



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

I Timothy 4:15

Journal of Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

THE SOLA SCRIPTURA PRINCIPLE AND BIBLICAL STUDIES TODAY --
CRISIS AND CONFLICT.*

We have taken upon ourselves the name: CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION. With the word "Church" we identify ourselves as being one in faith with all the communion of saints. With the remainder of the name we declare that our profession of faith is "Lutheran," that is, that we are in agreement with the Confessions as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, in its unaltered form. With our name we are furthermore declaring that we are not in sympathy nor in step with those present-day branches of Lutheranism (so-called) which no longer adhere to the principles of the Lutheran Confessions. We are a conservative church, in the sense that we cherish the doctrines of our Lord as He revealed them to us in Holy Scripture by His divinely inspired writers; and as they are set forth in our confessional writings. Our brief history as a church body has shown that we, by God's grace, have not hesitated to set forth new statements of the same age-old profession of faith, when the events of our time have made it necessary. Thus, we have presented to the world Concerning Church Fellowship and concerning the Church and Ministry.

There is a confessional principle (stated in its three-fold expression) that has stood the church in good stead. It has had validity from the beginning of the world, of course, although it has become a particularly Lutheran principle. That principle is: Sola fides, sola gratia, sola Scriptura (Faith alone, grace alone, the Scriptures alone). There have been times in the history of Lutheranism in America in which the concepts of sola fides and sola gratia have been at stake. One thinks particularly of the great controversy on the doctrines of Election and Conversion of some eighty years ago, a controversy which caused church federations to rend asunder, synods to split, families to divide, friendships to terminate. However, in our own church body's brief history, the principle that has been more at stake than any other, it seems to me, is sola Scriptura. What a church body declares about the Scripture and the interpretation of Scripture reveals in our day what kind of church body it is -- whether orthodox or heterodox, at

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least in so far as this principle is concerned.

The present writer is unaware of any area in our church where the Reformation principle of sola Scriptura is not upheld. However, we are not able to foresee the future. There were certainly times in the past in which one judging confessional church bodies such as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod would have correctly made the same judgment about that church then that we make about our own today. And yet one of the Missouri Synod professors of theology (one who wishes to be conservative) at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, has recently (1966) declared, "...there are those who would shake our confidence in the Scriptures of God. And let there be no mistake about it. The Christian Church, the Lutheran Church, our Missouri Synod, faces a crisis today on this very point. For if we let go of God's infallible Word we stand to lose more than we bargain for: not merely our claim to orthodoxy, not merely the Bible itself, but our Savior."¹ And even more recently, in the April 17, 1972, issue of Christian News we find the same individual protesting a statement by Dr. John Tietjen, president of Concordia Seminary, to the effect that it is impossible for any instructor to teach a course in biblical interpretation without using the so-called historical-critical method. Dr. Preus makes the assertion that when he began his work at Concordia Seminary fifteen years ago, no one taught (publicly, at least) interpretation of the Bible on the basis of any principle other than the historic Lutheran system of hermeneutics (i.e. the study of interpretation).

This is an alarming and saddening situation. Our church has long stood indebted to individuals in the Missouri Synod, such as Pieper, Walther, Stoeckhardt, and others, who have written exegetical works which have not deviated from the principle that God's truth comes to us by Scripture alone; that the Scriptures were verbally inspired and are therefore reliable, truthful and inerrant in all their words and parts, also where they treat of historical, geographical, scientific or other matters; although they were not given to men for those purposes, but for doctrine, reproof and instruction in righteousness. It is heart-rending, therefore, to behold that church body today wracked from one end to the other over the principle of biblical interpretation. We do

1. Robert Preus, Biblical Hermeneutics and the Lutheran Church Today.

not wish to stand aside and poke the finger at the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and smugly declare: "Well, that's what might have been predicted. If they had only listened to us in the thirties, forties and fifties ...!" Rather, let us thank God that solely by His grace (*sola Gratia*) we of the Church of the Lutheran Confession have thus far been spared from this particular snare of our fearsome foe. But, at the same time, let us not fail to pay heed to the signs of the times. In preparation for a day in which our church body may be also endangered by a departure from the principle of *sola Scriptura* (may God in His mercy prevent it!), it seemed to me of importance to consider an essay with the theme: THE SOLA SCRIPTURA PRINCIPLE AND BIBLICAL STUDIES TODAY -- CRISIS AND CONFLICT. How much better it is to consider these issues in a period in which we can do so for purposes of giving warning and strengthening one another, than at a time of bitter controversy over them! I propose to consider the theme on the basis of three parts:

(1) A review of the hermeneutics (the principles according to which the individual reads and understands Scripture both correctly and devoutly) as practiced in our historic Lutheranism;

(2) A discussion of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation, with comment on form-criticism, as well as the documentary hypotheses; and

(3) Implications for our Church of the Lutheran Confession.

