

"Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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Seeking the Larger Joys of Preaching

Listen first to a description of underground exploration in the cave country of Kentucky. It was written by Joseph McCray Ramsey, editor of The Expositor Magazine, many years ago and reads in part:

"We followed through pinching shafts of onyx which had grown pillar-like, as though supporting the carved ceiling somewhere up there in the darkness above us. We followed through torturous twists and bends, where virgin formations reached out from the walls as well as the floor and roof, to snatch unasked pieces of clothing and epidermis alike. We followed, inch by inch, at times pulling with solid though scant fingerhold and pushing against little protuberances over which our toes dragged deliberately.....

"At one point, after the party had safely climbed out of a narrow crevasse onto a fairly level, if low-ceilinged, crawl-way, the guide, on hands and knees as were we all, suddenly suggested that here was a fit place to tarry a bit before attempting the unknown ahead.

"There was a slightly knobby cap to a tremendous 'mountain' of onyx, over which our way must be made were we to reach the end of this particular passage. The top sloped off suddenly, and as the guide inched ahead cautiously and turned the electric beam of his cave lantern down over the drop, his one remark was, 'Cain't see bottum. Gotta go back fer more rope.'

"While we sat in various huddled shapes there in the semi-dark, Shorty, who knew caves, if not this particular one, retraced the long way we had come, left the cave, and in an incredibly short time was back with a hundred-foot coil of hempen rope. Fastening it securely about him, he said 'I'll go ahead to see what it all looks like. Lower away slowly and stop if I call. '"

Reflectively the author closes his report on exploration with the wistful comment: "I still hear Shorty's voice coming out of the darkness as he said, 'Cain't see bottum. Gotta go back fer more rope,' and wonder if you and I don't frequently miss the larger joys of our experience by fear of an unknown dark and disinclination to go back for more rope. "

There is always something to be missed, some goal foreshortened, some rich experience denied, in any profession, for the great majority of individuals who are content to have reached the end of the conventional length of rope. In cave exploration one sits down, looks thoughtfully into the depths beyond, shrugs shoulders and turns back. What wonders may lie ahead? What have we missed because the normal quota of rope did not reach? Few would chide us for retracing our steps at such a time. We have gone far, we have penetrated a goodly coil of earth's bowels. There is every excuse for calling it a day! Only Shorty, the man of real stature, senses the challenge. "Cain't see bottum. Gotta go back fer more rope." It is of such stuff that true greatness is made, the kind of supremacy which Christ our Lord seeks in His preachers who are called to explore the vastness of the Word of Truth and mine its treasures.

This brief treatise is designed as an appeal to all who are charged with the responsibility of the pulpit to see the need and acquire the habit of going back after more rope, striving for an enlargement of their capacity and an enrichment of their sermons.

I.

In order that our reference to the preachers' capacity may not be misunderstood at the outset as a suggestion that the measure of preaching is determined by the measure of the man in the pulpit, it may be

well to begin with a very apt comment by the late Dr. Halford Luccock:

" "He seemed to be the channel of a communication, and not the source of it." These words, written by Walter Bagehot after hearing a sermon preached by Frederick Denison Maurice, are more than a perfect tribute to a great preacher. They describe all true preaching. In real preaching, the preacher is a channel, not a source.The primary fact about preaching is that which is behind the preacher—the reality of a God Who speaks. Any discussion of preaching which does not begin there, might as well not begin at all."*

When our Saviour cried: "He that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," (John 7:38) he described the believer as a channel, not as a fountain, a reservoir rather than a well-spring. For He had said to the woman at Jacob's well: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14). This figure applies with peculiar force to the preacher of the Word. He is merely the transmitting agent, as the bed of the river which curves to embrace the torrents fed from the hills and directs their course to the hungry sea. The injunction of Christ to His messengers, poised for their first venture into preaching, might have been as aptly addressed to the streams of the earth: "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8).

*) "In the Minister's Workshop," by Halford E. Luccock; p. 11. Published by the Abingdom Press, Nashville, Tenn., who graciously granted permission to quote Dr. Luccock in this article.

Since the preacher, then, is a channel and not a source, the quality and capacity of his person are of secondary importance. If God but speak through him, the ultimate objective is served; if God speaks not by him, the finest attributes of the man are a snare and a delusion. Unless God enters the pulpit with the pastor, preaching is trivial, an intolerable imposition upon the patience and credulity of the human race, a meaningless babble of words and an odorous belching of emotions. All the technique in the world and all the sanctimonious vaporings of sentiment cannot deliver self-starting preachers from the stinging indictment of the Apostle Peter: "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." (2 Peter 2:3).

The prime requisite of all preaching and therefore of every preacher is significantly foreshadowed in the very first positive remark addressed by the Lord to His disciples, on that earliest day of their getting acquainted along the path from the Jordan River. His command was not: "Go and preach!" It was: "Come and see." (John 1:39).

Yet if it is thus granted without qualification that the preacher is essentially a medium of communication, that the voice of him and the Word from him is God's, it may not be assumed that his qualities are of no moment. On the contrary: if the preacher is to be a channel, it is vastly important that the channel be unobstructed, that corrosion of the pipe-line be flushed out; and if he is to be a reservoir, the sediment which is bound to collect and shallow the supply must be industriously removed.

St. Paul urged the young preacher at Ephesus: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine." (1 Tim. 4:16). It seems rather significant that the Apostle here relegates doctrine to second place, an

unusual procedure for him; and it suggests that we may give Paul a seat as chief pleader for the cause of the preacher's personal problem. Doctrine was never secondary on Paul's list of ingredients for preaching. For when God is in the pulpit, He is always proclaiming doctrine. We must not be misled by a superficial exegesis in the matter of that other injunction of the Apostle: "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13), but realize that these are but three forms of the same activity. Exhortation is essentially nothing other than the preaching of doctrine in an exhortatory manner, as distinguished from doctrinal presentation in a formal manner. There is simply no room in the Christian pulpit for preaching that is anything other than the declaration of the Truth, which is the pronouncement of doctrine. But there is room in the pulpit for degrees of efficiency on the part of the man who funnels the voice of God and scatters His Words upon waiting ears and hearts. Therefore "take heed unto thyself!"

It would be trite and repetitious to enlarge upon the exacting, demanding nature of the ministry in general and in particular upon the fabulously difficult assignment which requires weekly and even more frequent production of good sermons. Perhaps we may let another speak here:

"If any young man is afraid of hard work, that young man should never consider the ministry as a life work. From the days when Matthew collected taxes for a livelihood in Galilee until today, Jesus has had no use for a lazy man in any Christian pulpit. The task for the Christian minister is one that strains the arm and dries the brain. If you are in love with the heroic, then in the ministry is a chance for bravery like American soldiers showed at Bataan, for heroism like our forefathers possessed in conquering this continent, for

courage like that of David Livingstone in Africa."*

This rather florid tribute to the task of the preacher may suffice for the conventional view of our work. But we have in mind another approach to the situation. It may with justice be pointed out that the preacher's calling is often an easy one, making few exorbitant demands upon his physical energies and following a standard pattern without many surprises. No heroic drama imparts its luster here. Frequently it constitutes the leisurely tripping along over a well-beaten path worn by other feet, and a stopping at the end of it. The preacher is undeniably subject to the severe personal risk of a mediocrity that is not to be ascribed so much to a lack of spiritual gifts as to the nature of his assignment. There is often a great temptation to walk no farther than the average length of rope allows. The incentive to go back after more rope is stultified by several factors that appear in every preacher's life.

