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A Comparison of the Frequency and Effectiveness of Contemporary Preaching in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and Protestantism on Selected Social Issues as Represented in the Concordia Pulpit and the Pulpit Digest

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SHORT TITLE

PREACHING ON SOCIAL ISSUES

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—LUTHERAN CHURCH AND PROTESTANTISM
ON SELECTED SOCIAL ISSUES AS REPRESENTED IN
THE CONSTITUTIONAL BULLETIN AND THE WISCONSIN JOURNAL

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Paul Willie Krueger

June 1957

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OF CONTEMPORARY PREACHING IN
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THE CONCORDIA PULPIT AND THE PULPIT DIGEST

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christianity, if it is to make any impact upon a people, must speak to his needs and problems in a changing society. The following study is based on this supposition and in the same spirit endeavored to find the reasons for existence. The purpose of this study is to supply a measuring device to indicate both the frequency and effectiveness with which the message

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For a church's eternal salvation is not regarded as a social event. ever, if Christian activity is regarded as being chiefly an individual, private delinquency, it is included in this study. The latter, the Christian here may be regarded as a source of promoting the Christian growth of its members and this not be understood about the system as a whole. On the other hand, it may be regarded as fundamental in reducing crime, mental illness, and vagrancy and these were also within the purview of this study. Though a mission program may be directed at improving the lot of the underclass of the community as a whole, it is not considered

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Christianity, if it is to make any impact upon a person, must speak to his needs and problems in a changing society. The following study is based on this supposition and in the same supposition it finds its reason for existence. The purpose of this study is to supply a measuring devise to indicate both the frequency and effectiveness with which the Missouri Synod has been relating Christianity to the social situation of her people. It is not a primary goal to measure the progress of Protestantism in the same way. Protestantism is represented rather as a control-element by which the Missouri Synod might either contrast or identify herself. Any faults of Protestant preaching are illuminated, not for polemical reasons, but rather pedagogical.

A social issue, as it is referred to in this paper, is a situation which affects the physical well-being of the populace as a whole. Thus, a sermon on Christian education which stresses its content and importance for a person's eternal salvation is not regarded as a social issue. However, if Christian education is advocated as being useful in eliminating juvenile delinquency, it is included in this study. Similarly, the Christian home may be regarded as a means of promoting the Christian growth of its members and thus not be concerned about the populace as a whole. On the other hand, it may be regarded as instrumental in reducing crime, mental illness, and vagrancy and thus come within the purview of this study. Though a mission sermon may be directed at improving the lot of the unbelievers or the populace as a whole, it is not concerned

primarily with their physical well-being and is, therefore, not qualified as a sermon on a social issue.

It is recognized that the Church meets the needs of its members in numerous ways. Preaching is only one of them. This study confines itself to the area of preaching. In doing so, it is this writer's opinion that he is examining one of the most effective avenues through which the message of the Church may be related to people confronted by social problems, and that preaching may well be an indication of the effectiveness of the Church's voice in other areas of service.

It must also be recognized that this study is confined to representative groups of sermons. The preaching of the Missouri Synod is represented by the sermons in the Concordia Pulpit, a collection of sermons issued annually by Concordia Publishing House. These sermons are written exclusively by Missouri Synod clergymen. Assuming that those who buy them, read them, they constitute a relatively reliable gauge of Missouri Synod preaching. To the extent that these sermons may be not only read but also incorporated into a given pastor's sermon, the degree of representativeness increases. Protestant preaching is represented by the sermons of the Pulpit Digest, a monthly magazine circulated chiefly among Protestant clergymen. Its sermons are authored principally by Protestant clergymen. The term "Protestant" is used to define those Christians in the United States forming denominations which are neither Roman Catholic, branches of the Eastern Church or Lutheran. Sermons appear in the Pulpit Digest, on occasion, by Jewish Rabbis. Although even these sermons have an effect upon Protestantism, they cannot be said to be representative, and are for that reason not included in this study. The Pulpit Digest

also contains several sermons by Lutherans. Since it can be assumed that these have an equal influence upon Protestant preachers and since none of these Lutherans are of the Missouri Synod, such sermons have not been eliminated from the scope of this study.

A third limitation of this study is that it treats only six social issues. These are labor, race relations, war, citizenship, education and the family. These six areas were chosen because, with the possible exception of the second issue, all are treated in both publications. These sermons are chosen only from the last six years, the Concordia Pulpit from 1952 through 1957 and the Pulpit Digest from 1951 through 1956. Bearing in mind that the sermons of the Concordia Pulpit are written and published the year before they are to be used and are therefore pre-dated one year, the six years under scrutiny are parallel in both publications. The purpose of examining only the last six years' sermons is to see how present problems are met by present preaching. Six years is admittedly not a long enough period to indicate any trends. These six social issues are the only ones treated in the Concordia Pulpit. The Pulpit Digest gives attention to additional social problems.

A final major limitation of this paper which must be mentioned is that it deals only with the direct method of preaching on social issues. This method includes a statement of the problem at the outset of the sermon, and the remainder of the sermon attempts to explicate or solve it. The indirect method applies a general goal of Christian sanctification to specific social situations. With the direct method, a specific social issue is of primary concern and is expressed in the theme. This is not meant as an indication that the direct method is better, nor that it should be more widely used than the indirect method. It is the

contention of this writer that deficiencies of either frequency or effectiveness in one method could well be an indication of the same deficiencies in the other. The direct method was chosen for this study in preference to the indirect because it lends itself more readily to objective examination. It must be admitted that, in the case of a few sermons, there may be some doubt as to whether the treatment should be considered direct or indirect.

