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"May God Preserve unto Us a Pious Ministry!"

The following address was delivered at the meeting of the Presidents of Synod, May 9, 1934. It was delivered in the German language, and the brethren present requested that it be printed in the *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY* and sent to all pastors of our Church. For certain reasons it is here given in English. Pastor Rudolph Prange of St. Joseph, Mo., has kindly done it into English at the author's request. L. F.

THE COLLEGE OF PRESIDENTS, BRETHREN: —

The chairman has requested that this session be opened with a brief address of possibly forty-five minutes. In view of the subject-matter I hardly consider myself the proper person to deliver that address and would have been pleased to see somebody else chosen. However, I finally consented to serve since I agree that in times such as these and at so important a gathering we should indeed not limit our discussions to the business affairs of the Church, but in addition should admonish and encourage one another to conduct the spiritual business of the Church as becometh it, to recognize the dangers threatening us, to attack them boldly, and with the power and grace of God to overcome them. I would have it understood that what I have to say I address first of all to myself, even as every pastor in every sermon should address his message first of all to himself.

The subject on which the chairman has asked me to speak is a well-known utterance of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, so to speak, his last will, delivered to the Church nearly fifty years ago. These are the words: "*Gott erhalte uns ein frommes Ministerium!* May God preserve unto us a pious ministry!" That statement has been handed down to us through authentic channels. Prof. M. Guenther writes in his biography of Walther: "Up to the last month" — the day before yesterday was the forty-seventh anniversary of his death — "Walther showed genuine concern for the welfare of the Church, of Synod, and of the institution" (Concordia Seminary, of which he was president). Then Guenther quotes these as the exact words of Walther: "Oh, that our Synod might hold fast that which it has! God has been unspeakably gracious to us; if only our Synod preserves a pious ministry and admits to its ranks none who are unworthy of it!" (P. 204.) Our fathers frequently uttered that wish, that admonition, that prayer. At the Jubilee Synod in 1872, the last general convention in the strict sense of the term, — after that time the so-called Delegate Synods came into existence, — at that Synod a number of guiding statements were discussed in detail, statements which had been widely distributed beforehand through the columns of the *Lutheraner*. The subject was: "What precautions must we take, so that the blessings which God has showered upon us during the past twenty-five years will not be lost, but passed on to our chil-

dren?" The following solution was offered: "1. In general: We must guard against ingratitude, which causes the fountain of grace to cease flowing; against self-satisfying boastfulness, which arouses the wrath of God and moves Him to destroy what has been built; against satiety, greed, and a godless life. 2. In particular: Pastors must watch not only over their congregations, but over themselves as well; they must preserve the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, prepare their sermons with care, minister to individual souls conscientiously and in an evangelical spirit, refrain from all efforts to be lords of their congregations, continue their studies, the study of Scripture and also the writings of our Fathers, preserve among themselves the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, avoid all secular occupations that might draw them away from their sacred office, beware lest they unscrupulously and selfishly solicit a call, and conduct themselves in a manner causing the congregation to hold in due reverence the Gospel." (*Fuenfzehnter Synodalbericht*, p. 44 ff.). These and a number of other points were then enlarged upon beautifully and profitably.

"May God preserve unto us a pious ministry!"

This wish and prayer is more necessary to-day than ever before. We all realize that in the world and in the Church we are living in serious times. For such times our Savior has given us the warning: "Watch and pray," Matt. 26, 41. Throughout His earthly life, especially in His last prayer immediately before His suffering and death, in His so-called high-priestly prayer, Jesus was unto us a Model as a Man of prayer. By His watchfulness when tempted in the wilderness He has left us an example of how we ought to watch. The Tempter attacked Him from three sides, but he had to retreat each time, due to the fact that our Lord was on His guard and was armed with Scripture. The Tempter attacks the Church to-day from the same three vantage-points. An analysis of the dangers of our day will bear this out. We have with us the same old temptations, though in a changed garb, changed by changed conditions. "Old foes with a new face." We have with us to-day the insidious social questions, which, consciously or unconsciously, engage the heart of man, also of church-members, more pressingly than is usually recognized—the question of bread, the question of money, a worldly-mindedness which is ever ready to express itself in the words: "Command that these stones be made bread," Matt. 4, 3. We still have with us the temptation to seek power, to strive for honor, to catch the public eye, as expressed in the words of the Tempter: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down," v. 6. There is the tendency to make the Church and Christianity something external, something to engage the eye. Probably the most popular and far-reaching temptation is the desire to enjoy the glory of this world as indicated by the Tempter's words:

"All these things will I give Thee," v. 9. These are the dangers confronting the Church of our time, also our Church. They could and should be enlarged upon. Let the example of our Lord remind us, however, that the Church here on earth is to remain "the Church of the Cross," *ecclesia crucis*, the Church as a whole as well as its individual members; the religion of the Church is to remain a religion of the Cross, in deed as well as in word; our theology, as Luther says, is to be a theology of the Cross and for that reason the purest and truest theology, *cruz Christi theologia sincerissima*. (St. Louis Ed., IV, 550.) What a contrast when we read some of the frank statements uttered publicly by representatives of the largest Protestant denomination in our land, the Baptists. A writer in the *Watchman-Examiner* of April 19 says of the Church in general and of his Church in particular: "Even a cursory study of church-life will disclose the following realities in the situation: 1) superficial understanding of what it means to be a Christian; 2) lack of vital religion in the lives of most church-members; 3) invasion of the churches by a vast body of pagan life and practises; 4) utterly inadequate programs of Christian education."

"May God preserve unto us a pious ministry!" In the final analysis, what God demands of His Church He demands of the office of the ministry. By that not this is meant, that the universal priesthood of all believers is to be set aside. The Church is not, and is not intended to be, a Church of pastors, but a Church of Christians. The Lord founded one Church, in which all believers are brethren. No priesthood stands between them and God. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood," 1 Pet. 2, 9. Just that Scriptural truth Walther set forth clearly and gloriously, in Europe and America, defended it triumphantly and inscribed it beneath his portrait as the motto of his life. But it is equally true that the church, the flock, which the Savior purchased with His own blood, is to be under the care of "bishops," *ἐπίσκοποι*, overseers, and shepherds, *ποιμένες*, pastors, first the apostles, then other shepherds and teachers, Eph. 4, 11. In Old Testament times, when the people became wayward, the Lord first took to task the shepherds and priests and prophets; *they* were held responsible. The same holds true in the New Testament. "Feed My sheep," thus the risen Lord commands Peter, John 21, 15—17; and when Paul takes leave of the elders at Ephesus, he declares that he is "pure from the blood of all men" and charges the elders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock," Acts 20, 26, 28. Hence no pastor has a right to complain if the people hold him responsible. God Himself holds the pastors responsible; they are God's representatives; they are to speak God's Word; God's business is entrusted to them. Does that mean pastors are responsible for everything that happens, for all the wrong that is done, for all the

good that is neglected, for all the shortcomings and defects and deficiencies that occur in the Church? Not exactly that; some accusations are slander. But this is their responsibility, that they be found at all times in the service of God and that they appear some day in the presence of God and report to Him: "Lord, it is done as Thou hast commanded," Luke 14, 22.

What may we do, where must we begin, that we may have and preserve a pious, faithful, conscientious ministry in these troublesome and perilous times with their manifold, diversified, and complicated tasks? Truly, God alone can give and preserve unto us such a pious ministry. But we can be, we should be, we are permitted to be, His coworkers in this matter as in all spiritual undertakings.

