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Foreword: That the ministry be not blamed.

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Kretzmann: Foreword: That the ministry be not blamed.

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No. 1

Foreword.

That the ministry be not blamed. — 2 Cor. 6, 3.

There are grave dangers confronting the Christian ministry, and specifically the Lutheran ministry, in these trying days. We have every reason to assume that we are living in that period of the world's history of which the Savior stated: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved," Matt. 24, 22. The false Christs and the false teachers of our times are proceeding with ever greater boldness, partly by distorting Scriptures and propagating antichristian teaching, partly by according to the various pagan religions a position of equality with the Christian religion and thus practically denying to Christianity its real reason for being, as the recent survey of Foreign Missions shows. But there is reason for even greater apprehension on account of the attitude taken by those who profess to be Christians. As history shows, times of hardship and persecution usually served to rally the believers around the banner of the Cross, to make them more zealous for the propagation of Christ's kingdom. But it seems that the tribulation of the last years, far from rousing the Christians to new endeavors, to a more determined effort in favor of the expansion of the Gospel, has effected a paralysis of spirit which is threatening disaster to the work of the Church. Instead of cries for expansion we are hearing pleas for retrenchment; instead of being urged to hold the fields which the Lord has opened to us, we are being given directions to abandon such work.

If this spirit has not already affected our ministry, it is at least confronting every pastor in a manner that is truly alarming. Pastors are but human beings, who always, at least to some extent, are children of their times. When the days are evil; when people become indifferent to the sound truth; when they act upon the premise that the luxuries of a decade ago are the necessities of to-day; when they have itching ears for the vagaries of the social gospel and become increasingly hostile to Bible-preaching; when they regard the Lord's money

entrusted to them as their own private property, to be used as they see fit, without any regard for the needs of the various mission-fields, then pastors are apt to become not only discouraged, but to become indued with the same spirit of indifference and hostility, so that the paralysis which has threatened only certain parts of the Church begins to spread more and more, until the entire body is ill. One is constrained to think of the Lord's arraignment in the days of Isaiah, when we are told: "For the people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. . . . For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed," Is. 9, 13, 16.

We are here concerned with *the difficulties and dangers as they confront the pastor*, the minister, in these days of distress and tribulation. Just what factors are there in the situation as we face it today, factors that are hindering his usefulness, making it difficult or impossible for him to carry out the injunction of the Lord as contained in the Great Commission and elsewhere?

We may mention, in the first place, the *overorganization of most of our city congregations* and of many in the rural districts as well. Every new idea, every new project of our days, seems to call for a new organization, a new society, or association, or club, or guild. It does not seem to matter that many of these groups could just as well function as divisions of larger associations, thus reducing the amount of machinery. Besides, every group or club requires a special afternoon or evening for its meeting, and if the pastor desires to be in attendance (as being responsible for all the members of his flock), it means that every evening of the week is taken by at least one meeting and often by two or more gatherings. The fact that a congregation, especially one with a hall or a parish-house and a school-building, could arrange to have one church evening or at the most two such evenings in the week does not seem to have been suggested or at least not to have been received very favorably. The result is that the average pastor spends his evenings in various and diverse meetings, necessary and unnecessary, important and unimportant. Valuable time and equally valuable nervous energy are used up; he is engaged to the limit in the *πολυπραγμοσύνη* (*Vielgeschaeftigkeit*) of our days, and he has precious little to show for it. There was more wisdom in the statement of the apostles, Acts 6, 2: "It is not reason that we should *leave the Word of God* and serve tables." It is to be feared that this *Vielgeschaeftigkeit* frequently becomes an indulgence in *Allotria*, in matters that are at best only remotely connected with the pastor's real office of *cura pastoralis*.

