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Arthur Brunn

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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The Pastor and Mission Opportunities

Have we become guilty of introducing faulty terminology by speaking of a certain group of pastors as "missionary pastors"? The impression seems to be abroad among us that missionary pastors are the men who are working in parishes under the supervision and control of some mission board. We speak of so many mission-stations. A given synodical District lists so many missionaries at work in the Home Mission field. Synod has so many missionaries in the Foreign Mission field. These are the "missionary pastors." However, the pastor of old St. John's on Foch Boulevard is not a missionary pastor. His church is crowded to the doors every Sunday. His hands are so full taking care of the members of the church that there is not even a thought of mission activities.

Of course, it goes without saying that in certain localities missionary opportunities present themselves in greater abundance and in greater variety than in other localities. The great metropolitan centers of our country offer a wider field for missionary activities than some little hamlet in an isolated desert section. However, every pastor ought to be a missionary pastor, and the topic "The Pastor and Mission Opportunities" ought to be of interest not only to those who are under a mission board, but to every pastor.

It may not be amiss for a moment or two to rethink our mission obligation. Basic to such study of course is the fact of universal sin and universal grace. We need to remember that by nature all men are under the wrath of God and children of perdition. What must a man do to be lost? Nothing at all. Just remain what he is by nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "Ye must be born again." "There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant for in Thy sight no man living is justified." "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Then, too, we must rethink God's plan of salvation. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Just as in the wilderness all Israelites who had been bitten by the poisonous serpents must perish unless they looked up at the serpent which Moses had lifted up on the cross, so all men must perish, since all have been poisoned by sin, unless they look up to the cross on Calvary and, trusting in the forgiving grace of God, pray in sincere repentance, "O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon me!"

All this may seem very commonplace. We know, of course, that Modernists have long ago discarded these basic facts of sin and grace, but, thank God, we have retained them. Yes, we have retained them in our system of dogmatics; but do we always make the practical application of these basic facts of Christianity when we are thinking missions? One is reminded of the experience that is told of two men who were partners in business. The one was a church-member and the other was not. They had been in business together for many years. One Sunday morning they happened to meet. The church-member was on his way to church, and the other was on his way to the golf links. Said Mr. Golfer to Mr. Church-member, "John, when are you going to give up this hypocrisy?" "Hypocrisy? What do you mean?" was the answer. "Why," said Mr. Golfer, "your whole churchgoing is hypocrisy. According to your religion I am on the way to hell. You know that, but all these years you never said a word to me about it. You never warned me. You never urged me to change my way of life. You just let me go. That is why I think you are a hypocrite. You don't believe your religion." How many of us theoretically believe the facts of sin and grace and yet fail to make the practical application of these facts to our every-day experiences with our fellow-men! According to our religion everybody who has not yet accepted Jesus as His personal Savior is an object of our missionary activities. We know that, but we so often forget to apply this knowledge.

One is sometimes tempted to say that in times past the Lutheran Church of America has not been a great missionary Church. True, the Lutheran Church, also our branch of the Lutheran Church, grew; it even grew very rapidly. But its growth was not the result of our missionary activities. From the very beginning of our existence we have had our Home Mission work. But was it mission-work? Was it not rather conservation work? Fellow-Lutherans, fellow-Christians, fellow-believers, came from across the seas and fairly beckoned us to send them preachers and teachers.

This source of supply has been stopped. We must learn to do real mission-work, gather in the unchurched who have no Lutheran and no German background. It seems so difficult for some of us to learn that. We are so much like Peter. At first he did not think in terms of the Gentile world in connection with the preaching of the Gospel. To be sure, Jesus had commanded the disciples to go out into all the world. Jesus had again and again demonstrated the fact that also the Gentiles shall have a place in the Kingdom. But Peter rarely thought of them as possible objects of his missionary activities. The Lord first had to show Peter by a vision that the Gentiles also can be made clean by the blood of the Lamb. Neither was Peter alone in this. When he came back home, the other disciples were amazed. To think that Peter should go into the house of a Gentile! Peter must make long explanations why it was that he dared to do such a thing.