For one thing, there is the fact that, in general, an average degree of satisfaction is both felt and given by the preaching which never gets beyond the usual applications and the exposition of a certain few texts. Indeed, a pastor may conceivably repeat the preaching of a certain sermon from the same pulpit within a period of ten years from the first date of delivery, and everybody will be content. A divine message of unquestioned importance has been effectively transmitted, the audience has heard something it needed to hear, and the work has been done. What might have happened had the preacher deepened his vision and extended his investigations in the meantime, no one can say. But we may ask with concern: What must be happening to the preacher who never advances himself or his congregation into ever deeper and richer levels of the message of God, a preacher from whom the waters of life do

*) C. H. Nabers in Expositor, November, 1948.

not flow with higher crest because there is no flood-tide in his soul?

In extenuation of the inertia which produces static preaching we might offer the fact that a preacher's task wears him down by attrition. Sisyphus knew no more frustrating experience with his stone than does the average pastor who finds himself needing to say the same things over and over again in the simplest way because even the most elementary truths do not seem to stay rooted so as to bear fruit. Acting as transmitter of the voice of God is not the easy thing it may appear to be. Zion must climb upon a mountain to shout; the disciples are directed to the roof-tops. The constant, strident challenge of human nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, brings pressure against which a full head of inspired vigor may exhaust itself. Truly it often seems burdensome enough just to maintain the most ordinary gait.

Yet for this very reason the urgency of the preacher's personal need ought to receive attention. As an overburdened heart will compensate by becoming enlarged, so there is but one effective and rewarding way of self-protection and self-service in the ministry of preaching. The greatest of all dangers for the preacher is the tendency to lead a minimal spiritual life himself in a time and under circumstances of maximum demand. The starved preacher-soul will never know how much he has withheld of the good things from the flock which he is required to feed.

The personal religious experience of the preacher is a vital factor in his preaching. It is not enough to have a story to tell. He must live in this story in order to be prepared to tell it. When a river runs, we see only the surface water. But the channel must smooth itself to the rubbing and eroding of every drop of the flood, and endure with its banks and caresses of its fulness. So the sermon may sing of only the smallest fraction

of the works of God; but the reservoir of the preacher's heart must know the depth of it all and rejoice in being filled with it.

This will never be achieved if we persist in being content to serve as tourist guides over familiar and shop-worn routes. The first order of business for a preacher, always, must be his personal research and exploration in the cool caverns of the Word. Not only does the maintenance of a true ministry depend upon it, but we shall find it the key to the larger joys of preaching. Nothing fends off so thoroughly the vicious threat of frustrated indifference, of shallow formalism, as intensive preoccupation with the Word. Entirely apart from the specific task of sermon preparation, hours of engrossing meditation are the mark of the faithful servant of the Lord.

It takes resolute effort. It requires a certain selfless fanaticism. But above all, it calls for conviction on our part that Christ has called us, not unto mediocrity, but unto the joys of preaching. These joys are realized when we, gazing from our present vantage-point of knowledge, look down, appreciate the fact that we cannot see bottom and, resolutely adding to our rope of resolve and desire, penetrate ever farther into the mysteries of the Word. For there we shall encounter new marvels of our own redemption; there we find the increasing assurance that our names are written in heaven; and this, as our Saviour told his disciples, is the one inalienable, incorruptible source of the rejoicing which can give lasting impetus to the work.

II.

We proceed now from a consideration of the needs of the preacher to an evaluation of his product, the sermon. In justice to the announced topic of this brief essay we cannot engage in a detailed and

formal discussion of the art of sermon-making. Remaining rather within the framework of our subject, the pursuit of the larger joys of preaching, let us inquire as to how these may be attained through an enrichment of our sermons, principally through attention given to technique, subject matter and labor.

A preacher once pointed to a cartoon wherein was pictured a little man with a huge Army tank bearing down on him as he stood all alone in a vast meadow, plaintively saying: "I feel sort of out of things!" and remarked: "Sometimes I feel like that when I see Sunday bearing down on me and no one in the wide world to help me see to it that I have a sermon ready to satisfy the demands of that hour." - And who of us has never felt that way? Such a sense of inadequacy, however, deals a mortal blow to the impulses of joy which feed the high voltage of enthusiasm to the ministry of the Word. Yet a feeling of inferiority is largely self-induced. The Chief Shepherd, who calls His servants into the ministry through the Holy Spirit, supplies to each the necessary gifts. While these gifts are by no means equally imparted, they are in all cases adequate both to the purpose and assignment committed to each and to the generation of the joy in which he may render service to his Lord. Therefore any lack of joy in the work is to be traced, not to the work or to the Master, but to the servant who has failed to employ his gifts as he should. Given the challenge of improvement, he has refused to go back after more rope.

Such indolence may make its appearance flagrantly in the field of sermon technique- in the art of sermon construction. Sometimes disparaging remarks about homiletical detail are heard in casual discussions among the clergy. Perhaps some preachers have successfully shed all that they ever learned in school about the recognized rules of sermon-making and profess to feel magnificently free about the whole thing. They consider themselves bound by no rule. They declaim grandly on

the subject of preaching as the Spirit moves them, unbound by any homiletical strait-jacket. Again others may hold fast to one or two basic systems which they have managed to salvage for their use through the years: and when a sermon is due, they collect a supply of thoughts and hastily pour them into one of the forms on Saturday night, leaving them to harden until next morning. But ought it not occur to us to re-examine the question of technique from time to time, to address ourselves perhaps to some of the unexplored areas of this vital phase of preaching, to pioneer and experiment with the mating of certain forms to certain types of message for the production of effective preaching?

For the sake of those who are easily impatient with form we would hasten to say that there must be no preoccupation with technique. It has been aptly said that Jesus went from the carpenter's shop to His life of ministry and that we must not reverse the order by leaving our ministry to go into the carpenter's shop. We have more important things to do than to tinker for hours on end with the mechanical end of a sermon. Yet when all this has been conceded, it remains true that the form of presentation of the great Truths of God is of great importance and often constitutes the difference between duty well done and duty neglected. Preaching is not the mere act of stating the Truth, but the task of presenting it to the mind and hearts of the hearers. Some preaching resembles the taking of a calculated risk—the risk of not making sense, of not being logical, of being opaque. In the matter of rhetorical effectiveness, at least, the difference between a good and a poor sermon lies in the resources of technique at the command of the preacher.

