter Adams American Consul in Chungking, January 14, 1927, in Blumer, p. 479.

with wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The British bombardment had not done as much damage as was thought at first; but now the Bolsheviks are very active in the city with lively propaganda against the Christians and against the strangers. It was not good knowing what will happen.²⁷⁴

On January 17, 1927, Bernice wrote what would be her last letter from their mission home in Wanhsien. It is a very touching example of the internal turmoil faced by wives of pastors and particularly of missionaries.

Won't it be fine to visit with each other over our dishwashing, bed-making, etc. etc. ... God grant we may all meet within a few months! I think, Mamma, that you are disappointed in me. I suppose you wouldn't like to say it or perhaps admit it, but anyway I feel that you may be a little disappointed. It must be mainly because you have wanted to think better of me than I deserve. Where could I have established a reputation for patience? You say you would not say I had expressed myself as being through with China because you would not want to spoil my reputation for patience. If I only were patient! I should have learned patience these years and many other virtues, because, of course, trials and hardships are sent us to train us in Christian virtues. But I am a miserable failure in every way - a poor Christian, a poor daughter, wife, and mother. But I want to improve - and one must have faith in and love for Him in order to be a better person. You say no missionary's life is one of ease. Perhaps that is true to a certain extent, although in the larger cities, many missionaries live a life little different from that at home. But no Christian should expect a life of ease and I have not thought that I should lead any easier life at home as far as work is concerned, than here, nor that it would be a path of roses. But I did expect that the 'mission life' would be different. I knew that there are 'politics' in the church and that pastors and preachers of the Word are human and so on, but it was somewhat of a jolt to get into such close contact with it as we have here in China. Is there no peace? Seems to me there should be a sort of peace between Christian brethren at least. And as for justice, Ragnar (what am I thinking of) ... George got a rotten deal in 1916-1917 and he certainly isn't getting any very nice deal from this Mission Board - and it is the same question really - unionism- syncretism ... Let me cease! I almost

²⁷⁴ *ELT&LS* 10:1, January 5, 1927 "Kirkenyt" p. 14.

dread getting to where I can *talk* to you about these things. If I say anything, I'm afraid I'll say too much.²⁷⁵

Immediately after expressing these concerns, she moved on to the issues with packing because of the political situation. One of the items she specifically mentioned is the piano they had originally purchased and shipped to China. They were hoping to sell it for \$1000 Mexican rather than renting or storing it.²⁷⁶

Bernice and the children left Wanhsien on January 20, 1927. George followed four days later. The boat he was travelling on “was heavily fired on at short range by southern soldiers from junks in the river, and the Chinese steward on board was killed.”²⁷⁷ Postal service had become much slower due to the war. As they were leaving, the Lillegards received letters posted by their families in the United States the previous November. As the Lillegards were leaving, most of their co-workers had escaped to Shanghai. George was the last to leave the Wanhsien mission station. Almost all the missionaries were leaving China. The Arndts, however, would be staying behind in China.²⁷⁸ The Lillegards travelled by steamer from Wanhsien all the way to Shanghai, a journey of eight days. The children took sick on the trip. Laura suffered from pneumonia but was recovering by the end of the first week of February. They stayed in Shanghai until their departure on February 20, 1927.²⁷⁹

The Lillegard family boarded the ship *The President McKinley* on February 20, 1927. The trip contained some rough weather but was otherwise uneventful. They arrived in Seattle on March 7th.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Letter 236 to her Mother from Wanhsien, January 17, 1927, in Blumer, p. 477-478. Underlining original. I am not sure, but I think Bernice's use of the name Ragnar is a reference to the character Ragnar Brovik in Ibsen's 1892 *The Master Builder*. I believe the reference is to the rocky relationship between the character Ragnar Brovik has with his employer, the architect Halvard Solness—who would then be E.L. Arndt. This would make Hilda Wangel parallel to the Mission Board and the St. Louis Faculty. In *The Master Builder* Halvard Solness is encouraged beyond his abilities by Hilda and falls to his death from the building he had designed and erected. From Bernice's perspective it certainly looked like the Mission Board et al. were pushing and encouraging Arndt in ways that were destructive to the Mission itself.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ “Missionary Lillegard's Annual Report.” *ELT&LS* 10:36 September 7, 1927, p. 551-555, quote from p. 554-555.

²⁷⁸ George to his Folks, En route to Shanghai, January 31, 1927, in Blumer, p. 480. On Arndt see *CHI* Arndt Collection Number: M-0005, notes to CM Binder 19 (1927).

²⁷⁹ Ibid., and Bernice to George's parents from Shanghai, February 6, 1927, in Blumer, p. 481-482.

²⁸⁰ “Missionary Lillegard's Annual Report.” *ELT&LS* 10:36 September 7, 1927, p. 551-555. George to his Folks, on board *The President McKinley*, March 2, 1927, in

Seattle, March 8th, 1927

Dear Folks,

Here we are, all safe and sound. We are at Jacobson's — they met us at the docks, and are having a fine time. ... We plan to leave Tacoma on the 12th, arriving Mpls. the evening of the 14th.

With love to you all from us all —

George²⁸¹

This was not the end of the Term Question or of George's dealings with the mission board of the Missouri Synod. But was the beginning of a new and different phase of family life for the Lillegards.

In March, newspapers focused on the plight of missionaries escaping China. The Bismarck Tribune ran an article on the status of missionaries stationed in Nanking, China. This whole issue of this paper contains stories of concern for the missionaries and their families during the revolution in China. The headline for this paper is "Former Bismarck Girl Wounded in China" the article after that was "Anna Moffett, Missionary, Shot Twice." Another front page read: "Eight Killed in Renewal of Tong Warfare."²⁸²

The missionaries with the Missouri Synod mission who chose to return were able to return home safely. The Synod Report for 1927 noted:

It is very likely known to all that civil war in China has practically put a stop to our missionary activities in that country, and that at a time when the preparatory work that had been done hitherto was beginning to show marked results. Most of the missionaries in China have been brought back to this country together with their families, while a few still remain in Shanghai awaiting developments. God alone knows how soon their activities may be resumed. Rev. Lillegard is at present at this meeting and will tell more about the actual conditions. In the work in this field the so-called Term Question has caused some difficulty. The matter has been in the hands of the General Board of Foreign Missions of the Missouri Synod and has also been referred to the Theological Faculty of the Seminary at St. Louis where it is still being studied. Let us pray that a God-pleasing solution of this problem may be found soon.²⁸³

Blumer, p. 483-484.

²⁸¹ From Blumer, p. 485.

²⁸² Bismarck Tribune, 1927.

²⁸³ SR 1927, Committee on Foreign Missions, p. 66-67.

In the *ELT&LS* notes on the Synod meeting stated: “The mission in China is continued by native Christians, while the white missionaries are forced to be absent. It is a time of trouble and a trial for the Christians in China; therefore our prayers and our financial contributions are needed to support this mission.”²⁸⁴ LSQ

Abbreviations

CHI = Concordia Historical Institute

ELT&LS = *Evangelisk Luthersk Tidende and Lutheran Sentinel*

FOF = *Faith of Our Fathers*

GFG = *Grace For Grace*

LCArch = Luther College Archives, Decorah, Iowa

KMT = “The Kuomintang (KMT) (Chinese: 中國國民黨; pinyin: Zhōngguó Guómíndǎng; lit. ‘China Nationals’ Party’), often referred to in English as the Nationalist Party of China or Chinese Nationalist Party (CNP), is a major political party in Taiwan, based in Taipei. Formed in 1919, the KMT was the sole ruling party of the Republic of China from 1928 to 2000 under the Dang Guo system, and is currently an opposition political party in the Legislative Yuan. The Kuomintang is one of the two historical contemporary parties in China, the other being the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).”
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuomintang>

SR = *Synod Report of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod* or *Beretning om Den norske Synode af den Amerikanske Evangelisk Lutherske Kirke.*

SR-ELKA = *Beretning om det Synoden for den norsk=evangelisk=lutherske kirke i Amerika*

²⁸⁴ *ELT&LS* 10:27, July 6, 1927, “Synodmødet” p. 404-409, quote from p. 408.

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1920b "Kirkelig Rundskue: Pastor Geo. Lillegard" Volume 34, Number 32, August 5, 1920, page 6, column 2. Notice that George had received a call from the Missouri Synod to be a missionary to China. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045534/1920-08-05/ed-1/seq-6/>.

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- 1909g "Second Rendition of 'Ruth'." Volume 15, Number 11, April 28, 1909, page 1, column 7. Describes the requested repeat performance of the cantata and its success. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081022/1909-04-28/ed-1/seq-1/>.
- 1909h no lede, Volume 15, Number, June 9, 1909, page 3, column 6-7. A very brief report of the annual Board of Trustees meeting for Willmar Seminary including the statement "Mr. G. O. Lillegaard of the literary department will not return, as he intends to enter the Hamline Theological seminary." The positioning of this article is interesting, there is no title or lede. On the left is "Farmers' Elevator Meet at Pennock." Below is a notice on new tax and

funding for installing a city wide telephone system. To the right is a notice about the Crow River Medical Society meeting. The title above the Seminary report reads, "State Building Erected This Year: Minnesota Board of Control Buys Willmar Farm from Mr. Tallman for the Inebriate Asylum." I believe this is the property that would later become the State Asylum in Willmar. But the focus at the time of purchase was minded toward the Prohibition movement and caring for drunkards. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081022/1909-06-09/ed-1/seq-3/>.

1909i "Personal Mention." Volume 15, Number 26, August 11, 1909, page 1, column 1. News that George and his sister, Miss Luise Lillegaard arrived and were spending a couple weeks with the J.B Boyd family at Eagle Lake. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081022/1909-08-11/ed-1/seq-1/>.

1910a "Personal Mention." Volume 16, Number 14, May 18, 1910, page 1, column 1. George, a student at Hamline, visited the Boyd family on the previous Sunday. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081022/1910-05-18/ed-1/seq-1/>.

1910b "Personal Mention." Volume 16, Number 31, September 14, 1910, page 3, column 3. Noting that George was the guest of the Boyds on his way "from Crosby, ND to Hamline, where he is a student at Luther Seminary." <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn89081022/1910-09-14/ed-1/seq-3/>.

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2012 "ELS Historical Society — Sixteenth Annual Meeting: Program theme: Mission Work in China: The Career of The Rev. George O. Lillegard and His Wife Bernice." *Oak Leaves*, Volume 16, Number 2, pages 1-2. <https://www.els-history.org/download/oak-leaves/oak-leaves-vol-16-no-2-2012.pdf>.

Why Have a Seminary?

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LSQ 61, no. 4 (December 2021)

IF A CHURCH BODY IS TO HAVE A FUTURE, IT MUST prepare for the same in the present. That means it must constantly be instructing its members in the Word of Life and be bringing the same Word to others beyond its borders. If this is not done, the church can disappear in just one generation.

However, this preaching and teaching the Word—through which we are to make disciples of all nations—will not be very thoroughly or systematically done if men are not especially trained for that task. This is why we as a church-body, with definite doctrinal commitments, have a seminary. Through such a theological institution, men, who volunteer to become full time church-workers, are led to a fuller understanding of and appreciation for what the Scriptures teach. The training is to help these men develop their talents and skills so that they may be able to teach the Word effectively as well as faithfully. This is an aspect of church-work we cannot treat lightly, for the Scripture says the preacher of the Word must be “apt to teach.”

They had seminaries in Bible times, too. In Elijah’s day they were called “schools of the prophets;” and Jesus had a very practical seminary class in His day—His disciples who later became the twelve apostles.

But as we know, it takes a considerable amount of training to “produce” such effective church-workers. Our seminary, as most others today do, asks its students to put in three years of study after they have received their

college degree. That means both the student and the church have invested a great deal of time and effort in preparing workers for the church.

It is easy to see that such an education calls for a goodly amount of money, too. Yet, it is the best investment the church can make. For each pastor or missionary trained means another voice to invite men to come to Him Who has saved them from their sins and Who is most anxious that they come to know that—so that they might be saved. Having a hand in bringing people to believe in Jesus is a work which pays dividends; yes, it is building Jesus' church of believers, which will last through all eternity. Here is the real reason for having a seminary—to help save souls.

Our Bethany Lutheran Seminary needs our prayers and our gifts. What a blessed way to "Give Thanks" for the salvation most of us have known and received since childhood! LSQ

Sermon on Matthew 20:1–16: Proof for Grace Alone

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Editor's Note: This was the last written sermon by the late President John Moldstad. It was intended for a decommissioning of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Escondido, California, on January 31, 2021. President Moldstad was taken to be with the Savior on January 29, 2021.

Text: *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’*

“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered one of them and said,

'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.' (Matthew 20:1–16)

ALUTHERAN PASTOR WHOM I KNEW (NOW SAINTED) told of how a young college-aged woman whom he had confirmed a number of years earlier, asked to speak with him one day. She had a serious concern about a teaching in the Bible. The pastor wasn't surprised to hear her make the remark, "Pastor, I have no difficulty with the Bible teachings that you have taught me over the years, but now that I am in science courses at the university I have trouble with the creation account." She went on to say, "This teaching which is opposite of evolution seems like the hardest thing for me to accept." It was then that the wise pastor responded: "No, Tami, this is not the most difficult teaching in the Bible. Yes, the Bible clearly teaches the 6-day creation account (and we will talk about that), but the hardest doctrine in Scripture for we humans to accept is this: that we sinners are saved by grace—and grace alone—by faith in Jesus Christ."

True ... It is. The message is simple. Ephesians states: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it's the gift of God—not of works, so that no one can boast" (2:8–9). Romans states: "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (11:6). We might ask: why should it be so hard to believe that forgiveness of sins and getting to heaven is fully a free gift? It's primarily one reason: We sinners tend to think in terms of merit and reward, not just in secular affairs, but even in the spiritual realm. And the devil likes nothing better than to get people to think that getting to heaven is something people must earn or deserve by their goodness—at least, partly. We also know this erroneous view plays on a person's sinful pride to imagine getting to heaven is due somewhat to his or her style of Christian living.

But the Bible shoots a big hole through that merit-and-reward theory, which we sinful humans have in our heads by nature.... Because of our first parents' original fall into sin, Scripture tells us that even from conception and birth we all are tainted with original sin, which in and of itself is enough to damn us to hell forever. What's more, without God working all good in us, we could not even accept by faith the grace in Christ that saves. In fact, if we were ever to try to depend on our own

works for gaining heaven, we also have to reckon with the fact that Isaiah calls them “filthy rags” (64:6). Our sins and tainted works would mean that, by nature, we would be cast out eternally!

Thank God we have this wonderful parable of our Lord Jesus concerning the workers in the vineyard. **It serves as proof that we are indeed saved by grace alone!** ... As Luther would say, “We are all beggars.” Sinners that we are—who of us is in the right spiritual position by nature to dicker with God about His plan of generously rewarding people with forgiveness and eternal life? All of us must kneel with empty hands held out, waiting on his magnanimous nature to grant his multi-faceted gift of goodness and mercy!

There is both warning and comfort found in this parable. There is a warning to our smug “old Adam” side. There is a great comfort to each of us as contrite sinners. The context of the parable is important. Jesus’ disciples had been listening to him talk to a rich young man who expected to earn his way to heaven. The young man thought he had kept all of God’s commandments. He didn’t realize that he was a sinner who desperately needed a Savior. To teach him a lesson, Jesus said to him: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21). The young man went away sad. He realized his money meant more to him than following Jesus. But as he went away, it suddenly dawned on Peter that what Jesus had asked of the young ruler, he and the other disciples had already done! They had left their fishing boats, their houses and their friends to follow Jesus. So, Peter thought he and the other eleven disciples should in the end have a greater reward from the Lord. He asked Jesus, “What then will there be for us?” (Matthew 19:27). How easily even the disciples could be led away from the greatest truth: that we are saved purely by grace alone. So, Jesus told them this parable as **proof that we all are saved by grace alone.**

What strikes us is how the landowner handled pay day. Those who worked twelve hours and those who worked six hours and those who worked only one hour all received the same pay at the end of the day. That is exactly the way it is with God’s grace. No matter when a person starts believing in Christ as the Savior—whether it is as a baptized infant; whether it is as an adult halfway through life; or whether it is as a person in the hour of his death—that person possesses the same full and free forgiveness of sins and the blessed promise of heaven that all believers possess. Did the thief on the cross who had lived a terrible life but repented

and came to faith in his dying moments receive any less of a blessing than other believers? Jesus told him, “Today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Did the woman who was caught in the act of adultery and repented receive any less forgiveness than other believers? Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Did Zacchaeus, the tax collector who presumably cheated people out of hundreds and hundreds of dollars and yet repented, receive any less of a blessing from Jesus than other believers? Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:9–10).

