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### The Weakness of the Modern Pulpit, a brief examination of the trend and principles followed in the preaching of to-day

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**THE**  
**WEAKNESS OF THE INDIAN PULPIT,**  
**a brief examination of the trend and**  
**principles followed in the preach-**  
**ing of to-day,**

**by**  
**B.F. Halm.**

**1930.**

**Faculty Advisor: Prof. E.B. Sommer.**

## Introduction.

When some of the magazines of our day carry such startling and screaming headlines as **SIXTY-THOUSAND CHURCHES DEAD,** **or WILL THE CHURCH FAIL,** or **CALL IN THE CHURCH JOURNALS,** and when we then consider that of all the souls that ~~populate~~ <sup>in our country</sup> the globe to-day only 40% attend church and belong to that body which constitutes and supports this greatest up-lift agency in the world, while the remaining 60% are going on from day to day, spending fleeting time without religion, without God, and without the saving message of Christ as offered to us in Scriptures, and <sup>are</sup> ~~are~~ passing into eternity unsaved and as fuel for the unquenchable fires and torments of hell, we believe, that it is imperative that we pause to ~~contemplate~~ <sup>meditate upon</sup> these tragedies and to ask **What's wrong with the church? Why can't or don't the church reach these perishing souls with its life-giving means? Why must these 60% of unfortunate sinners who are likewise candidates for heaven go on day after day without the only ray of hope and power that can make their stay here on earth momentarily worth while and finally bring them face to face in blissful communion with their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier instead of ending their worthless careers as souls bound for hell?**

It is true that some of these have never had the opportunity to <sup>live</sup> ~~look~~ under the inspiring influence and power of the church's message, but in our day with its world-wide missionary campaigns this number is not so alarming as the number of those who have sometime or other heard the call of the Saviour as uttered by the church, but for reasons of their own do not belong to any church; and to those we have reference in the above lines. **Why didn't the church maintain its hold upon them and their lives? Are the writers in our daily press correct in their assertion that the existence of those outside our churches inspite of all Christian agencies prove that the church is losing its power?**

Certainly the cause is not to be sought in heaven, not with the King of the church, as a hasty examination of Ezekiel 35:11; et al., <sup>et al.</sup> ~~et al.~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ at is more, has

1. Amer. Luth. Sept. 1929

2. W.L.H. Dec. 1929.

3. W.L.H. Nov. 1929

Has He not equipped His church with the means for the regeneration, salvation, and reformation of the world? Has He not placed into her hands a weapon more powerful than all the implements of war, a means more constructive than the world's assembled agencies for good, namely the Word and Sacraments, in a word, the gospel of the Crucified Redeemer? Indeed, and therefore not with Him but with His ~~arm~~ must we seek the cause of failure. They who have been entrusted with the Almighty's means for converting this world into the place which His divine goodness and wisdom had intended, these are they upon whom the world may look for a better and brighter day in its affairs.

True it is, and there is no person of common information and an equal amount of common sense who wouldn't concede this, that the church too has stubborn and tireless enemies obstructing her in her soul-saving program, which are common to all ages, and which all too frequently defeat her efforts and account for a portion of the losses in her ranks. These as we all know are, first of all, the powers of darkness veiled in skepticism and irreligion, and secondly, man's innate and deep-seated aversion and carnal enmity against that which God has prepared for his eternal welfare. But in spite of these evil forces we maintain upon the authority of Scriptures that, "though devils all the world should fill", though man be ~~yet~~ <sup>yet</sup> so an avowed enemy of God at birth, the Gospel will nevertheless and in spite of the most concentrated opposition prove itself God's Almighty's "power unto salvation" and be in the end "the victory that overcometh the world." Or shall we not take heart at the promises for the success of our labors such as recorded Isaiah 55: 10; 11; Isaiah 60: 2-5; Is. 2: 1-5 et al?

Seeking then after the real cause of <sup>many of</sup> the church's failures and deficiencies, we find them within in its own doors, among those who constitute its external organization; and the order in which these must be indicted is none other than the order which Ezekiel observed when in ch. 22: 24-29 of his prophecy he dealt <sup>with</sup> similar spiritual conditions and moral bankruptcy as we have in our day, and consequently arraigned first prophets, then the priests, then the princes, and finally

the people. While it is true that "the church cannot prosper in the best way unless its individual members realize that they are life-members in God's ordained missionary society and therefore must preach the message of the cross with their individual gifts and especially with an exemplary Christian life, which is always the sermon that brings results, - yet their responsibility for the church's failures is according to Ezekiel's not chief and foremost; the decay begins rather at the top.

In other words, then, it is in the pulpit of today, occupied by the preachers whose office corresponds very closely to that of the prophets and priests in the Old Testament, where we shall find the chief reason why the church is apparently failing in its world mission to-day. Viewing the pulpit in this light men have produced much literature in the attempt to better and advance the pulpit; many and varied are the weaknesses that have been pointed out by them, among the more recent of which we note the following:

"The greatest and most constant lack is the want of ability". This, we concede, may have been a marked deficiency of men of the pulpit any century <sup>other</sup> except the twentieth when even the man of very meager means have the opportunities of colleges and universities. Then, too, it must be remembered that special talents and extraordinary gifts, such as the author of this suggestion has in mind, are not among those requirements stated by Paul I. Tim. 3:11 with regard to the office of a preacher of the gospel.

With equal conviction we cast aside the suggestion that "shorter sermons, shorter services, and more music which have been insisted on by the taste of the day" will improve the cause of the pulpit. While we cannot help but rule out and consider hopelessly out of harmony with the spirit of our age the example of Bishop Burnett of whom we are told that he "preached with an hour-glass and when it ran out was requested by his congregation to reverse it and to continue for a second hour", or the example of John Howe of whom we read "that his Fast-day services ran like this: He began at 9 A M with (1) Prayer,  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour (2) Read and expounded,  $\frac{2}{3}$  hour (3) Preyed,  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour



- (4) Preached, 1 hour
  - (5) Prayed, 1/2 hour
  - Retired for refreshment, 1/2 hour; left people praying
  - (6) Prayed, 1 hour
  - (7) Sermon, 1 hour
  - (8) Prayed, 1/2 hour
- Closed services at 4 P M.

yet the mere length of services and sermons will be found irreproachable in a <sup>city</sup> such as ours when the average man in the pulpit has a sufficient amount of common sense to know that in our day <sup>of</sup> speed and power the successful preacher must be guided by the simple rule: "Tell them quick, but often."

Nor can we concur in the opinion of Hoyt, who says: "The weakness of the pulpit is in the confusion of tongues, each claiming to be the voice of God. Where is the authority of preaching when preachers differ as widely as to what is truth? Truth, indeed, is many-sided and no man or society of men can look at once upon all its facts. But there are vital truths of Revelation about which there can be no mistake in a rational exegesis, and these we are to get and proclaim." To this we reply in the words of Jesus (John 8:31-32): "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

How do we finally advocate with some such break-neck and drastic suggestions as "Away with preaching and the pulpit", "abolish the weekly sermon entirely, substitute an occasional sermon, or used 'canned' sermons handed over to an itinerant order whose visits would relieve the stationary preacher of this 'burden' and permit him to spend his time in caring for the pastoral duties of his flock" To this radical solution the Lutheran Witness answers: "It would be just as right to cry out: 'Away with the church altogether'; but no, - God has chosen the Church and her preaching to save sinful men."