It is quite within their import to quote here the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." (2 Tim. 2:15). So long as we live, we shall never be more than apprentices in the shop

of our Lord and Savior; but even so we cannot afford to become slovenly in the artistry of sermon building. He who brushes aside the demands of form is not only violating the terms of his apprenticeship but is also undermining the joy that should permeate his task. There is room, and there is demand, in our ministry for deeper exploration of the realm of sermon form.

Yet the finest construction is of no value whatever without employment of the best materials. The subject matter of our sermons should require neither definition nor improvement. It is acknowledged without debate among us that we are ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that we are to know nothing save Christ and Him crucified. The warning of Arnold Lunn was intended for other ears than ours when he said: "There is no market for sermons on the text: God so loved the world that he inspired a certain Jew to inform his contemporaries that there was a great deal to be said for loving one's neighbor."* Unfortunately there does seem to be a market for variations of that theme; and this depraved gospel suits many of the great and wise in this world. But we are confident that the servants of Christ within our fellowship have never stooped to its utterance. Yet if we have faithfully preached the saving Gospel, if we have declared the Law, have we taken heed to strive for enrichment of our sermons by ever better use of this material? Even here there is opportunity for the addition of more rope.

Our stream-lined age has been nuzzling at the pulpit with its demand for air-flow sermons that will allow the minimum of resistance to the speed of men whizzing by. The result has been, not only a spate of sermons described by someone as fashioned on the

*) Quoted by H. E. Luccock in "Minister's Workshop," page 39

model of a small-time package of bright, vivacious radio comment, but especially an abridgement of the proper subject matter which belongs into every sermon. This type of preaching is not unknown in Lutheran churches. Where it occurs, parishioners will receive about fifteen minutes' worth of bright, cheery observations about the Saviour Who died on the Cross and in conclusion hear a few comforting remarks on courage in cross and trial or, alternately, a brief exhortation to sanctification. This is sometimes called "preaching the Gospel in a timely manner."

Beyond doubt the message of the Lamb of God for sinners slain is the Gospel; but whether such a vest-pocket edition may properly be called a sermon is quite another matter. Let us not overlook the grave possibility that sermonizing which contents itself with thumb-nail presentation of the central truth of Redemption can eventually deteriorate into mere declamation of legalistic formulas that resemble sacred charms. The needs of men are not met by the reiteration of divine truths without proper regard for the totality of the Gospel and its doctrines.

Dr. Luccock, whom I have already quoted, urges us to learn to preach the Gospel in sectors of truth rather than in an arc. Let us explore this pithy bit of advice. If you will picture to yourself a circle, then you will draw a sector by cutting two radius lines from points some distance apart on the perimeter of the circle to the center. That gives you a wedge of the circle, like a piece of pie. This illustrates sector preaching, as against arc preaching wherein one merely ambles along the outer circle, the crust, for fifteen or twenty minutes.

The purpose of congregational preaching and teaching is described by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. Speaking of the gifts which Christ has

bestowed upon the Church in the form of pastors and teachers, he states that they are for the purpose of edifying the Body of Christ "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man" (Eph. 4:13). No pastor can taste of the larger joys of preaching unless he aspires to sermons which are adequate tools to that end. The objective set forth by the Apostle is sublime. It comprises spiritual manhood of the believers in the full unity of faith. Such a conquest is not achieved by marches and counter-marches along the periphery of the riches of God's wisdom.

Sermons are needed which present the Gospel in solid, cohesive expositions of doctrine, in segments which penetrate to the center and are self-contained units. Not only the crust, nor the sweet filling alone, but the balanced serving of doctrine after doctrine can edify a congregation toward the eventual goal. There is no joy like the joy of a pastor who has spent half an hour in the pulpit solidly imparting a full section of the Truth. He leaves with a feeling of completion. He has given his people a full spiritual stomach, and his congregation is not on a diet of anchovies and lettuce salad.

It is obvious that sector preaching is far more exacting than arc preaching. Substantial texts are needed rather than pretexts; and the texts must be thoroughly assimilated. We get nothing for nothing. The preacher finds the larger joys also by increased labor devoted to sermon-making. This is essential, and worth a few concluding remarks.

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A variety of alibis is offered by those who would excuse themselves from devoting large portions of their precious time to the task of thorough sermon preparation. One of the most plausible is the plea that the modern ministry makes such manifold demands upon the hours of the laborer that little is left for sermonizing. The importance of getting out among the people is

stressed. The appeal is made to the need for personal contact, and to its merits. It is even argued that mixing with the people provides an abundance of sermon thoughts. Very true this is, in a sense. Surely a preacher will speak to the needs of men better when, instead of remaining cloistered in his study, he moves among them. Yet we must not make too much of the merits of a peripatetic ministry. We are called to preach, first of all; and regardless of sentimental drivel to the contrary, sermons are made in the study.

I cherish the statement recorded by Dr. Luccock concerning the unjust steward in the famous parable. He called him the shabbiest character in the Gospels because the man confessed: "I cannot dig!" (Luke 16: 3). The preacher who resembles him sacrifices in his laziness much of the larger joys of preaching. Though he may protest overmuch, saying that true preaching comes of sympathy for the sinner and not of candles burned at both ends, the inexorable truth is that neither sympathy or love is any substitute for good, oldfashioned hard work. The man set over ten cities in the future Kingdom is the servant who says, concerning his preaching: "Cain't see bottum. Gotta go back after more rope." May God preserve unto us so faithful a ministry.

E. Schaller

PAIDEIA

Men and Machines

This is to be a discussion of teaching machines as they relate to the thoughts and doings of people. It is a consideration that is due at this time because a number of thoughtful teachers who are alert to the making of better mousetraps are concerned about the usefulness of certain new devices, the misnamed "teaching machines."

Perhaps we should state, for the benefit of some of our readers who do not read professional education magazines, and who may have missed some of the discussions in popular articles, that the so-called teaching machine is a device in a box that presents printed material on paper tape in small amounts and in carefully planned sequences that a child can master at his own rate. This teaching device is not necessarily confined in a box. The program of material, which is the heart of the new idea, is sometimes presented in book form, in such a way that the student takes a step at the time, writes his response, and checks it with the correct response, which is available immediately.

As indicated, our chief concern in this first discussion is the relation between the humanity and the machine aspect of this new thing. Humanists and liberal arts-minded people, in whose tradition we find ourselves, tend to be jumpy about something so cold and material as the gadget at hand. People concerned with ideas and values and spiritual insights tend, if they do not first ask some questions, to have signal reactions of horror at the very thought of a machine for teaching. They tend

to view this monster as a competitor. They feel defensive and insecure in the presence of technology, and move to the attack. Feeling that what is unknown is inimical, they may make the mistake of judging the device prematurely. Therefore we must get some information before we dismiss the newcomer as dangerous.