For you and me, too, it is not important for us to think about how long a period of time we have been Christians as opposed to others, or to think about how much time and effort we’ve put into our lives serving Christ. That way of thinking quickly feeds our sin of pride, the big violation of the First Commandment. Each of us here are being warned not to draw the conclusion that we should get a bigger reward in heaven than some other believers. What is vital is to know and trust right at this moment that Christ has forgiven all our sins, and that it is only because of His grace we are certain of going to heaven. One of our hymns reminds us of this: “All depends on our possessing God’s abundant grace and blessing” (ELH 468). The thief on the cross, the woman caught in the act of adultery, Zacchaeus, and all the rest of us, need only look to the grace of Christ on the cross for free and full forgiveness and salvation.

In the parable the workers who had put in the longest day grumbled and complained about the landowner’s fairness. But the landowner—who here represents God—gave one of the complainers this classic reply: “Friend, I’m not being unfair to you. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give to the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?” (20:13–15).

Jesus doesn’t deal with those who are called to believe in Him according to the marketplace standards of what is right and fair. And how thankful we are that He doesn’t! If He did, we’d all be lost! We’ve all sinned—and if we doubt that, we haven’t checked the catechism mirror lately. How have our thoughts been? Are they pure as God wants them to be?—not just toward our neighbor ... but more to the point, toward God himself? Are we plagued with worry and lack of trust in our God? Do we wonder if He really is in control as we ponder our nation’s future and our own futures—even as your beloved St. Paul Lutheran is now coming to a close? Are we constantly praying? Are we constantly looking to Word

and Sacrament alone for strength? ... So often we fail! ... If Jesus were to deal with us according to what is right and fair, we'd all receive only the wages of sin: death—the eternal kind.

But here is our great comfort and strength: Instead of following market-place standards of what is right and fair, Jesus follows the divine standard of grace. You see, Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, but to save the world. He didn't come to punish sin, but to forgive sin. He didn't come to show the sinner the way to eternal death, but the way to eternal life. He didn't come to pay us according to what we have done, but to bestow on us the gifts of his free grace and mercy. He has done this by his life of holiness lived in our place, and by his sacrificial death at the cross in atoning for our sins, and by his rising from the dead to assure us that our sins have been dealt with and that we now are in good standing with our heavenly Father. You see, He deals with us according to His goodness, and not according to what we have earned and deserve. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Consider Abraham.... No doubt, Abraham was one of the best men to ever live. He faithfully served God. He even followed God's orders when God wanted Him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on the altar. But Abraham, too, was a sinner. Remember how he had lied about his wife Sarah, calling her only his sister, so that the Egyptians would not harm him. But Abraham was not afraid of God's just anger over sin. He knew that God was counting him as righteous—as holy—for totally another reason: God had promised that a Savior would come and take away the guilt and punishment of everyone's sins. He repented of his sins and trusted with his whole heart in that promise. This is why in Romans 4 it says: "If in fact Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" And Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad!" (John 8:56).

Yes, from the least sinful to the greatest sinner in the world, you and I and all need to look only to Christ's grace for the ticket to heaven. This parable is **proof that we are saved only by grace alone.** "All ... are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

The parable of the workers in the vineyard has a warning, then: Let grace be grace. How easily the Old Adam tickles us with the idea of being deserving. So sly is Satan, he can tempt us to trust in works under the very name of grace. He can whisper: "Oh ... it's all grace, but see, you do what so many do not do, you go to church, you read, you do good, therefore you have received God's grace and the promise of heaven." But that's making the very gift of grace a kind of reward obtained by man's effort. We dare never lose sight of this fact: every person who is saved, is saved in no other way than the way the thief on the cross was—simply by the mercy of God!

Yet, what comfort is here in this story of Jesus for downcast hearts! There is much comfort here for the person who says, "I sure wish I could work in the Lord's vineyard, but when I try to do some good, some sin is sure to come along and spoil it." In other words, there is much comfort for the person who would like to believe that heaven is a free gift for him, but feels left out because of a pressing load of sin. The comfort is that the landowner doesn't deal with us according to what we deserve—if he did, all of us would be lost. He deals with us according to His own mercy. Take comfort in this sentence from the parable: "I want to give to the man who was hired last the same as I gave you" (20:14). Are you unworthy and undeserving? Do you feel you're the last? Don't despair. God is gracious. The gifts of grace were set before the complainers, but they didn't want gifts; they wanted wages. On the other hand, those who knew they had earned nothing, were glad to receive the gift.

During World War I the Prince of Wales visited thirty-six severely wounded men in hospital right outside of London. The Prince and his escorts went through the main ward and shook hands with most of them. As preparations were made to leave, the Prince indicated to one of his aides that he had only seen thirty-five. "Where's the other one?" Although the Prince was told the young soldier's appearance was unbearable, the Prince insisted on seeing the last man. The Prince stood silent for a moment, and then moved toward the man and, stooping down, kissed him! With a quivering voice, the Prince of Wales was heard to say of the disfigured soldier, "Wounded for me."

Whether we are paupers on this earth or princes, Abrahams or Zacchaeuses, we all need to kneel before our wounded Savior at Calvary and say, "Wounded for me." "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

This is the great message that has been proclaimed here in this sanctuary Sunday after Sunday. While this worship facility respectfully draws to a close today, the message of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus, wounded for our salvation, still continues and will continue forever as God has his Word and Sacrament proclaimed and administered throughout the world. It is fitting to be reminded of the namesake of your church. St. Paul emphatically declared: "I am determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified!" (1 Corinthians 2:2). May the cross of Christ's grace and his empty tomb go with each of you in the days ahead. Amen. [LSQ](#)

Preaching the Gospel with Purpose

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Foreword: ELS President John A. Moldstad, Jr. went to be with his Savior on January 29, 2021. Before his sudden departure from this earthly life he had begun work on a paper for the Great Plains Pastoral Conference entitled, “Preaching the Gospel with Purpose.” Still wanting this paper to be presented, the conference planning committee asked if I would complete his work and present on it in his absence. In taking up this task, I have sought to include as much of John’s original material and thoughts as possible. It should be noted that it was his intention for this paper not just to provide insight and ideas for pastors, but to spark discussion concerning gospel preaching and how we may seek to improve our proclamation of the gospel. —Matthew J. Moldstad

WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF OUR Evangelical Lutheran Synod? Would outsiders name the same identifiers as we who compose the clergy of our ELS? We all must admit that any viewing from the *inside* has the potential to be less objective and cast a better light than might truly be the case. However, at the risk of a biased assessment, I venture to propose the following *positives* as characteristics of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod:

We are perceived as a “family,” due to our close-knit affiliation with one another in terms of doctrine and practice. No doubt our frequent (despite 2020) plenary gatherings of annual conventions and pastoral conferences contribute to this. Our Bethany Lutheran College and our

common Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary also lend to the “family” atmosphere.

We are interested in liturgical worship services.¹

We are a church body committed to carrying out the Great Commission of our Lord. As small as we are, we strive to establish home and foreign missions. We also strive—but more efforts can be made—to reach members in our communities with the life-saving message of Christ as Savior.

Finally, a very important distinguishing mark of the ELS is this: in our worship services we stress the preaching of Law and Gospel and emphasize the use of God’s means of grace.²

This brings us to our homiletics topic for discussion at this year’s Great Plains Pastoral Conference: “Preaching the Gospel With Purpose.” Since we know that only the gospel saves, uplifts, strengthens, and motivates the Christian life, it is wise for every one of our ELS clergymen to reflect on how we may *improve* the focus (or predominance) of the gospel in our preaching.³

Perhaps in our zeal to preach both Law and Gospel and to allow the gospel to have a general predominance in our preaching, we have not given as much thought to how we might preach it with purpose. Are we merely inserting the gospel into our sermons to fulfill a quota so that we

¹ See Committee on Evangelical Lutheran Synod Worship, “Report of the Committee on Evangelical Lutheran Synod Worship”, September 19, 2011, https://www.els.org/wp-content/download/worship_committee/2011-Report-of-the-Committee-on-ELS-Worship.pdf: “A feature of the ELS—and of its predecessor body, the old Norwegian Synod—is that we place a high value on fostering and maintaining liturgical unity. This is seen in our bylaw concerning Liturgical Forms and Ceremonies, Chapter 1, which recommends specific orders of worship for us in our congregations.”

² Our seminary continues to stress the essentials of Law and Gospel in our homiletics studies. C. F. W. Walther’s “The Proper Distinction Between Law And Gospel” is still used as a homiletical text book. Critiques of seminary sermons draw attention to specific applications and illustrations in the textual treatment of the Law, and also—most importantly—in the personal and pointed comfort of the Gospel of our Lord’s great work of salvation for sinners. These same “sermonic markers” frequently are topics of discussion in our synod’s pastoral conferences, especially also in many of our smaller winkel meetings. Two key identifying concerns in our gospel proclamation are: presenting clearly the teaching of objective justification and also referencing not only the passive obedience of Christ, but also his active obedience in securing for each of us vicariously the victory over our enemies of sin, death, Satan and hell. Our synod has made these like twin pillars in our halls of homiletics.

³ C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law And Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), 403. Walther reminds us in his final thesis, “In the twenty-first place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching.”

do not draw the ire of one of our members or a brother pastor listening in online? Are we merely describing the gospel without making personal application to hurting souls? Do we fail to bring out the multi-faceted aspects of the gospel of Christ? Are there specific purposes in preaching the gospel, if so, what are they, and how may we emphasize them?

In this paper I will discuss six purposes of gospel preaching as well as provide suggestions on how we might better preach the gospel with purpose.

I. The purpose of conveying forgiveness

A. Explanation of the purpose

The Formula of Concord defines the gospel in this way,

The Gospel ... is that doctrine which teaches what a man should believe in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins from God, since man has failed to keep the law of God and has transgressed it, his corrupted nature, thoughts, words and deeds war against the law, and he is therefore subject to the wrath of God, to death, to temporal miseries, and to the punishment of hell-fire. The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally. For everything which comforts and offers the mercy and grace of God to transgressors of the law strictly speaking is, and is called, the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God wills not to punish sins to but to forgive them for Christ's sake.⁴

Conveying forgiveness is the overarching and quintessential aim in our proclamation of the gospel. No greater gift can be offered and received than that of the forgiveness of sins personally from our God himself. We often state that every one of the Ten Commandments stem from the first. So also in the realm of the gospel every blessing of good news from God stems from the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, through which we have the forgiveness of sins. As Luther emphasized in his Small Catechism, "Where there is the forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation."⁵

⁴ FC, SD, V, 20–21; T. G. Tappert, ed, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 561–562.

⁵ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism* (Madison: Litho Productions, 2001), 201.

B. Scriptural examples

Bible examples of this central purpose of the gospel preaching are numerous. Here are just two samples:⁶

He said to them, “This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46–47).

But the One God raised did not see decay. So, gentlemen, brothers, let it be known to you that through this Jesus forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you, also forgiveness from everything from which you could not be justified through the law of Moses. In this Jesus, everyone who believes is justified (Acts 13:37–39).

C. How might we emphasize this purpose?

1) Preach specific gospel

One way of emphasizing this purpose is to preach “specific gospel.” That is, the gospel should be preached as it relates to the text, but also as it relates to the specific law presented in the text.

Concordia Seminary professor, David Schmitt, writes,

Preaching is centered in the gospel of Jesus Christ for forgiveness, life and salvation. The question, however, is how does one move from the text to Christ? This question is an important one because it prevents preachers from making awkward insertions of stereotypical and formulaic statements in order to preach Christ in the sermon. Preachers want the gospel proclamation to flow naturally from the text rather than be artificially imposed upon it.⁷

I remember in seminary that our teachers taught us to look for gospel statements within our text and to speak of the Gospel in our sermon in those terms. Various gospel motifs can be and should be used, most often as suggested from the text itself. Examples include: a courtroom picture

⁶ For additional examples, see: Genesis 3:15, 4:1; Psalm 103:3, 130:4; Isaiah 43:25, 44:22, 53:4–6, 53:11; Luke 1:76–77, 3:3; John 1:29; Acts 2:38–39; Romans 3:21–28; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 5:19, 5:21; and 1 John 1:7, 1:9, 2:2, 3:5.

⁷ David Schmitt, “Anatomy of a Sermon,” *Concordia Journal* 46, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 71.

in Romans; the vine and branches in John 15; crushing Satan's power in Genesis 3:15 and 1 John 3:8; the Good Shepherd in John 10; and the Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7.⁸ The preacher is wise to utilize the gospel motifs used within the text itself. This will provide variety as well as help bring out various aspects of the Gospel.

What do you do when the gospel can't be found in your text? There are perhaps two strategies: look for the gospel in the context or look at the law of the text and bring in gospel that specifically speaks to that law. This latter strategy provides a great opportunity to bring in Christ's active obedience. Perhaps the text is a part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Many sins are condemned in that text, yet we can assure people of their forgiveness, that they are right with God because of Christ's active obedience. Jesus never lied or hated, he perfectly loved and he did so, for you. Or perhaps the text is the Good Samaritan, there isn't a whole lot of gospel in that text unless we look to Jesus as the Good Samaritan who loved his neighbor perfectly for us.

Concordia Seminary professor, Elmer Kettner writes,

Juxtaposition is a good word to remember in sermon preparation. Put the individual alongside of Christ. Then describe them as they trade places, the sinner as though he had done all that Christ did, and Jesus as though he has done all that the sinner did. Let us not merely refer to the Gospel, but dwell on it, develop it, repeat it, emphasize it, and apply it that our hearts may catch it.⁹

Focusing on the specific law and gospel of your text will help you to bring out this purpose of conveying forgiveness of sins, especially when you make use of Christ's active obedience. This reminds the individual that Christ's perfect record, even in the specific area where they have failed, has been credited to their account in Christ.

⁸ See also Francis Russow, *Preaching the Creative Gospel Creatively* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1983), 36–49 for more examples.

⁹ Elmer Kettner, "Are We Really Preaching the Gospel?" *Concordia Theological Monthly* 24, no. 5 (May 1953): 322. See also, Klement Preus, ed. *Preaching to Young Theologians—Sermons of Robert Preus* (St. Louis: Luther Academy, 1999), 36–37. In a sermon for a chapel service at Concordia Seminary on October 8, 1959 on the text of Romans 5:1–10, Robert Preus recalls an illustration often used by Norman Madson, Sr.: "One of my professors at the seminary used to illustrate the nature of our justification with a rather striking analogy. It is as though God listed on one page of a ledger all the sins and crimes which have been or ever would be committed by all men. On the opposite page he listed all the good works and virtues of Jesus Christ. Then God switched the columns. He imputed Christ's righteousness to us and our sins and wrongs to Christ and Christ died for them."

2) Preach “for you”

i. For your listeners

A little Augsburg Fortress book entitled, “The Lutheran Handbook,” encourages Lutheran parishioners when deciphering Law and Gospel to “(3) Listen for the ‘for you.’” The gospel is always spoken directly to sinners. If what you hear doesn’t use the word you, it could be a good description about God or Jesus, but it’s not quite the gospel. The gospel says it straight out, ‘You are forgiven.’ ‘Jesus died for you.’” Perhaps the point is overstated, but it is a good reminder to apply the comfort of the Gospel to sinners.

Making the gospel personal to the hearer can be of great benefit and provide an excellent way of emphasizing the purpose of conveying forgiveness in our preaching. I (Matthew) remember a sermon preached by one of our current seminary professors years ago in the Bethany chapel. Though it was not an overly exuberant sermon, I recall that the reiteration of those simple words “for us” and “for you” had a powerful effect on the audience. I myself have often been reminded by a fellow pastor when my gospel preaching falls short I must remember to preach the “for you” aspect of the gospel. Keeping this in mind will also help the preacher not just to preach about the gospel, but to actually apply its soothing balm to the listener in the audience. In this way, we emphasize this purpose of the gospel, conveying the forgiveness of personal sins.

ii. For yourself

In this regard, we should not think that the gospel is simply a “for you” message for the congregation, but also a “for you” message for the preacher. How important it is for the pastor to take to heart personally what he proclaims. In your sermon preparation apply the law of the text to yourself, but also run and embrace the very gospel words that God through His Word has revealed are “for you” too. In doing so, the precious message of the gospel will penetrate your heart, and it will also more meaningfully flow from your mouth in your preaching.

By making regular use of the “for you” and by using Christ’s active obedience we can remind and reassure our listener that their specific sins were forgiven, that Christ has in fact perfectly obeyed God’s law in the area where they individually have failed and they have been forgiven.

II. The purpose of conveying comfort and joy

A. *Explanation of the purpose*

A second purpose in gospel proclamation is conveying comfort and joy. Now we should not think of these two purposes of preaching the gospel as being in conflict with one another, rather that they complement one another. This second purpose flows from the first. True comfort and joy are to be found only in the gospel of Christ, that he through his life, death, and resurrection has won for us the forgiveness of sins.

B. *Scriptural examples*

We see examples of this purpose in these sections of Scripture, among others:¹⁰

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call out to her. Her warfare really is over. Her guilt is fully paid for. Yes, she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins (Isaiah 40:1–2).

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God (Romans 5:1–2).