And thus we might continue to cite other opinions as to what is wrong with the modern pulpit, all of which, however, fail to touch upon its chief and foremost deficiencies in our day. We rather believe that when pious people complain that they are "living in a dry and barren land where no water is", that



1. Hoyt: The Work of Preaching

2. Luth. Witness, 1929

3. Oliver: What and How to Preach, p.55

when they "ask for bread and receive but a stone", when, expressed differently, "many sermons are like Pharaoh's lean cattle, - skin and bones only, no flesh, no feeding in them", when they are "often but texts floating about like a piece of meat in a quantity of very weak soup", and when in addition to all this "many preachers are so dull in their presentation, so slow to quicken, stimulate, and uplift that sleep creeps from pew to pew" during their sermons, - then we believe something more than shorter services, shorter sermons, and more music etc point out the weaknesses of our pulpit and sug out their remedies. And to these sins of the modern pulpit we shall make reference in the following as we consider preaching with regard to its

I. Matter

II. Manner

III. Man

IV. Purpose.

1. Oliver: What and How to Preach. p.53.

2. ... ..

3. Pattison: The Making of the Sermon, p.367.

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### The Imitator.

Of all Protestant pulpits there are none which are more certainly doomed to failure and final extinction than those which deliberately refuse to recognize and profess the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the infallible Word of God, as God's revelation to sinful man. To what frightful consequences this has led we see when we examine the "new theology" which such pulpits have invented and substituted for the theology of Scriptures. "It offers a pantheistic God, instead of a personal God; a human Saviour, instead of a divine Saviour; infallible scholarship, instead of an infallible Bible; 'modern thought', instead of a 'thine with the Lord'; a development of religious ideas from the mind, instead of a revelation from God; the natural in all things, the supernatural in nothing; reformation, instead of regeneration; culture, instead of conversion; a change of environment, instead of a change of heart; the energy of the flesh, instead of prayer and faith; interest in the secular, instead of zeal for religion; nobody afraid of hell, and nobody caring much about heaven; everybody coming out right anyhow, and nobody on the wrong track except those who cling to the myth once delivered to the saints."

This is essentially the theology found in a recent publication of "characteristic and representative" sermons of "fourteen ambassadors for Christ who in this Twentieth Century of intellectual revolution and spiritual stagnation are carrying their message not simply to fine congregations of men, women, and children in America's cities and towns, but also into those front-line areas of the schools, colleges, and universities." Very openly and boldly the editor of this volume characterizes these sermons in his preface: "To be sure the divine authority of Jesus is not presented", and again: "The text has lost its exalted position. In only a portion of the sermons do the preachers give their first spoken



words to a text." To every reader it is therefore at once apparent who is speaking in these sermons, whether man or God, whether human or divine authority predominates. A rather glaring illustration of this is found in the introduction to one of these sermons, where the author, Ernest Fremont Tittle, uses the capital "I" eleven times in his first four sentences. In addition to the objection we raise against this, namely, that it indicates the author's arrogance when he places himself and his wisdom over that of Scriptures, something which even the Lord Jesus Christ never did, Hoyt pronounces all such expressions of egotism "at the beginning of the sermon offensive to true method." ("Other side.")

Nor do these "fourteen ambassadors" for Christ constitute the entire body of adherents to this "new theology"; their number is rather legion. Thus we hear Dr. Brown of Yale "who is one of the most noted preachers of America" and therefore also considered a leader of many, venturing such bold statements as this: "I do not believe in God simply because the Bible says so, although I take it to be the Book of Books." Thus it happens that we must note from the reported Dr. Shelton of the National Bible Institute "Concerning 41 New York preachers' sermons that the word "sin" occurred but once in all these sermons. Thus alone can we account for the country-wide spread of that pernicious "it-doesn't-matter-what-you-believe" spirit which voices itself like this:

"Brother, if your Christ be the Atoning Lamb,  
 The Only-Begotten of the great God;  
 The Rock of Ages cleft for you,  
 And you say my Christ would never do,  
 Follow your Christ - and give me your hand.

Brother, if my Christ be the great Ideal,  
 The possibility of the race made real,  
 The lovely man of Galilee,  
 And I say your Christ would not help me,  
 Leave me my Christ - but give me your hand."

Another expresses it thus with an apparent appeal to Scriptures: "If there are twelve gates to the city of God (Rev. 21:12) there must be twelve roads to the city of God."

That, briefly, is the substance of the preaching that is being sounded from many pulpits in our day and also hailed by some, such as Barr of the chair of homiletics at Chicago University, as "the preaching that increasingly will 'lead the

## References:

1. Preaching in the New Era, p. 41
2. Hoyt: The Work of Preaching, p. 183
3. St. Louis Times, March 21, 1930
4. T. Pieper in Cons. Theol. Month., April, 1930
5. Preaching the New Era, p. 269
6. Globe Democrat, March 21, 1930
7. Present-Day Fundamentals in Protest. Preaching, p. 23

## Admonitions:

What a contrast is this to the example of Albert Barnes, the well-known exhorter, of whom we read that "one who listened to him for six years heard only two allusions to himself from his lips. He did not preach himself any more than Paul did" (What and How to Preach - Alex. Oliver, p. 66)

Another example how openly men renounce their independence of Scriptures and instead depend on their own human wisdom in determining spiritual values is furnished in a recent sermon on Prayer in which the author, Mr. Druce, states his personal reasons why he believes in prayer, namely, 1. "because I believe in God" 2. "because the best people I love know or know about pray," 3. "because Lincoln, Gladstone, Froth", 5. "because Christ prayed" (St. Louis Times, April 1, 1930) Thus the conclusion to be drawn from this is that we should pray not because God bids us to do so in Scriptures, not because of God's gracious promises to his praying children, but because our reason demonstrates prayer to be a very beneficial act of worship.

lonely home to God', and be increasingly a creative force for righteousness." How far from the truth this prediction, however, is, is born out by the statement of one no less an authority than Prof. Barr: "Because these blind leaders of the blind are endeavoring to rule the God of the Bible out of existence, they are inviting appalling catastrophes and great national calamities upon our country. No nation has ever spurned divine grace without calling down upon itself the consuming power of God's wrath. Remember how the streets of Paris ran with a gory stream that started at the guillotine when the worshippers of human reason placed an actress upon the altar of Notre Dame Cathedral. Look at red-ruled Russia today and realize that, though Moscow and Leningrad may be thousands of miles distant from us, yet the rain which Soviet atheism has worked on Russia may be repeated in our own country if American modernism is given full sway. Modernism rejecting the Christ of God, leads us to internationalism, and internationalism leads us to communism, and communism leads to anarchism, and anarchism leads to destruction." Indeed, when the Church forgets the God-given purpose of its existence as a soul-saving agency, and neglects to proclaim the message with which it has been entrusted, when the Church scraps the Scriptures and enthrones human reason or individual consciousness as the court of final appeal in all religious issues, when, moreover, the Church centers its attention and endeavors on the external elevation of men and women to a higher social and moral level instead of attending to the elevation of man's souls to open heavens then that Church is doomed to die. For like of old God thunders upon those churches and their leaders the judgment: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."