There are lessons from the past that point to the importance of suspended judgment. We can think of no benefactor in the field of education whose efforts were not summarily denounced as denigrating the fine art of verbalism in teaching. The things that Luther advocated upset painfully the schoolmasters of his age, and they required the patient work of reformers for centuries before they became accepted as a part of good procedure in our time. We went through the same misinformed objection to audio-visual aids a few years ago, before teachers learned that abstraction can come only after knowledge of the concrete. The specificity and objectivity of a new type of testing was equally denounced a few years ago, so to speak, by the advocates of the subjective as the only way to measure the presence of learning. The steel plow, remember, was once assailed as a machine that would poison the soil. If experience teaches anything, it teaches us to wait a minute.

In connection with these analogous situations it is well to admit that caution has always been well taken for the simple reason that there have often been the extremists and pervertors who have claimed too much for their new mousetraps. Objective tests do have their limitations, and audio-visual aids have not always done all that was claimed for them. Likewise, the Herbartian method, which was a new and good thing, was not the last word in teaching. It helped a good deal, but it was not a panacea. It was perverted into a treadmill. But the wise proved it, among all things, and then held fast that use of it which was good.

With respect to this new medium of instruction we would now ask you to consider the thought that there is more of the man in it than there is machine. Really, there is no more of the impersonal machine here than there is in the conventional book, which is paper and ink and paste and string and cloth. The programming of the teaching text or tape requires almost endless human patience and knowledge of both the material and of the human learning process.

In 1929, Edward Thorndike and Arthur Gates, two men well known to students of education, wrote in their Elementary Principles of Education: "If, by a miracle of mechanical ingenuity, a book could be so arranged that only to him who had done what was directed on page one would page two become visible, and so on, much that now requires personal instruction could be managed by print."

We owe thanks to the work of psychologists and other students of child development who have stuck to their work in recent years and have come up with much information on how organisms learn. Let us not forget how much we owe to these men, men of the world though they be. We should remember that in their generation they are wiser than the children of light, and we should also remember that their work is God's gift to us, to choose and use as we can, comparable to all the invention around us. We use their devices every day, their engineering, their electronics, their mathematics, and their art.

These men have put their minds to work and devised a teaching text, not so much a teaching machine. The device has more of the human, rather than the mechanical. It enables the child to grasp every new development in manageable amounts. The child not only can know, but actually does know immediately whether his response is right or wrong. The child is not allowed to practice his errors. He must get the right learning

only, and is not allowed to add to it wrong learning.

The new approach is an improvement on the long-cherished method which believes that repetition is the mother of learning. Repetition, yes, but a repetition of right responses, furthers learning. Repetition for its own sake as a method, unrelated to any new short step forward, has often been a most boring grind in education. Repetition has at times been used in a most inhuman way; it can now be humanized.

To know the difference is a sign of advancing human development. Animals can learn surprisingly well to know some differences. New techniques have been devised by which animals learn quickly to perform almost unbelievable tasks. Ought not, then, the higher organisms respond even more readily and rapidly to better procedures? This was the reasoning of Miss Montessori: if deficient and defective children respond to these newer and better methods, should not these methods yield even better results with normal children?

We can learn to accentuate not only the human but the humane. We must escape the mechanical ever more, and we must emphasize that which belongs to man — always under the aegis of God, to be sure. The reward of the mechanical and the machine has apparently begun to pall, but reward along the lines of progress that befits man as man carries no malaise. It is here that we as Christians can well question some of the procedures that are not particularly sacred just because they have been practiced by Christian people. Christian people are just as afflicted by ignorance in the head on some topics at times as are other people. They need equally to use their brains, to sense insights, to make distinctions, to see differences. Must they not learn to walk circumspectly? Is not wisdom commended to them as something they need to learn? Ought they not then to be interested in every advancement and discovery that can help in the direction of faster and fuller learning in the field of education?

Reward is one of the first principles involved in the God-man situation. Not the likelihood of failure, but the prospect of success drives each of us on to realms beyond the stars. This does belong to the human condition, in the measure that we have not settled for something less.

In connection with this thought we find what is to us most pleasing about the psychology of the new teaching texts, the programmed learning of the misnamed teaching machines. Citation and re-citation is not so true to man, as is experience and growth. That he can be taught, that he can grow to use his powers, that he can soar far above his present mean behavior is far more commendable to man than is the lesser view of him that he can be trained. Animals can be trained. Pigeons can learn, when properly rewarded, hence motivated, to turn in a circle in three minutes. One learned to dance in a figure eight in eight minutes, it was found. That there has been discovered consonant behaviors between rats and men does not mean that what has been found to be true of the learning process in man has been "rat"ified! As those once made in the image of God, we men are not insulted by the discovery that the lower animals have hearts that pump blood and lungs that breathe air, even as we. The similarities of organismic behavior that obtain both among animals and among men are no offense to us who wish to be known more for our humanity than for machinism, to coin a word.

To those interested in the psychology of learning, operant conditioning is the term involved here. This implies something more than the simple conditioned response of the Russian Pavlov and his dogs. Much of his work, by the way, has been appreciated also by Christian teachers in the past under the old expression, association of ideas. We really ought to be ashamed of ourselves for leaving so much of this work to the Russians and Jews and atheists of one hue or another. Be that as it may, worldlings have enlightened us on the possibili-

ties of vastly faster learning if we will only learn that learning proceeds apace in the presence of reward rather than punishment.

with a child, pretty soon, will draw him on to learn much faster than that which promises correction by the teacher, perhaps tomorrow or the next day when they get their papers back. Adults must learn release from the whim of the moment, yes, and Christian faith must learn to wait for the recompense of the reward, surely. But these are things not learned to any great extent, at least, from books. Nor are we prepared to deny that we can still learn much about teaching of such subtler outcomes. But the work commonly done in schools can certainly be done ever more efficiently; and the work uncommonly done there can perhaps be done, too, if only we can learn to aim at it.

In the new use of textual material under discussion we do find elements of the learning situation far better controlled than we are accustomed to see. The motivation is more surely built into the process, or the situation is so set up that the learner will respond with self-activity to a degree seldom seen before in the classroom. Positive choice is at least made more likely this way than under external pressure. The lie can demonstrably be given to the notion that children do not like to learn. Part of the secret, perhaps, lies with this that whereas reinforcement is paired with the stimulus in classical conditioning, it is paired with response in operant conditioning. There is a vast difference between the two. The letter and the law work wrath; the spirit and the promise do something else.

Thus we have attempted to introduce you to programmed learning. If you wish further discussion, your questions will be welcome, and they may well serve as starting points for amplification.