The ministry of to-day is confronted with a *lack of consecration* as one of the chief dangers obstructing the usefulness of the pulpit. When St. Paul says of the man who desires the office of a bishop that

he desires a good work, he employs a word which is well explained by a noted commentator: *negotium, non otium*. Time and again St. Paul refers to himself and his fellow-laborers as, literally, galley-slaves for the Lord, and he uses the verb *κοπιᾶω* of the ministry, which means hard or heavy labor, one which is bound to produce fatigue, to wear a man out. No wonder that men like Lewis (*The Minister and His Own Soul*) speak of an "energeia of love," of a power which, coming from God, so completely places itself at the service of God and His Gospel that it forgets all selfishness, all mechanical and perfunctory activity, and desires only to be in action for God, with a devotion that has only the glory of God and the welfare of souls as its goal. The consecration of a true pastor will show itself in fact in a passion for souls which swallows up all other personal and emotional considerations. "The power that redeems the individual, that keeps the disciples faithful, that makes the pastor irresistible, is consecrated love." Cp. 1 Cor. 9, 16—27.

The ministry of to-day is confronted with a *lack of initiative* as one of the main items in hindering the work of the Gospel. The children of this world are verily wiser than the children of light in their generation. Even during the depression thousands and millions of them faced the issue squarely and somehow managed to find a way to carry on. But this initiative is sadly lacking in many pastors. They may be interested enough in preaching, they may even enjoy presenting a fairly good sermon to their congregations every Sunday; but when it comes to the real follow-up work, the care of the individual souls, when it means warning the sinner, admonishing the laggard, talking to people face to face and heart to heart about their relation to their Savior, about their duty to their God and His Church; when the situation requires the working out of plans whereby more souls may be won for Christ, especially by personal missionary work; when it means the leading of others in the difficult task of personal solicitation, then many pastors fail. And yet the greatest of all missionaries could say of himself in all truthfulness: "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn *every one* night and day with tears," Acts 20, 31.

The ministry of to-day is confronted with a *lack of study*, another form of overbusiness or plain laziness, and it is to be feared that conditions are frequently made the excuse for a lack of application. To preach regularly at the rate of two or more sermons a week requires the most assiduous application to study, not only in the intervals of other activities, but with whole-hearted, unhurried application. To teach one or more catechumen classes, one or more Bible classes, to conduct Sunday-school teachers' meetings and institutes, to prepare for bedside visits and other pastoral calls, to take an intelligent part in the various conferences which the faithful pastor will invariably

attend, all this requires *hours of the most painstaking labor* in the form of study, and that *every day*. Every pastor who neglects to replenish the stores of knowledge upon which he is bound to draw so constantly, every minister who relies upon various manuals and collections of material without real study, whereby he is enabled to adapt material of this type, if actually needed, to the specific requirements of his parish, is not faithful to his call and to his charge. If there is any profession that makes the demand upon its incumbents to ~~take time~~ *for regular, systematic study*, it is that of the Christian ministry. Many a pastor has found out too late that he actually lost time (and who knows how many opportunities) because he did not take time to study, to draw new power and ability from the work and through the work of applying himself to the mastery of the profession into which he was called. St. Paul writes to his pupil Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," 1 Tim. 4, 16.

The ministry of to-day is confronted with a *spirit of cowardice* in attacking the increasing worldliness of our congregations and sinfulness in general. It is no secret that worldliness has entered our congregations, that the distinction between the children of God and the children of this world has been largely erased. The peculiar pleasures of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are sought by such as desire to be known as church-members. Men like Oliver (*Psychiatry and Mental Health*) and Forman (*Our Movie-made Children*) point out that some of the favorite pastimes of the world, including the modern dance and the movies, are fraught with dangers of the worst kind; yet the children of the manse are found at places of this type, and there is little, if any, discrimination practised in the choice of such diversions, whereas the first type is impossible, the second improbable, as far as the consistent Christian is concerned. But even as these dangers to the youth of our Church are ignored or treated with indifference, so other sins, such as those of lodgery and unionism, are permitted to go on without censure on the part of him who is the Lord's watchman, who will be expected to give an account on the Last Day. While no one has indeed as yet undertaken *publicly* to defend the increasing worldliness of our congregations, the attitude taken by many pastors is one which condones the sins of our days. One does not want to lose members, especially not influential (rich) members, and for that reason one prefers to use discretion. But the Bible says: "His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber," Is. 56, 10. They lack the spirit of John the Baptist in reproving the sins of Herod Antipas, and of Paul in speaking to Felix of the Judgment to come.