The comparative frequency with which the Missouri Synod and Protestantism deal with social issues is treated in the following chapter. The statistics are based on the sermons selected according to the above-mentioned characteristics. The next four chapters compare the effectiveness with which the two groups of preachers treat the six problems. Each of these chapters is grouped around one of four criteria which, in the estimation of this writer, are essential to effective preaching to a social need. The first criterion is that the preacher be well informed of the facts of the social issue in point. This would include a proper appreciation of conflicting points of view in the case of highly controversial issues. A statement of the goal of a sermon often reveals a preacher's competence and general knowledge of the facts by reflecting what he considers important or relevant. The second criterion is that the preacher does not shrink from affirming his position in matters where Scripture has clearly spoken. A consideration of malady is useful at this point. The danger at the other extreme is that the preacher goes beyond Scripture, becoming partisan in expressing his personal views. The third criterion is that the sermon be an exposition of Scripture. This includes a consideration of whether a text is stated, whether it is used, and whether it is used correctly. The Confessions, Church tradition

and the decrees of more recent Church councils must also be properly considered. A final criterion is that the Gospel be preached as the dynamic for improvement. The findings are summarized in a concluding chapter.

This writer found few comparable studies of either the frequency or effectiveness of preaching on social issues. There are two which he found helpful. Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer briefly lists some criteria for preaching on social issues in the 1941 edition of the Concordia Pulpit.¹ He follows the criteria with six sermons which illustrate them. Harold A. Bosley treats the frequency and method of preaching on controversial issues in his book, Preaching on Controversial Issues.² This is not wholly parallel to the present study since all controversial issues are not social and all social issues are not controversial.

The findings of this study indicate that the Missouri Synod preachers preach on social issues much less frequently than do the Protestant men. Both groups have some virtues and many faults when rated according to effectiveness.

¹Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Christian and His World," Concordia Pulpit, XII (1941), 419-44.

²Harold A. Bosley, Preaching on Controversial Issues (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), pp. 9-26.

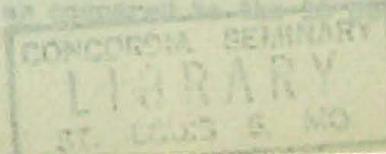
CHAPTER II

THE COMPARATIVE FREQUENCY OF PREACHING ON SOCIAL ISSUES

It is not the purpose of this paper to establish the ideal frequency for directly dealing with social issues from the pulpit. The purpose is rather to compare objectively the instances of preaching on social themes found in the Concordia Pulpit and the Pulpit Digest and to allow the reader to determine the ideal frequency for himself. It may be helpful, nevertheless, to present another's opinion on the matter. One man may say it is never necessary to preach on social themes because, if the Gospel is preached, the Kingdom of God is established and the problems of society are thereby mended. Preachers through the years, however, have found it helpful, if not necessary, to preach the Gospel to specific goals of sanctification, i.e., to mundane problems which distress Christians. Once it has been granted that preaching on social issues is necessary, one must determine what percentage of the sermons which a congregation hears should be devoted to such a direct presentation and solution of social problems. In speaking of controversial issues, a scope somewhat narrower than social issues, Harold A. Bosley recommends the number which he preached during the two years of 1950 to 1952.¹ Of approximately one hundred sermons, he lists thirteen which deal with controversial issues by the direct method or 13 per cent.

Fifty-four sermons of the Pulpit Digest from 1951 through 1956 have

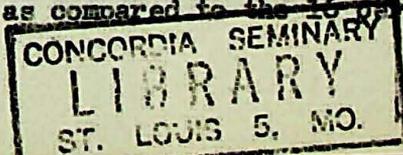
¹Harold A. Bosley, Preaching on Controversial Issues (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), p. 10.



been classified as sermons which deal with social issues by the direct method. A total of 348 sermons were counted in the same issues, showing that slightly less than 16 per cent directly treat social problems. Fifteen such sermons were found distributed over a total of 547 Concordia Pulpit sermons for slightly less than 3 per cent.

Some sermons of the Pulpit Digest deal with social issues other than those listed in this paper. Seven sermons are about the problem of alcoholism. Others treat soil conservation, communism, brotherhood, and other pertinent social problems. The Concordia Pulpit deals with no social issues other than those represented by the sermons of this study. None of its sermons directly treat the problem of race relations. However, it does contain two sermons on human relations other than inter-racial. The Pulpit Digest, on the other hand, contains two sermons exclusively about race relations. These are included in this study. In addition, it contains six sermons of the broader topic, "brotherhood." These, too, all contain reference to race relations in addition to inter-faith relations. Another area of unequal attention is that of war. The Pulpit Digest deals with it in six sermons, while the Concordia Pulpit has but one. The one area in which the Concordia Pulpit exhibits a special interest is the general subject of citizenship. Six of the fifteen Concordia Pulpit sermons fall in this category as compared to eight of the twenty-seven Pulpit Digest sermons. To the areas of labor, the home and education, both give comparable attention.

Two tendencies of the Missouri Synod suggest themselves as a result of this comparison. The first is a tendency to slight the direct treatment of social issues. This is evidenced by the fact that it occupies only 3 per cent of the sermons as compared to the 16 per cent of



Protestantism. The second is the tendency to avoid controversial subjects. This is evidenced by the total absence of all reference to race relations and only one sermon on the ethics of war, while there is a preponderance of attention given to civic awareness, civic morality and the like.

The first criterion of a preacher's effectiveness in treating social issues is that he be well-informed of the facts of the case. In the instance of controversial social issues such as war or race relations, it would involve an appreciation of the conflicting points of view. The degree of a preacher's competence is often not apparent in one sermon. For that reason, in addition to outward evidences of familiarity with the subject, the goal of the sermon has been chosen as a reflection by its scope or immediate philosophy and as an indirect reflection by revealing what the speaker considers an important aspect of the problem.

The goals of the seven Palmit Digest sermons on labor are here arranged under three headings. The first has a goal which indicates evangelistic convictions, i.e., to achieve the redemption of the whole of our society through the cooperation of religion and labor.¹ Goals increasingly general in nature are to urge the Church to play an important part in the labor movement in this country,² to solve the problem of vocational by pointing to the teachings of Christ,³ to urge acceptance of Christian unity for harmonious labor-management relations⁴ and to urge a return to

¹Harold Eby, "Religion and Labor," Palmit Digest, XXXI (August, 1952), 27.