M. Galstad

PANORAMA

A BRIEF STATE- MENT—THEN AND NOW (continued)

relevant for our day, the Concordia Theological Monthly (CTM) leads off with a study of

In developing the thesis that A Brief Statement (ABS) needs expansion and correction before it can be considered adequate and

The External Aspects

A. Under this heading the question is asked, "Is the exegesis of A Brief Statement correct?" The CTM finds it impossible to answer this question with an unqualified yes. In presenting the reasons for feeling constrained to take exception to the use of certain Scripture passages, the St. Louis professors give a sampling of the kind of work they believe must be done. For this present review we shall undertake to examine the guidelines only as they touch on the first section of ABS, namely the section entitled, "Of the Holy Scriptures." This should be sufficient to indicate the character and the quality of the study under consideration. The writers of the guidelines make it clear that they are making reservations in assenting to the exegesis of the fathers. And it is their purpose to give examples to show the nature and extent of these reservations. The first example follows:

"In par. 211 (In our copy of ABS this is par. 1.-Ed.) Rom. 3:2 is cited in support of the statement that 'the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures... is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures.' Now the words 'unto them were committed the oracles of

God' are eloquent witness to the divine origin of the revelation entrusted to Israel; but do they actually make a 'direct statement' on the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures?" (CTM, April, 1962. p. 210.)

For the sake of an intelligent examination of the cogency of this reservation it is only fair to set down the whole paragraph of ABS under consideration. The paragraph:

"1. We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called 'theological deduction' but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35; Rom. 3:2; I Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical and other secular matters, John 10:35."

The CTM takes issue with the use of Rom. 3:2 as a passage cited to show that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is taught by a "direct statement." To be entirely fair to the authors of ABS one ought not to overlook the fact that the passages listed in this connection are cited to show that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a "theological deduction" but is clearly, specifically and directly taught in Holy Scripture. To suggest that Rom. 3:2 is not here exegetically acceptable as a proof text because it does not "make 'a direct statement' on the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures" is an absurdity. If one were to press this argument as is here done, he would be forced by the same line of reasoning

also to rule out John 10:35 and in the final analysis all the other passages. Finally also the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture would be ruled out as a doctrine and would be classified as a "theological deduction." One cannot help wondering if this is what the writers of the guidelines have in mind. It is readily admitted that none of the passages use the term "verbal inspiration" but this does not at all make it incorrect to say that these passages present direct statements teaching the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. There is no passage of the Bible using the term "trine" and yet we would not hesitate saying that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught by direct statements of the Bible and is not a theological deduction.

Since the passage Rom. 3:2 has been singled out for special treatment it is fitting that we take a closer look at this reference. The passage in its context reads:

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid; yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." Rom. 3:1-4. The pertinent phrase (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ) is used in three other passages of the New Testament: Acts 7:38; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:11. The λόγια in Acts refers to the law of Moses, in Hebrews to the Gospel of Christ and in 1 Peter to the Word of God in general. The passage under consideration clearly refers τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ to all the Words of God as committed to the Jews in the Old Testament canon. (cf. Stoeckhardt's Commentar ueber den Brief Pauli an die Roemer.) It is significant to note that the LXX renders Numbers 24:4, "the words of God" (Hebr. דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה) with Ἐλάγια ἰσχυρά (the oracles of the Mighty One.) Likewise in Ps. 107:11 "Words of God" is rendered τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ in the LXX. Dr. Franz Pieper in his Christian Dogmatics Vol. I says,

"Rom. 3:2 the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament, committed to the Jews, are called 'the oracles of God, ' God's sayings, God's Words." p. 214. This passage is here cited to show that Scripture teaches the identity of Scripture and God's Word. It is cited as an answer to the objection of modern theology which says, 'The fault (of the old dogmaticians)... lies in this, that they did not at all distinguish between the Bible and God's Word or did so imperfectly." In his book "The Inspiration of Scripture" (A Study of the Theology of the 17th Century Lutheran Dogmaticians) Dr. Robert Preus reviews the passages brought forth by the dogmaticians in support of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In this context Dr. Preus says: "Scripture is called the Word of God (Rom. 3:2; Ps. 119:11) and cannot be called such unless not only the thoughts but also the words were given by inspiration. If the individual words of Scripture are called the oracles of God--everyone grants that the individual words were given by inspiration. God promised that His Word would be in the mouths of His prophets. This can only mean that God inspired the very words which these men spoke and wrote. God did not govern the mouths and pens of his amanuenses only in respect of a certain amount of eloquence or in respect of the content of what they wrote or spoke; he governed them completely and suggested the very words which they were to speak and write." p.44.

B. "Guidelines and Helps" next poses this question: "Is the Exegetical Basis of A Brief Statement adequate?" It is clearly apparent that the authors of the Study do not believe that e.g. the ABS article "Of the Holy Scriptures" presents the subject with a fulness and detail adequate to convey "the character of the confessor." The Study goes so far as to ask: "Do men see in the face with which we confront them a genuinely sola Scriptura face?" Again limiting ourselves to the one section "Of the Holy Scriptures" we quote the pertinent paragraph from the "Guidelines and Helps":

"1. A Brief Statement opens with article Of the Holy Scriptures. In the face of today's situation (the revival of Biblical theology and the current debate on the authority of the Scriptures) this section ought certainly to have a broad and massive exegetical base. The seven passages cited in pars. 211 and 212 can hardly be said to constitute such a base. An adequate base should, for instance, include passages which illustrate more fully the attitude of our Lord and His apostles toward the Scriptures (e.g., Matt. 4:1-11; 15:6; 22:43-46; Rom. 1:2; 4:2, 3.) and passages which speak explicitly of the efficacy and authority of the written New Testament Word (e.g. John 20: 30, 31; I John 1: 3, 4; Rev. 1:11; 2: 1, 7.)"

Certainly it was not the intention of the writers of the ABS to present an exhaustive list of Scripture texts such as is given for instance in A. L. Graebner's "Doctrinal Theology" which gives four pages of Bible Texts under the heading of "Inspiration." The document is what it claims to be, A Brief Statement. And why can it not be permitted to be just that? Certainly the church and the world have not missed the "lineaments of the face" drawn in this section of the ABS. So well have the liberals understood this section that they have refused to accept it. They have well understood that it teaches a verbal inspiration which extends to historical, geographical and other secular matters and they have therefore been quick to express their dissent. It was at this very point that the negotiations of the Missouri Synod and the ULCA broke down. And now a full-blown controversy is raging within the Missouri Synod on this matter. Now we ask: Does not John 10:35 adequately set forth our Lord's attitude toward the Scriptures? We are well aware of the fact that the use of this passage in ABS is embarrassing to those who hold that there are scientific and historical inaccuracies in

the Bible and one would have to be naive indeed to suppose that they would approve of its retention in the present context. Furthermore we ask: Does not I Cor. 2: 13 provide an adequate base to set forth the efficacy of the written New Testament Word? Or do the authors of "Guidelines and Helps" deny that this passage applies to the written (underlined in the paragraph above) New Testament Word?