What is the remedy for the situation? First of all, a frank acknowledgment of the evils that exist and due repentance where sins of omission and of commission must be admitted. To this must be added the antidote of prayer, both for the incumbents of the ministry and for every congregation in their care. It is surprising how often in the gospels we find Jesus at prayer. And with the Apostle Paul prayer was a steady employment. He thanked God in behalf of the Corinthians for the grace of God which was given to them by Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 1, 4 ff. He thanked God for every remembrance of the Philippians always, in every prayer for them all making request with joy, and that because he had them in his heart, Phil. 1, 4 ff. Cp. Col. 1, 9 ff. The whole Church on earth, every individual Christian congregation, and every individual Christian and his particular needs — these are the subjects of prayer on the part of the faithful pastor.

But to prayer must be added STUDY. In fact, the best way to bring these two functions into the right relation to each other is in the motto of Luther: *Bene orasse, bene studuisse*. And it is this point that we ought to keep in mind in this new year, in which we shall celebrate one of the most important anniversaries of the great Reformer, Martin Luther, that of the publication of the entire Bible in the German tongue. Because it was Martin Luther who was the great protagonist of the open Bible, the most successful translator of the Bible into a modern tongue, therefore the motto "Back to Luther!" does not ascribe to Luther an unwarranted position, does not make him the founder of a new Church, but merely emphasizes one of the fundamental principles of his life, the *Sola Scriptura*, which all Protestantism has placed on its banner as the formal principle of the Reformation.

Every Lutheran pastor, in fact every one who aspires to a position in the ministry of the Lutheran Church, should be a *theologian* in the highest and best sense of the term. This means that his theology should be a *habitus practicus theodidotos*. This habit, or attitude, is a matter and object of incessant striving to the true theologian, although he knows full well that "our sufficiency is of God." 2 Cor. 3, 5. Just as little as the praying of the Fourth Petition makes daily labor superfluous if one desires food and drink and the other necessities of life, so little will the fact that it is God who makes men able ministers of the New Testament permit any teacher of the Church to be indifferent in the matter of constant training for and in the highest profession in the world, that of the Christian ministry.

It is for this reason that we need to be reminded time and again of the other motto: *Quo propior Luthero, eo melior theologus*. Martin Luther was truly a theologian by the grace of God, a teacher and preacher who lived in the Word and by the Word, one who had in addition been blessed in a most unusual degree with the ability to

interpret the Scriptures and to apply their eternal truths to the needs of individuals and groups. Like Luther the Lutheran theologian must study first, foremost, and all the time the Bible, reading it, studying it, ransacking it with indefatigable diligence. Next to that he will study the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, which are a wonderful mine of information on sound Bible knowledge, second to no other books written by human authors who were not inspired penmen of the Holy Ghost. But immediately after the Confessions come the writings of the great Reformer himself. In the books of no other man since the days of the apostles do we find such an understanding of the eternal truths of the Bible as in those of Martin Luther. The Lutheran theologian will therefore make the theology of Luther his model, and it may be said that he will succeed in becoming and remaining a *Lutheran* theologian in the measure in which he comprehends and absorbs the theology of Luther.

For let us emphasize it again: Luther was a *Bible* theologian. Although he knew his Church Fathers well enough, he refused to look upon them as anything more than witnesses, to be heeded when in accord with the Word, to be ignored and rejected when out of harmony with the inspired record. It was in this way that Luther recognized and utilized the special gifts which God had given to His Church on earth since the days of the apostles, without in any way jeopardizing the authority of the one absolute norm of truth, the Holy Scriptures. For that reason Luther will ever remain our model for the study of the Bible. He had had no Greek and Hebrew at the university, and it was not a mere linguistic interest, a philological or humanistic hobby, that caused him to study the original tongues of the Bible. No, it was because the practical requirements of his work in the Bible called for such study that he, with some help from his friend Johann Lang and later from Melancthon, but largely as an *αὐτοδίδακτος*, gained a mastery of the two original languages of the Bible which may well cause amazement. No wonder that Luther, himself a self-taught man and an inspiration to all theologians of this type, could speak with such emphasis on the need of Greek and Hebrew in the study of the Bible. In his *Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen . . . in Behalf of Christian Schools* he writes: "Let this be kept in mind that we will not preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the scabbard in which the Word of God is sheathed; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; the cask in which this wine is kept; the chamber in which this food is stored. . . . Hence, although faith and the Gospel may be preached by ordinary ministers, without the languages, still such preaching is sluggish and weak, and the people finally become weary and fall away. But a knowledge of the languages renders it lively and strong, and faith finds itself constantly renewed through rich and varied instruction." (Transl.