C. *How might we emphasize this purpose?*

We emphasize this purpose of the gospel in our preaching when we proclaim the result of the forgiveness of sins, what forgiveness means for the individual here and now—comfort. This isn't the comfort that our people will never have stress and always be happy because they are children of God. No, it is the comfort of knowing they are right with God. As a result of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, we proclaim that our people need not live in fear that God is angry with them or that they haven't done enough to earn God's favor. We assure them that they have peace with God.

Walther reminds us what emphasizing this purpose is and what it is not:

¹⁰ For additional examples see: Isaiah 61:1–3, 10–11; 66:10–13, Romans 5:1–2, and 2 Corinthians 1:3–5.

Some preachers describe the Christian as having nothing but pleasant feelings ... you will say “a Christian—oh, what a happy being he is! He is free from all anxiety, free from doubt,” etc. All this is not so. Thousands upon thousands of Christians are, on the contrary, filled with anguish and despondency and are continually fighting with themselves and crying: “Oh, wretched man that I am!” In your sermons you like to treat subjects like these: “The blessed state of a Christian,” and the like. Well, do not forget that the blessedness of Christians does not consist in pleasant feelings, but in their assurance that in spite of the bitterest feelings imaginable they are accepted with God and in their dying hour will be received into heaven. That is indeed a great blessedness.¹¹

But the result of the gospel is also joy. It is not a joy in thinking in that the rest of our parishioners’ lives are going to be sunshine and roses, but joy in the gift of eternal life that is theirs in Christ.

On conveying joy when proclaiming the gospel, the preacher can explain that often the joy is mingled with sorrow: we are saint and sinner at the same time; furthermore, a healthy sorrow over sin (Law worked) can highlight the gospel’s joy as far deeper than an ephemeral greeting.

As we plumb the depths of what Christ did on the cross, how he suffered the most terrible suffering in all of existence, hell itself, we should not shy away from explaining the reason he had to suffer, it was because of me and my sin. Yes, we should emphasize that we are very real sinners, whose sin deserved eternal punishment, but who have a very real Savior, who did suffer and die for us. We then can look with much appreciation and joy that he has in fact suffered all which was necessary for our sin. No matter what difficulties, trials, and troubles we endure, we can have joy in Christ. And it is this joy that leads to rejoicing and praise.¹²

¹¹ Walther, 311–312.

¹² Lutheran Laymen’s League, *The Dr. Walther A. Maier Memorial Booklet* (St. Louis: Lutheran Laymen’s League, 1950), 18. In the final message personally delivered by Lutheran Hour speaker, Dr. Walter Maier, he said, “If your Christmas joy is not complete; if you have no true peace in your heart but only fear and worry; if you have not yet learned to know what unselfish love is, don’t let the day close without having God bless you with the gift of this grace! When Handel wrote *The Messiah*, which every Christmas season brings joy to millions of hearts, he locked himself in his room in London for twenty-four days with no other printed material than the passages of Holy Scripture dealing with Christ to form the text of his masterpiece. He let everything else fade away. At meal time a servant brought him food, but the tray often remained untouched. It is recorded that the servant stood by in silence as Handel’s tears dropped on page after page to mingle with his sacred score. A visitor found the composer convulsed in sorrow as he wrote the music for “He is despised.” When he finished the “Hallelujah Chorus” and wrote at the

III. The purpose of conveying confidence

A. Explanation of the purpose

One of the definitions of “confidence” is “Faith or belief that one will act in a right, proper, or effective way, e.g. have confidence in a leader” (Webster’s Dictionary). God alone is our confidence, and we know Him in this matter of salvation for sinners through His Word and the Sacraments. *Therefore*, we find in the Word and Sacraments the *confidence* transmitted to our souls (Romans 8:1). What we are referring to here is the *certainty* of our standing/relationship with God due to the gospel of Christ.

B. Scriptural examples

We see examples of this purpose in these sections of scripture, among others:¹³

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God (Romans 5:1–2).

So then, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1–2).

C. How might we emphasize this purpose?

1) *By presenting the promises of God as unconditional and objective*

One way in which we emphasize this purpose is to present the Gospel as unconditional and objective. It seems to be a hallmark of ELS preaching that we emphasize objective justification, that Christ’s work of redemption paid for the sins of the whole world, and that whether we believe it or not this stands as an objective fact of Scripture. We also stress again and again the word “justification.” We point out that God’s work of salvation is something outside of us, that for the sake of Jesus Christ,

end, above his signature, “S.D.G.,” a common abbreviation for the Latin “To God alone all glory,” he later confessed, “I did see all heaven before me and the great God Himself.”

¹³ See also Acts 2 and Romans 8:31–32, 38–39.

God has declared us sinners to be “not guilty.” How important it is for us to do these things, in order to bring confidence to the listener. Despite the sin they continue to see in their own heart and life, they can be confident that God views them as holy and blameless. This is not because of grace poured into them, but because of his grace outside of them, by which he declares the whole world righteous.

We also emphasize this purpose when we stress the sacraments. We point our people to the objective, unconditional promises of God connected to water, bread, and wine. We point them to their baptisms as an objective reminder of the reality that God has brought them into his family, has washed away their sin, and has given them the new life of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. We point them to the Lord’s Supper as an objective reassurance that God has forgiven their sins in Christ. We remind them of the intimate nature of this forgiveness, that it isn’t just for everyone else, but for you personally. In doing so, we must take care to remind our people of why such confidence can be found in the sacraments. It is because of Christ and his promises to which he binds himself.

We should take care though in doing this. It has been said that sometimes we preachers may be so objective in setting forth the scriptural facts that we unfortunately become “objectionable” in the ears of our hearers. This may sound oxymoronic, for to be scriptural is to be understood *ipso eo* as practical. I also fear that our preaching of the Gospel may at times slide into continual references to the “means of grace” or “Word and Sacrament” without offering what these treasures are conveying: Christ himself and his full forgiveness. After all, the preaching of the sermon—the offering of the Gospel to needy hearers, including the one in the pulpit—is itself a means of grace.¹⁴

¹⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, “Preach the Gospel” in *New Park Street Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/preach-the-gospel/>. Spurgeon in a sermon delivered in 1855 said, “Some time ago there was a young woman under great distress of soul; she came to a very pious Christian man, who said ‘My dear girl, you must go home and pray.’ Well I thought within myself, that is not the Bible way at all. It never says, ‘Go home and pray.’ The poor girl went home; she did pray, and she still continued in distress. Said he, ‘You must wait, you must read the Scriptures and study them.’ That is not the Bible way; that is not exalting Christ; find a great many preachers are preaching that kind of doctrine. They tell a poor convinced sinner, ‘You must go home and pray, and read the Scriptures; you must attend the ministry;’ and so on. Works, works, works—instead of ‘By grace are ye saved through faith.’ If a penitent should come and ask me, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ I would say, ‘Christ must save you—believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ I would neither direct to prayer, nor reading of the Scriptures nor attending God’s house; but simply direct to faith, naked faith on God’s gospel. Not that I despise prayer—that must come after faith. Not that I speak a word against the searching of the Scriptures—that is an infallible mark of God’s

Continuing to remind our people of objective justification as well as the unbreakable promises of God in connection to the sacraments certainly promotes this purpose of conveying confidence.

2) *By speaking with conviction*

Another way we can convey confidence is by speaking with conviction. We might say that in Christian preaching these two things naturally go hand in hand. The preacher desires to express the objective truths of Scripture in a way that shows that he himself firmly believes them, conveying to his congregation that they should have confidence in them as well. In order to best speak with conviction, free delivery is required. To not make use of the free delivery method is to not fully utilize all of the tools available in public speaking, severely restricting this means of communication.

Concordia Seminary Professor John Fritz remarks,

It ought not to be necessary to add that reading the sermon from a manuscript makes for uninteresting preaching. Interesting and effective preaching calls for free delivery. The preacher who is a slave to his manuscript is not fully the master of his subject and cannot put into action his whole body (facial expression, gestures) nor that interplay between speaker and his audience which makes for a better understanding.¹⁵

The sermon should never be read in the pulpit. Speaking reaches its perfection only in *free delivery*. This demands that the sermon be *memorized*.¹⁶

children. Not that I find fault with attendance on God's word—God forbid! I love to see people there. But none of those things are the way of salvation. It is nowhere written—'He that attendeth chapel shall be saved,' or, 'He that readeth the Bible shall be saved.' Nor do I read—'He that prayeth and is baptised shall be saved;' but, 'He that believeth,'—he that has a naked faith on the 'Man Christ Jesus,'—on his Godhead, on his manhood, is delivered from sin. To preach that faith alone saves, is to preach God's truth."

¹⁵ John H. C. Fritz, *The Preacher's Manual: A Study in Homiletics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 66.

¹⁶ Fritz, 73–74. Fritz goes on to say, "We must admit that one preacher may read his sermons and make a deep impression, while another may preach extemporaneously and be dull and dry. But this fact does not contradict anything I have written; for the one man would be a much better preacher than he is if he would make use of free delivery and in course of time learn to preach extemporaneously, while the other, if he cannot improve, ought not to preach at all. People will not listen to dull, dry, poorly delivered sermons, nor will such sermons be very effective."

For his doctoral thesis, Dr. J. Kincaid Smith did much research into the importance of speaking with passion with regard to the reception of a message. He writes,

This passion itself conveys to our hearers a message of one's certainty of what one is asserting. The sense that the person speaking is passionately convinced of the truth of something gets our attention to at least carefully examine his evidence. The evidence, if we find it valid, and if we don't resist it, changes our mind.¹⁷

Smith makes the point that it isn't the speaker's demeanor or passion (or even free delivery), which converts, but ultimately the truth of what is conveyed. On the other hand, a speaker's lack of passion can give the impression to the listener that their message is not worth considering, because by the speaker's own demeanor he shows not that he believes it himself.¹⁸ Speaking with passion indicates to the listener that perhaps the speaker's message is worth considering.

So, as a called preacher of the gospel, it is essential also in demeanor and voice to "speak with conviction" in a genuine manner. This comes naturally when the preacher *internalizes* the very message for his own soul. This is something that must agree with the personality each of us possesses, not something that will be perceived as "contrived." In the opinion of this essayist, this trait can be enhanced by a fervent resolve to memorize one's sermon well in advance of the Sunday delivery. When this occurs, it is more natural that the delivery will enable a conversational tone (not robotic), and facilitate flexibility of the moment in making "eye-to-eye contact" for personal absorption by the hearer. All the while, of course, noting that the Holy Spirit works when and where he pleases.¹⁹

For this reason, a pastor should spend time not just to prepare a sermon manuscript from which to read, but to memorize and to internalize his message that he may preach it with conviction and confidence so that his listeners conclude that his claims are worth considering.

¹⁷ J. Kincaid Smith, "Heuristics of Gospel Communication" (DMin diss., Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, 1987), 147.

¹⁸ See addendum I: S. C. Ylvisaker, "Our Preaching with Special Reference to Law & Gospel", point #17 d).

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:12–14, 12:3 and John 1:12–13.

IV. The purpose of conveying certainty of providential care

A. Explanation of the purpose

Another purpose of gospel proclamation is to convey certainty of God's providential care. In the introduction to his book *God's Providence: He Cares for You*, Prof. Mark Lenz makes the point that the gospel in baptism doesn't just provide comfort in that you know your sins are forgiven or that you know where you are going when you die. It also provides a temporal comfort as well, that even right now you know God loves you and is going to care for you all the days of your life.²⁰ Since the gospel of Christ, granting our forgiveness, is our life's mainstay, we cannot fail to see how the message of the gospel carries providential implications for every step of our daily lives.

B. Scriptural examples

Here are a few examples from Scripture to consider:²¹

But now this is what the Lord says, the Lord who created you, O Jacob, the Lord who formed you, O Israel. Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine. When you cross through the waters, I will be with you. When you cross the rivers, they will not sweep you away. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned, and the flame will not set you on fire. Because I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior, I gave Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you (Isaiah 43:1–3).

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose, because those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. And those he justified, he also glorified. What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for

²⁰ Mark J. Lenz, *God's Providence: He Cares For You* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 7. Lenz draws his reader's attention to the blessing spoken by Lutheran pastors at the end of the baptismal service, "The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (Psalm 121:8).

²¹ Also 1 Corinthians 10:13, John 14:14, and 1 John 5:14–15.

us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him (Romans 8:28–32)?

C. How might we emphasize this purpose?

1) Know your members' earthly concerns

In order to emphasize this purpose of the gospel, it is important to know your members earthly concerns and the best way to do that is through regular interactions with them.

Dr. Robert Preus, in a chapel message to seminarians said,

My dear friends, unless you love people, unless your heart reaches out in sympathy to all who are troubled and distressed, unless you simply find yourself rejoicing with them that do rejoice and weeping with them that weep, like Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, then for Christ's sake do not enter the Christian ministry. There is no such thing as a perfunctory theology or a perfunctory pastoral call, just as a perfunctory love is an impossibility. No, like your Master Theologian, you must identify yourself with him whom you would seek to help. He groans at the grave of Lazarus, He weeps over Jerusalem, He feels so sorry for the crooked woman that He interrupts a sermon to heal her before she even knows what has happened. He spends a whole day theologizing with greedy, misguided Zacchaeus, because He has identified Himself with a lost man. He has compassion on a multitude that is hungry. He even makes water into wine because he wants people to be happy on a festive occasion. And He has so completely identified Himself with our troubles that He took our flesh and became a brother to each of us, a brother who endured temptation in our place and suffered our guilt and punishment.²²

Perhaps we are reminded of the importance of regularly visiting our members, this of course remains beneficial, but don't limit yourself to these interactions. Through phone calls, electronic correspondence, fellowship time, and social events there are many additional opportunities to interact with your members and come to understand their earthly concerns.

²² Preus, 73. This chapel address by Robert Preus on Job 32 was given at Concordia Seminary on January 13, 1961.

2) *Connect the gospel with God's providence*

Not only is it important to know our members well in order to see the opportunities to proclaim comfort for them concerning God's providential care, we also must regularly make this connection to the gospel.

Former ELS president, Rev. George M. Orvick, often made the remark that preachers should not short-shrift this amazing side-benefit from the narrow gospel message of forgiveness *via* the atoning work of Christ. This tremendous treasure for life in the present world is directly related to our obtaining what Christ's gospel conveys.

Whether we like it or not, our members at times are not so much filled with overwhelming concern for the eternal, but especially for the here and now. I think of the situation of ministering to those whose loved one has died. I myself (Matthew) have often wanted to focus so much on the eternal, believing what the family needs most of all to hear in their distress is that through faith in Jesus their loved one is now safely in his loving arms and they will see him again. Though this is important to stress, through my own experience, I've learned that for many what weighs heaviest upon them is their loss in the here and now. They have many questions concerning their earthly life. What comfort can we bring in emphasizing not only their loved one's eternal status and the hope of reunification in heaven, but also that God is caring for them even now, even in this! We can connect the gospel with their earthly concern in this way: God has done the greatest thing imaginable for us in sending Jesus to live and to die for us, certainly he also cares for us in the lesser things.²³

The providential benefits of the narrow gospel message are to be proclaimed and these are uplifting and strengthening due to the adherence to the forgiveness we have in Christ: answered prayers, promises of protection, God's controlling all things for our good.

V. The purpose of motivating Christian living

A. Explanation of the purpose

In his Small Catechism, the explanation to the second article, Luther reminds us of another purpose of the gospel: motivation for our lives of sanctification:

Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his

²³ Romans 8:28–32.

innocent suffering and death; In order that I might be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.²⁴

The gospel is the only proper motivation for our life of sanctification. Christ redeemed us lost and condemned creatures to make us his very own dear children, who desire to serve him in thanksgiving. Therefore, let us recognize and make use of this purpose of the gospel.

B. Scriptural Evidence

Here are a few examples from Scripture to consider:²⁵

Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32).

For the love of Christ compels us, because we came to this conclusion: One died for all; therefore, all died. And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:14–15).

C. How might we emphasize this purpose?

1) Don't forget what motivates sanctification

The first thing we might mention in this regard is not to forget what the proper motivation for Christian living is: the gospel. It's clear from both President Moldstad's notes as well as comments made by Norman Madson, Sr. that there is a temptation for pastors both young and old to think that more law preaching is necessary to motivate lives of sanctification among their members.²⁶ But beware! Satan works hard to diminish the effects of

²⁴ Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 104.

²⁵ See also Romans 6:4, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:18, and Titus 2:11–14.

²⁶ N. A. Madson, *Preaching to Preachers* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1952), 181. "In the earlier years of one's ministry (and I speak from personal experience through a quarter of a century) one is apt to think that it is by thunderous denunciation, sensational exposes, burning strictures that the Lord's work will best be accomplished. But as we grow older we learn the very salutary lesson that men are seldom terrified into being good."

The longer terms served by pastors in their parishes, the more challenging this might be to remember. Over time, the familiarity with the people we serve may show some warts or pet-peeves that are irritating for a pastor who desires to lead them in the right direction. Is it to promote better attendance at worship? Is it the perception of poor stewardship? Is it frustration with comments that seem to stifle efforts at doing outreach? Whatever it

God's gospel. Without the gospel predominating and motivating no true sanctified living can ever occur (Hebrews 11:6).