²H. Edward Doady, "Christian Labor Relations," Palmit Digest, XXXII (August, 1952), 25.

³William H. Stratton, "Jesus, You, and Your Work," Palmit Digest, XXXIV (August, 1952), 24.

⁴Werner S. Untchale, "Some of a Working God," Palmit Digest, XXXV

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST CRITERION OF EFFECTIVENESS

The first criterion of a preacher's effectiveness in treating social issues is that he be well-informed of the facts of the case. In the instance of controversial social issues such as war or race relations, it would include an appreciation of the conflicting points of view. The degree of a preacher's competence is often not apparent in one sermon. For that reason, in addition to outward evidences of familiarity with the subject, the goal of the sermon has been chosen as a reflection by its accurate or inaccurate phraseology and as an indirect reflection by revealing what the speaker considers an important aspect of the problem.

The goals of the seven Pulpit Digest sermons on labor are here arranged under three headings. The first has a goal which indicates erroneous conceptions, i.e., to achieve the redemption of the whole of our society through the cooperation of religion and labor.¹ Goals excessively general in nature are to urge the Church to plan an important part in the labor movement in this country,² to solve the problem of vocation by pointing to the teachings of Christ,³ to urge acceptance of Christianity for harmonious labor-management relations⁴ and to urge a return to

¹Kermit Eby, "Religion and Labor," Pulpit Digest, XXXI (August, 1951), 27.

²R. Edward Dowdy, "Christian Labor Relations," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (August, 1952), 25.

³Hilmyer H. Straton, "Jesus, You, and Your Work," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (August, 1954), 14.

⁴Verner S. Mumbulo, "Sons of a Working God," Pulpit Digest, XXXV

worship in order to preserve our way of life.⁵ Goals which indicate a good grasp of the subject are to urge hearers to find the God-given purpose of a task in order to obtain the greatest satisfaction from it⁶ and to direct those who are frustrated by the apparent futility of their daily work to the resources of the Church.⁷ It might be assumed that Kermit Eby, who wrote the sermon referred to under the first heading, would know the facts. He is associate professor of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. Yet, he seems to transcend and ignore facts in this sermon in the dream of a complete solution to the problem. Such treatment violates the first criterion of this study. The second group of goals leaves too much leeway for generalities, and the sermons give evidence that the preachers succumbed to this temptation. The first goal in the third section is the most specific of these seven sermons. The final goal is less exact, but it shows that the preacher is keenly aware of the frustrations of the laborer.

There are three sermons in the Concordia Pulpit (1952-1957) on labor. Their goals are to give proper motive for labor,⁸ to show that it is God's

(August, 1955), 20.

⁵William P. Vaughn, "Six Days for Labor," Pulpit Digest, XXXV (August, 1955), 20.

⁶Thomas F. Hudson, "Do You Enjoy Your Work?," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (August, 1952), 29.

⁷Arthur G. Ackenboen, "Pie in the Sky," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (August, 1954), 19.

⁸Herbert Lindemann, "Labor Day Sermon," Concordia Pulpit, XXIII (1952), 426.

arrangement that man should work⁹ and that Christians accept God's call to work.¹⁰ The first of these shows reasonable acquaintance with the facts. The second preacher apparently knows of nothing urgent enough in the case to incite him to do more than give information. The final goal here listed is exemplary. In general, the goals of these three sermons strike more truly at the problem than those of the Pulpit Digest, but they are less concerned with defining the problem at hand and more concerned with its solution.

On the subject of race relations a preacher exhibits competence by dealing fairly and intelligently with all viewpoints. He understands the facts but also properly acknowledges controversial opinions. The sermon in the Pulpit Digest by Carl Hermann Voss is an example of complete ignoring of all arguments of the opponents.¹¹ The sermon by Andrew L. Janssen, on the other hand, uses a good knowledge of facts to set forth his goal in a persuasive and winning manner.¹²

The two sermons on human relations taken from the Concordia Pulpit exhibit a poor knowledge of the problem. They are excessively general. These are their goals: to urge and teach hearers how to get along with

⁹Alfred W. Koehler, "Earning Our Daily Bread," Concordia Pulpit, XXIV (1953), 357.

¹⁰Kenneth R. Hoffman, "The Christian Calling in Daily Work," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 409.

¹¹Carl Hermann Voss, "Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (February, 1952), 27.

¹²Andrew L. Janssen, "Venturing in Brotherhood," Pulpit Digest, XXXI (February, 1951), 39.

people¹³ and to improve a Christian's human relations.¹⁴ The fact that these sermons on human relations make no mention of race relations indicates that the Missouri Synod preachers are ignoring or are ignorant of a gigantic aspect of human relations.

Two of the six Pulpit Digest sermons on war are excellent in the way that they recognize and evaluate variant opinions. To assist the individual in answering the question, "May a Christian kill?"¹⁵ and to make men Christian Peacemakers¹⁶ are their goals. In this issue, more than a any of the others here considered, a good understanding of the facts demands an understanding of the arguments of the minority, in this case the pacifist. The first criterion states that it is advantageous to give evidence of this knowledge in the sermon. The two sermons referred to above did so. A second group of two sermons from the Pulpit Digest by Rolland W. Schloerb¹⁷ and Harold A. Bosley¹⁸ show a fair knowledge of subject but their approach is different. They begin by advocating "inward peace" as the basis of world peace. They do not consider the ethics of war. A third group of two sermons in the Pulpit Digest shows definite

¹³Herbert Berner, "Getting Along With Other People," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 320.

¹⁴Erich H. Heintzen, "St. Paul on Human Relations," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 300.

¹⁵Arthur O. Ackenbon, "May a Christian Kill?," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (November, 1952), 31.

¹⁶J. Chandler Adams, "Traits of Christian Peacemakers," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (November, 1951), 35.

¹⁷Rolland W. Schloerb, "Do We Want Peace?," Pulpit Digest, XXXVII (November, 1956), 37.