Thus if the destructive desertion of the Scriptures as the principle *cogitandi*, as we have shown, is the greatest weakness of the modern pulpit, then the rapid return and faithful and four-square adherence to the Scriptures is the ~~the one and foremost requirement for~~ restoring preaching to its full power and its God-intended blessing upon the world in which we live. For if we would reach the uncounted



1. Dr. V. Albini in Globe Democr., Nov. 4, 1929

2. Rosen 4:6

myriads of the churchless with a worth-while and constructive message and lead them directly and safely heavenward, Scriptures alone must be our guide, "the lamp unto our feet, and the light upon our path". Says one authority: "The preaching that is most effective has a 'Thus saith the Lord' back of it and through it. This was the secret of the apostles' success. This gave to the prophets their commanding influence. This made the Reformers a tremendous factor in their generation. This imparted life and vigor to the ministry of the fathers in former days. This is what is greatly needed in many of our pulpits to-day."

This same truth is emphasized by another: "The instrument which God is using .... for the establishment of his kingdom is His Word which is said to be quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword..... But the Holy Spirit uses, also, the man behind the sword. No doubt God could evangelize the world without us.... The function of the Holy Ghost in this connection is to open the Scriptures, to suffuse their pages with light, and to smite the reader's eyes with eye-salve that so he may see and understand.....He is an expert swordsman of Christ."

Indeed, <sup>only</sup> with a Luther's, Spurgeon's, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> Wesley's, a Luther's principle of Sola Scriptura can preaching rest on the highest authority known among men and acquire its fullest power and effectiveness; but above all, then first does preaching adopt the correct essence and matter of its message which the Bible indicates in both the Old and New Testaments. In the O.T. God saw fit to accept the writings of 16 prophets into the canon, who with their heaven-inspired message of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, warning and invitation, judgment and pardon, damnation and salvation directed the destinies of the people of God. We naturally ask, why 16 such prophecies? Merely to acquaint us with the life and spiritual and political conditions of the Jewish nation at the various periods of its existence? Merely to demonstrate the progress of the Messianic revelations? Merely to corroborate spiritual principles and verities expressed centuries before? Merely to bear eloquent evidence to His grace and goodness toward his chosen, but sinful and stiff-necked seed, the children of the covenant? Certainly these are some of the lessons which the prophets would teach us; but the preacher will surely miss the importance of the prophets unless he remembers that

1. Pa. 119:105

2. McKinney quoted by Burrell in the Sermon, p.193

3. Burrell: The Sermon, p.20 - 21

the prophets were in their day that he is to be in his age,- a watchman, and that their message was the model in the O.T. for preaching. For after all, their preaching forms the basis for the message which the N.T. enjoins upon us as the matter for our preaching.

And what that message is to be which the N.T. Scriptures enjoins upon us for our preaching we see from a host of clear and emphatic references. We have, first of all the expressed command of Christ: Matth. 19:35 and Mark 16:15 "Preach the gospel"; Matth. 28:20 "All things whatsoever I have commanded you"; Luke 24:46 "Repentance and remission of sins". Then the unequivocal statements of Paul, the greatest of preachers: 2.Tim. 4:1-2 "Preach the word" (ton logon); 1.Tim. 6:3ff "The words of our Lord Jesus Christ...the doctrine which is according to godliness". Then, the examples of Christ himself embodied in the four Gospels; of John the Baptist, Luke 3:3 "The baptism of repentance for the remission of sins"; of Peter, Acts 2:14-40 "The gospel of the promised, crucified, and glorified Christ"; Acts 11:19, Acts 10:36 "The word (ton logon) ...peace by Jesus Christ"; of Philip, Acts 8:4 "The things concerning the kingdom of God"; of Barnabas, Acts 15:35 "The word of the Lord"; of Paul, Acts 20:25 "The kingdom of God"; Acts 28:31 "The kingdom of God ...these things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ"; 1. Cor. 1:17-18 "The gospel ... the cross"; 1. Cor. 2:4 "Not with enticing words of man's wisdom"; 1. Cor. 15 : 1, Gal. 1:7-8 "The gospel"; Gal.1:23 "The faith which he once destroyed"; 1. Cor.15:14 "Resurrected Christ"; 2. Cor. 4:5 "Not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord". Summed up, every pulpit must just like the Lutheran pulpit have its slogan the immortal words of Paul (1. Cor. 2:2) "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

And this brings us to the decisive question : What is it to preach "Christ and Him Crucified"? As previously indicated, hundreds of the pulpits of our land are answering this question Sunday after Sunday with such high-sounding but deceptive phrases as "Christ is a personality", "Christ is the great spiritual dynamic of the world", "Christ is no mere ideal, but a living Presence and force in the world to-day", and a representative statement in this connection is the following:

1. Preaching in the New Era, p.264

2. " " " " , p. 265

"He is to me a personality as real as the personality of my friend whom I meet on the street. I find myself saying these things about him; he is a hero. He reveals himself as one who 'never quit', who met opposition perfectly, not of only of men with swords in their hands, but he was able to meet the opposition of sin. I find myself in life in need of a hero.

"Jesus is to me a saviour. This is a word extremely difficult for us to understand. Christ meets lives of selfishness and lives of sin, and he drives out the selfishness and sin. Men are concerned about salvation, but he is concerned about present salvation. I am not saying every man is a perfect man, desiring to drive all sin from his life, but every man comes to a certain situation and he would like to be rescued.

"Jesus Christ comes face to face with a man in a trying situation, and saves him.....Jesus is to me a personality, a hero, a friend."

All this may at first glance appear very religious and even smacking after Scriptures but, we hasten to say, is in reality far from the true conception of "preaching Christ and Him Crucified" in the sense which Paul employs this phrase. Moreover, such is the preaching concerning which the Lord already in the C.T. (Jer. 23:31) <sup>says</sup> "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith." For all this preaching deliberately forgets the fundamental fact of Christ-ianity, namely, that Christ did not come into the world <sup>merely</sup> to be acknowledged as "a fact of history", or "a personality" or as a reformer of society, but chiefly and primarily as the Saviour of sinners, as <sup>the</sup> Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And he who does not know Christ as such neither knows Him at all nor preaches Him as the Crucified Christ. At best he will only preach about Christ but not Christ.

In other words, then, what preaching "Christ and Him Crucified" in the fullest sense implies, is, first of all, that after <sup>proaching</sup> "preaching to the conscience, pressing home what the Scriptures make so clear and what the conscience affirms, to wit, the total depravity of our nature, the exceeding evil of sin, man's moral helplessness, and the absolute certainty of retributive judgment" we must set Christ forth in His divine dignity and His mediatorial character, and to declare that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world" (1st John 2:2); and contrary to Calvinism there must be no restrictions in any way of God's offer of Christ to mankind sinners. The scriptures re-  
*present God's compassion for sinners as world-embracing; He will have all men to be*

1. Dr. Holt in the Globe Democrat, March 31, 1930

2. John 1: 29

3. Oliver: What and How to Preach, p. 36, 41

saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1. Tim. 2:4); verily, <sup>4</sup>unless we tell to every man we meet that, no matter how many and great his sins may be, there is salvation for him if he will come to Christ, we shall not discharge Christ's commission to preach the gospel to every creature. <sup>Any other</sup> <sup>not</sup> Only such preaching will be justly called "the ministry of reconciliation" - 2. Cor. 5:18.

