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The Value of Doctrinal Preaching. — There certainly can be no more timely and necessary message to pastors than the one which Dr. Hamann publishes under the given heading in *The Australasian Theological Review* (March 31, 1943). He writes: "Impatience with doctrinal sermons is not a modern or recent phenomenon. St. Paul speaks of it in 2 Tim. 4:3. But this impatience does represent a tendency which crops out also in Lutheran congregations, and against which the Lutheran pastor must learn to set his face like a flint. Our people and our pastors are by no means immune against this poison — impatience and even contempt of doctrinal preaching. People seem to think that a good sermon is one in which the preacher shouts and appeals and pleads and admonishes and urges and threatens and storms. It is so much easier and simpler to have one's feelings pleasurably excited — even if the pleasure consists only in promptly transferring all admonitions and rebukes to the man or woman in the next pew — than to be asked to think quietly, to ponder and meditate upon divine truth. And if the preacher is weak enough to have his head turned by undeserved praise and shallow flattery, considering that *vox populi* must be *vox Dei*, he will soon forget the true ideals of sound Lutheran preaching and give his hearers what they clamor for — sermons modeled on the style of the revivalist. The temptation is there, and it is particularly strong in the case of the young preacher. Hence it will neither be amiss nor, we hope, be taken amiss if we offer in translation what Dr. C. F. W. Walther writes on this matter (*Pastoraltheologie*, p. 81 f.): 'The didactic use or the use [of Holy Scripture] for doctrine is that which the holy apostle (2 Tim. 3:16) places above all others. For it is indeed the most important of all. It is the basis of the four other uses. Let a sermon be ever so rich in admonition, correction, and comfort; if it does not contain doctrine, it is an empty sermon, a meager sermon, and the admonition, correction, and comfort which it offers hang in the air. It is hardly possible to say how many preachers sin, and how much they sin, in this respect. Hardly has the pastor touched upon his text and his subject, when he already begins to admonish and to rebuke or to comfort. His sermon consists almost entirely of questions and exclamations, of beatitudes and cries of woe, of demands for self-examination and belaborings of heart and conscience, so that the hearer, continually aroused in heart and conscience, finds no time for quiet reflection. Preaching of this kind, far from being really effective and quickening true spiritual life, is on the contrary apt to preach people to death, to kill whatever hunger for the Bread of Life still remains, and methodically to create weariness of God's Word and disgust with God's Word. A hearer must of necessity grow tired of finding himself again and again admonished or rebuked or even comforted in a saltless fashion, before a solid foundation of doctrine has been laid. To improvise all this, and to do it in such a way that the sermon nevertheless has the ring of liveliness and of power, is certainly easier than to present a doctrine clearly and thor-

oughly. And the fact that it is easier to do the former may be the main reason why some preach so little doctrine and why they like to choose subjects which presuppose in the hearers a knowledge of the matter to be treated and promise merely the application of that matter. However, a further reason is undoubtedly this, that many preachers themselves lack a sound knowledge of the revealed doctrines and consequently are incapable of explaining them convincingly to others. Still others, perhaps, largely ignore doctrine in their sermons because they imagine that detailed presentations of doctrine are too dry; that they leave the hearers cold; that they do not serve to bring about a quickening, conversion, or truly living and active Christianity of the heart. But that is a serious error. The eternal thoughts from the heart of God which are revealed in the Scriptures for the salvation of men; the divine truths, counsels, and mysteries of faith which were kept secret since the world began, but were made known to us by the writings of the prophets and apostles: these and nothing else are the heavenly seed that must be sowed into the hearts of the hearers if there is to grow up the fruit of true repentance, unfeigned faith, and genuine, active love. There can be no true spiritual growth of a congregation without sermons that are rich in doctrinal content. He who neglects this matter is not faithful in his office, even though he may seem to consume himself in faithfully caring for the souls entrusted to him by constant eager admonition, by earnest correction, and by comforting that professes to be particularly evangelical. In short, the first *usus* of the divine Word is "for doctrine" (2 Tim. 3:16); the first, necessary, indispensable quality of a bishop, a preacher is that he be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24); the first ministry in the Church is that of teaching, which is followed by exhortation (Rom. 12:7, 8); the most important requisite in a sermon, next to the demand that it must present the pure Word of God, is that it be rich in doctrine. The noblest pattern in this respect is St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which introduces practical applications only after laying the doctrinal foundation in the first eleven chapters.'" — This admirable paragraph from Dr. Walther's *Pastoraltheologie*, offered in so fine a translation, is certainly worth study and re-study and might be quoted with telling effect also to our congregations that are apt to forget what the pulpit really is for and which is the highest duty and privilege of the pastor whom they have called for expounding to them the way of salvation. In many churches doctrinal preaching has already become a forgotten art, and we are therefore grateful to Dr. Hamann for directing our attention once more to the most essential of all essentials of the Christian ministry. J. T. M.

Dr. Coffin as a Candidate for Moderator. — Under this heading *Christianity Today* (May, 1943) reviews the rise and reign of Modernism in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The article closes with the words: "If knowing those facts, the Commissioners to the 155th General Assembly elect Dr. Coffin as their Moderator, we will see in that action additional evidence of the triumph of liberalism and doctrinal indifferentism in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. If knowing these facts, the Commissioners to the 155th General Assembly do *not* elect

Dr. Coffin as their Moderator, we will see in their action evidence that the rank and file of the ministers and elders in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. are still devoted to the Gospel of the grace of God as expressed in its Confession of Faith and its Catechisms and as exemplified in the lives of their Presbyterian forbears — God-centered, self-sacrificing, but strong and rugged lives which served well their age and generation." Since this was written, the former has happened. Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, outstanding Auburn Affirmationist and president of Union Theological Seminary of New York, was elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. From his writings the editor of *Christianity Today* has gleaned excerpts showing Dr. Coffin's liberalism and indifferentism to doctrine in such weighty points as Biblical Inspiration, the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, Miracles, and others. A few sentences will show the reader how Dr. Coffin stands on these issues. We read: "Liberalism is opposed to external authority because it obstructs free response to truth, and the liberal Christians [?] have examined carefully the nature of the authority of the Bible. Tradition declares it verbally inspired and inerrant. . . . No man can pronounce a book without error unless he claims omniscience for himself, and verbal inspiration cannot be asserted of a collection of writings which frequently contain divergent accounts of the same incident or utterance. The Protestant Reformers did not regard the Bible as an external authority." Dr. Coffin does not shirk from downright falsehood in trying to make his point. He also denies the virgin birth of Christ, for he says: "One may point out that no New Testament writer combines pre-existence and miraculous birth, which apparently are, to start with, two different explanations of our Lord's uniqueness." On the doctrine of the atonement Dr. Coffin has this to say: "A father who had to be reconciled to His children, whose wrath had to be appeased or whose forgiveness could be purchased, is not the Father of Jesus Christ — the God in whom He believed. . . . Such a God [Christ's God] freely forgives." Dr. Coffin does not believe the narratives of Christ's miracles to be true, but he suggests: "The modern preacher may not feel that he knows exactly what lies behind the tradition of many of the Biblical miracles, but he knows that generations of believers have tested the spiritual laws which these narratives illustrate with incomparable vividness and power." That means that the miracles of Christ are nothing more than so many fairy tales, but that they nevertheless teach and illustrate certain truths which generations have experienced to be such in their lives. There is no doubt about it that Dr. Coffin is a confirmed liberalist who has no right to claim the name *Christian*. His election as moderator most assuredly supplies additional evidence of the triumph of liberalism and doctrinal indifferentism in the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.

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