C. F. W. Walther warns,

Let no minister think that he cannot induce the unwilling to do God's will by preaching the Gospel to them and that he must rather preach the Law and proclaim the threatenings of God to them. If that is all he can do, he will only lead his people to perdition. Rather than act the policeman in his congregation, he ought to change the hearts of his members in order that they may without constraint do what is pleasing to God with a glad and cheerful heart. A person who has a real understanding of the love of God in Christ Jesus is astonished at its fire, which is able to melt anything in heaven and on earth. The moment he believes in this love he cannot but love God and from gratitude for his salvation do anything from love of God and for His glory.²⁷

Walther speaks of the melting aspect of the gospel. This is also *why* the presentation of the gospel should again be made in every sermon as an ending note, as opposed to concluding with a law demand. We need to remember and strive to proclaim our salvation in Christ as our proper motivation for living a Christ-like life.

Forgiveness toward others is one of the more challenging aspects to Christian living. It may be lingering effects from a divorce. It could come from a sour business arrangement. A close relative may now be estranged. Inside the parish, one member seems to detest another. Here especially the gospel incentive to work on a better relationship is in place. Is there a more clear connection to that gospel motivation than in such a case? Christ's love and forgiveness motivates our own.

2) *Gospel preaching should coincide with gospel living*

Sunday preaching should also be backed up by gospel living. We've heard the quip, "The preacher is invisible for six days in the week, and incomprehensible on the first." But we could also say it this way: "The preacher who spends six days in the week loving and caring for his people will also be well-comprehended by his people when he enters the pulpit each Sunday." What better opportunity for the members of the congregation to see gospel motivation in action than in your own life. Again, this

is, the pastor may feel that the club of the law is the way to shake the complacency and not what may be perceived as the "pillow resting" sweet gospel. See also Addendum II.

²⁷ Walther, 389.

is stated to the pastor not as a club to “Practice what you preach!” but rather a wonderful reminder to be motivated by the gospel in our own everyday life. May the gospel of Christ so penetrate our own lives that his forgiveness and love may shine forth, serving as an inspiration to others.

VI. The purpose of meeting our departing moment

A. Explanation of the purpose

It has been said that the purpose of every true preacher is to prepare each of his members to transfer membership from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. A purpose of gospel proclamation is to point our people forward to their eternal home in heaven.

B. Scriptural Evidence

Here are a few examples from Scripture to consider:²⁸

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” Jesus said to him, “Amen I tell you: Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42–43).

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never perish. Do you believe this?” “Yes, Lord,” she told him. “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (John 11:25–27).

C. How might we emphasize this purpose?

1) Preach the resurrection

Here especially the focus on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus is proof positive that the gospel indeed carries us from the dark tunnel into the glorious room where even our bodies will glow with splendor in the day of the great resurrection of all the saints.²⁹ How important not just during the season of Easter, but throughout the year, to remind our people of the certainty and benefits of the resurrection.

²⁸ See also Isaiah 46:4, John 14:1–6, Romans 7:24–25a, 1 John 3:2, Daniel 12:2–3.

²⁹ See how this was highlighted in Acts. See also Philippians 3:20–21, 1 John 3:2, Daniel 12:2–3.

Regularly proclaim the *risen* Savior and the empty tomb, and what that means for the individual. It means that Christ is who he claimed to be, the very Son of God. It means that his words are true. It means that when he promises to raise the dead he can and will do exactly that, because he proved it with his own resurrection. Proclaim the comfort of Christ's promise, "Because I live, you also shall live" (John 14:19).

2) *Preach to Dying Souls*

Since the study of homiletics in particular, as well as all branches of theology, is pragmatic and not ethereal, the address to the soul which is dying (as all are) ought to receive utmost attention. Who knows what soul in the pew (or pulpit) may not be present the next Sunday because of entry into death's door. Therefore, it is not simply wise advice but imperative that the preacher ends his message on a note of gospel joy and reassurance of eternal life. Let no soul go home from the sanctuary that day without the ringing assurance that he has a Savior and is thus certain of heaven because of Christ's merits.³⁰

Conclusion

How great is the task of the preacher to proclaim the gospel to his people week in and week out! How important as well for him not just to proclaim the gospel in a perfunctory way, but with purpose. The intention of this paper was not to encourage you to pigeonhole your gospel proclamation into one gospel purpose or another, but to help you to see a number of the facets of the gospel and to preach it with purpose.

Those in this conference might remember Peter Faugstad's paper from 2014, entitled, "The Antinomian Controversy with application for

³⁰ The now sainted Rev. George Orvick made reference in an Easter sermon to this pertinent illustration: "A group of residents of a nursing home was expressing their fear of death to a pastor. They were sick and knew they would not live very long. The thought of death created anxiety and fear in their hearts. The pastor then said, 'Suppose I told you that I could lead you from this room into another room. That new room would be one where there would be no more sickness or fear. You would all be healthy. No more cripples, no more pain. As soon as you entered this room you would again be in the prime of life. But to get into this room I had to lead you through a dark tunnel that would be frightening. How many of you would follow me?' Everyone raised his hand. 'Well,' he said, 'this is just what death is like. Jesus takes you by the hand and leads you through a dark tunnel. But he leads you right into that room which is bright and beautiful and free from all sorrow. For Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:6). Yes, because Jesus lives we too shall live forever.'"

Law and Gospel Preaching.”³¹ In both the content of that paper as well as in the discussion that followed, the point was made that no matter which use of the law a pastor might want to emphasize all three uses will still be present. For instance, even if a pastor in the end of his sermon might want to stress the third use of the law, as a guide to direct our new self who desires to do good works in Christ, the preacher cannot stop the second use from also being present. Individuals who hear those same gospel-motivated encouragements might also be reminded of their failures and thus understand them in light of the second use of the law, though unintended by the preacher. While this is true, the conference still upheld that it is wise for a pastor to desire a certain outcome for his law preaching and to frame his presentation of it according to that purpose.

The same could be said concerning preaching the gospel with purpose. While a pastor might intend to bring out one purpose of the gospel at a certain time in his sermon, that doesn't mean that the other purposes aren't present or that the listener might understand those statements as relating to different gospel purposes. Yet it is still beneficial for a pastor to strive to use the gospel for specific purposes within his sermon. Doing so will bring out the multifaceted aspects of the gospel. It will also help deepen our members' understanding of the gospel by assuring them of God's forgiveness, bringing comfort and joy to their hearts, giving them confidence of their salvation, providing certainty of God's providential care, motivating their lives of sanctification, and preparing them for their departing moment.

Law and gospel preaching is certainly a hallmark of our ELS. May God help us never to neglect proclaiming the life-saving gospel to our people. May he also help us ever preach the gospel with purpose.

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Addendum I

Our Preaching — With Special Reference to Law and Gospel

By Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker

1. Our great commission—privilege—opportunity!
2. If our private visits were as they should be: frequent, searching, consoling and admonishing, they, too, would stand side by side with public preaching, as in the case of Christ.
3. Since they are not, we should 1) improve the one, 2) lay the more stress on the public.
4. What public preaching is. Why it is so important: instruction, convincing and convicting, comforting, saving, exhorting, explaining, elevating and edifying, confessing, praising.
5. No better preacher than the pastor himself, because he knows his sheep.
6. Each sermon a holy responsibility.
7. Each time and occasion presents new opportunities and needs.
8. In private preaching it is possible to consider individual needs.
9. In public the needs of the whole congregation, but as these become apparent through the individual. In so far each public preaching must at the same time be addressed as to the individual, be governed by individual needs.
10. No preaching is effective that is addressed to a nation, a church, a congregation, a mass—for the mass cannot *hear, consider, repent, believe, do the works of faith*.
11. Considering the individual, then, what is his need? According to the Commission of Christ: the Gospel—in every case, at all times, above all else.
12. The preacher must know and realize the need of the Gospel from his own case and from that of his members. This can and dare be no superficial knowledge—but vital, deep, and sincere.
13. This can be brought only through the Holy Spirit in the Law.—Therefore the study of and the preaching of the Law is self-evident and necessary.
14. How much Law can be determined only by study of individual case.
15. Can predominate only where members are in real danger of hypocrisy and rejection of Christ.
16. But when Christ Himself says, preach the Gospel, we have a right to suppose that this is the supreme need and the supreme concern of our preaching.
17. What is Gospel preaching? Need to study this continually, examine and re-examine ourselves and our preaching, and strive toward ever higher accomplishments in this divine art.
 - a) By contrast, the preaching of the law is a terrible thing, for the law terrifies, drives us away from God, destroys hope, kills without mercy, demands its cruel pound of flesh, leads to the brink of hell and thrusts us down into its eternal despair. The law puts before man an impossible

perfection, reveals the holiness and justice of God, and robs us of every merit and worthiness. It reveals God in His glorious majesty, but leaves us in that dark night out from which we see as from a deep pit of misery and defeat. The law does not bring God close, but intensifies the infinite distance and eternal abyss which separates man from God. Read again the account of the rich man in hell and know what the law effects. To man in his fallen estate the law breathes damnation and a curse. So far as fallen man is concerned the law is as the lightning and thunder which played on Mt. Sinai, wreaking vengeance, striking terror, causing fear,—there is no pity there, no love as from God to men, no hope that man can reach, no gladness to cheer—the Law is in itself a bright light, but it only reveals the darkness which is man's and does not rescue him from it.

- b) We do not forget when we say this that there is a law spoken by a loving God to His loving children—cf. even Mt. Sinai: “thou *wilt* not kill”—and Luther was not wrong when he explains: we should *fear, love and trust* in God, revealing the relationship of loving trust which should exist as the very basis or foundation for a proper keeping of the law. But the situation is still the same: the law demands this loving trust, does not produce it; it curses and condemns if it is not there; and can only show the bitter fruits of disobedience.
- c) Then consider what the Gospel is and does: for the Gospel makes glad, cheers, gives hope, saves, forgives, shows mercy, extends pity. The Gospel binds up what is broken, heals what is sick, leaves what is unclean, raises up what is faint, brings new life where death reigns. The Gospel is the voice of the Good Shepherd to bring back what was lost; it is the power of God to erect that temple in the heavens where the weary and heavy-laden, the hungering and thirsting, the despised and despairing, may find rest and safe refuge. The Gospel brings God very near, draws us to Him, reveals Him in ever new and startling beauty, loving compassion, tender grace, holding out to the most unworthy the rich mercy which only He knows to give. The Gospel opens wide the glory of heaven, clothes the meanest sinner with the righteousness which Christ has wrought as a heavenly garment—unsullied, seamless, pure, bright, fit for heaven. The Gospel breathes hope as a life-giving breath, and causes the water of life to spring forth among men to refresh and renew to eternal life.
- d) To *preach* the law and the gospel means more than to speak of them, describe them, point to them. Then any half-hearted mentioning of law and gospel would be *preaching* the same. It is *not*, and we say that to the great discomfiture of many, even ourselves. It means *matheuteûein - didâskein - keerrüttein - euaggelizein*. It means *marturêin - parakalêin* and the rest, words and expressions by which God describes and so fills the office of gospel preaching full of meaning and responsibility that the preacher is tempted to cry: woe is me, for I cannot. We do not blame

a Moses and other prophets for hesitating when called to this serious work—and yet, when we consider the contrast between this and the preaching of the law, who would not greatly desire and long for it?—To *preach* the gospel, then, is more than talking about it. It is more than an objective statement of the doctrines involved, no matter how carefully exact, orthodox and biblical such statements may be. The gospel *is* that green pasture of which the Bible speaks. It *is* that banquet table of Christ, that living water with which Christ identifies Himself—in other words, to preach the gospel is to preach Christ.

In this preaching we are to be the mouthpiece of very God—to convince, to invite, to confess, to urge,—we are the servants to place the heavenly food of the Gospel before our hearers, the ambassadors sent by Christ to bring the greatest news of all. We come as physicians to the dying, on an urgent errand of mercy, we come as undershepherds to save the lost. We cannot imagine Jesus saying listlessly those life-giving words to the malefactor, to Zacchaeus, to Peter; nor can we imagine a Sermon on the Mount delivered as a dry doctrinal discourse. There is an earnest intensity about the sermon of Peter on Pentecost, of Paul in his discourse before Festus. We may say as much as we please that it is not a man's voice, effort, demeanor or style that lends effectiveness to the preaching—but it must be said that the preacher by his person, speech, lack of serious effort, etc., can lay many a stumbling block in the way of the preaching to reduce its effectiveness and even render it fruitless. Let us emphasize this only more and more that the preaching must be preaching indeed in the sense of the expressions used in Scripture itself.

18. The moot question of the right proportion between law and gospel will be decided by many considerations:
- a) As for the pastor, if he is a gospel preacher—and that is the only true pastor—the preaching of the law will be as a foreign and a dread work even as it was to Christ. He knows it is necessary, but he will show in every sermon that his anxious concern is to reach his main goal, to preaching Christ, to evangelize, to comfort.
 - b) As for the congregation, the preacher has a right to consider that the great need there, too, is the comfort and saving grace of the gospel. The law kills—the gospel alone saves. A Christian congregation, so long as it may be looked upon as Christian, i.e. made up of Christians, presents the picture of those who hunger and thirst after the gospel, who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, whose cry goes up to high heaven: How long?—and we dare not, for Christ's sake Who redeemed them, hold back from them the riches of God's grace. Why invite them to church as to a banquet table, if we come to serve only sparingly? It is God Who has provided for all the abundance of His blessing. Should we not give as freely and richly as God has provided?

- c) It is disturbing to note that some preach the law as if they loved that law preaching, as if they found it easier to preach, as if they made it a greater concern. Before they know it, they have so filled their sermon with law that there is barely time and space for a perfunctory mention of the gospel—they must not forget to slip that in that it may be said that they preached law *and* gospel. This is but a first step toward modernism which has made of Christ a forgotten man.
- d) No matter how important it may be to include in every sermon the threat of the law as the directive of the law—even to the extent that it may be necessary that the bulk of the sermon, counting words, lines, minutes, be an expounding of the law—a sermon is not truly biblical which fails to preach Christ. The hearer should in every case, without exception, be forced to admit and rejoice to exclaim: Today I have seen Christ....

taken from the *Clergy Bulletin*, April 16, 1945

Addendum II

Effective Preaching by John A. Moldstad, Jr.³²

Q: When a pastor preaches the Word of God, can we speak of his style and manner of presenting it as “effective?”

A: The word “effective” requires precision in definition. If the word is taken to mean “producing the desired result,” then describing a pastor’s style of preaching as “effective” would be attributing to the pastor’s personality or ingenuity that which is the work of the Holy Spirit alone. But when the word “effective” is used simply to indicate a pastor’s God-given communication skills or his ability to present the objective truths of the Bible in an interesting and refreshing manner, this is an acceptable use of the word. In this sense, when a person comments that some pastor is an effective preacher he is merely making a legitimate observation about his communication skills.

An analogy from the realm of nature is helpful. Paul employs a gardening illustration to teach the connection between the pastor and the application of God’s Word to people’s lives: “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6). Just as God uses the gardener’s diligence so that His own power and the ingredients of water soil nutrients and

³² <https://els.org/resources/answers/effective-preaching/>.

sunlight are applied to the plant and it grows, so God causes faith and its growth in the soul through the Word planted and watered by Paul and Apollos. This illustration does not imply that a caretaker's excellent gardening abilities causes the seed to sprout and mature into the fruit-bearing plant. It does mean that a gardener's lack of attention to the garden may cause plants to fail.

Similarly, God uses the diligent pastor as he applies the means of grace (Word and Sacrament) to those souls placed under the pastor's spiritual supervision. The pastor's diligence does not cause or assist in the spiritual increase, for only the Holy Spirit can do that. For "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). However, at the opposite juncture, the pastor's lack of diligence in skillful communicating may be a contributing factor in hindering the Holy Spirit's work in a person or among a group of people.

At our seminary, the curriculum includes work in homiletics. Homiletics teaches the preparation and delivery of Bible-based sermons. In the preparation of a sermon, the men who are training to be pastors are taught to divide Law and Gospel properly and the importance of applying Scriptural doctrine to real-life situations. The students work on improving their communication skills through practice sermons in the new seminary chapel. Besides this, the memorization of their sermons is also stressed. However, both the seminary students and our synod pastors currently serving parishes clearly recognize that the Spirit of God alone brings about "faith-results" in the heart. This happens only when the gospel of Jesus Christ touches the heart of the penitent sinner. For only the gospel is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

Addendum III

Practical Advice for Sharpening our Gospel Preaching

1. Exegetically and carefully study the sermon text for Law/Gospel handles.
2. Pray for the Lord's guidance in setting the truth of the text before your hearers.
3. Think of your audience: -how educated? -common folk?³³ -needs and challenges?