The necessity of this presentation of Christ is born out by two significant statements of Spurgeon who, while preaching before the Conference of the Pastors' College in 1890 on the subject *The Minister in these Times*, said:

<sup>1</sup>"They are the aspects under which we must regard our divine Lord, but I must always give the greatest prominence to his saving character as Christ, our sacrifice and sin-bearer. If ever there was a time when we should be clear, pronounced, and vehement upon this point, it is now ..... To attempt to preach Christ without His cross is to betray Him with a kiss."

<sup>2</sup>"Those who set aside the atonement as a satisfaction for sin also under the doctrine of justification by faith. ... Hedera thought is nothing more than an attempt to bring back the legal system of salvation by works. Our battle is the same as that which Luther fought at the reformation. If you go to the very ground and root of it, grace is taken away, and human merit is substituted. The gracious act of God in pardoning sin is excluded, and human effort is made all in all, both for past sin and future hope. Every man is now his own saviour, and the atonement is shelved as a pious fraud."

Moreover, without this emphasis on Christ all those who accept Christ as a great teacher and the most perfect man brand themselves as inconsistent; for if Christ is the most profound teacher of truth, why not follow his teaching in toto? Why not set Him forth, as He Himself claimed, as the Son of God? Or was He a teacher of truth only part time and a liar at other times? All who teach thus may well bear in mind the closing remark of one Of Warfield's sermons: <sup>4</sup>"We may have long admired Him as a teacher sent from God and have long sought to serve Him as a King re-ordering the world; but we shall find that great day of self-discovery that we have never known Him at all till He has risen upon our soul's vision as our Priest, making His own body a sacrifice for our sins. For such as we shall then know ourselves to be, it is only as a Saviour from sin that Christ will suffice." Very significantly Lyman Abbot, therefore, declares:

<sup>4</sup>"Whenever a minister forgoes the splendid message of pardon, peace,



1. Oliver: What and How to Preach, p.37

2. Quoted in Life, Wit and Wisdom of Spurgeon by Cook, p. 144

3. The Power unto Salvation, p. 88

4. Quoted in Hoyt's The Work of Preaching, p.54.

and power based on faith in Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh, whenever for this message he substitutes literary lectures, critical essays, sociological disquisitions, theological controversies, or even ethical interpretations of the universal conscience, whenever, in other words, he ceases to be a Christian preacher and becomes a lyceum or seminary lecturer, he divests himself of that which in all ages of the world has been the power of the Christian ministry, and will be its power so long as men have sins to be forgiven, temptation to conquer, and sorrows to be assuaged."

Included in this presentation of Christ, of course, is the setting forth of Him in his prophetic and kingly office as well; for in order to "preach Christ and Him Crucified" fully we must lead the sinner also up to the ascended and living Christ, the "God-man of to-day with His Priesthood and Headship". After having lifted high the cross which Jesus bore for sinners, we must also lift high the cross which He tells redeemed sinners they must take up when they follow Him. It is not sufficient that we lead them merely back to Christ and up to Christ, but just as important that we also lead them forward to Christ who is to come again to be admired of his saints and to judge the world; or as another expresses it: "We must not follow the pilgrim only till we see him safely through the 'wickst-gate'. He sins and suffers much after that." If Scriptures are according to 2. Tim. 3:16, as they surely are, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," then we must study them in the light of the cross and thus apply them to human life. Says one: "The excellency of a sermon lies in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Christ. He who makes Christ prominent cannot go wrong in the matter of his preaching. It is Paschal who suggests that there is one, and but one, individual point from which any picture can be rightly viewed, every other point being either too high or too low too near or too distant; so there is in theology one, and but one, right point of observation, and that point is the cross of Christ. The preacher, therefore, who takes his position there commands a view of all revealed truth and will be sure to present truth and duty in their just relations and proportions."

Thus, only with this view in mind will our preaching be what Christ had designed it to be when he said: "Preach the Gospel"; only then also will our preach-



ing assume an edifying and doctrinal character, the lack of which is often justly  
decried as "one of the causes for the present lamentable ignorance in the church";  
only then will our preaching truly be used by the Lord as "a power unto salvation"  
and be like that of Spurgeon's, Wether's, Speckhardt's, C.C. Schmidt's, et c. al. a  
blessing and comfort to sin-oppressed souls.

Summed up, the matter of preaching should always be in consonance with  
the excellent and well-known rule: "Never preach a single sermon from which an un-  
enlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never after-  
wards heard another sermon."

1. What is Faith? p. 21

2. Quoted in Oliver What and How to Preach, p.43

### **The Manner.**

In treating the weaknesses of the modern pulpit with regard to its "manner", by which we mean the mode of presenting its message, the methods which it employs in conveying its truths to congregations, we shall first consider the construction of the message itself and then the delivery of this message.

With regard to the construction of sermons to-day we note first of all that there is a very noticeable and widespread lack of what is called expository preaching, explained by one as <sup>1</sup>"a clear presentation of the truth with a judicious comparison of Scripture with Scripture." This lack or want is particularly evident when we examine two recent books, "If I Had But One Sermon to Preach" and "Preaching In The New Era", which contain representative sermons of some of the prominent preachers and leaders of our day. This is also lacking among the greater majority of Evangelists, whose sermons, although they may have a Biblical ring, nevertheless fall far below the true ideal of expository preaching. But to what this will finally lead is emphasized in the following statement: <sup>2</sup>"The preaching in which the expository element predominates is the fading preaching. It is most profitable for yourselves and for your people. This was the kind of preaching in the early Christian Church; this was the preaching of the Reformers; and this is the preaching which has given our Church (of England) its hold upon the people. It is instructive preaching, and instruction should vitalize every appeal that is meant to arouse and impress. Jay of Bath, though very popular in his day and called by some the "prince of preachers" lacked this expository element and therefore incurred this censure upon his sermons 'they might be repeated for a lifetime without tending in the slightest degree to educate a congregation in the habits of sound interpretation'". It was also the lack of this preaching in addition to the want of proper instruction that prompted Luther to criticize



the Church of his day when he said: "The common people, especially in the villages, know nothing at all of Christian doctrine." And it is this preaching which must replace much of the story-telling and book-reviewing of our day if preaching is to return to its own.

This lack of expository preaching, however, is merely the result of another tendency of the pulpit in our times, namely, that of using either short texts or no texts at all for the basis of the sermon. In the introduction to "Preaching In The New Era" we find this statement, which although previously quoted, bears repetition here: "In only a portion of these sermons do the preachers give their first spoken words to a text. Some of the other speakers, if they have a text or a passage on which they are preaching, introduce it by leading up to it, and then weaving it in as their own thought (one of the dangers of not using a text) develops". Tolmidge seems to have had the "short-text fever", as can be seen from the following examples: "I shall go to him" (2.Sam. 12:23); "Is thine heart right?" (2. Kings 10:15); "We began to be in want" (Luke 15:14); "And I saw a new heaven" (Rev. 21:1); "The statutes of the Lord are right" (Ps. 19:8); "Who touched me?" (Mark 5:31); "Bring Zenos the lawyer" (Tit. 3:13); "And his hand clave unto the sword" (2.Sam. 23:10) and a host of others as can be taken from his Tabernacle Sermons. In defense of this use of eccentric and fragmentary texts some one has raised his voice in the following manner: "Short texts are more easily remembered. They allow of emphatic repetition, clinchers of argument. And they are more likely to result in concise and effective sermons. A vivid and energetic mind will naturally seek short texts and the sermons will be direct and convergent and the minds of the audience awake and active. Even in expository preaching it is generally best to choose a short text that gives the key-note of the passage".