Just so it seems difficult for some of us or for some of our people to learn this lesson, which must be learned, that others, too, have an immortal soul; that others, too, are under the curse of sin; that others, too, are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. We must learn that we are debtors to all men and are under obligation to bring unto them the saving truths of the Gospel of Jesus. The time must come when we no longer report for our church-papers as a special news item the fact that in a given city church there are people of so many different nationalities.

Three steps are essential in our mission-work. First, contacts must be made with individuals. Secondly, individuals need to be won for Christ. Thirdly, neophytes need to be trained for church-membership in local congregations.

Contacts need to be made. Lapsed church-members and former members of other churches offer many opportunities for contacts. Especially in our larger urban centers many of our church-members fall away from the faith before we are aware of the fact. What with the many removals, the mixed marriages, the strange associations, there must always be a large group on the border line, who must if at all possible be reclaimed. Then we have a large group of people in the sectarian churches who are heartily sick of the strange "gospel" which is being preached to them. They are like the blind groping after light, that light which we have in such rich abundance. Then there is that large group of people outside of the pale of the Christian Church, heathen people right here in a land in which the Gospel of the Christ has been preached from the very beginning.

Many avenues for contacts open themselves. In smaller communities it is usually not so difficult to make contacts. Everybody knows everybody, and everybody knows everybody's business. It

is much more difficult to make the acquaintance of people in our larger centers. The closer people are huddled together, the farther they seem to be removed from one another. Under such conditions the pastor must continually be on the lookout for prospects. He must build up his list of prospects. This can be done in many different ways. Sometimes it may seem a waste of time to make a house-to-house canvass in order to find prospects. Unless people are antagonistic to the Church, they do not care to be put on the spot, as it were. A much better source of information concerning the religious status of people are opportunities offered at baptisms, marriages, burials, the children in Sunday-school, the parents of the Sunday-school members, through neighbors, friends, acquaintances, the grocer and the butcher and the druggist. The press and the radio are wonderful methods of making contacts. Especially in communities which are not too large the pastor will not find it so difficult to make regular contributions to the weekly or the daily newspaper. By doing so he will introduce himself to many people with whom perhaps he could never make any contacts otherwise. Often people will seek him and make it their business to make his acquaintance because they read some of his articles or some of his sermonets in the paper. Or when they do meet him, it will not take long for them to feel at home. They have known him for a long time although they never saw his face. Just so the radio offers valuable opportunity to introduce oneself and the message which one is preaching. The radio opens channels which otherwise would remain closed. Our pastors ought to embrace every opportunity to get on the air. They ought to seek opportunities to get on the air, not only in national broadcasts, but particularly also in local broadcasts. We have in mind, for instance, the very frequent broadcasts of our missionary in the Adirondacks. Those morning devotions which he sends out over the air reach practically everybody in the Adirondack section. When the missionary comes, he need not explain at great length who he is. People know who he is although they have never seen him. They have heard him. They are happy to make the personal acquaintance of the man who has spoken to them so often in the morning devotion. In that way local broadcasts open many doors which otherwise would remain closed.

Having, then, made our contacts, the next step is to win the new acquaintance for Jesus. Do not try to win him for the church. Convict him of his sin. Show him his Savior. Give the Holy Ghost a chance to work on his heart through the Gospel which you are presenting to him. This is the type of work which requires much skill, much patience, and a great deal of time. It cannot be done in wholesale fashion. Conversions are not effected in wholesale

lots. We may gather a group of people for the purpose of training them for church-membership, but we cannot convert people in groups. Singly, individually, one by one, souls are won for Jesus. Remember Jesus at Jacob's Well dealing with one lonely soul. He must go up into the region of Tyre and Sidon because there is that one woman of Canaan. He goes into the house of Zacchaeus to bring him salvation. Likewise we find Paul on his missionary journeys often dealing with individuals. There is Sergius Paulus, the jailer of Philippi, Lydia, and many others. At one time when he dealt with a crowd, namely, in Athens, they laughed at him. The mob spirit got hold of them. And so we must do our work from house to house. It is work which requires a great deal of time and endless patience and an understanding of the human soul and its needs. In this work we must take nothing for granted. We are now not dealing with lapsed church-members or with people from other denominations, but with people who need to be won for Jesus of whom so far they have heard little or nothing.