³³ E. Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 3:1130 (#3610). "When we are in the pulpit, we should nurse people and give them milk to drink; for a new church is growing up daily which needs to know the first principles. Therefore one should not hesitate to teach the Catechism diligently and to distribute its milk. The lofty speculations and matters should be reserved for the wisecracks. I will not

4. Use of parallel passages from scripture.
5. Use of pertinent hymn verses.
6. Find pertinent everyday examples/anecdotes/illustrations.
7. Peruse regularly the Lutheran Confessions, for they continually testify to Christ as Savior.
8. When the law is especially pointed, then make sure the gospel truly resounds.
9. Is the active obedience of Christ applied?
10. As to the passive obedience of Christ: while usually more obvious to the hearers, the transfer of guilt and the corresponding righteousness between the sinner and Christ needs to be stressed.
11. Don't overlook how the providence of God plays a part in our gospel preaching.
12. Good to check through one's sermon to see that the resurrection of our Lord is mentioned as proof positive for what the gospel guarantees (cf. sermons in Acts).
13. End your message on a gospel note of reassurance and joy.
14. Take to heart personally what you are proclaiming as God's called servant of the Word.

consider Drs. Pomeranus, Jonas, and Philipp while I am preaching; for they know what I am presenting better than I do. Nor do I preach to them, but to my little Hans and Elizabeth; these I consider. He must be a harebrained gardener who wants to consider only one flower in a garden and neglects all the others. Therefore, see to it that you preach purely and simply and have regard for the unlearned people, and do not address only one or the other.”

Sparkle Language: Attending to Style in Preaching

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PASTORS ARE MEN OF THE WORD AND MEN OF words. Since the Word (Jesus) is conveyed through the Word (Scripture) and then to God's people through the words we speak in God's name in sermons, it is central to our callings to attend to how words work and how we use them. We should be skilled with words; for the most part we are. Words are our tools; today I will encourage you to hone them, sharpen them, to make our language shine and sparkle.

I'm assigned to explore "one of the classical canons of rhetoric¹ and its application to preaching." The canon focusing on word choice was "elocutio"—in English, "style." This is not a theoretical exploration of "style" in its many aspects² but a practical presentation of two of its dimensions: 1) some characteristics of good style, and 2) some figures of speech that enhance style—my purpose to prompt thought about how these appear in your own preaching and how some might be incorporated with a bit of additional attention. Certainly we do this not to become admired as

¹The Roman politician/philosopher Cicero gathered a wide range of Greek and Roman rhetorical thought into the "Five Canons of Rhetoric," in effect answering the question, what must a speaker be good at to be successful? His answer: a speaker must be good at 1) gathering ideas (*inventio*, invention), 2) arranging them (*dispositio*, organization), 3) putting them into words (*elocutio*, style), 4) fixing them in memory (*memoria*, memory), and finally speaking them to the audience (*actio*, delivery).

²How we choose our words has far-reaching implications. Hugh Blair, a Scottish preacher (1718–1800), was among those who explored style broadly considered. The way one speaks, he claimed, reflects the way one thinks, and in turn who one is. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783).

“eloquent speakers.”³ Our purpose in carefully crafting wording is to open the minds of listeners to the message and make it stick there.

Besides that, playing with words, with style, is fun.

First, then, observations about some (though not all) characteristics of “good style.”

Part One: Characteristics of Style

Clarity

Throughout the history of rhetoric, from Aristotle through Blair,⁴ and on to Reagles, the foremost stylistic goal has been clarity. Reagles reminds us that Aristotle “put *clarity* at the top of communicative priorities, for ‘a good style is, first of all, clear.’”⁵ Blair put it simply: “Without perspicuity [clarity], all is lost.”⁶ Churchill offered good advice: he urged speakers to employ “short, homely words of common usage.”⁷

We must be especially careful with theological terms quite familiar to us but not to our listeners—and with streaming, our listeners lie far beyond those visibly sitting before us, many having never seen a “bulletin” (an odd term for “worship folder”). Even terms like “our text” (jargon for “these words of Scripture before us”) sound foreign to many tuning in. The term “shut-ins” sounds offensive. Not long ago I got an excited email from a relative who had tuned in online to a Bethany chapel service and was upset that politics was being preached from the Trinity Chapel pulpit. He had heard a preacher say something disparaging about “the Kingdom of the Left.” Clarity requires we adopt the mindset of our listeners regarding theological language in which we are steeped but they are not.

Appropriateness

Remember when “wear your Sunday best” depicted a certain level of dressing up? Today worshipers attend in jeans and approach the Lord’s Table in cut-offs, and a growing degree of informality in language is finding its way into preaching. I simply pose the question: what level of dignity in our language should be expected as appropriate to our message?

In the second century A.D., the Roman theorist Longinus identified five sources of good style, what he called “the sublime,” that is, true

³ As stressed by Thonssen and Baird, 514.

⁴ Blair (see fn. 2 above) here represents several thinkers of that era who emphasized style in preaching.

⁵ Reagles, 7.

⁶ From *Lectures in Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, quoted in Reagles.

⁷ Quoted in Lucas, 225.

excellence and effectiveness in speaking. Two of them are relevant here: “grandeur of thought” and “dignity and elevation of structure.”⁸ The former we have in our message; the latter we must work to achieve in our choices of words.

Here the physical setting might be a factor. If you walk into a sanctuary with pews, stained glass windows, a prominent altar and a pulpit that the preacher actually uses, you expect a certain level of dignity of language. But if the sanctuary has moveable chairs instead of pews, with several recliners in the back, a fireplace to the side, and no pulpit but a projection or video screen before which the preacher paces back and forth as he talks, a lesser level of dignity becomes acceptable—an occasional “you guys” or an “oh, I forgot . . .” as the next slide pops up might be more easily tolerated. But remember that dignity of language reflects the grandeur of the message. A sermon should sound different from a Bible class.

Correctness

Pastors as men of words should be in control of them and use them correctly, according to both grammar and meanings. Grammatical errors reflect on the credibility of the speaker. Popular usages do change but we should discern whether changes are improvements and if they are not we don't have to adopt them. We don't have to misuse “hopefully” (an adverb meaning “full of hope”) instead of saying “I hope.” My mother, whose career was teaching English and German in public schools, was seriously distracted by a preacher's mismatch of subject and predicate or any other divergence from “correct” grammar. Aristotle would support her, believing correctness of language to be the foundation of all good style.⁹

English vocabulary is rich in shades of meanings and we should be precise in finding exactly the right one. We don't have to repeatedly characterize every superlative as “incredible” as in “God's incredible love for us”—remember that the word basically means, “not to be believed.” We are men of words, get out your thesaurus, we can do better by finding the right shade of meaning: amazing, extraordinary, remarkable, astonishing, surprising, astounding, shocking—which is exactly the right word to use?

Inclusiveness

It takes only awareness and small effort to avoid language that stereotypes or demeans and therefore unnecessarily distracts and offends sensitive

⁸The other three: power of moving passions, figures of speech, and graceful expression. Longinus, *passim*.

⁹Quoted in Thonssen and Baird, 494.

people and keeps them from returning to your church to hear the gospel. The generic “he” easily is pluralized: “Whenever a doctor prescribes, he risks a lawsuit” becomes “Whenever doctors ... they ...” Generic “man” becomes “people” or “humanity” or “the human race.” Don’t assume gender roles: “Being a small businessman is hard today” becomes “It’s hard to be the owner of a small business today.”¹⁰

Similarly—though this is sometimes difficult to keep up with—when referring to people in groups, use the names that they use to refer to themselves, not names imposed on them by others. It’s “Dakota,” not “Sioux.” “PC” does not mean “political correctness;” it means “personal courtesy.” It’s one of the ways Christians can show love, even toward those with whom they disagree.

Vividness

Strong, vivid, concrete language can be especially effective in sermons. C. S. Lewis discouraged using adjectives that merely tell hearers how they should feel. “Instead of telling us a thing was ‘terrible, describe it so that we’ll be terrified. Don’t say it was ‘delightful’; make us think ‘delightful!’ when we’ve heard the description.”¹¹

Consider the range of senses one can animate with carefully chosen words: vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch (including texture, pressure, temperature), muscle strain, internal sensation. Which of these did President Biden touch in his speech at the five hundred thousand COVID death mark (Judy said these words conjured up vivid memories of her father’s hat in a closet after his death sixty years ago and she cried):

And I know when you stare at that empty chair around the kitchen table, it brings it all back no matter how long ago it happened, like it just happened that moment you look at that empty chair. The birthdays, the anniversaries, the holidays without them, and the everyday things, the small things, the tiny things that you miss the most, that scent when you open the closet, that park nearby that you used to stroll in, that movie theatre where you met, the morning coffee you shared together, the bend of his smile, the perfect pitch to her laugh.

¹⁰ These and other examples are found in Lucas, 234–5.

¹¹ Quoted in Rossow, 12.

Our pastors do this too. Consider Dean Madson's concrete description in a sermon during World War II:

It is true, men have lived and dreamed of a carnal peace ever since there were arrows sharpened for battle, guns loaded for the frontline positions, four engine bombers headed for cities marked for destruction.¹²

Prof. Reichwald brought the first century into today with specific description:

Thus Matthew did not quibble when Christ called him as an apostle. He did not ask about the salary, the hours, the fringe benefits, the working conditions, or the chance for advancement. Christ called, and he dropped everything.¹³

Juul Madson did the same:

God does not have to check the police blotter to learn of your transgressions.¹⁴

And how many senses did President Schmeling touch when, speaking on Psalm 1, he brought us into the hay wagon:

There is nothing more worthless than chaff. When it comes out of the back of the combine, it just blows in the wind, good for nothing. On hot humid days it sticks to your sweaty back and makes you feel itchy and miserable. The dust gets in your lungs and you cough for hours. That is what the person without Christ is like. His life is worthless.¹⁵

Vivid language, "picture language," can make abstractions concrete, as Pastor Hartwig described what happened to the condemnation of the Law:

Jesus did not want its condemnation to come crashing down on our heads. He stepped underneath the Law and allowed its punishment to fall on him.¹⁶

It's fun to talk about vividness. It provides good examples of how language can sparkle.

¹² Norman Madson, Sr., 210.

¹³ Reichwald, 243.

¹⁴ Juul Madson, 265.

¹⁵ Gaylin Schmeling, 252.

¹⁶ Hartwig, 131.

Rhythm

Rhythm, among us a subtle and underappreciated characteristic of language, involves on the macro level the changing sequences of thought, mood, and emotion throughout a sermon, and on the micro level the graceful arrangements of stresses within phrases and sentences.

We associate rhythm with music because it functions most obviously there. But it also works powerfully though less overtly in speaking. Word rhythm, appreciated by the ancient Greeks, factored powerfully in their dramatic productions. Translation can't capture the power of the great dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, nor are we as sensitive to rhythm as the ancient audiences who were moved to tears and terror—even reported miscarriages—by the powerful spoken rhythm of the Greek chorus.¹⁷

Longinus, writing several centuries after the great Greek dramatists, compares the power of spoken rhythm to that in music, where even the non-musical can't help moving with the beat.¹⁸ Today we would say listeners will “groove” with the language, and thus also with the thought, something well understood by acknowledged great speakers like Churchill, FDR, JFK, and certainly MLK. While I don't recommend we try to imitate it, consider how certain Black preachers energize audiences largely by rhythm.

Rhythm might well deserve more attention in our preaching. For now let me simply mourn the loss in the newer translations of the beautiful rhythm of the KJV in 2 Corinthians 5:15. Compare:

EHV “And he died for all, so that those who live would no longer live for themselves but for him, who died in their place and was raised again.”

KJV “... he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

I suggest that the combination of simplicity and rhythm makes the KJV rendering of the Christmas story in Luke 2 the favorite of nearly everyone. Consider here too the KJV's twenty-third Psalm and the traditional wording of the Lord's Prayer.

¹⁷ Readers of Greek drama in English translations are tempted to skim quickly through the chorus parts since they don't further the plot and therefore are considered boring. It was the opposite with the Greeks.

¹⁸ Longinus, xxxix.

Lucas's widely-used textbook identifies several stylistic devices useful in achieving a graceful speech rhythm, including parallelism, repetition, alliteration, and antithesis.¹⁹ This provides a transition as we move from a survey of some characteristics of good style to a survey of some useful, accessible and powerful figures of speech.

Part Two: Figures of Speech

It takes little effort to sprinkle our sermons with figures of speech. In fact, we already do it many times. With a bit more awareness, they can make our language sparkle even more.

Julia Han defines figures of speech as departures from normal rules of speech or language that express truth in an unusual, often non-literal way.²⁰ Here I am leaving aside their many theoretical aspects—distinctions between “tropes” and “figures,” “figures of grammar,” “figures of thought,” “figures of sound,” and others. Nor am I dealing with important hermeneutical questions about discerning whether instances of language in Scripture should be interpreted literally or figuratively—a paper topic for another conference. I simply want to draw your attention again to the potential in figures of speech for powerful expression by presenting examples from Scripture and contemporary preaching.

Figures of speech are abundant in Scripture.²¹ That fact alone justifies attention to them in our preaching. Regarding their purpose and power, simply acknowledge that we hold many scriptural passages as “favorites” **because** they are expressions involving figures of speech—that will be illustrated below. If God by inspiration often uses figures of speech to create “sparkle language” in Scripture, why should we not do the same in sermons?²² It's often the apt expression, the phrase that keeps ringing

¹⁹ Lucas, 230–2.

²⁰ In her introduction.

²¹ E. W. Bullinger's definitive 1898 work, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*, covers almost a thousand pages and categorizes more than two hundred figures of speech, some with up to forty variations. Every language employs figures of speech.

²² As for the view that we should not presume to assist the Holy Spirit through our feeble language efforts, Francis Rossow observes: “Errant as our language can be, it nevertheless is an effective, God-chosen medium to communicate God's love. Language has magic in it. It packs a wallop. Hence communicators of Christian doctrine harness the power of language to the power of God's Word, not with the false assumption that by their efforts they are helping God do his job but with the prayerful hope that through their efforts the Word of God ‘as becometh it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people.’ God's method is not exclusion (God without human language) nor is it cooperation (God plus human language); rather, it is transformation (God through human language). With that truth in mind communicators

in one's ears, that enables the listener to carry the point of a sermon in memory out of the church and into everyday life.²³

I have selected from the many possibilities several common figures of speech that we can, with a little thought, easily incorporate into our preaching as appropriate. Each is illustrated by examples from Scripture and from randomly encountered sermons.²⁴

A. Figures of Repetition

Anaphora: [an AFF er ah] repetition of a word or words **at the beginning** of successive sentences, phrases, or clauses

Matthew 5:3–11 “Blessed are the poor ... Blessed are those who mourn ... Blessed are the meek...”

Μακάριοι eight times.

Psalms 148:1–4 “Praise the Lord...” יהִלְלוּ יהִלְלוּ יהִלְלוּ
then יהִלְלוּ יהִלְלוּ יהִלְלוּ three more times.

Hebrews 11:2–11, 17–31 “By faith” Πίστει occurs 20 times at start of a description

2 Corinthians 11:26ff. “In perils ...” κινδύνοις eight times.

Professor Otto used it simply in an Easter sermon:

That is the event we today are celebrating—Christ the Lord is risen again. **It was an event which** caused no little consternation among Jesus enemies when they heard of what took place to the accompaniment

of Christian doctrine tap the magic of language, exploit the medium in their continual efforts to tell ‘the greatest story ever told’” (13).

²³ In her introduction, Hans lists the following purposes served by figures of speech: to emphasize a point, to dramatize a setting, to imbue a passage with a mood or tone, to make a passage more interesting/entertaining, to enliven language, to give ideas emphasis, to deepen expression, to heighten the drama of communication, to give language freshness, vitality, and variety, to draw attention to what is being said, and to make ideas memorable. Longinus describes the power of figures this way: “The striking image will overwhelm an opposing argument!” (xv).

²⁴ As I cite scriptural examples below, I am not (in most instances) looking at the original languages, but only English translations. While much of Scripture’s figurative language translates well, some does not—a good reason for competence in the original biblical languages. One could argue, in fact, that true competence in a language is achieved when one can recognize its figures of speech for what they are.

of an earthquake at Jesus tomb. **It was an event which**, in the course of time led the erstwhile timid disciples literally to turn the world upside down. **It is an event which** is the cornerstone of our faith today.²⁵

Kuster used anaphora to emphasize the point of an Easter homily in Trinity Chapel as Jesus displayed His living human body in Luke 24:

The living human body of Jesus means your sins are forgiven; God has accepted his death as the payment for the sins of all the world. **The living human body of Jesus means** He keeps His promises, including that He will be with us, protecting us, giving us strength. **The living human body of Jesus means** He has gone ahead of us through the grave and come out alive on the other side, and since we are bound to Him in our baptism, He has brought us with him through the grave ...²⁶

Here is anaphora eloquently rejoicing in God's gifts to us through the work of the Holy Spirit:

God's most precious truth revealed to man is comprehended in His proclamations: Christ is born for you! Christ died for you! Christ is risen for you! **God's most valuable legacy bequeathed to man** is framed in His revealed Word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. **God's most blessed assurance directed to man** is extended in His declaration: You are a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. **God's most exalted privilege bestowed on man** is conveyed in His reminder: You are a laborer together with God. With all of these astounding acts of divine love and grace the Holy Spirit of God is unceasingly active.²⁷

Mesodiplosis: [meh zo dip PLO sis] Repetition of a word **in the middle** of every line or clause.