¹⁸Harold A. Bosley, "The Christian Witness For Peace," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (November, 1953), 35.

lack of knowledge of history, or the urgency of the present situation and of man.¹⁹ They seek to insure world peace by promoting optimism.

There is only one sermon in the Concordia Pulpit on the subject of war.²⁰ This preacher touches upon some vital aspects of the issue, although without any real insight. The seven pages of the sermon are replete with "illustration book" stories.

All the sermons which fall in the category "citizenship," with the exception of one from the Concordia Pulpit, were written either for Independence Day or Memorial Day. The social problem in this case is not as sharply focused as the others. The problem more positively stated is the abuse of citizenship. This uncertainty of the problem evidences itself in a nebulous goal and inexact understanding of any specific issue. Five of the eight sermons on this topic selected from the Pulpit Digest are more accurately considered as promoting patriotic feeling more than a change in social action or thinking. Their goals are to recall our illustrious past or to see hope for continued freedom in the principles of America. The three sermons with a definite goal exhibit a more concrete knowledge of the problem. One explores the dangers involved in the right of pursuit of happiness.²¹ Another examines various harmful or helpful

¹⁹Thomas Franklyn Hudson, "The Valley of Dry Bones," Pulpit Digest, XXXVI (November, 1953), 35; Robert G. Middleton, "Give Me Tomorrow," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (November, 1952), 23.

²⁰Walter F. Troeger, "Peace With Others," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 235.

²¹Frederick M. Meek, "Happiness is Not an Inalienable Right," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (June, 1952), 52.

concepts of freedom.²² The third sees a danger to the country in man's failure to evaluate himself properly.²³

Five of the six sermons on citizenship taken from the Concordia Pulpit are likewise exceedingly general and not directed to specific goals. One Memorial Day sermon is concerned only with remembering,²⁴ while another adds the goals of repentance and thanksgiving.²⁵ An Independence Day sermon is directed chiefly to the goal of thankfulness that we have a government that tolerates all religions.²⁶ One sermon not only shows a lack of current knowledge but also gives concrete instances of misinformation.²⁷ This sermon, found in the 1957 edition of the Concordia Pulpit, speaks of the nation's 50 per cent religious affiliation and refers to this nation's international security because of her position between two oceans. Reinhold A. Hingst, in a Memorial Day sermon, illustrates a more informed position as he addresses himself to the goal of overcoming the attitude of regarding that day as an opportunity only

²²Harold B. Walker, "Do We Really Want Freedom?," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (June, 1952), 45.

²³John W. Van Zanten, "Christian Faith and Our Way of Life," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (May, 1954), 25.

²⁴Martin G. Poch, "In Remembrance," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 385.

²⁵Roland H. A. Seboldt, "Our Memorial Stones," Concordia Pulpit, XXVII (1956), 404.

²⁶Arthur F. Katt, "The Apostles' Fearless 'Declaration of Independence' and Gamaliel's Wise Political Counsel," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 402.

²⁷Horace R. Frerking, "Our Independence Day Confession," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 395.

for personal enjoyment.²⁸ This is the one sermon which gives evidence of an awareness of the problems and duties of citizenship.

The fifth area of social concern is the home as it affects society. Neither of the bodies under scrutiny makes a noteworthy contribution in this field. The first of the two Pulpit Digest sermons applies the story of the stolen birthright to the international situation as well as to the domestic.²⁹ On an international scale, stealing birthrights is likened to an exploiting colonial policy. Though this is specified as a sermon for the Christian home, fully one third of the sermon is spent on an "international stealing of birthrights." On the domestic level it is directed against the evil of juvenile delinquency. The other sermon refers to the broken home as a cause of criminality.³⁰ The most striking feature of this sermon denoting lack of knowledge is the abundance of anecdotal stories. There are eighteen secular stories which fill 337 of the 637 total lines of the sermon.

The sermon taken from the Concordia Pulpit on the home addresses several problems of society in the introduction but does not thereafter refer to them.³¹

Of the sermons on education, one by Gerald Kennedy in the Pulpit Digest exhibits an acute understanding of the problem of linking right

²⁸Reinhold A. Hingst, "The Christian Significance of Memorial Day," Concordia Pulpit, XXV (1954), 399.

²⁹James W. Fifield, Jr., "The Noblest Inheritance," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (April, 1953), 29.

³⁰Ivan H. Hagedorn, "What is a Good Home?," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (June, 1952), 29.

³¹Herbert Berner, "Making the Family Christian," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 306.

action.³² A sermon in the Concordia Pulpit shows a creditable acknowledgment of the needs of society which proper education might cure.³³ The other two sermons on education are not outstanding in this respect.

³²Gerald Kennedy, "Set Me upon My Feet," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (August, 1953), 21.

³³George Wittmer, "Our Program of Christian Education," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 425.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND CRITERION OF EFFECTIVENESS

A second criterion of effective preaching on social issues is that the preacher be firm in his convictions and that he exercise fearlessness in speaking the message of his text. This is not to be confused with deliberate tactlessness. The preacher must avoid, on the other hand, any unnecessary alignment with factions or partisan groups. The forty-two sermons of this study have been evaluated on this criterion in two ways. Each sermon is first evaluated to determine whether it confronts the listener with his shortcomings. Those sermons which contain some malady preaching are further divided between those which proclaim the basic malady, sin and separation from God, and those which refer only to the surface symptoms of such disorder. The second evaluation is made to place each sermon in one of three categories denoting its degree of offensiveness. The first category contains those which could not possibly be offensive. This would include sermons which avoid any strong reference to man's failure. A second group is composed of those sermons which may be offensive to some, but only because it faces them with their shortcomings and with the message of Scripture. The third group contains those which are likely offensive to some because they express a partisan sentiment.