Just one more word at this point. Today's situation is described as a time when we are experiencing a revival of Biblical theology and a debate on the authority of the Scriptures. We question the revival and strongly suspect that we are not agreed on the definition of Biblical theology. That there is a debate going on regarding the authority and the inerrancy of the Bible can hardly be denied. But we are satisfied that ABS is confronting the liberals with a genuinely sola Scriptura face and is setting forth the verbal inspiration of Scripture in such fulness and detail that it will not permit a denial of it. It is indeed passing strange that the authors of "Guidelines and Helps" on the one side would rule out a relevant passage such as Rom. 3:2 and then on the other side fault the Brief Statement for not presenting the material with sufficient fulness and detail.

C. "Is the Exegetical Substance of A Brief Statement presented in Scriptural Perspective?" This is the third question presented under the study of Exegetical Aspects. The authors introduce this section by stating that this is debatable ground, but promise profitable results from a consideration of the relationship between exegesis and systematics at this point. Restricting ourselves as previously noted, the following quotation is given from the Guidelines:

"1. Should Of the Holy Scriptures be separated from Of the Means of Grace? In a scholarly work

on systematic theology the Holy Scriptures may for good and valid reasons be treated in the Prolegomena; the theologian is stating his presuppositions. But is not the case different when a church is speaking its deepest convictions for all men to hear? Shall we not give more eloquent witness to the Scripturalness of our confession by speaking of Scriptures as the Scriptures speak of themselves? Must we not speak of the Scripture first and foremost in terms of their power (2 Tim. 3:15), their 'usefulness' (2 Tim. 3:16), their inspired capacity to create faith (John 20:30-31), to bring men into communion with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3, 4), to keep the church under the judicature and the blessing of her Lord (Rev. 2:1, 7)?"

We make no apologies when we a priori state our conviction regarding the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. With vigor we reject the a posteriori approach to the doctrine of verbal inspiration. To the veiled charge that ABS does not present an eloquent witness to the Scripturalness of our confession we object and brand it as false. ABS speaks of Scripture as the Scriptures speak of themselves and it does so most eloquently. And before we speak of its power, its usefulness, its capacity to effect miracles, it is essential to be assured that it is indeed the Word of God in all its words and parts. The suggestion that the section entitled "Of Holy Scriptures" should be dealt with under the heading "Of the Means of Grace" is not well-taken and is only a leaf out of the text-book entitled "Common Confession" where this approach is used. Certainly ABS does not separate Holy Scriptures from the Means of Grace but it does treat the subject apart from the Means of Grace and there is a good reason for so doing. The section "Of the Holy Scriptures" deals with the whole Bible and sets forth the inerrancy of the whole Bible—Law and Gospel as well as those parts which treat of historical, geographical and other secular matters. The

means of grace are rightly defined in ABS: "These means of grace are the Word of the Gospel, in every form in which it is brought to man, and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and of the Lord's Supper." In discussions with other Lutherans there was an insistence on including also the Law as belonging to the Means of Grace and thereby a door was opened to the inclusion of a preparatory function on the part of man in his conversion. All of this has been avoided in ABS and with good reason. One may venture to say that the "Common Confession" is not dead yet even though it has been discarded as a basis for church union. It needs not only to be discarded but to be rejected.

A review of the observations on "ABS and the Lutheran Symbols" as presented in the "Guidelines and Helps" must be reserved for another time.

C. M. G.

NONE SO
BLIND...

When the Federal Supreme Court handed down its recent decision declaring prayer in public schools to be and infringement of the First Amendment of the Constitution, it obviously stirred up a hornets' nest. Speaking for Catholics, Cardinals Spellmann and MacIntire deplored the decision, the former with a pathetic reference to what George Washington would say if he could see the low degree to which the country he fathered has now fallen. Speaking for Protestants the Reverend Billy Graham invoked the names of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson and spoke darkly of the day when even the familiar "In God We Trust" might no longer be seen on the Dollar. Various Congressmen have offered to introduce an amendment designed to amend the First Amendment so as to grant the State the right to make at least some laws respecting an establishment of religion. We have not yet heard the charge

that this decision proves the Supreme Court is trying to communize the country —but we expect it any day. In all this outcry it remained for President Kennedy in a press conference to speak a word of common sense. After remarking that it is the business of the Supreme Court to define the Law as they find it, particularly with regard to constitutional matters, even as it is the business of the citizen to abide by it even though he might not agree, the President went on to say that actually this decision can be a good thing for the entire nation. Rather than delegating this important matter to an institution that is not designed for it, let those who deplore the ending of prayer in public schools pray with their children at home. The result will be that once again the family would become the basic unit in the spiritual life of the nation.

We rejoice in the clear thinking and the forthright courage of the Court. For they must have known that this would not be a popular decision. We are for prayer in schools — so much so that by private means we support schools dedicated to the cause of Christian education. But we are convinced that the cause of Christianity is not served by prayers that have been edited and censored until they are sufficiently "non-denominational" to be used in the mixed company of a public school room. For in the process the very things that make a true prayer Christian are ruled out. One listens in vain for the voice of the penitent sinner seeking pardon for the sake of the Blood shed for him by the Divine Substitute. We do not look for a great measure of understanding of our position on the part of the average American public. But churchmen in high places should know the difference between prayer that is offered in the Name of Christ, and the non-descript kind that was the issue in the recent Federal case. We believe that they do know, Graham in particular. When they plead for the latter kind nevertheless, one is reminded of the old saying that none are so blind as they who will not see.

For they want what has been denied —they and many others. The Catholic Cardinals may want it for one reason, Graham for another. But they both want more rather than less government-inspired religion. And they may well get it, even though it be by the laborious route of constitutional amendment, now that the Court has ruled out the more direct way. And we believe that eventually they will get it —for the trend is in that direction. And when that comes to pass, let us note well that another step will have been taken toward the development of a National Religion.

E. Reim

FROM CLEVELAND TO
CLEVELAND TO ?

It is not easy to get the feel of an important convention without the opportunity for on-the-spot observation, particularly when one must make up for one's absence by a laborious sifting of the more than 600 pages of mimeographed material that constitute the day-by-day business of a Missouri Synod convention. Certain outstanding facts nevertheless emerge and mark the developments that are taking shape in this major sector of American Lutheranism. These developments we must note carefully in order to keep our bearings in the ever shifting environment in which we live.

The atmosphere was tense with expectation when the 45th Convention of Missouri assembled at Cleveland June 20. Hailing it as the "Crisis Convention," conservatives had gone forth girded for decisive battle, confident that their high-power ammunition would win the uncommitted middle group for their cause and thus make possible a reversal of the trend that is carrying their Synod ever further to the left. They had a strong case, and their ranks had been re-enforced and their position redefined by the "State of the Church" movement of a year ago. But disaster was swift to strike.