We indeed concede that a short text may at times be used and with the result that this statement makes plain, but probably the best argument against the general use of short texts is the examination of the sermons themselves based



1. Preface to Sm. (tech. p.5.

2. Preface to 'Preaching in the New Era, XV

3. Barrall: The Sermon, (?)

on them. As a rule, they are not a complete fulfillment of the promise which the preacher makes when he announces before the sermon that he is going to speak of this or that text. Instead of expounding, "sticking to the text and making the text stick" these sermons consist largely of anecdotes and experiences of the preachers own life. And that certainly is contrary to the principles which we set up as the preaching which follows Paul's dictum: "Preaching Christ and Him Crucified". In the long run such preaching drives the thinking hearer out of the church to seek spiritual nourishment elsewhere. As a final warning against this use of short texts we must remember that it is not at all in keeping with the dignity of the Word of God to proclaim it in such piecemeal attempts. We repeat, there are times when a short text may be used effectively and profitably, but the general rule of larger portions of Scriptures such as the pericopal system of our church exemplifies has stood the test sufficiently and proved edifying and constructive to such an extent that it deserves to be our example. Incidentally, this in a measure accounts for the fact that the Lutheran Church still maintains the most conservative stand among all churches to-day, namely, because it has always accorded Scripture instead of human wisdom the most prominent place in its teaching and preaching.

Another tendency in the construction of modern sermons which, however, we can only touch upon here is the disregard for indicated divisions of the sermon. This is very apparent in the two books mentioned above, and is also one of the characteristics of the preaching of the Methodist Church and related bodies. We do not mean to say that these sermons do not follow prepared divisions, or some kind of order, but the fact that these are not brought before the audience in the proper manner might well be considered a weakness in preaching as the following statements demonstrate: "A discourse which rejects these aids to perspicuity will turn out a bewildered rhapsody, without aim or effect, order or conclusion". "Contrary to a belief which has become very general in consequence of clumsy sermonizing, I believe that divisions excite interest in the minds of our hearers. They foster

1. Pattison: The Making of the German, p.157

2. "p. 159"

Expectation. like a catalogue of fine paintings over which you run your eye before entering the gallery" And once more, "should the divisions be made apparent throughout the sermon? Certainly they should. If you are treating your subject logically and progressively, it is surely right that any intelligent hearer should be told just where he is".

But perhaps nothing is tending to degrade the pulpit more in our day, when considering its methods of presentation, than the unmistakable attempts to be odd, startling, funny, in a word sensational. This is evidenced first of all in the choice of a text. To illustrate: <sup>1</sup>A certain Methodist preacher described as a "man of brilliant powers", one day gave out for his text the words 2.Kings 6:5 'Alas! master for it was borrowed'; and then he began in this way: 'I wish Christian men and women would exhibit some of this feeling when they borrow umbrellas. I have lent, I am sure, a score, and lost them all.' - <sup>2</sup>Dean Swift preached the annual sermon to the Associated Tailors of Dublin from the text, 'A remnant shall be saved'. - <sup>3</sup>A New England minister once preached to the newly married couples of his congregation from Ps. 73:7 'And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.' A more recent example is given us by Arthur Brisbane in his column, <sup>4</sup>'in discouraging superstition a preacher recently remarked that some clergymen always avoided a thirteenth chapter, and a thirteenth verse; 'but I shall read to you the thirteenth verse from thirteen chapters'; He did so with reasonable self-approval. His chair collapsed, and he fell flat on the pulpit floor."

This same craving inclination to be sensational is also exhibited in the formulating of themes, outlines, and entire sermons. In keeping with the spirit of our advertising age we therefore must here examples such as these: <sup>5</sup>'Check and Doublecheck' (the popular slogan of Amos and Andy of Radio fame) was the subject of a local minister's sermon. Schramm in his book "The Evening Sacrifice" preached three sermons on these themes: "The tale that is told by the grass"; "A coated tongue"; "Spiritual gangrene". An <sup>6</sup>evangelist recently chose as his theme, "Jewish or Bastard?" An editor of one of our leading papers in the East compiled these



and caustically remarked about them "Ice and Sand"; "This hard-boiled age"; "Radio Christians"; "The Modern Babel"; "Victim and Victor"; "Blossom time in the desert"; "Lion of Sorrows"; "Heart scorching"; "How to be happy though a church member"; "Boogers at sin"; did you think they were movie titles, you poor heathen? Well, they were the titles of sermons preached in Kansas City yesterday."

"Another preacher, after hearing that his football team of his town had won nine straight games decided to conduct "a football service" with a "football sermon". Similarly comes a report from Waterbury, Conn., where "a few months ago, a Negro evangelist, exhorted a weeping audience, with fists milling, to clean living. In front of the platform in the African Methodist Church a casket was piled high with flowers. The evangelist told of the horrors of hell and there were not a few hysterical cries from the listeners. The newspaper announcement said that the service was to be a funeral. Over the cof-in the evangelist chanted an eulogy. The dead man had committed every sin. He was wicked, and therefore he would go into eternal torment. When the sermon was finished, the audience was invited to file past the casket and take one final look at this horrible sinner. Each man and woman peered into the casket. The casket was empty. A mirror in the bottom reflected the face of every person who stared."

In answer to the question: Do you use humor in your pulpit? Dr. Stidger replies: "Yes, I believe in stories - the funnier, the better. I use them in my preaching when they are timely." Another pastor we are told preached an entire sermon without the letter "r". And thus we might continue to quote examples of preachers who dramatize the Scriptures, introduce into their discourses imaginary dialogues, who sin at smart things, and who deal greatly in scenic painting in which the colors are bold, all of which, though parading under the name of "originality", is directly contrary to Paul's admonition when he said: "Let all things be done decently and in order," and certainly not even remotely in keeping with the dignity of the message which we are to proclaim. To any sane and seriously minded person all such buffoonery must be repelling. Certainly no one recognizes the church as an entertaining parlor; yet some preachers evidently have this mistaken notion. While we

1. **Richmond News Leader, 1929**

2. **Dr. Boyd in Globe Democr. Dec. 16, 1929**

3. **The Defender(Back to the Bible) Dec. 1929**

4. **Hom. Mag. 53:225(1929)**

5. **W.L.M., Nov. 1929**

6. **1.COR. 14:40**

<sup>employ</sup> must every legitimate means to make our message attractive and welcome to our hearers, yet when we stoop to such depths as the examples above indicate then we shall, to say the least, dishonor the message of the cross and degrade the pulpit the level of the "concert hall and the theatre". Says Baxter: "Of all preaching that speaks not stark lies, I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with ticklish levity, and affect them as stage-players used to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God." The same sentiment is expressed by Alex. Oliver: "The sensational preacher is a man who draws - he has plenty fire of a kind; but then you must remember it was not every kind of fire which was allowed on the altar..... ; it is degrading to the pulpit; it is bringing it into the wretched artifices of the mob orator. And this I can assure you, is grieving the hearts of the best men of our churches, and is giving occasion to the unbeliever to sneer and ridicule. The fires of such sensational preachers kindle are those which do not belong in the church." It also receives the sharpest condemnation from thoughtful laymen. Says one: "Every trick of successful advertising in other departments is imitated, but in no single case is the imitation ever so clever as the original."