With the help of God, and calling upon Him for guidance, let us begin our task.

1.

There is an extremely important aspect of historic Lutheran hermeneutics which cannot be stressed too much; namely, that it is not incorrect for an interpreter to hold presuppositions. The presuppositions held by historic Lutheranism have emphasized that the Scriptures are of divine authorship, that the Scriptures possess a harmonious unity, and that all Scriptures center about Christ and His saving work, among others. When one holds these truths as evident, it cannot help affecting him in his entire approach to Scripture, as well as his task of interpreting Scripture. The Lutheran interpreter understands that he, a sinful being, is dealing with the holy Word of God; therefore he, as it were, takes the shoes off his feet, for he knows that

he is standing on holy ground. When, therefore, he reads a portion of Scripture which stands in opposition to his reason and intellect, he realizes that his reason must be totally and completely subjected to the revelation of God's Word. One cannot overemphasize the importance of these presuppositions.

Our Lutheran Confessions do not contain any article specifically concerning the Scriptures and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. This is not to say, however, that the Confessions do not contain the doctrine. The Lutheran Confessions were written, after all, to clarify doctrines which were in dispute and controversy. At that particular point in history rationalism had not yet made the serious inroads into theology that it did later on; both sides held to Scripture as sacred and inspired. One might note, for example, that the Lutheran Confessions also do not find it necessary to declare the reformers' belief in the existence of God! Nevertheless, there are throughout the Confessions passing references to the Scriptures as the divinely inspired Word of God; they are called "eternal truth" in contrast to other writings which are only witnesses to the truth.² The point is well taken that "the fact that they are passing statements show us that the divine origin and authority of Scripture are simply taken for granted in our Confessions. But more than this, such passing statements reveal that the divine inspiration of Scripture was quite consciously considered as a presupposition for all exegesis by the writers of our Confessions."³ When the historic Lutheran theologians regarded God as the origin and author of all Scripture, they also recognized the Scriptures as inerrant. We have already referred to the statement in the Formula of Concord calling the Scripture "eternal truth." In the Large Catechism of Martin Luther the Scriptures are described as not erring or lying to us. And in the Preface to the Book of Concord the Word is described as pure and infallible.

A significant point is made in J. P. Koehler's Biblische Hermeneutik that "it is necessary for most people who attempt an interpretation, particularly those who make interpretation their specific study, to remember that all interpretation must be coupled with the sincere determina-

2. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, par. 13.

3. Preus, op: cit., p. 84.

tion to arrive at the meaning of an author's document according to the sense intended by the author." Now, since we have seen that the Scriptures are the writings of the Holy Spirit, the task of the true interpreter is to arrive at the divine meaning of Scripture placed there by the Holy Spirit. It has been well said that "the author of any piece of literature is the best interpreter of it." In the field of secular literature (an area of study of special interest to your essayist) critics have been extremely grateful to those literary innovators who were conscious of their contributions to literature and were not averse to setting forth their philosophical foundations. Among the romantics we might point to Coleridge and Wordsworth as being particularly helpful; in the development of the American novel we can turn to Henry James and his The Art of Fiction to provide us with helpful insights. The interpreter of sacred Scripture, then, must turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance in reading the Scripture with understanding. The human mind has been weakened by sin, and man's understanding has been darkened; sacred truths are spiritually discerned. No interpreters have been more aware of this than our historic Lutheran predecessors. The Formula of Concord puts it very plainly: "But to be born anew, and to receive inwardly a new heart, mind, and spirit, is solely the work of the Holy Spirit. He opens the intellect and the heart to understand the Scriptures and to heed the Word."⁴

The purpose of the Holy Ghost in leading the individual to understand and correctly interpret the Scriptures is, of course, to lead one to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The task is not, therefore, performed in a vacuum or in an objective manner, as many modernists would want us to believe. The Spirit comes to us through the Word as a Means of Grace -- the Gospel of our Lord. What is meant, then, by the recognition that the Holy Ghost interprets God's Word to us, is that the Spirit is thereby actively engaged in the task of bringing us to faith in Christ and in leading us to believe the Scriptures. Although we agree with Luther that certain doctrines are so plain that anyone, even a complete unbeliever, can understand the literal sense of the words (such as, for example, "this is My body, this is My blood"), yet true hermeneutics also involves the acceptance in faith of the biblical statements; and this aspect of hermeneutics is truly the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. FC SD II, 26.