The convention had barely gotten under way when a resolution was presented by the Committee on Constitutional Matters recommending repeal of the famous "Resolution No. 9" of the 1959 San Francisco Convention. Making the Brief Statement binding on all pastors, professors and teachers of the Synod, this resolution had been hailed as a signal victory for orthodoxy by conservatives throughout the Synodical Conference, most of whom, however, seemed to overlook the fact that this 1959 resolution gave precisely the same confessional status to the Common Confession in both its parts as to the Brief Statement. But now this trophy was being snatched from their grasp. It was small comfort that this repeal was based on the argument that to enlarge the confessional base of the Synod would call for a constitutional amendment, and that it was offered with voluble protestations of loyalty to the substance of the Brief Statement. Several attempts to redefine the authority and significance of the embattled document failed, and the best that could be done with this monument of better days was to send it to a newly created and still quite mysterious Commission on Theology and Church Relations for "review." Noting what has already been published in the Concordia Theological Monthly concerning the defects of the Brief Statement, particularly with reference to the article on Inspiration (see the report by Prof. Gullerud in this and the previous issue of our JOURNAL), there is reason for real concern about the future shape of this document.

It seems that this action of the convention repealing Resolution No. 9 set the pattern for what was still to come. Skirmishes occurred almost every day and in almost every area of the Synod's business, even elections, but they clearly showed the waning strength of the conservative group. When the Synod's representatives reported on their theological discussions with Presbyterians, their frank reference to their participation in prayer was according to one observer found to be rather startling, and may well have contributed to the length of the debate. But when it

came time to vote, the resolution of the Floor Committee endorsing these meetings and calling for their continuance was adopted, notwithstanding the vigorous protests that had been offered. And so it went, on one issue after another.

Judging from the length of the debate and the nature of at least one of the amendments, Resolution No. 16 of the Committee on Doctrine seems indeed to have turned out rather well for the conservative petitioners. Dealing with a number of memorials that raised serious questions on the Doctrine of Scripture, the first section of the resolution produced a vigorous reaffirmation of belief in the plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Turning in its second section to "a number of propositions related to the nature of the Word of God," the committee explained that "as they stand without context, these propositions do not express the consensus of our church and should not be taught as truths." An addition, however, to the effect that "the effective teaching of theology, especially in the training of pastors, may well require the frank examination and critical evaluation of some of the views reflected in these propositions" was held up until a valuable safeguard had been added, making the phrase read, "critical evaluation and firm refutation." (Our emphasis) On this we commend the defenders. But even so, we note with concern that this and a related third section was by the convention referred to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, to pastoral conferences and congregations "for study."

But the supreme test came over the case of Dr. Martin Scharlemann, the St. Louis professor who had been charged with teaching falsely, particularly concerning Inspiration, and whose removal from office was being demanded. Here the floor committee introduced a statement, read by the professor in person. Affirming his commitment to the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, he went on to say: "I hold these Scriptures to be the Word of God in their totality and in all their

parts and to be utterly truthful, infallible and completely without error." This should have been enough as a positive statement, and without doubt it satisfied most of the hearers. But coming from one who in his writings and with specific reference to the Word of God has demonstrated the disturbing ability to make a distinction between "truth" and "fact," between "truthful" and "factual," the statement still left much to be desired. Nor was this deficiency removed by what followed, namely an admission that his essays "have become the source of much difficulty, disturbance and confusion because of their inadequate formulation and their failure to guard carefully against misunderstanding." (Our emphasis) Admitting that "Basically they addressed themselves to the wrong question," namely, "In what sense are the Scriptures the Word of God?," he offered as an alternative, "How are The Scriptures, as the Word of God, to be used?" Then there came an obviously sincere expression of sorrow over the unrest that his writings had created in the Synod, and a moving plea for forgiveness. Four papers he had written were withdrawn by title and "in their entirety." This action was followed by an explanatory paragraph:

"Such withdrawal is here understood to mean that the questions to which these essays proposed to address themselves will not again be dealt with by me on the basis of anything written in them. If and when I need to address myself to these issues again any such effort will be undertaken only in full cooperation with my colleagues on the Seminary Faculty and any others in Synod delegated to carry out this task. At that time, I assure you, a new, more considered and properly safeguarded approach will be used."

Perhaps the foregoing could have been told more briefly. We have, however, quoted directly and at some length in order that our readers might note for themselves (1) that in the entire statement there is no admission or error, only one of inadequate formulation and failure to guard carefully against misunderstanding, and (2) that no

assurance was given that the issues might not be taken up again, but only that "if and when" this is done, the old and inadequate form will not be used. Nevertheless the convention, obviously moved by the Chairman's plea for "a spirit of Christian forgiveness," adopted the favorable recommendation of the committee by a vote of 650 to 20 (four of the negative votes were later withdrawn). — Thus the real question was passed by: Did the essays contain false doctrine or not? And by permitting their withdrawal at this stage of the discussion, did not the convention thereby consent to the removal of the only concrete evidence on the basis of which an objective decision on this important question would have been possible?

After this the convention followed its predictable course. Grave charges of unscriptural teaching at Valparaiso University were disposed of by calling for a more precise definition of the relationship between the University and the Synod. Then there were actions indicating the Synod's determination to use the next meeting of the Synodical Conference (Chicago, November 13-15) for immediate steps to form an International Lutheran Synodical Conference; to refer to the new Commission on Theology (which seems in a fair way to becoming a theological supreme court) not only the review of the Brief Statement already referred to, but also the question "What is a Doctrine?" as well as the "Theology of Fellowship" document; and last, but not least, the convention resolved to take initial steps toward forming a Lutheran inter-church association.

This is in brief the story of Cleveland — with one important exception. It is not enough to note what Missouri said and did at Cleveland, 1962. Missouri is not standing still. Just as every other church body, it is moving, and the direction and pace of this motion are a vital part of the story. For Missouri has been at Cleveland before, twice, to be exact. The last time was in 1935, when the Missouri that had buried its Franz Pieper four short years before, that had in the following year adopted his Brief Statement as

its final word in inter-synodical discussion with heterodox Lutherans, and that had just retired its veteran President Frederic Pfotenhauer, now accepted two invitations, both dealing with the problem of Lutheran union. One was from the United Lutheran Church of America (ULCA), the other from the newly formed American Lutheran Church (ALC). The former project came to a sudden end when the ULCA representatives declined the request of the Missouri committee (then headed by the stalwart Dr. Theo. Engelder) to begin the discussions with a study of the article on inspiration as the necessary foundation for any further progress. (See our article on the National Lutheran Council and Missouri in our JOURNAL, December 1961, p. 39) Negotiations with the American Lutheran Church took a much longer course. With ALC's firmer position on Scripture (although it soon proved itself capable of agreeing also with the ULCA position in the so-called Pittsburgh Agreement) discussions came to a point where that body declared its willingness to accept the Brief Statement, but with certain exceptions in "non-fundamental doctrines" that it considered as not being divisive of church fellowship. It took nine years and three conventions to dispose of that argument. Then, in 1950, came the Common Confession. This time the responsibility of authorship lay equally on both contracting parties, but the prospective union failed nevertheless because the then ALC had developed other interests, those that have led to the present merger with the Norwegian ELC and other bodies into what now is the new American Lutheran Church. Nevertheless, even though this Common Confession reveals a marked and demonstrable decline from the high doctrinal standard of the Brief Statement, particularly in the articles on Justification, Conversion and Election, it was soon to be enshrined by Missouri's 1959 Convention alongside of the Brief Statement as one of the official doctrinal statements of the body.