When we are concerned about, and pray for, a pious ministry, we mean, to express the matter in another way, a ministry which is spiritually alive; for all true piety is a fruit of spiritual life. If the Church is to show true spiritual life, the pastors must radiate such life. By that is meant not the external occupation of the pastor, not the performance of the various duties which the ministry brings with it, but rather the hidden life in God. That is the root of the matter. The well-known words of the Epistle to the Colossians: "Your life is hid with Christ in God," chap. 3, 3, apply to all Christians, particularly also to us pastors. Hidden life! To some that expression means nothing. In their life there is nothing hidden; everything is exposed and on the surface. Their sermons are superficial, their thinking is superficial, their judgments are superficial, their work is superficial. Perhaps the manifold activities of their office have made them superficial. Their well is pumped dry and is not being refilled by the fountain of eternity. As a result their daily life, the performance of their official duties, their home life, their private life, seems empty. Others perhaps have a hidden life, but in an evil sense—they act differently when in public than when alone. They lead a double life, divided between God and the world, between Christ and sin.

The true hidden life is the life in God and with God as found at all times in the true servants of God. When Moses ascended the Mount of Sinai in the cloud, or when he entered the Tabernacle, over which the cloud hovered, God communed with him, Ex. 33. All the prophets had their hidden life; otherwise they could not have said: "Thus saith the Lord." The perfect hidden life was found with our Lord and Savior, who without interruption communed with His heavenly Father, whether in the wilderness or on the mountain top. Consequently, when He encountered people, He could say to them: "I speak those things which I have heard of My Father," John 8, 26. Similarly, for a period of three years, He exercised His disciples in the hidden life that they might be deaf and blind to the world, hearing

only Him and seeing only the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, John 1, 14. For that reason also He could say of them in His high-priestly prayer: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," John 17, 16. It was afterwards that He said to them: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," John 20, 21.

Accordingly the hidden life with Christ in God is permanently a part of the office of the ministry. True, when Christ ascended into heaven, visible and bodily contact with Him ceased. But God has not ceased to speak to His servants. He speaks in His Word. His Word, the Bible, Holy Scripture, is the Holy of Holies into which they are to enter to meet with God and to commune with Him. When we have entered, the veil closes after us; we are with God alone. But is that really the case? The temptation is ever present for us pastors to read the Scriptures only "officially," only with the thought of employing what we read in our official duties or to enrich our theological understanding. There is such a thing as a professional reading of Scripture. Too conscious of our profession, we do not permit God to draw near to our soul. The result—a mechanical ministry. That is not as it ought to be. God wants to speak to the pastor individually. He does not want the pastor's own soul to starve and perish while he directs others along the way of life. All of us—pastors, presidents, professors—recognize this danger, this temptation. That explains the words of an earnest theologian of the later Lutheran Church, Paul Anton, in his *Sentences for Pastors*: "Because we have constantly to do with sacred things, we become so accustomed to them that we, more than any one else, are in danger of becoming hypocrites." ("Sentence" 104.) The renowned Adolf von Harless, author of *Christliche Ethik*, one of the best Lutheran theologians of Germany during the nineteenth century, who was in a special sense a disciple of Luther, exclaimed on one occasion, as reported in a review by Dr. Engelder in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY (4, 397): "*Wenn nur MEINE arme Seele gerettet und bewahrt wird!*" "If only my poor soul will be saved!" If we would commune with God alone, we must close the door to exclude all other voices. Then we shall hear God speak earnestly and in all His goodness; then God will open our eyes to see ourselves as we are; then God will humble and comfort us; then God will reveal to us the glory of Jesus and the limitless love of the Father—always by means of the Word. Such study of the Word of God will lead the pastor to a clearer understanding of things and will enable him to view time and events *sub specie aeternitatis*, in the light of eternity. When God speaks thus with us, we cannot but speak to God. More and more we shall become men of prayer, daily we will appear before God in prayer, without prayer we cannot live. We will share the sentiments of the apostle: "I live; yet not I, but

Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me," Gal. 2, 20. And the sentiments of Luther, the greatest disciple of Paul: "*Denn ich bin dein, und du bist mein*," "For Thou art mine, and I am Thine." With reference to this utterance of Luther the well-known and able student of Luther Wilhelm Walther writes in his *Lebenserinnerungen* (p. 94): "I shall never forget, when on one occasion Vilmar (during a lecture) summarized Luther's theology in these words: 'For Thou art mine, and I am Thine,' how these words brought tears to the eyes of that man of iron." That is the secret of the hidden life, and without that secret it is impossible to be a real preacher. By means of the hidden life the pastor will grow in his ability to discharge his duties in these solemn and perilous times. He must take time daily to cultivate the hidden life; otherwise his life will wither away. Such daily intercourse with God will also show itself in the pastor's daily life and conduct, in his sermon work, in his *Seelsorge*, in his administrative activities, in his missionary activity, in his home life, in his example to the flock. That is the secret of preserving a pious ministry.