With regard to the construction of the sermon let the preacher, therefore, remember that he must avoid all such evidences of light-hearted thinking. Let him rather bear in mind that the first requirements of a sermon that should be popular and effective is clear thinking. Evidently this can not be said of the concluding remarks of a sermon by Schramm (Evening Sacrifice, p. 214): "Brethren, our Redeemer calls upon us to minister unto Him. We cannot say Him nay, can we? Yea." Certainly this is not clear thinking. Then let him also speak plainly, or as one has expressed it: "I seek divine simplicity in him who handles things divine." Furthermore, let him set forth his message and illustrate it in such a way that makes his truth fast in the minds of his hearers and serves to accomplish the aim and purpose of his message. In short, let him present his message in such a manner <sup>4</sup> that the hearers may be able to say not only that they have got something to think about, but something to strengthen them for their toils and trials, some-  
 to think about, but something to strengthen them for their toils and trials, some-



1. Quoted in Phillips Brooks Lectures, p. 57

2. Olivers: What and How to Preach, p.66

3. Hays: The Work of Preaching, p.151

4. Quoted in Barrell's The Sermon

5. Olivers: What and How to Preach, p.70

thing ... 'to put them in good heart'; something that will speak to them in the home, in the workshops, in the mart of commerce; something that will brighten life by making it better in spite of all its trials; something that will lead them rightly to use, and not to abuse, the numerous springs of joy which earth has."

With reference to the delivery of sermons in our day we believe on the basis of our observation that particularly two warnings must be sounded. The first has to do with the lifelessness of some preachers whom we had occasion to hear. Outside of their pulpits some preachers appear to be the incarnation of life and vigor, but when on a Sunday morning they stand in the stead of God to proclaim the greatest message that this world has ever known, it seems that vigor and vitality have fled from their limbs. They seem to cherish the mistaken notion that their presence in the pulpit requires a entirely changed attitude than they ordinarily maintain; extreme sanctimoniousness for the pulpit, naturalness anywhere else seems to be their motto. But all such may well ponder the following lines:

"It is not enough that what you say is true;  
To make us feel it, you must feel it too;  
Show yourself warm, and that will warmth impart  
To every hearer's sympathizing heart."

Sydney Smith, commenting on clerical dulness, expresses the same sentiment, but more forcefully when he says: "Why are we natural everywhere but in the pulpit? No man expresses warm and animated feelings anywhere else with his mouth alone, but with his whole body; he articulates with every limb, and talks from head to foot with a thousand voices. Why this holoplexia on sacred occasions alone? Why call in the aid of paralysis to piety? Is it a rule of oratory to balance the style against the subject, and to handle the most sublime truths in the dullest and driest manner? Is sin to be taken from man as Eve was from Adam, by casting them into a deep sleep or slumber? Or from what possible perversion of common sense are we all to look field preachers in temples, holy lumps of ice numbed into quiescence, and stagnation, and numbling?"

To be sure, the delivery itself of the sermon will not bring souls closer to Christ; that power rests alone in the word of God. And yet the delivery may do or to Christ; that power rests alone in the word of God. And yet the delivery may do

1. Quoted in Burrell's *The Sermon*

2. "Oliver's Wart and How to Preach," p.65

such to separate them from Christ; and it is dullness especially, to which we have referred, that hinders the message of salvation more than any other consideration in the delivery.

Others again have gone to the other extreme in delivering their message; we have reference to the wildness and clownishness in the pulpit. It was for this reason that the evangelist Sunday has been called by one "the hot-tongued and accomplished clown". But he is <sup>of</sup> lesser concern in this connection than those preachers who try to be effective by pounding on the Bible before them, holding it up like auctioneers, and waving it in the air; others like the evangelist Paul Baker demonstrate such things as the kick of of a broncho, the ceremony of baptism, swimming, etc. And here the second warning comes in. Perhaps these preachers do not realize the fact that all this excessive action and unnecessary waving of the air, which certainly militates against the dignity of the pulpit and churchly atmosphere, becomes sickening to the hearer of average intelligence. Said Spurgeon: "If you are depending on singing and fiddles and semi-theatricals, you are disgracing the religion which you pretend to honor." To all such we recommend without qualifications the chapters which Pattison in "The Making of the Sermon" devotes to this subject, and plead that they take particular notice of p.291 - 300 where the proper and effective manner of delivery is characterized briefly and simply by five adjectives: "Prepared", "Lammered", "Natural", "Reverent", and "Calm".

1. Quoted in Life, Wit, and Wisdom of Spurgeon, p.151

The Man.

When we recall that the world's first notice of the advent of the Saviour (Luke 2:9f) was brought to man by heaven's angels, it will not seem unnecessary to emphasize here first of all that in the continuation of that work, - in the work of imparting unto man the knowledge concerning salvation, in the ministry of placing in man's hands the only sure staff and comfort for man's journey through life and death's dark vale, God uses not angels but man whom He chooses to this office through the voice of the local congregation. For from appearing superfluous this truth ought to impress everyone with the thought, - what a privilege and honor has been bestowed upon man that they should be instruments in the hand of the Almighty God for proclaiming His love and mercy in Christ among man!

It is evident from this consideration already that not every and any person is chosen by the Lord through the local congregation to this high and holy office. Scriptures rule out from the very outset all women who may, as they are doing to-day, aspire to this office. 1.Tim. 2:11-12 "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Again 1. Cor. 14:34 "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law." Accordingly, the Lord does not nor has He ever in one single instance in the U.S. called, ordained, and used <sup>women</sup> women for this office. Woman's sphere is always will be according to Scriptures the home; there she may assert her intelligence, instruction, and influence; there her ambitions may find a legitimate outlet; but in the churches "man is the head of women". But as already indicated, all this has been ruthlessly cast aside by donors of church denominations including some Lutheran bodies to-day. Just because a greater percentage of their membership is made up of women, many have thought it necessary to disregard the passages above and to let down the bars to its women-members to preach publicly. And for an apparent justification for their position they point us to the account of Pentecost and tell us, "the Holy Spirit came upon the women as well as the men, and that therefore being filled with the Holy Spirit they are to be allowed to preach." Now in answer to this we tell all such that whenever churches deliberately ignore and distort Scriptures to permit women to occupy the pulpit and teach in mixed assembly, which glaringly contradicts the passages quoted above, the

1. St. Louis Times, Jan. 14, 1950

such churches are not only inviting calamity upon themselves just like everyone who willfully disregards the advice and guidance of Scriptures, but at the same time are converting their pulpits into lecture platforms where one man's opinions are just as good as another's. To say, this is a weakness of these pulpits, would be putting it mildly; it is rather the beginning of their end. And wherever pulpits are occupied by persons <sup>and</sup> uncalled and disqualified for this office by the Word of God, the Saviour's admonition and verdict applies: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are reviving wolves" (Matt. 7:15)