Of the twenty-seven sermons from the Pulpit Digest, ten contain no reference to any human malady. Of the remaining seventeen, only three cite man's basic malady, sin. Those sermons which only infer a shortcoming (because of the pointlessness of preaching to a given goal when it

has already been attained) are included among those which ignore man's condition. There is also the borderline case of sermons which tell about the weakness of men but not the men within the range of the speaker. Because of the practical difficulty of deciding in each instance with certainty, all such sermons have been subsumed in the group with those which contain surface malady. Typical of this frequent impersonal type of malady preaching is the following excerpt from a Pulpit Digest sermon. "Much, we know, is wrong with America, seriously, deeply, and gravely wrong. Her declining faith, her forsaken altars, her armies of criminals. . . ."¹ Another type included in this group are those which are apparently not even aware of man's basic malady. Sin, to them, is the lag of social goodness. The following quotation typifies this type.

Could it be that such evils as war and communism are symptomatic of a deeper malady? Could it be that the real disease eating at the heart of civilization is caused by such things as hunger, ignorance, ill health, injustice, exploitation and denial of the basic needs and sacred rights of people as children of God?²

The three sermons which preach basic malady, do so with clarity. The following is an example.

The wages of sin, we have been told for many generations, is death. . . . Sin is well defined as rebellion against the will of God. . . . Yet how much conviction of our rebellion against this will of God do we have in our heart or hearts? How real and how deep is our conviction of sin in the awful awareness that all men seem to be enemies and brotherhood, a chimera?³

¹Clarence Edward Macartney, "Their Name Liveth Forever," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (May, 1952), 36.

²J. Chandler Adams, "Traits of a Christian Peacemaker," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (November, 1951), 38.

³Carl Hermann Voss, "Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (February, 1952), 28.

Five of the fifteen sermons taken from the Concordia Pulpit have no clear statement of man's malady. Seven contain only surface malady and three include a statement of man's basic sickness. The percentage of the Concordia Pulpit sermons which preach no malady is only slightly lower than those of the Pulpit Digest, while the percentage of those containing basic malady is slightly higher. In both cases the largest category is that of surface malady. One difference between the two is that, in the Concordia Pulpit, there are no apparent instances of a preacher equating sin with social lag. There is, however, one distinctive element in the Concordia Pulpit sermons. The statement of man's basic malady often appears only in the closing sentences of the sermon.

Turning to the second area of evaluation, fourteen of the Pulpit Digest sermons are classified as "non-offensive." These sermons are placed in this category because they do not tell men of their part in making conditions what they are, because they state only the obvious and because they do not speak with conviction. Following is a labor sermon excerpt which states the obvious. "The Christian Church in all this field of endeavor today must be, of course, on the side of the dignity of work, the demand of truth, and the necessity for righteousness."⁴ Lack of conviction is typified by a quotation from the same sermon: "Numbers of us who feel we are Christian believe sincerely that something of the way of Jesus is definitely being realized. . . ."⁵

The second group is composed of those sermons which not only contain

⁴Verner S. Mumbulo, "Sons of a Working God," Pulpit Digest, XXXV (August, 1955), 19.

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

a clear and thorough statement of God's judgment upon a situation but also a courageous Scriptural position on a controversial issue. The Pulpit Digest contains only three such sermons.

However, ten sermons fall in the third category, i.e., those which evidence a partisan spirit. The following quotations give evidence of this characteristic: "Here in Jefferson, our county, within ten days, we can show how much we are concerned for our children, by our vote in the School Bond Election."⁶ Another says: "Like most ministers alert to the needs of our age, my sympathies tend generally to be with labor."⁷ One preacher refers to "our deceiving State Department"⁸ and another to the "Mundt-Nixon-Ferguson hodge-podge now on the statute books" and the "political demagoguery of Senator McCarthy and his type."⁹

The most striking contrast in the sermons of the Concordia Pulpit is that there are none which show an unnecessary alignment with a faction or partisan group. Only three of the fifteen sermons, however, are listed in the second category. Though he does not give consistently clear witness in all matters, one Missouri Synod preacher makes the following contribution to illustrate a non-partisan, yet firm, statement:

It is clear from the duties set forth in the text that God is neither "pro labor" nor "pro parents." God is "pro righteousness" in the individual, regardless of his position or station in life.

⁶Charles C. Griffin, "Our Sense of Values," Pulpit Digest, XXXVI (February, 1956), 29.

⁷Arthur O. Ackenbom, "Pie in the Sky," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (August, 1954), 19.

⁸James W. Fifield, Jr., "The Noblest Inheritance," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (April, 1953), 29.

⁹Raymond E. Balcomb, "What Meaneth these Stones," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (May, 1952), 40f.

He has imposed the mutual obligation of love upon us all.¹⁰

Although they are not partisan, the majority of the Missouri Synod sermons attempt too little and do it too "inoffensively" and thus err in the opposite direction.

¹⁰Erich H. Heintzen, "St. Paul on Human Relations," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 305.

In evaluating the extent to which the text is used, these sermons which state a text have been divided into three classes. The first includes those which recited the entire sermon upon the thought of the text.¹ Of the twenty-seven Pulpit Digest sermons, fifteen begin by stating a biblical text. The stated text is a portion of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.² All fifteen of the Concordia Pulpit sermons are prefaced by a text. The records a twenty-five verse text in its entirety.³ Although it appears to be the usual procedure for Missouri Synod preachers to state a text, it may be noted that at least one sermon in labor in the 1960 Concordia Pulpit does not do so.⁴

In evaluating the extent to which the text is used, these sermons which state a text have been divided into three classes. The first includes those which recited the entire sermon upon the thought of the text.¹

¹John E. Clark, "The Nation Under God," Pulpit Digest, LXVIII (June, 1953), 37.

²Arthur F. East, "The American's Fearless Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's War 'Political' Council," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 409.

³W. B. Bauer, "Our Responsibility to Employers and Employees," Concordia Pulpit, XII (1945), 427.

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD CRITERION OF EFFECTIVENESS

For maximum effectiveness a sermon must be an exposition of Scripture. This is the third criterion. Three means have been used to measure each sermon on this point. First, it is determined whether a text is stated. It is admitted, however, that a sermon may be an exposition of Scripture without following the traditional method of stating the text at the beginning of the sermon. The second question is to what extent the text is used. Finally, a more subjective evaluation is made of the preacher's general Biblical orientation and interpretation.