2 Corinthians 4:8–9 We are hard pressed on every side, but not (ἀλλ' οὐ) crushed; perplexed, but not (ἀλλ' οὐκ) in despair; persecuted, but not (ἀλλ' οὐκ) abandoned; struck down, but not (ἀλλ' οὐκ) destroyed.

Kuster used this in the 2009 Bethany commencement address when he reminded graduates to consider their priorities:

²⁵ Otto, 220.

²⁶ Kuster, Chapel Address.

²⁷ Wunderlich, Preface. Emphases added. Writing in the 1950s, he used generic "man." Substitute "us."

While everyone is preoccupied with the economy, with making money, the old needs continue to grind on out there. There's the woman considering abortion **who needs more than** a law, the military veteran with flashback nightmares **who needs more than** a bottle, the neglected teenager **who needs more than** a gang, the middle-aged family breadwinner recently laid off **who needs more than** a handout, and more than any of these, those whom Jesus called lost and wandering sheep **who need** a Shepherd.²⁸

Epistrophe: [ep PIS truh fee] Repetition of a word **at the end** of every line or clause.

Here is Koren in his pastoral letter.

... the busy race for the goods of the world, first and foremost for **money, money, money**. Everything becomes **money**. The value of time is that it is **money**. The fracture of a leg becomes **money**. A fire becomes **money**. The fear of God becomes **money**. Good deeds become **money**. 'Prayers and tears' become **money**. Farther men do not reach, except in the church of Rome where purgatory has become **money** and for money they enter Heaven.²⁹

Symploce: [SIM plus ee] (A combination of anaphora and epistrophe) the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a line and the repetition of another phrase at the end.

Notice the beauty of the Greek construction in 1 Corinthians 4:12–13:

λοιδορούμενοι εὐλογοῦμεν διωκόμενοι ἀνεχόμεθα δυσφημούμενοι παρακαλοῦμεν

The EHV captures the construction in English with a symploce:

When we are verbally abused, **we** bless. **When** persecuted, **we** endure. **When** slandered, **we** speak kind words.

Milton Otto used this figure simply to describe generational influences:

As the tree is, **so** will the fruits be; **as** the spring, **so** the stream; **as** the elders, **so** the youth.³⁰

²⁸ Reproduced in Kuster, *A3: The Growing Years*, 114.

²⁹ Koren, "Pastoral Letter," 258.

³⁰ Otto, "Ezekiel," 302.

Kuster used this figure in his 1988 Bethany commencement address as he urged graduates to recognize their growing maturity:

But then come the larger, more important questions, as you move **beyond** the personal, more narrow interests of youth, **beyond** arguing about the “drinking age” **to** considering what it means to live as we do in a “drug culture”; **beyond** a concern with “cafeteria food” **to** an awareness of a worldwide “food crisis”; **beyond** insistence on “my rights” **to** a contemplation of “justice.”³¹

Paul Emmel wrote thus about misplaced fear:

Our problem is that we get it backwards: **we fear** the very things we should not fear and we **fail to fear** that which we should fear. **We fear** the opinions of others and **we fail to fear** the opinion of our Maker. **We fear** COVID and we **neglect to fear** the sin of pride. **We fear** losing control of our lives, but **do not fear** the loss of our friendship with God.³²

Finally, Kuster used this figure of repetition in the final paragraph of his study of Nineteenth Century Lutheran preaching:

Here is a lesson about preaching from this study: **We can urge** people to attend to the Word, **without** telling them the chief message of the Word. **We can urge** people to the Sacrament, **without** telling them what happens there. **We can urge** support of missions, **without** relating the mission message. **We can acclaim** doctrinal purity, **without** explaining the essence of that doctrine. **We can encourage** faith, **but fail to** mention the substance of that faith, the forgiveness of sins that we have by grace through the work of Jesus Christ.³³

Epizeuxis: [epi ZOOK sis] Repetition of the same word with no other words between.

The effect of this figure is to increase the tension in the situation. Consider ...

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people (נְחַמְנוּ נְחַמְנוּ עַמִּי).

Luke 22:31 Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.

³¹ Kuster, *A3: The Growing Years*, 117.

³² Emmel, email blog, February 16, 2021.

³³ Kuster, “Preaching,” 63.

Acts 9:4 Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Luke 10:41 Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is needed.

Sometimes translations lose the flavor of this figure. Consider John 1:51 where Jesus says, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν.... The old King James Version captures this with “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” The Evangelical Heritage Version is literal: “Amen, amen, I tell you....” But it is lost in the New King James Version (“Most assuredly I say to you....”) and the New International Version 1984 (“I tell you the truth....”).

And how should we translate Isaiah 26:3 (“You preserve perfect peace for the person whose resolve is steadfast because he trusts in you” [EHV]) to capture the flavor of this figure—in Hebrew “preserve in shalom shalom” (שָׁלוֹם—שָׁלוֹם)? Most translations make it “perfect peace.” Translating figures of speech in a way that fully captures their impact is often difficult.

Polyptoton [po LIP tuh tun]: Repetition of a word in a different form

The King James Version renders Genesis 37:5 as “And Joseph **dreamed** a **dream**,” capturing the Hebrew וַיַּחְלֵם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם. Newer translations simply translate, “Joseph had a dream.” Is something small but meaningful lost in not capturing the figure?

God used this figure in blessing Abraham after his great test:

Genesis 22:17 כִּי־בָרַךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ וְהִרְבָּה אֲרַבָּה אֶת־זַרְעֶךָ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם (KJV) “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven....”—(NKJV) “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants....”—(NIV) “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars....”—(EHV) “I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your descendants greatly....”

Pastor Gernander found the depth of some Christian experience in a memorable phrase when he observed,

We despair of despairing.³⁴

Chiasm [KAI az um]: repetition of similar ideas in reverse sequence

JFK: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

³⁴ Gernander, 124.

Genesis 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed.

President Schmeling used this figure to capture the gospel message:

He became as we are, sharing in our suffering, pain, and hell, so that we could become as he is, sharing in his life, glory, and Heaven.³⁵

And Kuster used it at the end of his Easter chapel message:

Jesus had a human body like ours, so that we will some day have a human body like his.³⁶

Antithesis [an TITH u sis]: placing together contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.

Revelation 2:10 Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (KJV).

Prof. Brian Klebig spoke in Trinity Chapel of how we sometimes model the kind of Messiah we want, rather than the One that is:

Sometimes when I listen to Christians talk about other human beings, I can't help but think that the Savior they are modeling is a Messiah whose fight was **with** humanity, not a Savior whose fight was **for** humanity.³⁷

President Wilhelm Petersen captured the essence of preaching as he cited the Smalcald Articles when addressing seminary graduates:

While the Law is to be preached in such a way as to drive the greatest saint to despair, so the Gospel must be preached so as to give the greatest sinner hope.³⁸

Bill also commented as speaker followed speaker endlessly at conferences and conventions:

Everything has been said, but not everyone has said it.

³⁵ Gaylin Schmeling, 250.

³⁶ Kuster, Chapel Address.

³⁷ Klebig, Chapel Address.

³⁸ Wilhelm Petersen, 254.

Climax: a series of ideas, similarly phrased, building from lesser to greater.

Romans 10:13–15. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **How, then, can they** call on the one they have not believed in? And **how can they** believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And **how can they** hear without someone preaching to them? And **how can they** preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!

Referring to 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, Lorenz Wunderlich observed:

A veritable crescendo of reasons is intoned by Paul for avoiding sin and consecrating ourselves to the service of God. **Because we are** the temple of God, **because we are** the occupied temple of God, **because the** Occupant of the temple of our body is the Holy Ghost, **because this** divine Occupant is ours from the Father, **because we** do not belong to ourselves, we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which belong wholly to God.³⁹

B. Figures of Comparison

Simile: [SIM uh lee] a comparison **based on resemblance** usually keyed by the words “like” or “as.”

Scripture has many of these:

Genesis 26:4 I will make your seed multiply as the stars of heaven....

Psalms 17:8 Keep me as the apple of your eye.

Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones.

Ephesians 5:22, 25 Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord....
Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church....

1 Thessalonians 5:1–2 ... the Lord comes as a thief in the night.

³⁹ Wunderlich, 106.

Dean Madson used a metaphor followed by a simile as he introduced the familiar Christmas story:

The story, though hoary with age, is still fresh as is the sparkle of the morning dew.⁴⁰

Prof. Tim Schmeling characterized a psalm:

This is the function of Psalm 97 in our lives. It's like Christian Kung Fu, fighting without fighting.⁴¹

H. A. Preus spoke of the function of preaching the Law:

... like the surgeon is compelled to use the sharp knife before they can apply the salve or pour the healing oil into the wound ...⁴²

Pastor Matt Moldstad described an attitude of the world toward God's message:

... like a flower bed planted on the bad side of town, and the day after it's planted, gang members trample it. They won't allow such beauty to exist.⁴³

Sometimes similes are drawn out into an explanation, as Pastor Andrew Schmidt did to explain (with concrete description) how temptations, while not sins in themselves, can take over.

Our minds are like a hotel. Typically the manager can't keep someone from entering the lobby for a short time. However the manager can keep that person from renting a room.... the sin comes when you give it a room and let it dwell in the mind ... When you hand out a room key to temptation, it checks into the room and turns into bitterness, relating to your overall mood. Then it turns on the TV and becomes wrath, the uncontrollable passion. Next it kicks off its shoes and jumps onto the bed, turning into anger, that isolated expression of emotion

⁴⁰ Norman Madson, Sr., 208. It's a testament to the power of figures that the most effective are repeated and quickly become clichés. It's unclear whether "fresh as the morning dew" was already a cliché when Madson spoke this, but it certainly is one now. We should avoid clichés like the plague. (Oops.) Lucas, 229, warns: don't say busy as a bee or strong as an ox in a sermon or you are probably going to be dull as dishwater and find the congregation sleeping like a log.

⁴¹ Timothy Schmeling, 258.

⁴² Preus, 19.

⁴³ Moldstad, Easter Exordium.

and hostility. It's only a matter of time before it sprawls itself out and becomes clamor and evil speaking....⁴⁴

A drawn-out, explained comparison becomes an ...

Analogy: [an AL uh gee] a comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification:

Koren used vivid description in this comparison of a mother's love with God's—and the *topos*⁴⁵ of lesser to greater which we often use to increase understanding of God.

You also talk about love. Picture some mother sitting among you, who thinks she knows something about love. She looks at her sick, suffering child and her heart is drawn to it with fervent, yearning, and sacrificial love. Her heart burns with this love, and it shines from her eyes. And yet, this love is only like a spark compared to the love with which God loves you.⁴⁶

John Petersen uses the analogy of a grilled burger to explain what can happen to conscience:

Peter speaks about a man with a seared conscience and when we leave a hamburger on the grill too long it becomes seared, you can hardly cut it with a steak knife, and when our conscience gets that way it probably means that we've been overruling it and ignoring it too long.⁴⁷

Metaphor: [MET uh for] a comparison where one thing is declared to be another thing or named another thing.

Metaphor is often superficially defined as “a comparison without using ‘like’ or ‘as,’” implying that metaphor is a kind of stripped-down simile. But metaphor is much more than that, far more powerful than a simile because it calls to mind all the feelings and associations we have with the metaphor and applies them directly to the item named. When Jesus tells the pharisees who came to warn him about Herod, “Go tell that fox ...” (Luke 13:32) we immediately apply to Herod the characteristics we associate with that animal; “sly, tricky, devious, wicked, destructive, not

⁴⁴ Schmidt, “Mouth,” 119–20.

⁴⁵ Ancient Greek thinkers compiled lists of *topoi* (Greek: places), a metaphor describing where effective rhetorical or literary ideas could be found. *Topoi* fall under the “canon” of “inventio,” not style.

⁴⁶ Koren, Holy Spirit Sermon, 1888, quoted in Kuster, “Preaching,” 54.

⁴⁷ John Petersen, Devotions.

to be trusted” all come flashing into our minds in an instant, the effect of one well-chosen word.

Metaphor is a powerful use of language. Rossow observes,

Metaphor is concrete rather than abstract, exciting rather than dull, understandable rather than perplexing, communicating rather than complicating. [He then adds provocatively,] In my homiletics classes I have often risked the sweeping generalization that effectiveness in preaching is in direct proportion to the preacher’s capacity for metaphor.⁴⁸

Often metaphors flash by in a single-word moment, as in the “fox” example, and these:

John 2:19 “Destroy this temple....”

Matthew 12:34 “O generation of vipers ...”

Matthew 16:6 “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees....”

Prof. Otto strung together several scriptural metaphors: “Christians are called the salt of the earth, the light of the world. They are the pillars and props of a nation. They are the dam that holds back the waters of God’s wrath.”⁴⁹

From Prof. Rank: The Law “lifts the rock off our lives” [a vivid picture; we know what disgusting things are found under rocks].⁵⁰

From President Petersen: The “searchlight of the law ...” and later, “open the floodgates of the Gospel.”⁵¹

From Pastor Krause: Jesus’ body was placed “in a tomb in the womb of the earth that he had created.”⁵² [“womb” as place from which new life emerges.]

From President Schmeling: The believer “repents of his sins, throwing them back into the baptismal water....” [sins as rocks we can throw into deep water where they disappear.]⁵³

⁴⁸ Rossow, 12.

⁴⁹ Otto, “Ezekiel,” 300.

⁵⁰ Rank.

⁵¹ Wilhelm Petersen, 252, 254.

⁵² Krause.

⁵³ Gaylin Schmeling.

From Prof. Schmeling: “Psalm 97 is a cry of resistance. It’s our fight song ...”⁵⁴

Prof. Otto: “... the erosion that has taken place in many sectors of the organized church.”⁵⁵

Pastor Schmidt let a familiar scriptural simile inspire a metaphor of his own: Because of Jesus’ work, he said, the roaring lion devil has become no more than “an insignificant barn cat in western Minnesota.”⁵⁶

Sometimes the metaphor doesn’t just flash by but is briefly elaborated.

Isaiah 40:6 All flesh is grass ... the grass withers....

Matthew 5:13 Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth ...” [then He explains what happens if salt loses saltiness.]

John 10:11 “I am the Good Shepherd ...” [then He elaborates on what good/bad shepherds do.]

All of our Lord’s “I am’s” are metaphors.

A metaphor starts Psalm 23: “The Lord is my Shepherd”; the rest of the psalm elaborates.

President Schmeling describes a familiar scene and, at the end, turns it into a metaphor:

Down Wisconsin Avenue from the church stand many stately trees all leafed out and alive with beautiful green. Interspersed with them are some splintered, weather-beaten utility poles. These poles stand tall and are made of the same material but are merely lifeless wood sunk into the ground. Only the trees are green and productive bearing fruit because they are sustained by the water flowing to them in the soil. Are we only lifeless utility poles bearing no fruit because we have no roots in the water of life? Are we just gray ugly poles taking up space?⁵⁷

Frederich Wyneken began a New Year’s Day sermon by applying our Lord’s metaphor in Luke 13:8:

Beloved in Christ! By God’s grace we enter into a new year today. Where would many of us be if Christ had not prayed for us: “Lord,

⁵⁴ Timothy Schmeling, 256.

⁵⁵ Otto, in Aaberg, 309.

⁵⁶ Schmidt.

⁵⁷ Gaylin Schmeling, 251.

let him alone for one more year so I can dig around his roots and throw on some manure”?⁵⁸

Koren borrowed a metaphor from Kierkegaard as he described a challenge pastors face as they try to contemplate God’s Word while aware of the troubles in the world around them:

It is one thing to grasp the Highest when a person sits undisturbed in his quiet study, alone with God and His Word; it is quite a different thing to sit inside a large copper kettle as the blacksmiths belabor it from all directions, and still own a collected mind to grasp the Highest.⁵⁹

Entire sermons have been built by elaborating in detail on metaphors. Pastor Shawn Stafford throughout a sermon spoke of forgiveness as having a great weight removed from one’s chest.⁶⁰ H. A. Preus, speaking at the ordination of Ottesen, spun an entire sermon out of 2 Timothy 2:3: “Ye therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” with lengthy and labored elaboration on military hardships.⁶¹ And H. C. Schwan, preaching not long after the Civil War, filled his sermon with military imagery, as when declaring the Confessions to be our flag; the listener was of course to apply all this to the Confessions:

A banner, a standard, a flag, is placed on an occupied location where it can be seen far and wide. There the soldiers are gathered for battle. Where the banner stands, the general has his encampment. Where it is raised, there is the army. Wherever the banner is carried, the multitude follows. Where the flag falls, the columns fall into confusion. But as long as it flutters in the wind, the troop, the squad remains undefeated. Thus a soldier stands with the flag to which he has sworn. To leave the flag, to abandon the flag, is an act of dishonor.⁶²

Metonymy: [met ON uh mee] a noun or name used for a closely related noun or name.