Others again, set up a host of requirements for those whom the Lord has admitted to the sacred office of the ministry, - requirements which in the light of Scriptures are manifestly no requirements. Thus, for instance, the popular demand in recent years seems to be that a preacher be an "entertaining and witty conversationalist" and similarly that he be a speaker of the first order, - an orator. As a result it is to be feared that some preachers to-day are better after-dinner speakers than preachers on Sunday morning. Indeed, <sup>Indeed,</sup> no one would gainsay that he whose vocation calls for such constant dealing with groups and <sup>and</sup> masses ought in a large measure be able to deal with them in an effective and winning way, <sup>way;</sup> and therefore ought be well-acquainted with the principles of the art of public speaking; but in order to do that one does not necessarily have to be an orator in the sense that is commonly understood. For after all, <sup>4</sup>the power of the pulpit does not consist chiefly in this or that art, but in the gospel that it proclaims. <sup>4</sup>Moses was not eloquent, Aaron was. The words of the Lord came constantly to Moses. Aaron had gifts of speech, but he made a golden calf. Jeremiah was not eloquent - his opponents apparently were. Jeremiah stands on the summit of prophetic work, and the worldly men who gained the popular ear in his day are pilloried in the history of the kingdom of God as deceivers. Paul was not eloquent, so he tells us, Apollon was, and mighty in Scripture too. Yet we gather that Paul with his poor presence, his involved periods, his arguments like the fiery grinding of a wheel of granite, received and delivered more of the word of the Lord than Apollon."

However, instead of insisting on such non-essential qualities it is far more important in our day to the strengthening of many pulpits that a greater and more serious insistence on two other and essential considerations in the makeup of the preacher be observed and encouraged. The first of these is that the preacher who would be a power in the



1. 1. Cor. 2:1

2. Hoyt: The Work of Preaching, p. 45

in the pulpit to-day must necessarily be a man of unquestionable faith and piety, without which he not only ceases to be a preacher, but is certain to be responsible for giving untold offense and for what is commonly known as backsliding on the part of his flock. Already in the O.T. the prerequisite for those who attended to the affairs of the Lord's house read: "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Is. 52:11) In all ages of the church's history its progress and success was most abundantly evidenced where its leaders were men of a simple yet unwavering faith, upon whose souls had dawned the vision that was St. Stephen's, Acts 7:55-56. Like Samson they with every gift they possessed were consecrated unto the Lord, but unlike Samson they constantly kept in mind their consecration. Their aid and power came from above. Prayer was to them a power just as actual and living as their own being, and consequently nothing was undertaken by them before spreading it out before the Lord in prayer. They were faithful in the true sense of the word.

Therefore just like Wether almost a century ago realized the absolute necessity of piety for the man in the front lines of the church's work, so we to-day must pray: "Gott beharre uns ein frommes Ministerium!" While it is true, and we thank God for that, that even our day when men are only too prone to think in terms of self first and of Christ and his Kingdom second, - that even at such a time there are many who are examples of faith and devotion to the cause of Christ, yet it is equally true, that there is a considerable number of those standing in our pulpits to-day in whose life the fullest implications of Hymn 555 are not realized; personal advantage, rising to ever higher positions of honor before men with their sinful ambition, and worldly comfort - these are some of the dangers lurking in the path of many a ministerial career. But in this connection it must be born in mind that whenever devotion is turned into ambition, self instead of Christ glorified, and a worldly spirit supplants a missionary spirit in the heart of the preacher, then the church's future is about as promising as the fate of a fly in a spider's web. For after all, it remains true, "the spiritual life of the preacher is one of the main elements of power in his preaching."

But in addition to this, the preacher of to-day like never before must be a man of thorough learning. If any, his training in theology and its related branches must be an intensive one and must receive his most diligent application during his training at a

1. "Take my life and let it be" etc.

2. A. Oliver: What and How to Preach, p. 96

seminary, if he is to enter upon his life's work equipped and prepared for the great tasks that confront him. But more than this; his whole life must be a constant application of the truth expressed by Paul, 2. Tim. 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". He must live for his pulpit, and his reading, thinking and observation must be ruled with a view to the pulpit. But above all in his daily study, while he must be a lover of books, and a student of nature, he must ever strive to master the Book, which is after all to him what the hammer is to the carpenter. There is perhaps nothing so disgraceful to the preacher and more detrimental to his pulpit than ignorance or even a partial knowledge in Biblical questions. As a rule it is the negligent Bible-student and preacher to-day who must take down sermon books of others in the preparation of his sermons, let another do his thinking for him, and feed his flock the following Sunday on a text and a subject that has neither penetrated nor thrilled his own heart and being. But all such ought not to deceive themselves that others do not notice their failures. And moreover, let them not think it wonderful that some should turn with indignation from ~~such~~<sup>these</sup> ~~sermons~~ and turn to books full of passion and wrath, full of ideas and excitement, full of knowledge and instruction. Let them rather know and realize that it is to those who employ a great part of their precious hours in the cultivation of some hobby of theirs at the expense of their God-imposed duties, that the awful truth and judgment applies: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jer. 48:10)

These then are some of the chief considerations in the constitution of the preacher who is to be a power in the pulpit to-day, which are especially significant in the analysis of its weaknesses. Summed up, the preacher in our day needs to be told and impressed with the truth: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1. Cor. 4:2) Faithfulness to our God, faithfulness to our trust coupled with something of that invincible determination that is satisfied only with death or victory - that is the great difference between men, between the great and insignificant, between the feeble and the powerful in the Lord's kingdom here on earth.

### The Purpose.

One should not think that churches which still in part hold fast to the Word of God as the source from which they derive their message could go wrong in answering the question, What is the purpose and aim of preaching? And yet what a wide range of misunderstanding and ignorance there really is in many of our pulpits to-day on this subject is a fact that is as startling as it is tragic.

We have before us an Associated Press clipping in which we are told that when the radical Prof. Emerson Barnes, of Smith College, recently spouted forth in some of his usual sensational utterances before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, namely, "we must cease talking about God; we must supplant theology by mental hygiene..... Science has shown it difficult to prove the very existence of God", then according to our report "New York patrons of various denominations, with one exception, raised a chorus of protest from their pulpits" against these statements, among whom were Cardinal Hayes (Catholic), C.F. Reiser (Methodist), H.L. Fosdick (Baptist?), H. Darlington (Episcopal). In regard to this we hold that while it is according to the Word of God the business of the church to raise its voice against error even, as Paul did, while it must shout to the endangered souls of men "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate" and thus mark and indict to men and women those "who teach otherwise," and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1. Tim. 6:3), yet when false teachers proclaim such expressions of rank unbelief and atheism such as Prof. Barnes does on this occasion then the domain of religion has been forsaken, and it will be a mere waste of breath to air this latest philosophy. Instead of directing their shafts of criticism against such things, it would be much more profitable and far more prolific of good to follow the example of Paul in his letter to the Galatians in fighting against that satanic doctrine which would dupe men into believing that heaven is reached via good works, money, prayers, in short, that attainments of man and not the attainment of Christ. That is the real foe of Christianity. the attainment of Christ. That is the real foe of Christianity.