by Painter, *Luther on Education*, 186.192.) And in a short monograph addressed to the Waldensians, Luther writes: "I should want to request that you do not despise the languages in such a manner, but, since you may well do so, let your preachers and intelligent boys learn a good Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. I also know truly that he who would preach and expound the Scripture and does not have assistance out of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew language, but is to do it from his mother tongue alone, will make many a mistake. For I experience how very much the languages assist in gaining a clear understanding of divine Writ." (19, 1336 f.)

It was due to this attitude that Luther became a great theologian in every department of Biblical and theological knowledge. In accordance with the plan of the St. Louis edition of his works we may think of Luther first as a *great commentator of the Bible*. It was the exposition of the Bible that engaged his attention as soon as his position in the theological faculty enabled him to relinquish his work in the philosophy of Aristotle and in the *Sentences* of Lombard. It was while he was preparing his lectures on the Psalms in the early months of the year 1513 that he really came to the knowledge of the truth. Then followed his lectures on Romans, then on Galatians, which he treated several times in the course of his career at the university, then on Hebrews. In the three decades after 1515 he produced commentaries on all the more important books of the Bible, most of which are of such unusual merit that every Lutheran theologian will do well to consult them time and again. This is true in particular of his *Commentary on Galatians* and the so-called *Grosse Genesis*, the concluding work of his thorough study of the Bible. What a treasure we have in the ten volumes of our edition which contain Luther's exegetical writings! And what a wealth of further expository material is found in his sermons, the House Postil as well as the Church Postil, and also in the *excursus* in some of his polemical writings!

Luther was a great theologian also in the field of *systematic theology*. True, he left to his spiritual posterity no book on dogmatics, and it may be that his humility caused him to refrain from writing *ex professo* in this field after Melancthon had published his *Loci*, which the older man praises so highly. Nevertheless we find Luther the master also of this department of theology in his catechisms (including his introduction to his *Deutsche Messe* and his other preliminary writings), in the Schwabacher and Marburger articles, precursors of the *Augustana*, in his *Smalcald Articles*, as well as in many of his monographs, of which the greatest, in his own estimation, is *De Servo Arbitrio*, "Of the Bondage of the Will," against Erasmus. To this group belong above all many of his *Disputationes*, from those against Scholasticism and those against indulgences of the year 1517 to those of the *Unity of the Divine Essence* in 1545.

What an opportunity for the Lutheran theologian who desires to grow in the knowledge of the truth!

Luther was prominent, in the third place, in the field of *historical theology*. Some of his books show an amazing familiarity with every period of church and also of secular history. To name only two of his monographs, his *Of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and *Of Councils and Churches* contain some of the clearest expositions of historical data to be found in all literature. One can certainly learn from Luther also in this respect.

And as for the fourth division of theology, that of *practical theology*, Luther's writings are a veritable fountain of sound information, of principles correctly stated and applied. He was a master of sound homiletics, as his sermons prove, of catechetics, as his catechetical writings demonstrate, of pastoral theology, as, for example, the collection made by Porta indicates. His ability in the field of hymnology was as amazing as his translation of the Bible, and the incentive which he furnished has not spent its force in the Lutheran Church to this day. His monographs in the field of liturgies, together with the many incidental references to this branch of theology, are fundamental for the understanding of true Lutheran worship as an adiaphoron, wisely controlled, to the present time. Even in the field of church polity Luther was a master, as his many excellent expositions show, even though he could not apply the principles which he found so clearly set forth in Scriptures, circumstances at that time not being favorable to the establishment of independent and autonomous congregations.