Of the twenty-seven Pulpit Digest sermons, fifteen begin by stating a Biblical text. One states as text a portion of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.¹ All fifteen of the Concordia Pulpit sermons are prefaced by a text. One records a twenty-five verse text in its entirety.² Although it appears to be the usual procedure for Missouri Synod preachers to state a text, it may be noted that at least one sermon on labor in the 1948 Concordia Pulpit does not do so.³

In evaluating the extent to which the text is used, those sermons which state a text have been divided into three classes. The first includes those which construct the entire sermon upon the thought of the

¹John G. Clark, "This Nation Under God," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (June, 1953), 39.

²Arthur F. Katt, "The Apostles' Fearless 'Declaration of Independence' and Gamaliel's Wise Political Counsel," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 402.

³W. E. Bauer, "Our Responsibility to Employers and Employees," Concordia Pulpit, XIX (1948), 422.

text and make it a primary aim of the sermon to expand the text. The second category is broader and includes all those which base part of the sermon on the message of the text. A final group includes those which completely ignore the text or use it only incidentally. Of the fifteen Pulpit Digest sermons which state a text, none of them fall in the first category, ten are listed in the second and five fall in the third. At times a short Scriptural excerpt is used as a Biblical parallel of the theme already chosen. If any reference at all is made to the original meaning of the text in its historical setting and if the contemporary parallel does not grossly distort its meaning, it has been included in the second class, i.e., sermons which make partial use of a text. An illustration of such a case is a sermon with the text, "What mean ye by these stones?"⁴ After a brief explanation of the textual situation, the text is never again referred to, nor is any other Scripture.

There are several clear examples of the last category mentioned above. A sermon with the text, "Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name liveth forevermore," never again refers to the text and does not quote or paraphrase other Scripture except once as an epitaph.⁵ Another, using Isaiah 11:9 as text, refers to it only once and then merely in a secondary nature.⁶ Nor does this sermon refer to additional Scripture.

⁴Raymond E. Balcomb, "What Meaneth These Stones," Pulpit Digest, XXVII (May, 1952), 39.

⁵Clarence Edward Macartney, "Their Name Liveth Forever," Pulpit Digest, XXVII (May, 1952), 31.

⁶Robert G. Middleton, "Give me Tomorrow," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (November, 1952), 23.

In pointing out the casual use of Scripture by the Pulpit Digest preachers, it must also be noted that they often refer to other authorities. The official statements of national or international church conferences are often cited, as well as quotations by famous men of the contemporary scene. Older confessions or semi-official doctrinal statements are less often referred to. In general, it might be noted that the Pulpit Digest sermons contain a greater amount of quoted material than the Concordia Pulpit. A sermon by John G. Clark contains 216 quoted lines as compared to 250 lines which are apparently original.⁷ The chief sources of his quotations are Dr. Cuthbert G. Rutenber of the Baptist World Alliance (113 lines) and Charles A. Well's book, Between the Lines (40 lines).

Seven of the fifteen Concordia Pulpit sermons are listed among those which use the text throughout the sermon. Six fall in the category of those which make only partial use of the text. Three of these sermons have a characteristic significantly peculiar to the social preaching of the Missouri Synod. They devote large sections to the exposition of the text and textual situation. Then follows another long section of "application." Since much of the "application" is difficult to deduce from the foregoing exposition, these sermons are classified as using the text for only part of the sermon. One of these sermons devotes nine paragraphs to exposition with no contemporary reference and then appends nine paragraphs of "application."⁸ Another devotes three paragraphs to exposition at the

⁷Clark, loc. cit.

⁸Katt, loc. cit.

beginning of each of its two major divisions.⁹

The two Concordia Pulpit sermons which are divorced from the stated text both distort the meaning of the text and then ignore it. The one uses the text, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance,"¹⁰ which speaks of God's memory. Though the sermon never refers to the text, it speaks of man remembering the dead soldier, the country and the Lord. The other interprets Genesis 3, verse 19, as referring to work as a curse and thereafter ignores the text and speaks of the blessings of labor.¹¹

The final level of comparison is that of general Biblical orientation and interpretation. The sermons have been classified as (a) those revealing moderate acquaintance and understanding of Scripture, (b) those which give evidence of a limited acquaintance and (c) those about which it is impossible to make a judgment. The Pulpit Digest contains five sermons in the first category, fourteen in the second and eight in the third. A few examples will illustrate the type of Biblical scholarship found in those sermons of the second category. One states that "'The soul that sinneth it shall die' may truly be paraphrased to read: 'The plan that disregards truth shall surely fail.'"¹² Another ignores the tertium comparationis in interpreting parables. He interprets the

⁹Horace R. Frerking, "Our Independence Day Confession," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 395.

¹⁰Martin C. Poch, "In Remembrance," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 385.

¹¹Alfred W. Koehler, "Earning Our Daily Bread," Concordia Pulpit, XXIV (1953), 357.

¹²Verner S. Mumbulo, "Sons of a Working God," Pulpit Digest, XXXV (August, 1955), 17.

parable of the sower as teaching that the world's work needs to be done. What killed the Rich Fool was overwork. The parables of the lost coin and sheep show that there should be joy in the task accomplished.¹³

Other examples are found in the meaning ascribed to such terms as Christian liberty or freedom. The latter is described by one preacher as coming from obedience to Christ's laws.¹⁴

In contrast, eleven of the fifteen Concordia Pulpit sermons give evidence of at least moderate Biblical orientation. Only one gives evidence of definite deficiency in this regard, and it is impossible to classify three of the sermons. The sermon which indicates a deficiency is one referred to previously, which distorts Psalm 112:6 and thereafter seldom refers to any Scripture.¹⁵ It is a marked characteristic of the Missouri Synod preachers that they ascribe great authority to Scripture. This is evidenced by frequent reference to the text or to other Scripture. The preachers of the Pulpit Digest, on the other hand, are more ready to submit supplementary testimony.