And what may *we* do to bring that about? Begin with ourselves conscientiously and faithfully to cultivate the hidden life. Next, let us continually and urgently bring to the attention of our brethren what Scripture says about the hidden life. That applies to us professors at our institutions. We should, and we desire to, point out to our students again and again the necessity and the blessings of the hidden life, teach them, admonish them, warn them, encourage them, and do our utmost towards reaching that goal, that, as Walther says, "no unworthy persons will be admitted to the ranks of the ministry"; and we extend this to include the teachers in our Christian day-schools.—What has been said applies to the Presidents. You have the special obligation according to our Constitution to "supervise the doctrine, the life, and the official administration on the part of the pastors and the teachers" of your District. (Paragraph 12, 7.) As far as possible, you are also to be the *Seelsorger* of those pastors and teachers. To that end you are to use especially the official visits and conferences. By means of public addresses and especially private interviews you are to bring to the attention of pastors and teachers the Scripture truths that have been touched upon, as expressed so excellently in the synodical report quoted before, "that pastors must watch not only over their congregation, but over themselves as well; that they must preserve the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, prepare their sermons with care, minister to individual souls conscientiously and in an evangelical spirit, refrain from all efforts to be lords of their congregations, continue their studies, the study of Scripture and also the writings of our Fathers, preserve among themselves

18 A Comparison of the King James and the Douay Version.

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, avoid all secular occupations which might draw them away from their sacred office, beware lest they unscrupulously and selfishly solicit a call, and conduct themselves in a manner causing the congregation to hold the Gospel in due reverence." A *Seelsorger*, too, needs a *Seelsorger*. Of one outstanding pious pastor and theologian—I cannot recall just now who it was—it is reported that he preferred the younger and more modest brethren in the ministry as his *Seelsorger* that he might not be influenced by the person, but give his whole attention to the word spoken by that brother. At the same time the public and private words of a trusted and experienced president, visitor, or older brother in office will do much, by the grace and faithfulness of God and with the aid of diligent and fervent and persistent prayer on our part, to preserve among us a pious ministry and to keep our church-life free of unwholesome influences.

David said to Solomon: "Be strong therefore and show thyself a man and keep the charge of the Lord, thy God," 1 Kings 2, 2. 3. We need to have that same word addressed to ourselves in these times. With faint-heartedness we can accomplish nothing. "Show thyself a man." God needs men to carry on His work, men who are firm and who refuse to retreat. "And keep the charge of the Lord, thy God." Wait on the ministry with which you have been entrusted. That includes everything. Serve God! Do what God expects of you!

L. FUERBRINGER.

A Comparison of the King James and the Douay Version.

A conference paper; somewhat abridged.

The treatment of this subject is occasioned by the jubilee of Luther as translator. It was the example of Luther that spurred others to action in giving the Holy Scriptures to the people in their own vernacular. In the era of the Reformation the Bible was translated into practically all the leading languages of Europe. Luther's work was the pattern for all of them. Luther finished the New Testament in 1522; Tyndale followed with his English translation of the New Testament in 1525. It was done partly in Hamburg and partly in Wittenberg, Cologne, and Worms. It was printed in 15,000 copies. The beauty of diction in the King James Version is due to Tyndale's translation. Miles Coverdale, in translating the Bible into English, used Luther's version and the Vulgate as the basis. This version, to use the very words of its subtitle, was "faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into English" and was published under the authority of Thomas Cromwell in 1535, one year after Luther's complete Bible had appeared. Two years later Matthew's Bible