1. Richmond News Leader, Dec. 31, 1928

2. N. Cox, 6/17

Others again seem to think the pulpit a political platform as is shown by the fact that a quarterly magazine (Liberty) is circulated whose object is to help maintain Separation between Church and State. That was manifestly the case in the pulpits of men like H.W. Beecher and Tolwedge. Tolwedge even went so far on one occasion as to tell men how to edit a newspaper; "To publish a newspaper requires skill, the precision, the vigilance, the strategy, the boldness of a commander-in-chief. To edit a newspaper a man needs to be: a statesman, an essayist, a geographer, a statistician, an encyclopaedist" On another occasion this same man thought himself on the floor of Congress when he spoke on the theme:

- 2. "The Demand of God and Civilization
  - I. God and Civilization demand of the political parties of this day a plank anti-Bronsonistic.
  - II. There is demanded of the political parties in this day a plank of intelligent helpfulness for the great foreign populations which have come among us.
  - III. There is demanded of political parties in this day that they have a plank that shall acknowledge God."

And this participation in politics men would defend by hiding behind such statements as the following by Dr. Stone: "Religion is concerned primarily with moral questions, and when moral questions are injected into politics the church should exercise its influence to the doors of the White House." Dr. Cadman: "The day is past when any realm of our economic, industrial, social, political, or international life will be regarded as outside the sphere of responsibility of the churches. All over the country prophetic voices are declaring from the pulpits and in ecclesiastical assemblies that the organized group life of society is to be no less subject to the rule of Christ than the life of the individual." The same is expressed by another: "It is the moral side of political events and social circumstances with which we are to deal." And as a result we must to-day hear that in our country "the political influence of the churches is exercised through two great organizations constituting the two principal departments of their activity in temporal affairs. These organizations are the following: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, representing 28 denominations with 25,000,000 communicants, which with the cooperation of numerous affiliated groups concentrates effort upon influencing the





actions of the government upon measures dealing with world peace, disarmament, national defense, immigration, labor, industry, and foreign relations;

The National Conference of Organizations Supporting the Eighteenth Amendment, and amalgamation of 53 clerical and secular bodies including the Anti-Saloon League and the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals, and comprising an aggregate membership of 20,000,000, which is dedicated to the maintenance of national prohibition and its more effective enforcement."

These constitute what is commonly known as the "church-lobby", whose purpose it is in "making the will of the church the will of the people". And what a powerful influence these lobbying churchmen have wielded in the past is demonstrated in the following statements: "It was under the whip and spur of the church lobby that Congress toward the end of the last session enacted the Jones law making every violation of national prohibition law a felony..." Again: "The most aggressive activities in support of the Kellogg war-remuneration treaty...were those of the church lobby...." Again: "The Federal Council of Churches takes credit for thwarting the effort of the Coolidge administration to obtain legislation last year authorizing the strengthening of the navy with 71 warships costing \$800,000,000." And what this body will effect in the future if it continues we can only fear.

That all this is, however, not the business of the church is brought out in the following statements: Against Dr. Stone - "Your conception of the business of the church is entirely misguided, and if your sermons are based on such a conception you are feeding your people chaff that certainly fails to save souls, which is the business of the church. The church is not the guardian of public morals, neither should it exercise any 'influence to the doors of the White House' on a moral issue. This meddling of the church into politics can only bring about a return of the Middle Ages, and, as a student of theology, you should know the consequences of such interference." Says Bishop Collins Denny of the Methodist Episcopal Church South: "The bare fact that a moral question is involved in politics does not give you the right to go into partisan politics, and if you do so you go at the danger



to your spiritual influence..... The church in its capacity has nothing to do with politics...." This is the comprehensive and decisive statement of the editor of the American Lutheran. <sup>These</sup> These misguided churchmen defend their political activities with the claim that all the questions they are interested in are moral questions. As a matter of fact the state can hardly deal with any question which does not to a certain degree involve a moral issue. It is the state's function to defend, maintain and foster public morality and justice. Our American system of government plainly outlines this as the distinct sphere of the state and makes provisions that this sphere shall not be infringed upon by the Church. The function of the Church is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for the exercise of this function the state promises its protection. As a matter of fact it promises protection to any religionists, even to opponents of religion, as long as they remain within the bounds of the law. The tendency to make every political question which can be construed as a moral one the field of church activity is a direct result of the spiritual bankruptcy of a large proportion of so-called Protestantism. To many of these churchmen Jesus Christ is nothing more than an example and director of morality. He is merely a pattern of rectitude in their circles. The vicarious character of His atoning work has long since been relegated to the limbo of outlived tenets. They have no other message but a moral one, and no other object but the inculcation of morality. They can conceive of no other object of the church than the furtherance of moral living, and naturally their ambitious program will include also the influence of national legislation..... God knows the Gospel preaching job of the church is big enough to enlist all its energies. Steady application to this job is, after all, the best contribution we can make to our country's welfare."

Another basic trouble with these organizations is the fact that they have united for the purposes above with other denominations regardless of religious convictions. They think that by uniting they are gaining strength. And thus in recent years the air has been filled and crowded with the cries for Union, to which and to say many have also yielded. But aside from the fact that Scriptures empha-

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size and recognize the fact (Rom. 16:17; 2. Cor. 6:14<sup>17</sup> ; Tit. 3:10; Acts 15:45-  
51; Rev. 22:18-19 et al.) <sup>that</sup> unity in doctrine is the first requirement for union and  
outward affiliation, they completely forget that they will never conquer sin and  
vice by mere mass and bulk, but alone by God Almighty's "power unto salvation".  
Leander S. Keyser states their chief trouble when he ironically remarks, "Many of  
them can come together in conferences and sing heartily, "We are not divided, all  
one body we".

Still others (and their number is increasing and they are also to be  
found among us) think the churches' aim and purpose is to afford recreational  
pastors. A glaring example of this is <sup>a</sup> bulletin of a cert. in church in San Fran-  
cisco which announced that on Monday night "there will be a dinner served in the  
basement of the church followed by a dance. All boys and girls between the ages of  
17 and 25 are invited to join us". On Wednesday night there will be "card party at  
which numerous prizes will be given". One result of this mistaken notion is the  
tremendous building prog<sup>r</sup>ams which some churches have set for them themselves and  
which are eating up large funds that might be used for realizing the true purpose  
of the church's existence here on earth and that purpose is summed up fully in  
Matt. 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the <sup>name</sup>  
of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all  
things whatsoever I have commanded you...", and again Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore  
unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you  
overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Let churches all over take these two passages more literally, let  
them remember that conversion and edification in spiritual truth are the two great  
ends of the Christian ministry, and the world in general will be a better and hap-  
pier place to live in, and the church itself will enter upon a new era that will  
be marked by unparalleled progress and prosperity.

1. The Doctrines of Lodorism, p. 52

2. The Defender, Dec. 1929

1892  
S. S.

We conclude with a statement which we heard in a Homiletic lecture, and which we believe contains and briefly summarizes all the essential elements for a pulpit of power : "Predige den Text der Heiligen Schrift aus begeisterter Liebe und lebendiger Anschauung nach deiner eignen Auserbeitung und Predigtart fuer die gegenwaertigen Verhaeltnisse deines Wirkungskreises und aus ewigen Heile der Menschen."  
"Exound the text of Holy Scriptures fervently and vividly in your own style, according to the needs of your community, and for the eternal salvation of men".

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