Much of this work can be done through well-trained members of the church. Indeed, why should it not? Give our people something to do in the real work of the church and do not limit them to raising money with their sales and their bazaars and their suppers and entertainments. Teach them how to win people for Jesus. Some of our pastors have worked out in detail plans for training and developing such lay workers. Somewhere along the line the pastor will have to step into the picture. It all depends upon the efficient and consecrated work that has been done. Let us not neglect this phase of our mission-work. It is without a doubt the most important phase to win the individual for Jesus. If that phase of the work is done conscientiously, then all will be well. If this phase of the work is neglected, then nothing else will avail. Let us make sure, then, that we win individuals for Jesus.

The final step is to make intelligent members of the Lutheran Church out of the newly won converts. To that end a group may be gathered into a class for church-membership training. There is the apostolic injunction concerning those that come to the Lord's Table, 1 Cor. 11, 28. We ask our members to accept the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. They ought to know at least Luther's Small Catechism. We expect them to take an active part in the work of Synod. They ought to know something about Synod, its purpose, its work, its organization.

How many lessons ought such instruction comprise? It is very difficult to lay down any fixed rules. Remember, the purpose of this instruction (at least normally) is not to make Christians, but to train Christians for church-membership and to develop them into intelligent members of the local congregation. Remember also

that there is a very great difference between students. And perhaps there is an even greater difference between teachers. Some teachers can put over more in half an hour than other teachers can put over in two hours. So, then, every pastor must use his own judgment, bearing in mind the purpose of this class instruction, not to make Christians, but to develop Christians into intelligent members of our Lutheran Church. The ultimate goal of membership in the visible Church is to use the visible Church as the organization through which the preaching of the Gospel and the extension of the kingdom of God is made possible. In this work every church-member must take a part. It is, then, not enough to make Christians. We must, in addition, make good members of the visible Church out of our prospects. Then only have we done a good and a complete job.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

ARTHUR BRUNN

Kleine Gesellschaftstudien

6. Der neue Tempel, Kap. 40—48

Die neun Kapitel Hesekiels am Schluß seines Buches bilden, wie allgemein bekannt und anerkannt ist, die großartigste und ausführlichste Vision des Alten Testaments. Diese Kapitel zeigen durchweg die eigenartige Weise und Schilderung des Propheten, die schon früher hervorgehoben worden ist. Aber freilich gehören sie auch zu den schwierigeren Abschnitten des prophetischen Buches und des ganzen Alten Testaments. Jedoch auch hier können wir zu einer festen Auffassung und Erklärung gelangen, wenn wir den Text, den Kontext und den Parallelismus namentlich des Neuen Testaments stets im Auge behalten und nach dem bewährten Grundsatz verfahren, daß die Schrift sich selbst auslegt. Nach dem Rahmen des ganzen Buches will der Prophet in diesen Kapiteln seine Hörer und Leser, die über den Verlust des alttestamentlichen Tempels und über das Aufhören des legitimen Kultus betrübt waren, trösten mit dem Hinweis darauf, daß der Herr ihnen noch einen ganz andern, viel großartigeren Tempel beschenken werde, einen Tempel, in dem die Idee des Tempels völlig werde realisiert werden. Dieser Tempel ist ein geistlicher Tempel, die Kirche des Neuen Testaments, wie wir weiter unten genauer sehen werden. Darauf weist schon der ganze Kontext, in dem diese Kapitel stehen, hin. In diesen kleinen Studien ist wiederholt betont worden, daß von Kap. 33 an, nachdem die Nachricht von der Zerstörung Jerusalems nach Babylonien gelangt war, B. 21, der Prophet nicht mehr destruktiv wie in den vorangegangenen Kapiteln, sondern konstruktiv verfährt, daß er das, was er gleichsam niedergedrückt hat, um die Juden von der Gewißheit der bevorstehenden Zerstörung der Heiligen Stadt und des Tempels zu überzeugen, nun wieder aufbaut, und zwar in viel herrlicherer und großartigerer Weise.