This definition sounds a lot like metaphor, but they work differently. A metaphor calls up feelings and associations, while in metonymy a comparison is based on a physical or similar direct relationship, such as

⁵⁸ Quoted in Kuster, “Preaching,” 46.

⁵⁹ Koren, “Pastoral Letter,” 257.

⁶⁰ Stafford.

⁶¹ Preus.

⁶² Quoted in Kuster, “Preaching,” 58.

referring to the Queen as “the Crown” or reporting that “the White House said....” Bullinger lists more than 100 subcategories of metonymy based on the relationship between the two nouns. Scripture contains many examples.

Proverbs 10:20 “The **tongue** of the righteous is choice silver.”
[metonymy, then metaphor.]

Matthew 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there will your **heart** (thoughts and affections) be also.”

1 Timothy 3:4 “One that rules well his own **house** ...”

John 3:16 “God so loved the **world** ...”

Mark 14:35 “... prayed that, if it were possible, the **hour** might pass from him.”

Synecdoche: [sin ECK duh kee] very much like metonymy, but the relationship is actually physical, as referring to a whole by naming a part (or sometime *vice versa*), as in, “he asked for the daughter’s hand.”

Romans 10:15 “How beautiful are the **feet** of them that preach the gospel of peace.”

Mark 16:15 (KJV), “Preach the gospel to every **creature** (humans).”

Psalms 145:21 “Let all **flesh** bless his holy name ...”

Romans 13:1 “Let every **soul** be subject to the higher powers.”

Philippians 3:19 “... whose god is their **belly**.”

I found this figure infrequently in our preaching.

From Prof. Tim Schmeling: “The Israelites were almost continually under the **jackboot** of foreign rulers.”⁶³

⁶³ Timothy Schmeling, 256. There is also a metaphor effect here; the term immediately calls up associations with Nazi Germany—at least among older listeners. How many people under thirty know what a “jackboot” is?

C. Other Easily Accessible Figures

Alliteration: [uh lit er AY shun] starting a series of words with the same sound.

In Hebrew Scripture, see Psalm 119; acrostic is a form of alliteration.

Prof. Glenn Reichwald combined alliteration with personification when he observed that “Pleasure” calls especially to the young, “telling them to engage in the **wild and weird world** of pleasure that entertains for the moment and yet leaves empty when one asks, to what good?”⁶⁴

Pastor Kyle Madson urged seminary graduates to remain ones who are “**fed** and **formed** and **fashioned** by the Word of God, and you will be **fit** ...”⁶⁵

Standing before God at the Last Judgment with faith in Jesus became “standing before God with **complete confidence** and **firm faith** in the **forgiveness** won by Jesus ...”⁶⁶

Allusion: [al LOO zhun] an expression designed to call a story to mind, often from literature.

1 Corinthians 15:22 As in **Adam** all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. [This is also a simile, but the reader is expected to know what the reference to “Adam” is all about.]

Prof. Brian Klebig noted that the crowd challenging Jesus in John 10 wanted a tough Messiah: “They wanted **Darth** Jesus.”

Euphemism: [YOU fum ism] a word with pleasant associations used for something unpleasant. There are many for “death.”

Genesis 15:15 You, however, will **go to your fathers** in peace ...

John 11:11 Our friend Lazarus has **fallen asleep** ... [the disciples misunderstood the figure, took it literally].

Hyperbole: [high PER buh lee] exaggeration

2 Samuel 1:23 “Saul and Jonathan ... they were **swifter than eagles**, they were **stronger than lions**.”

⁶⁴ Reichwald, 241.

⁶⁵ Kyle Madson.

⁶⁶ Thomas Kuster, Graveside.

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not **hate** his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

John 21:25 “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the **world itself could not contain** the books that should be written. Amen.”

Irony: an expression of thought in a form that conveys an opposite meaning.

You have to be careful with this one, since it can easily be misunderstood as **sarcasm** which is closely related and is intended to ridicule another. God Himself used sarcasm when he urged the sinning Israelites,

Judges 10:14 “Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!”

It was sarcasm when Job replied to his “friendly advisors,”

Job 12:2 “Doubtless you are the people and wisdom will die with you.”

But it was irony, not sarcasm, when St. Paul called himself a “fool” (1 Corinthians 11:16–21) and it was irony when Pres. Bill Petersen urged seminary student preachers to “try to keep false doctrine to a minimum.”

Litotes: [LITE oh teez] the expressing of an affirmative by the negative of its contrary. “This coffee isn’t bad.”

2 Kings 4:3 Then [Elisha] said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; **do not gather just a few**” (NKJV).

Acts 21:39 Paul answered, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of **no ordinary city**.”

When Koren was pointing out that pastors will face opposition to their message, he observed, “It is **no pleasant or easy thing to bear** this in mind, for war in the church is a heavy and bitter cross.”⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Koren, “Pastoral Letter,” 263.

Oxymoron: [ock see MORE on] “wise-foolly”; a wise saying that appears foolish because of contrasting ideas.

Isaiah 58:10 “Your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

1 Corinthians 1:25 “For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.”

Matthew 16:25 Whoever will save his life shall lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Asyndeton: [ah SIN deh tun] the omission of conjunctive particles between clauses. The effect is to hasten listeners along to a climactic idea.

Julius Caesar: I came, I saw, I conquered (Veni, vidi, vici.).

Mark 7:21–23 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

Philippians 3:5–8 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

From Prof. Otto: [Youth today] are becoming selfish, independent, deceitful, stubborn, irreverent, indifferent, pleasure-mad. ⁶⁸

From H. A. Preus: Without battle, no victory. Without victory, no crown, no peace. ⁶⁹

Polysyndeton: [polly SIN duh ton] repetition of a conjunction (usually “and”) more than ordinary usage would require. The effect is to add emphasis to each item in the list, more than a comma (or pause) would. [Emphases are added throughout this section.]

Acts 1:8 ... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem **and** in all Judea **and** Samaria **and** to the ends of the earth. [repeated καί]

⁶⁸ Otto, “Ezekiel,” 302.

⁶⁹ Preus, 14.

Ephesians 3:18 to grasp how wide **and** long **and** high **and** deep is the love of Christ. [repeated και]

The newest translations (EHV, NIV, NKJV) lose the effect of the polysyndeton in the following Joshua passage by converting items into a simple list separated by commas. Only the KJV and RSV translations preserve the effect of the polysyndeton (repeated waw in the original).

Joshua 7:24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, **and** the silver, **and** the garment, **and** the wedge of gold, **and** his sons, **and** his daughters, **and** his oxen, **and** his asses, **and** his sheep, **and** his tent, **and** all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor (KJV).

The same happens to the following passage; the polysyndeton is dropped in EHV, NIV 1984, NKJV—but the KJV keeps it.

Romans 9:4 οἵτινές εἰσιν Ἰσραηλίται ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι.

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, **and** the glory, **and** the covenants, **and** the giving of the law, **and** the service of God, **and** the promises (KJV).

The impact of the polysyndeton, which reflects the growing horror of the unbelieving observers at each of the woman's acts, is missed in the translation of this passage from Luke:

Luke 7:38 "... and began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she began to wipe them with her hair while kissing his feet and anointing them with perfume (EHV).

τοῖς δάκρυσιν ἤρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ταῖς θριξίν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτῆς ἐξέμασσαν καὶ κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλειφεν τῷ μύρῳ.

Consider too this passage:

1 Corinthians 4:11–12a ἄχρι τῆς ἄρτι ὥρας καὶ πεινώμεν καὶ διψῶμεν καὶ γυμνιτεύομεν καὶ κολαφιζόμεθα καὶ ἀστατοῦμεν 12 καὶ κοπιῶμεν ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν.

NIV 1984 turns the polysyndeton into anaphora with repeated “we are . . .”

To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands.

Again, the KJV preserves it.

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands.

Paradiastole: [pair uh dee ASS tuh luh] repetition of neither or nor (classical meaning)

John 1:13

οἱ [πιστεύοντες]

οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων

οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός

οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός

ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν.

They [the believers],

not of blood,

nor of the flesh's desire,

nor of a man's desire,

but of God were born.

In Romans 8 the Holy Spirit through St. Paul uses a magnificent paradiastole twice within a few verses of each other—verses 35 and then verses 38–39.

Romans 8:35 τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίσει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ; θλίψις ἢ στενοχωρία ἢ διωγμὸς ἢ λιμὸς ἢ γυμνότης ἢ κίνδυνος ἢ μάχαιρα;

Nearly all translations capture this repetition well:

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (EHV) [note metonymy at the end]

Then almost immediately comes

Romans 8:38–39 πέπεισμαι γὰρ ὅτι οὔτε θάνατος
οὔτε ζωὴ
οὔτε ἄγγελοι
οὔτε ἀρχαί

οὔτε ἐνεστῶτα
οὔτε μέλλοντα
οὔτε δυνάμεις
οὔτε ὑψωμα
οὔτε βάθος
οὔτε τις κτίσις ἑτέρα

δυνήσεται ἡμᾶς χωρῖσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

KJV preserves this figure and impact. New translations tend to lose it by mixing “neithers” and “nors.”

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (EHV).

I submit that especially beloved Scripture portions and passages like this one become especially beloved not only because of their message but because language usages such as described in this paper make them particularly penetrating and memorable.

Prosopopoeia: [pro so po PEE uh] personification, things are represented as persons, as having human characteristics and abilities.

Isaiah 55:12 The trees will clap their hands.

Isaiah 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains!

1 Corinthians 12:15–16 If the foot shall say, “Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body”... And if the ear shall say, “Because I am not the eye....”

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets ... [Jesus combined prosopopoeia and metonymy]

Koren makes a point about how we value trivial passing things by citing a Norwegian saying:

Naar Döden har fra vognen spont i gravens ormestrade, da skal det ikke blive kjendt, hvo höist har siddet i saede?—When death is unhitched in the wormy street of the grave, none shall know who sat on top in the driver's seat.⁷⁰

Closely related is

Anthropopatheia: [ANN throw POP uh THIE uh] portraying God as having human qualities, features, and abilities. Scripture does this all the time.⁷¹

God's face (Psalm 89:15)

God's nostrils (Job 4:9)

God's mouth (Deuteronomy 8:3)

God's grief (Ephesians 4:30)

God's wrath and jealousy (Numbers 25:11)

God "goes down to see" (Genesis 18:20–21)

God's "heart" and "soul" (Jeremiah 32:41)

And many more.

Erotesis: [air oh TEE sis] a rhetorical question, a question for which the asker does not expect a direct answer.

Rhetorical questions are frequent both in Scripture and in our preaching, probably because they have so many uses. Hans lists these: to rebuke, to admonish, to avoid, to express strong emotion, to arrest attention, to cause listener to pause, wonder, consider deeply, and to raise doubt. That last was involved in the first recorded use of erotesis:

Genesis 3:1 "Yea, hath God said ...? (KJV)

And is this doubt again, or amazement?

Genesis 17:17 Abraham ... said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

⁷⁰ Koren, "Pastoral Letter," 263.

⁷¹ I believe Tim Schmeling explores this in detail in his recent thesis: "The Glory of the LORD Whose Likeness Is as the Appearance of a Human Being/Adam: A Study of Ezekiel's Son of Man/Adam Anthropology" (Th.M. thesis, Saint John's University, 2021).

Other instances in Scripture are more clearly positive.

Genesis 18:14 Is anything too hard for the Lord?

1 Corinthians 3:16 Don't you know that you are the temple of God ...?

1 Corinthians 1:13 Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Romans 10:14–15 [a series of questions] How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?... [etc.]

God completely humbled Job with a series of questions:

Job 38:1–5 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!"

From Jesus in His own great sermon: Matthew 7:9–1 Which of you, if his son ask for bread, will give him a stone?

Our preachers have used erotesis for many purposes. Dean Madson, in a sermon part entitled, "How can I be sure I am included," posed a series of questions to set up an anaphora, another series of "then" phrases citing chapter and verse.

You are a human being, are you not? **Then** it was meant for you. Was it not your form he took upon himself? Was it not your sin he came to remove? Are your sins perhaps so great or so many that the Christ child is unable to bury them? **Then** God would be a liar when he assures us, "But where sin bounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20 **Then it would** be the most vicious exaggeration when he tells us: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" 1 John 1:7. **Then it would** not be true, after all, that God really wants to reason with us after this fashion: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool" Isaiah 1:18. **Then it would** have been far better that we had never entered this house of worship today. But, thanks be to God....⁷²

⁷² Norman Madson, Sr., 215.

Prof. Milton Otto used questions as Law preaching.

After having committed some great offense, or finding our conscience suddenly awakened or in general depressed because of our sinfulness, what do we do? Do we look for help and comfort to their dead and ineffectual things we have done or can do? Do we not look for life and hope the wrong place, forgetting that Jesus lives? ... Do we as Christians sometimes forget that our Savior lives and become so earthbound that he is almost forgotten? Do we seek our life here among the dead and passing things of this world?⁷³

Koren often used a common formula of the day—stating questions as if from a skeptical listener, and then answering them. In his 1890 sermon on Simeon and Anna, he invented a dispute [his points summarized]:

- You say “salvation is not valid”—but God prepared it so it is valid.
- “Isn’t it more reasonable that we prepare our own salvation?” God prepared this one so we can base our faith on it.
- “Can we ‘depart in peace’ knowing we are sinners?” Yes, because we are saved sinners.
- “But Simeon had served God (“let **your servant** depart ...”) and I haven’t done that.” But his (and our) service is that we believe God.⁷⁴

Koren frequently used questions in the following way as he urged pastors to apply the gospel also to themselves:

Or do we encourage and comfort only our hearers? Has our Savior not borne also our sins? Does he not love also us? Does he not pray also for us? Does he not bear also our infirmities? Does he not know the many and dangerous temptations which we more than others must face? Yes, surely.⁷⁵

Perhaps my favorite use of erotesis is over a hundred and fifty years old. In his New Year’s Day 1868 sermon in Cleveland commemorating the Circumcision of Jesus, Frederick Wyneken addressed listeners’ anxiety about the future, using the metaphor of a doorway, and entering the very thoughts of listeners by asking these questions:

My beloved, we stand once again at the threshold of a new year. It is natural for us to wonder: What will it bring? But no man can answer

⁷³ Otto, 223–4.

⁷⁴ Koren, cited in Kuster, “Preaching,” 55–6.

⁷⁵ Koren, “Pastoral Letter,” 260.

the question. Only God knows the answer. We also ask: How will it go with your office and vocation? We must answer, God knows. We ask: What fortune or misfortune will come upon you? Again, the answer is: God knows. We ask: Will you live through this year or die this year? And again: Only God knows. So we are in the dark about all this, you say, in darkness and uncertainty, and this bothers me! Behold, there your God has painted over the entrance and door a beautiful painting with a name over it. The painting is the circumcision of Christ. The name is the sweet, precious name *Jesus*. Through the painting and the name, you can look into the fatherly heart of God in heaven. And when you tell me how you stand with respect to the picture and the name, then I will ask you whether you enter the New Year with joy and confidence or with sighs and terror.⁷⁶

Conclusion

We have attended to style in preaching by surveying first several characteristics of good spoken style and then a number of accessible and powerful figures of speech. My purpose is not to teach you how to use these in your sermons and other speaking—there is in fact controversy over whether “good style” can even be taught, but rather is innate in the character of the speaker. Longinus claimed that good style, what he called “sublime speech,” arises from “nobility of soul,” and recommends reading great writers to learn of it.

I recommend the same—reading great authors when you can is not a waste of your time—and by citing many scriptural examples I have especially suggested we can learn much about good style by reading the works of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. Style is not mere decoration, adding “fanciness” to our speech, but as we have seen in many instances above, it is following the example of our Lord’s own speaking and in the inspired Scriptures to convey His message with penetration, to make it ring in the listeners’ ears and stick in the listeners’ head and heart. We can have no better teacher than the Holy Spirit and the examples He has given us.

So I conclude with the metaphor of my title. Our preaching need not—should not—must not be dull. Aware of the possibilities and with a little special attention, we can make our language sparkle as do the inspired words of Scripture, worthily manifesting the amazing dazzling Light that overcame the darkness and even now through the humble privilege of our preaching illumines the world. LSQ

⁷⁶ Frederich Wyneken quoted in Kuster, “Preaching,” 45.

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Chapel Sermon on Deuteronomy 10:12–13

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Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving us Your Law for our good. Continue to be merciful to us as we fall into sin and seek Your forgiveness through Jesus, our Savior. Give us thankful hearts for all that You provide for us—especially our salvation through Your Son. In His name we pray. Amen.

Text: *And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good? (Deuteronomy 10:12–13)*

IT WAS FIVE HOURS SITTING ON THE HARD SEAT OF a boat traveling on a river in South America. Five hours with only one brief stop. By the time we reached our destination, my legs were cramping, my back was aching, and I just couldn't sit any longer. I was warned before we started to wait for our guide to help us out of the boat when we arrived. Well, we had arrived on the riverbank, and he was already out of the boat along with two others. And I just couldn't take sitting any longer. I stepped out of the boat . . . and promptly sank up to mid-thigh in the mud. I didn't listen to the directions very well and could easily still be there, completely covered. Following directions isn't always my best trait.