¹³Hillyer H. Straton, "Jesus, You and Your Work," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (August, 1954), 15ff.

¹⁴Harold B. Walker, "Do We Really Want Freedom?," Pulpit Digest, XXXI (June, 1952), 52.

¹⁵Poch, loc. cit.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOURTH CRITERION OF EFFECTIVENESS

The final criterion is that the Gospel be preached as the dynamic in effecting any improvement. For this study, "Gospel" is defined in a basic, minimum sense as any reference to Christ's historical act of atonement in which God is the actor. Besides counting the sermons which actually contain Gospel, this study will consider the effectiveness with which it is used as well as other dynamics which are proposed. Two of the twenty-seven Pulpit Digest sermons contain Gospel. One of these is a very brief presentation in a human-relations sermon in which Christ's death is cited as the basis of brotherhood.¹ The other sermon contains a clear and adequate presentation of the Gospel in both major divisions.² In addition, this sermon correctly views the Kingdom of God in relation to social betterment.

But Christian Faith is not given to governments; it is given to individuals. To preserve our way of life, and to give hope to the world in a changing age, it is up to each of us to draw near to Christ—to let him enter our lives and to make us into new creatures. Out of new creatures will come the new civilization.³

One of the twenty-five Pulpit Digest sermons which do not preach Gospel illustrates the social-gospel conception of the Kingdom of God. Mr. Eby says, "We who see the common task of organized religion and

¹Andrew L. Janssen, "Venturing in Brotherhood," Pulpit Digest, XXXI (February, 1951), 44.

²John W. Van Zanten, "Christian Faith and Our Way of Life," Pulpit Digest, XXXIV (May, 1954), 25.

³Ibid., p. 32.

organized labor . . . believe in the redemption of the whole of society." The task of causing this kingdom to come is further explained by his words,

The mission of organized labor, if I understand it, is, in the last analysis, identical with that of organized religion; that is, to develop from our liberal religious beliefs a program which will achieve the kingdom of heaven on earth.⁴

Another prevalent solution advanced by the Pulpit Digest sermons is optimism. This is especially noticeable in the sermons on war. Conversely, the prime evil is pessimism. The following expressions are characteristic: "It can be done! . . . It is [this] spirit that will bring in a better world which we must never despair of attaining."⁵

the answers for which we are searching are more likely to steal in on us unawares, through some unexpected channel, and, according to the saying used in the New Testament about the coming of the Kingdom, like a thief in the night.⁶

With this emphasis on optimism there is a peculiar conception of faith. It is not regarded as one's relationship to God but rather a man's relationship to the impossible. It is a willful ignoring of all pessimistic factual data. The following quotation calls specific attention to such use of the term: "Quite obviously, we need faith--note that word--that war is not inevitable."⁷

A nebulous use of Scriptural language is also prevalent. The

⁴Kermit Eby, "Religion and Labor," Pulpit Digest, XXXI (August, 1951), 27.

⁵Thomas Franklyn Hudson, "The Valley of Dry Bones," Pulpit Digest, XXXVI (May, 1956), 40.

⁶Rolland W. Schloerb, "Do We Want Peace?," Pulpit Digest, XXXVII (November, 1956), 40.

⁷Robert G. Middleton, "Give me Tomorrow," Pulpit Digest, XXXIII (May, 1952), 26.

"spirit of Christ" is particularly subject to such treatment. One preacher describes this spirit as the spirit of truth, discipline, trust and adventure.⁸ As grounds for the last item, he refers to Christ's adventure in the big city at the age of twelve. Another writer, without ever defining his terms, tells his hearers: "Shoot our civilization through and through with the spirit of Christ."⁹ At other times the Biblical language is not only used in a nebulous way but is openly used to carry a different meaning. The following is the language of the atonement but not the message.

We have been bought with a price. What a price it was! When the flag was fired on at Sumter And America has her Memorial Day, set apart for the salvation and rebirth of our nation.¹⁰
(italics mine)

Several sermons speak of the need of obtaining and "life of Christ" or of applying the Christian Gospel to the problem, but do not, in fact do so. This characteristic is not peculiar to the sermons of the Pulpit Digest. Although it may be argued that a recognition of the need of the Gospel is better than ignoring it completely, this must not be confused with preaching it. R. Edward Dowdy illustrates the point with the following entry in the Pulpit Digest:

Today all across the land, thousands upon thousands of American preachers are seeking this day to point the everlasting Gospel toward the working man in America. . . . The solution lies in

⁸Daniel D. Walker, "On being Afraid of our Freedom," Pulpit Digest, XXXVI (June, 1956), 39.

⁹William P. Vaughn, "Six Days for Labor," Pulpit Digest, XXXV (August, 1955), 20.

¹⁰Clarence Edward Macartney, "Their Name Liveth Forever," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (May, 1952), 32.

bringing the Christian Gospel to bear on the problems of labor.¹¹

Other solutions proposed by the Pulpit Digest sermons to solve the social problems of this age are best described as moralizing. They expound in detail the virtues of integrity, truthfulness or statesmanship. A sermon on Christian freedom says, "The only freedom on earth that can save us now is under an authority of undebatable imperatives . . ."¹² Another, to illustrate the value of self-sacrifice, tells of a man who studied seven years at Harvard University despite being hopelessly crippled and enduring excruciating pain. With this training he translated the Buddhist Scriptures into English. In this way, he is said to have "found happiness, because of his absorption in a task that had meaning."¹³ A final proposed solution which must be mentioned is education.

The amazing thing is that as we place importance on that which sustains persons public education, we come to be more in line with the creative purposes of God and therefore more stable in our reactions to life.¹⁴

The Concordia Pulpit sermons exhibit a more consistent Gospel application. Eleven of the fifteen sermons contain some Gospel. However, five of these contain only a minimum statement of Gospel, usually at the

¹¹R. Edward Dowdy, "Christian Labor Relations," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (May, 1952), 32.