All of Scriptures possess a unity, a one-ness centering about Christ. This is sometimes spoken of as a scarlet thread that runs throughout Scripture. From the Fall into sin on the part of Adam and Eve to the end of time there is but one plan of salvation for all men. This plan was in the foreknowledge of God before time and the world began. Hence, God's revelation to man centers on the two great bodies of teaching contained in God's Word -- the Law and the Gospel. The task of the true interpreter is to seek to understand the Scriptures correctly in the light of their Christocentricity and to distinguish properly between Law and Gospel. Since, as Luther put it, "die ganze Schrift treibt Jesum," (all Scripture treats of Jesus), there can be and is no conflict between the writers of the Old Testament, on one hand, and the writers of the New Testament, on the other. The author of all Scripture is, as we have said, God Himself. God is not divided or in opposition to Himself; neither are His Words.

Consequently, the Scriptures possess perfect clarity. It is true, of course, that there are passages in the Bible which are more obscure to the mind of man than others, where it is necessary to use all the tools of extensive exegesis, involving a thorough knowledge of the original language, with its grammar and usage. However, historic Lutheran interpreters have understood and taught that the cardinal doctrines are all based on clear passages in Scripture. They are clear because both their historical setting and their grammar present no obstacle to their being understood. The interpreter recognizes that these clear passages of Scripture are the key to understanding those passages which are to his mind less clear.

We have stated earlier that it is a correct principle of hermeneutics that man's reason be made subject to the obedience of Christ. There is a place for reason, however, in the task of interpreting Scripture. The service that reason performs is "purely of a formal nature, having to do with externals."⁵ "Reason must take up the thoughts and views of Scripture and thereupon reproduce them from the Greek and Hebrew in the form of clear conceptions and statements. To the extent that it is necessary to establish what is laid down in Scripture as an objective fact, reason will also apply its power of critical judgment."⁶ Reason,

5. Koehler, Hermeneutics Notes.

6. Ibid.

therefore, is involved as the student of Scripture applies his knowledge of the grammar of the ancient language to get at the real sense of a passage of Scripture. His objective is to determine the plain and native meaning. The question he seeks to answer is: "What, exactly, did the Biblical author wish to say, assert, or affirm?"⁷ And so the Lutheran Confessions breathe this very purpose, namely to ascertain, determine and state what the Scriptures say. To aid the interpreter in this purpose, the sciences of language, history, archeology, and others are available. They are, however, his tools to help him in his task; they are not to govern him in his thought. Speaking theologically, they are to be ministerial, rather than magisterial. When one recalls the Reformation principle, *sensus literalis Scripturae unus est* (the literal meaning or sense of Scripture is a unity), one will be on his guard against permitting hermeneutics to lead him away from the plain sense of a passage into any allegorical or fanciful interpretation.

Historic Lutheran hermeneutics has always rejected any theory that allows for errors in Scripture, also in regard to matters which appear to have no reference to salvation, or matters which appear to be the personal opinions of the writers. Theories that permit error are arrived at through the speculative reason of the critic. That which they claim to be based on scientific methodology proves, upon investigation, to be merely theory. So-called "errors" in Scripture generally turn out to be apparent discrepancies between two or more accounts of the same event, where it appears that the Bible contradicts itself. Most of these have been taken up in Arndt's work "Does the Bible Contradict Itself?" and have been laid to rest there.

But how does a true interpreter resolve the question of the "dark" passages of Scripture? We have stated earlier that clear passages of Scripture are the key to understanding passages which are less clear. This is termed analogia Scripturae (the analogy of Scripture; sometimes termed the analogy of faith). "Since Sacred Scripture is one book with one author, any passage can shed light on another passage which deals with the same subject matter."⁸ And so the principle is fundamental: Scripture interprets Scripture. There is a danger in the way in which many interpreters have used the principle, however. For example, if the inter-