Thus a very precious thing — Missouri's former sensitivity to the preservation of the SOLA GRATIA — has been replaced by a modern tolerance of what was once held intolerable. And now comes Cleveland, the

Cleveland of 1962 with its evidence of a desperate internal struggle over the doctrine of Inspiration, a struggle that certainly is not yet over by any means, but one that has revealed the failure of what we have called the Uncommitted Middle to understand just how much was actually at stake. For how else can one explain the willingness of the delegates to accept a personal statement as a settlement without insisting that such a statement include a clear disavowal of the specific error that has been taught, without insisting that because of the importance of the matter the error be clearly identified and renounced — particularly since the professor is to continue to be entrusted with the training of future pastors, and may in the eyes of at least some of his students have been invested with the mantle of martyrdom by the procedure to which he was exposed. Few of those who were at Cleveland seem to have sensed what was at stake. But at least one not only did, but clearly said so: Dr. Siegbert Becker of Concordia Teachers' College at River Forest, Illinois. Said Dr. Becker, as quoted by a trained observer: "God help us all if we are satisfied with this solution, God have mercy on us." We salute a bold witness!

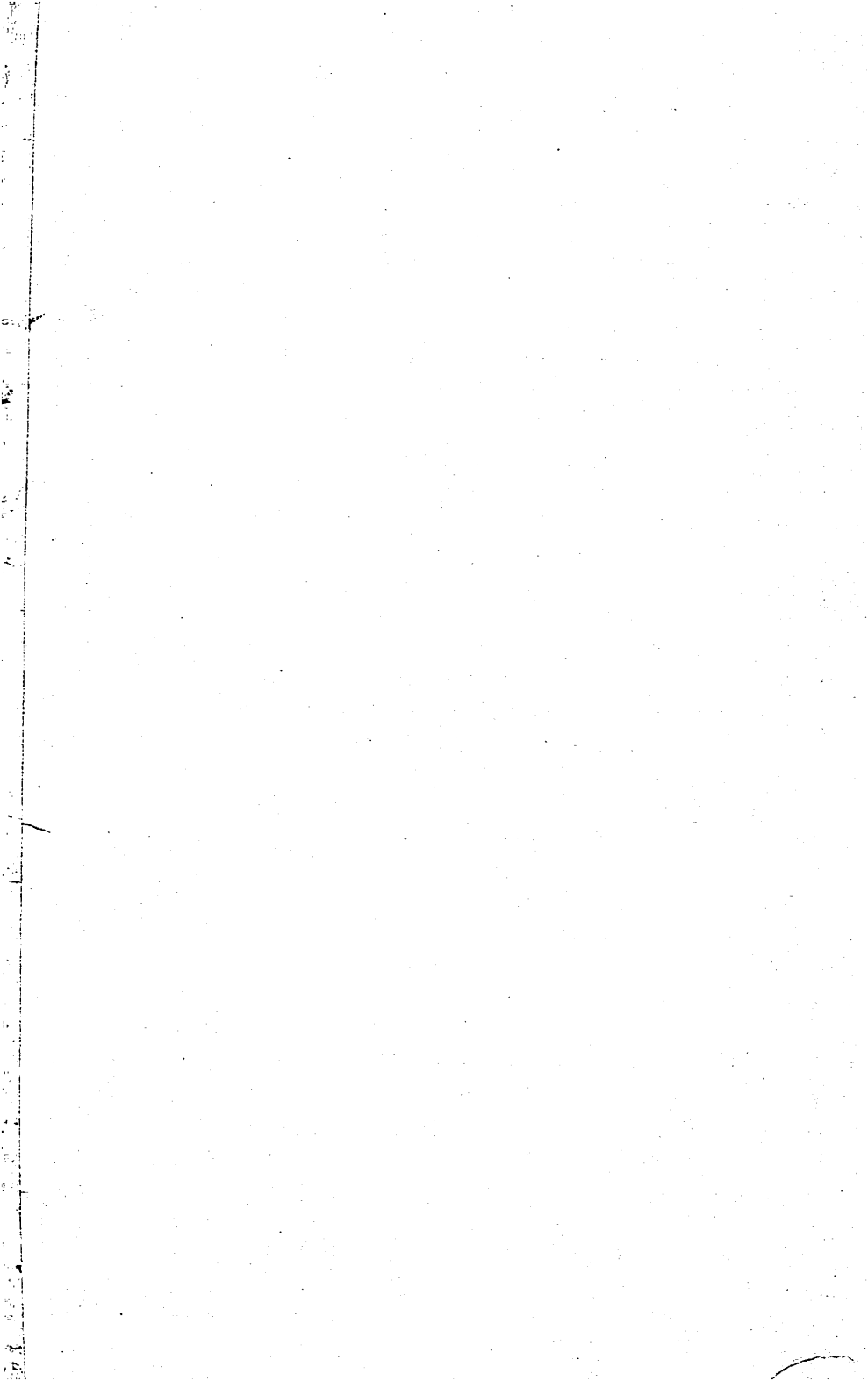
From Cleveland to Cleveland: in those twenty-seven years Missouri has moved a long way, in a fateful direction, and at a constantly accelerating pace. Wisconsin and its Norwegian brethren may well thank God for the grace that enabled them to break the tie. We believe that Wisconsin can, if it will put its own house in order, become a rallying point for true Lutheranism, and an effective leader for the conserving of those principles for which the Synodical Conference once so unitedly stood. The question is: Will Wisconsin see and seize this opportunity? Will it have the inner strength to put its house in order — not merely in the sense of closing its ranks and restoring inner peace and harmony, but of returning to its previous orthodoxy in the doctrine and practice of church fellowship and related issues. And then the thought that must govern all

of us who may have a part in this — whether from within or without — is for singleminded spiritual integrity and wholehearted obedience to the Word. Ecclesiastical opportunism will only contribute to a final disaster.

For Missouri has ruled itself out. It will continue its negotiations with the National Lutheran Council. It will do so without having established agreement on the doctrine of Inspiration, or even called for it as the basic premise for fruitful discussion (see our December article referred to above). It will do so after having already yielded so much precious ground (see our February and April articles on the same subject). It is this concern for what is still to come in the history of this once highly esteemed body that has caused us to formulate the question as we have it in our heading:

FROM CLEVELAND TO CLEVELAND TO ?

E. Reim



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