¹²Harold B. Walker, "Do We Want Freedom?," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (June, 1952), 49.

¹³Frederick M. Meek, "Happiness is not an Inalienable Right," Pulpit Digest, XXXII (June, 1952), 56.

¹⁴Charles C. Griffin, "Our Sense of Values," Pulpit Digest, XXXVI (February, 1956), 25.

end of the sermon. Two sermons illustrate this tendency most clearly.¹⁵ In both cases only three lines in the final paragraph are devoted to a Gospel statement. Others use it only incidently to define a word such as "righteousness." Another preacher's sole reference to the Gospel is used to show a Christian his duty.

But the whole point of Christian stewardship is that we are not our own; we are bought with a price, the precious blood of the Son of God, and we'd better acknowledge the lordship of him who paid it. That means being obedient to His will, and when you inquire what that will is, you find that it means being interested in what He was interested in, and giving yourself to that as He did.¹⁶

This trait of minimum Gospel content, which occurs in one third of the fifteen Concordia Pulpit sermons examined in this study, advances itself as a distinguishing characteristic of Missouri Synod preaching on social issues. A possible explanation is that the editors of the Concordia Pulpit have the policy that each entry contain some such statement.

A very thorough presentation of God's message of salvation is contained in other sermons. One such sermon written by Kenneth R. Hoffmann contains references to Christ's perfect life, His willful suffering, death and separation from the Father, resurrection and subsequent glory and power, the substitutionary character of these acts and the seal of these gifts given in the Lord's Supper.¹⁷ Though, in some cases, the Gospel is not presented as an integral part of the message, there are

¹⁵Walter F. Troeger, "Peace With Others," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 235.

Herbert Berner, "Making the Family Christian," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 306.

¹⁶Herbert Lindemann, "Labor Day Sermon," Concordia Pulpit, XXIII (1952), 429.

¹⁷Kenneth R. Hoffmann, "The Christian Calling in Daily Work," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 409ff.

also instances where such is the case. Reinhold A. Hingst gives an example in a Memorial Day sermon.

Yes, there was also a "heartbreak ridge" for our Lord, located not in Korea, but on the rugged, wind-swept slopes of Golgotha. . . . However, just as the sons and daughters of America have died on battlefields because of sin, so dare we never forget that Christ Jesus had to die on Calvary because of sin—had to die for your sins and mine. . . ."¹⁸

Three of the four sermons which do not employ the Gospel as the dynamic for improvement, do mention the need for it, or they speak about that Gospel. The following example is typical:

But it is only the Gospel of Christ that is able to overcome the divisions rooted in the human heart. This it does by calling all sinners to one Calvary, to stand in true repentance on the same level before one cross, to behold their one Savior and Lord, and to accept His perfect atonement for all.¹⁹

The one remaining sermon which fails to preach the Gospel makes the omission more evident. Here the solution proposed is education. It is religious education which is suggested, but this religion is described in the words of the preacher as law.

One sure way of promoting righteousness and fighting against unrighteousness, the cause of national decay, is to have the children learn the fundamentals of the Christian religion. Individuals and the church must teach their children precept upon precept, line upon line, the commandments of the Lord God and the wonderful truths of His holy Word.²⁰

¹⁸Reinhold A. Hingst, "The Christian Significance of Memorial Day," Concordia Pulpit, XXV (1954), 402.

¹⁹Erich H. Heintzen, "St. Paul on Human Relations," Concordia Pulpit, XXVIII (1957), 306.

²⁰George Wittmer, "Our Program of Christian Education," Concordia Pulpit, XXVI (1955), 430.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

Several characteristics have become more obvious as the preaching of one group was contrasted with the other. The difference in the frequency with which each body gives direct attention to social issues from the pulpit is especially evident. The Pulpit Digest preachers devote five times as many sermons to this area. The Pulpit Digest preachers are likewise, decidedly more bold in dealing with controversial social issues.

In studying the effectiveness with which those two bodies treat social issues, credits are divided. The Pulpit Digest may be said to fulfill the first criterion slightly better than the Concordia Pulpit, although both show deficiencies. Both are equally wide of the goal set by the second criterion, while the Concordia Pulpit exhibits great fulfillment of the third and fourth criteria.

The preachers of both groups often generalize and utilize many broad truths, which may indicate that their grasp of the subject is not exceptional. It has been observed that the preachers of the Pulpit Digest are better informed than those of the Concordia Pulpit, but this difference might easily be exaggerated by placing too high a premium on quantity. However, in both cases verbosity is often the companion of self-evident truths and generalizations. Both bodies are likewise negligent in speaking God's judgment to the individuals before them. Approximately one third of the sermons of each group are devoid of malady preaching. Only three sermons of each group express the basic malady of

man. Both groups preach predominantly "non-offensive" sermons in which they avoid the law and troublesome statements. A difference is seen in the Pulpit Digest preachers' tendency to become unnecessarily partisan.

The Pulpit Digest sermons evidence a lower regard for Scripture. This is attested to by the fact that a little over half of the sermons do not state a Biblical text. One quotes a text from the Gettysburg Address. None use the text throughout the sermon and five disregard it entirely. Many show a lack of Biblical orientation. All the Concordia Pulpit sermons, on the other hand, state a text, and only two disregard the text they choose. Nearly half, however, treat the text casually.

On the final point of comparison, the Concordia Pulpit is superior to the Pulpit Digest. Eleven of her sermons contain some Gospel, although five of these eleven reveal only a minimum. In contrast, only two of the Pulpit Digest sermons contain Gospel.

There are certain facts presented in this study which may be significant for the Missouri Synod. The most obvious is that she should seriously question whether she has been giving enough attention to the problem of society. Then, in examining the quality of her attention, she must acquaint herself with the facts so that she can preach to an honestly troublesome aspect of the problem. She must also become more bold in addressing the more controversial issues and brave in speaking God's judgment of sin. Finally, her supremacy in Scriptural and Gospel preaching must not lead her to excuse her deficiencies also in these areas.

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