If we therefore, in this anniversary year of the completion of the German Bible, remind every Lutheran theologian of the work of Luther, if we call attention to the motto "Back to Luther!" it is not with the object of according to a mere man an honor which should not be given to any human being, but it is to recognize in Luther God's own instrument in bringing about the reformation of His Church and to call men back to the study of the Bible, which was the secret of Luther's remarkable power and success. But his example will be of value only in the measure in which the Lutheran theologians of to-day also follow his method, so that they do not lose themselves in the maze of extraneous material, abstruse technicalities, and inconsequential details, but make *the study of the Bible the chief part of their work*. And let this be said by way of conclusion: Even as Luther studied the original languages of the Bible in order to penetrate more deeply into the meaning of the divine truth, although he was largely self-taught, so must we also study these languages and the German of Luther if we want to get his spirit. No Lutheran theologian can afford to dispense with at least a good reading knowledge of Luther's German, the language in which most of his books

were written and in which they set out on their victorious march through Germany and almost all the countries of the world. With this spirit to lead us, under God's guidance, we may look forward to new victories of the Gospel.

P. E. KRETZMANN.

Die große Kluft in der Lehre von der Taufe.

1.

Außerst interessant und höchst wichtig sind die jetzt immer häufiger werdenden Berichte über die sogenannten „Massentaufen“, die namentlich unsern Missionaren auf neuen Arbeitsgebieten vergönnt sind. Mit der Sache verhält es sich so: Kommen Missionare oder Reiseprediger in ein neues Missionsgebiet, so machen sie regelmäßig Hausbesuche. Dabei finden sie denn „ganze Massen“ von Kindern, die nicht getauft sind. In vielen Fällen lassen sich die Eltern zur Taufe ihrer Kinder bewegen, und so geschieht es, daß oft an einem einzigen Sonntag dreißig, vierzig, ja fünfzig und noch mehr Kinder und junge Leute getauft werden. Auch in geordneten Parochien machen Pastoren dieselbe Erfahrung, so daß auch da „Massentaufen“ vorkommen, namentlich in den großen Städten, wo man die Parochie gehörig nach Missionsmaterial absucht.

Die Erklärung für diese Erscheinung ist nicht schwer zu finden. In den Sektengemeinschaften unsers Landes ist die Taufe so gut wie gefallen. Die Prediger kümmern sich nicht darum, ob die Kinder getauft werden oder nicht, und das gemeine Volk weiß überhaupt nicht mehr, was es mit der heiligen Taufe auf sich hat. So wachsen denn unzählige Kinder ohne Taufe heran, und weil dann später noch der christliche Unterricht aufs schmachlichste vernachlässigt wird, so erklärt es sich, wie es kommt, daß wir in unserm Lande sechzig Millionen Personen haben, die gänzlich kirchlos sind.

Diese unchristliche Vernachlässigung der heiligen Taufe mag man zum großen Teil der heutzutage überall hierzulande grassierenden Seuche des Modernismus zuschreiben. Der Modernismus ist nämlich absoluter Abfall von Gottes Wort und zielbewußte Rebellion dagegen. Sein ganzes Bestreben geht darauf hin, die christliche Lehre mit allem, was dazu gehört, zu abrogieren. Man hat ihn daher ganz mit Recht die „große Revolution“ genannt.

Aber der Modernismus erntet nur, was der Zwinglianismus gesät hat. Der modernistische Nationalismus ist nur konsequent durchgeführter calvinistischer Nationalismus. Der Unglaube, der in den modernistischen Büchern und Schriften in bezug auf den locus *De mediis gratiae* zum Ausdruck kommt, findet sich schon wesentlich in Zwinglis *Fidei Ratio*. Es ist nötig, daß wir uns diese Tatsache vergegenwärtigen, um vor dem „andern Geist“ auf der Hut zu sein, den selbst die heutigen calvinistischen Fundamentalisten an der Kappe tragen. Auch die besten reformierten