We live in a dangerous world. I'm not talking about sinking in mud on a riverbank or slipping and falling in this new snow. The danger that

chases after us each day is spiritual. And to keep us from harming ourselves, sometimes physically, but always spiritually, God has given us very specific commands. It may seem strange to think about God's Law as something that is for our good, but that's exactly what it is. In fact, it tells us that in our text. God's commands are for our good.

We're also told that these commands are not optional. Listen again: "What does the Lord your God **require** of you? ... to fear the Lord your God, to walk in **all** His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes." Even though these commands are for your good, they are not optional. They are required. And you are required to not just do your best to follow them, but to follow them perfectly.

Imagine taking a college class with those requirements. You have to not only study and know the material very well to earn a good grade, you have to know *all* the material by heart and get 100% correct on every quiz and every test. The grammar and punctuation in your paper have to be 100% perfect and your paper must follow the assignment perfectly. You have to do all of these things or you fail. How would you do in that class? None of us could pass. The requirements are impossible.

God demands perfection. Jesus tells us in Matthew, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48). Jesus says this in His Sermon on the Mount as He summarizes and explains God's Law to a crowd of people.

Be perfect, just like God. That is the price for your entry into Heaven. Be perfect. Well, how have you done? When you don't do well on an exam, you might be able to convince your professor to give you those couple of points that you need or to let you do an extra assignment to bring up your grade. But God doesn't accept failure, and you can't make up for it. Be perfect. You can't. I can't. Our situation under God's Law is desperate. We have no hope. On our own, the only option is failure and despair. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

And then we also know the punishment. Under God's Law, failure means an eternity in Hell. Not just a void without God or anyone else, but eternal, never-ending punishment for our sins. Maybe you're thinking right now, "I'm sure glad I came to chapel today for this uplifting message."

But you know that's not the end of the story, don't you? "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). We know that we are not on our own. There is **One** who was able to follow God's Law perfectly. There is **One** who did what God required. There is **One** who walked in His ways, who loved

God and served Him with **all** His heart and soul. There is **One** who kept God's commandments perfectly. And that **One**, Jesus Christ, kept all those commands for you and for me. God demanded perfection and we couldn't provide it, so Jesus is perfection for us. We sin, so Jesus took our sins on Himself and gave us His perfection. In 1 Peter 3:18, we read, "Christ also suffered once for sins in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

I was very fortunate. As I sank into that mud by the river, our guide reached out and kept me from sinking and pulled me out. There's a great picture of him scraping the mud off my leg and checking to make sure nothing had attached itself to me. He washed me off, helped me up, and never told me how foolish I was. I already knew. And my motivation changed. I did what he told me for the rest of the trip—not because someone told me to, but because I was so thankful that he had rescued me.

Our motivation to follow God's Law changes, too, when we know and believe what Jesus did for us. He reached out and pulled us from the sin that trapped us, He paid for our sins against God with His life, and we are washed clean by His blood. And so, in faith and repentance, we follow God's Law, not just because God said it is for our good, but because we are so thankful that Jesus saved us.

As we leave here today and we are assaulted by our own guilt for our sins, and as our world grows colder and more hostile to God's truth, we look in faith to God's promises. We look to Jesus Christ, who chose us before the foundation of the world, who became man and lived a perfect life in our place, who took all of our sins on Himself, who died to pay our debt, and who rose again to guarantee our eternal life. You are forgiven for not following the Law perfectly. You are His and heaven is yours. Amen. LSQ

Sermon on Acts 3:1–21: Faith in Jesus Will Heal You

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OUR TEXT THIS MORNING IS THE FIRST POST-resurrection miracle by the apostles and Peter's speech to the crowd claiming that although Jesus died, he rose again and is therefore truly the promised Messiah and the true King of Israel. This miracle—and all other miracles in Scripture—can be understood using a three-part grid: *inward, upward, and forward*. Miracles first of all point *inward*, there is a problem that we cannot solve with our own power. Miracles also point *upward* to Jesus as the power and solution. And they are small previews pointing *forward* to the time when Jesus will comprehensively solve all problems and suffering in the world.

Text: *One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.*

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who

used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 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 completely healed him, as you can all see.

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." (Acts 3:1–21)

Miracles aren't surprising

The first thing Peter said was a question, "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you?" (3:12). Now, it's a good practice to stop and really answer the question every time you see a question mark in the Bible, even if it seems rhetorical or isn't addressed to you. So let's think about that. We have members at this congregation right now suffering with physical disabilities *worse* than this man's lameness. What if I invited one of them to the front of church right now and pronounced them healed and then turned to you and asked, "Why does this surprise you?" How would you respond? You'd say, "What do you mean, 'Why are you surprised?! Because it's a miracle, which is by definition surprising!'" We want to say to Peter, "Why are *you* surprised that I'm surprised?"

Many people today say, "I just can't believe the laws of nature can be broken. Therefore, miracles are impossible, so that makes the Bible difficult to accept." Others see miracles as embarrassments and want to accept the Bible without the miracles. When they find an account of a miracle, they say, "Uh, well, you know, that's a legendary addition that was put in there

by superstitious, primitive people. We can just ignore that and try to get the higher spiritual meaning out of the passage.”

But what Peter is saying is that if you believe in God at all, then miracles are not surprising or hard to accept. The Bible says God sustains everything with the power of his Word. He not only creates everything, but he also keeps it going. The so-called laws of nature are actually just God’s customary way of sustaining his creation. That’s all. When God does something so-called ‘miraculous,’ he’s doing what he always does, he’s just not using his customary way of doing it.

The miracle points forward

God created everything in the beginning with the power of his word, and what he created was the perfect Garden of Eden. He did not invent lameness. God did not invent blindness. He didn’t create suffering, he didn’t create a world filled with death. It’s not until humans turned away from God that poverty and injustice and sickness and death exploded into existence, by the creative power of the human word and action.

God is not happy with the world the way it is right now. He hates what is going on even more than you and I might hate what is going on in the world, and in this miracle he is already dealing with it in one particular instance. This miracle of healing is not a *suspension* of the natural order, but a *restoration* of the natural order. This is the way God wants the world to be. You could say the miracles of Jesus and the apostles are the only *natural* things in a world that is unnatural, wounded, and demonized.

The miracles of Jesus and the apostles are not just displays of power to impress people, like flying or lifting a big boulder. Jesus frequently tried to *avoid* the fame his miracles naturally brought. Rather, his miracles always fix some kind of suffering or trouble because they are pointing forward to the end of all things, to the day God restores his creation. St. Luke, the author of this text, wants us to see this miracle as the beginning of that restoration. He wrote, “[The healed man] went into the temple courts, walking and *leaping* and praising God” (3:8). Anybody who knew the Hebrew Scriptures very well and came to this passage would think of Isaiah chapter 35: “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then *the lame will leap like a deer*, and the mute tongue shout for joy” (35:5–6). Isaiah 35 is describing what’s going to happen in this world when God comes to restore everything in a new creation. And it has already begun to happen! We shouldn’t be *surprised* by this healing, but we should be *anticipating* it, hoping for it, praying for it, and expecting it!

The miracle points *inward*

But God wants to fix things in a certain order, and our spiritual problem needs to be fixed before the physical ones. Think about every miracle of healing like this one as also a tiny parable pointing beyond the physical or emotional need to a spiritual need. Spiritually, we are lame and paralyzed and blind and dead, and that's a bigger deal that God wants to address before our physical and emotional problems.

Jesus did a similar healing in the familiar story in Luke's Gospel when the friends of a paralyzed man brought him to Jesus and went so far as to let him down through the roof to get him there. They were obviously looking for a healing, but Jesus said, "What you want is too superficial. I'm going to give you something better, something deeper. Your sins are forgiven." Anyone today would have said, "Uh, thanks, I think, but you know, everybody else can see that I didn't come for that. I have a little more urgent need here. I can't walk. How can you ignore that? Let's talk about religion and spirituality later on, but this is what I really need. I need to walk."

Jesus was saying, "No, you don't. I want you to walk, but I also want you to know that's not what you *really* need. You're thinking if you could just walk, you'd never be unhappy again. But you're wrong. Look at all of the other people who are here. They're walking. There are all kinds of people who have walked all their lives, and they're not happy. That's not what you really need."

The physical need is never your deepest need; it's the spiritual. As bad as suffering is and as committed as God is to ending it, suffering is not your primary problem. It's sin, because sin keeps you separated from God in a way that cuts you off from his permanent solution to any of your other problems. And so Jesus has to deal with these problems in the right order and sin is the first problem Jesus came to solve. While Jesus walked in Palestine those years, he dealt with some physical problems in a preliminary, small way; but his purpose was to deal with our sin in a big way, in a complete way, in a way in which he could say, "It is finished." Although he was perfectly innocent, he absorbed all our sin into himself and was killed as a result of it. But he rose from the dead—with both our spiritual problem and our physical problems solved. The spiritual gift is given to you today through the Word and Sacraments, meeting your deepest need, and only then *can* the time of physical refreshing God promised come.

The miracle points upward

Jesus said, “It is finished” in regard to our spiritual problem, but not our physical ones—not yet. So what about those physical needs in the meanwhile? Well, we’re going to try and help you with them. Jesus is the enemy of suffering and fought it wherever he saw it when he walked the earth, and if you are on his side and if this is a church that says it is on his side, then we are going to be enemies of suffering too, and we are going to alleviate it wherever we possibly can while we walk the earth. Peter and John didn’t have silver and gold, but we do, and we’re going to give it to people. We’re going to be friends to those who don’t have any; and we’re going to try to provide inspiration to those struggling; and we’re going to give rides to people who can’t get around on their own. Many people might see those behaviors as so-called “miracles”! But they are not surprising *suspensions* of the natural order of humanity; they are *restorations* of it.

We’re going to do all of those things for people with problems, but we also want them to know those things are band-aids. They are only skin-deep solutions. We’re going to point upward, telling people who don’t know it that Jesus has a greater healing ready for them if they “repent and turn to God, so that their sins may be wiped out” (3:19).

And we’re going to encourage people who are struggling to live in between the time of Jesus’ first spiritual healing and second physical healings to have hope, reminding them that Jesus “must receive heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything” (3:21). We will turn their hearts and eyes upward, away from the present perishable world to Jesus their Solution and Hope.

Conclusion: Faith in Jesus will heal you

This miracle of healing shouldn’t make us feel jealous of that man or despairing that God doesn’t love us as much as him. It should make us hope for our own healing, which comes by faith. Peter said, “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 completely healed him, as you can all see” (3:16). I am going to *guarantee* to you—speaking in the place of God himself!—that faith in this crucified and risen Jesus *will heal you too*, literally.

But I don’t know the schedule. The day before this lame man was healed he had no idea that tomorrow was going to be his cure. That is what faith is—the constant hope that tomorrow will be your day. Maybe tomorrow will be your miracle healing. It could be! Maybe tomorrow you will be released from suffering by the doorway of death! Maybe tomorrow

will be the day of Jesus' return and worldwide healing of a new creation!
Faith in Jesus will heal you and the time of God's refreshing will come.
Believe it. [LSQ](#)

Book Review

LSQ 61, no. 4 (December 2021)

Book Review: Basics of Latin: A Grammar with Readings and Exercises from the Christian Tradition

Basics of Latin: A Grammar with Readings and Exercises from the Christian Tradition. By Derek Cooper. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020. 402 pp. \$59.99 (Paper); Supplementary Video Lectures, \$199.99. ISBN 9780310538998.

Those who learn inflected languages know that vocabulary and parsing charts do not come easily. Thus to succeed takes a strong motivation with a greater purpose in mind. Derek Cooper's *Basics of Latin* seeks to harness and leverage a Christian motivation to learning Latin, namely, being able to read Latin religious works, especially since many are still untranslated. Consequently, Cooper carves out a niche among first-year

Latin textbooks by organizing his work around vocabulary and readings from the Christian tradition. Furthermore, his pedagogical approach aims for a cleaner organization around Latin parts of speech and for a conversational tone that offers accessibility, practicality, and encouragement.

The conventional way to organize a textbook for non-modern languages is to teach the basics of all parts of speech in a limited fashion at first so the learner can quickly begin translating basic sentences. For example, you might learn basic present tense verb forms in the first chapters followed by some chapters on two noun declensions with subsequent chapters then branching out in various directions.¹ Although this traditional method gets the learner

¹ See, for example, the organization of Frederic Wheelock, *Wheelock's Latin*, 7th ed. (New York: Collins Reference, 2011), v–vii. For a Greek example, see Anne Groton, *From Alpha to Omega*, 4th ed. (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2013), v–vii.

into exercises with complete sentences without helps as soon as possible, a likely drawback is that the learner is moving onto another part of speech or unrelated topic before mastering the part already covered. In contrast to this approach, Cooper opts for an organization around the parts of speech and avoids jumping around to different grammatical topics as much as he can. The first seven chapters are devoted to the declension system of nouns and related adjectival forms. Seventeen of the remaining chapters deal with verbs with three intervening chapters for demonstratives, pronouns, relatives, and the like. The exercises then have helps to fill in the gaps so the student can still work through full Latin sentences. The logic of such an organization is to help students solidify related grammatical concepts and endings in a clear progression, such that the noun declensions all stick together in the student's mind with all their interrelations before moving on to verbs.

Older approaches to learning a language like Latin tended to have at least half of the exercises as artificial Latin sentences and English-to-Latin translations. The artificial sentences keep things neat and clean for the learner, but in the end, they may not instill the true messiness and reality of a language, stifling the learner. Original Latin sentences offer opportunities for inductive learning, which Cooper makes use of with explanatory footnotes. Likewise, exercises using sentences from original Latin texts highlight the very reason students learn Latin, further motivating the student, or as he puts it:

This feature represents one of the most unique elements of this book. Whereas some Latin books offer trite, made-up sentences for students to translate, this book only contains real-life, bona fide sentences from Latin-writing Christians. Here is my pledge to you: I will not make up any Latin sentences in this book. With so many hundreds of thousands of Latin sentences out there waiting to be read, why form new ones from scratch? I cannot think of one good reason. (xix)

In essence, Cooper seeks to offer a balance of inductive learning in exercises derived entirely from the Christian tradition with the deductive learning that a language like Latin necessitates. The versatility of sources in the exercises is impressive, not only including notables like Augustine, Aquinas, and Luther but also the likes of Tertullian, Bede, Fulgentius, Valla, Melancthon, Bellarmine, Zinzendorf, and many more. He includes historical biographies for larger excerpts, and each chapter begins by weaving in a Latin author's writing in connection to the topic at hand. Additionally, there is an answer key at the end of the book so one is never lost in the exercises when self-learning. All in all, Cooper speedily gets the student's feet wet in theological Latin texts.

Though Latin may well be the stereotypical language of the erudite, Cooper diverges from a formal, terse style that characterizes many textbooks by attempting a more approachable, colloquial style. What it lacks in succinctness it makes up for in the

author's care to talk you through the grammar and concepts. He likewise sprinkles in encouragement and humor to help with motivation. Companion DVDs can be purchased along with the textbook; however, they do not offer any contributions beyond what is written in the book, which can stand alone as is. The DVDs further highlight Cooper's conversational style. In the end, however, the value of the videos will lie in the student's preference for hearing and seeing Cooper himself talk them through the lesson rather than reading it for themselves. As such, the DVDs are probably best suited for self-learners or a homeschooling context. Though the video lectures have a steep price tag, retailers often have deep discounts for patient buyers.

Though the book can stand on its own in many respects and has a little Latin-English dictionary in the back, the author admits that you will need a dictionary on hand for some of the exercises while giving a couple of free online options too (299). The only truly bothersome feature of the textbook for me is the lack of comprehensive ending charts at the back. Though the book's clean organization makes it easier than most first-year books to refer to charts in previous lessons, it is nice to have all the charts in one place for reviewing or a quick reminder.

Undoubtedly the greatest strength of Cooper's text is its interweaving of Christian texts with learning the language. If reading Christian texts is one's goal of learning Latin, this textbook is an excellent choice and uses that interest as a motivator. After all, he notes that about 80% of Latin texts were written by Christian authors (xvii). Much of the Lutheran tradition, in fact, still lies untranslated (and consequently often unread) in Latin. Nevertheless as Cooper himself stresses in his own conversational style, there is no such thing as uniquely Christian Latin: "To imagine the Latin of a Christian as fundamentally different from that of Catullus or Ovid is tantamount to saying that a pair of shoes or a toothbrush is 'Christian' if used by a member of the church" (296). All Latin sources should be approachable after learning from this book. However, in my opinion, the vocabulary learned in the first year or two of a language sticks in one's mind the strongest, so if the goal is to read theological texts, you are better off learning theological vocabulary early on. The book deserves strong consideration and is recommendable for first-year Latin with a Christian emphasis in contexts such as a high school, college, self-learning, or homeschooling.

– Nicholas D. Proksch

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