7. Preus, op. cit., p. 86.

8. Preus, op. cit.

preter seeks to twist and adjust a clear Word of Scripture in such a way as to force it to agree with some other passage, he might thereby create a combination of ideas which are not found in Scripture. No, the analogy of Scripture does not permit the exegete to depart from the grammatical and historical sense of the words. "If concepts occur here which seem according to reason to contradict other doctrines of Scripture, one nevertheless dare not change the meaning of these concepts or give them a new form merely in order to bring them to agreement with the other doctrines. It is self-evident that these concepts must be clearly and unmistakably expressed in the passage we are treating. We can only compare properly passages which deal with exactly the same doctrine and here the more obscure passages must be explained by the clearer passages. If according to our human opinion the difficulty exists, and the locus classicus (the proof passage) of one doctrine cannot be made to agree according to our reason with the locus classicus of another doctrine, then it is the duty of a faithful interpreter to show up and to declare this difficulty frankly."⁹

Thus we recognize that historic Lutheranism has practiced Biblical studies with as much intensity as today, but with a difference. First of all, it has not sought to approach its study of Scripture with Locke's tabula rasa viewpoint; rather, it has held presuppositions. These presuppositions are that the Bible is the very Word of God; that the Holy Spirit, as Author of the Word, interprets Scripture, thereby creating faith in the mind and heart of the believer; that the Scriptures are Christocentric; that the Scriptures are clear; and that Scripture interprets Scripture. These presuppositions are not merely notions; rather, they are Spirit-taught by the Scriptures themselves.

2.

Thus far, our task has been a delight. When we now take up a discussion of Biblical studies today, however, we are entering into murky waters. Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan is but stating the present day view of Biblical studies when he writes, in a Foreword to Kenneth Cauthen's The Impact of American Religious Liberalism: "Among the permanent results of liberalism none is more important than the discovery that the Bible and the Church have been conditioned by history.

9. Koehler, Herm. Notes.

The cosmologies underlying the thought and language of the biblical writers are not the product of the religious experiences and the revelations of Israel and early Christianity, but are the common property of believer and unbeliever in the ancient world. Similarly, many of the cherished beliefs and bitter controversies in the history of the Church owe their origins not to the Scriptural passages that were always being quoted or the doctrinal and moral concerns that were always being cited, but to the social, political, and cultural milieu in which the Church was living."¹⁰

Pelikan's views are the inevitable result of a type of Bible study which began in the middle of the eighteenth century and is now espoused as a methodology by the president of the Missouri Synod's Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. The broad term used today to define the method is "historical-critical." Martin Scharlemann defines the method in this way: "... the historical-critical method is a rather precise concept and is described as that method of interpretation which uses the criteria of scientific historical investigation to analyze the sacred text, in terms of language, literary form and redaction criticism, with a view to discovering how much of the 'historical' content of the event described can be recaptured. In this method, the text is a primary source for the time of writing and only secondary for the time of the occurrence described. There is a very broad consensus on this point among Biblical scholars, I might add."¹¹ The three major points in that definition involve language, literary form, and redaction (editing).

For purposes of study, biblical criticism is often divided into two types: lower criticism and higher criticism. The terms do not denote the relative importance of one type over against the other. By "lower" criticism is meant textual criticism. This branch of study concerns itself with the ascertaining of the true text of the Bible. The original autographs (initial, handwritten versions) of the Holy Scriptures are no longer available; consequently Bible students must make do with the present printed texts which are based upon manuscripts copied during the course of

10. The Impact of American Religious Liberalism, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962, pp. ix-x.

11. A letter from Martin H. Scharlemann, Graduate Professor of Exegetical Theology, St. Louis, Mo., March 21, 1972, in Christian News, published April 17, 1972.

more than three thousand years, in some cases. So-called complete manuscripts of the Bible date back only to the fourth century A.D. Interestingly enough, one of our oldest versions in point of time is the Latin Vulgate translation by Jerome in the third century. Fragments of biblical texts have been found more recently that appear to go back to the first century. The Old Testament, of course, was a canonical form already at the time of Christ. In a sense, Christ Himself performed a type of criticism (although He, of course, speaks on His own authority and knowledge, as the Author of Scripture) when He identified the human author of the Pentateuch as Moses. Many scholars have spent a great many years, dedicating their lives to sincere endeavors to locate and identify the exact words (*ipsissima verba*) of the Bible, whether in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

Once lower criticism has done its work in identifying the real text of the Bible, "higher" criticism begins to dig into questions of authorship, literary form, and historical background of the various books of the Bible. On the face of it, these questions are all legitimate. Jean Steinmann, a Roman Catholic priest, in his book entitled Biblical Criticism, points out: "Its (literary criticism's) function will be to determine exactly what the inspired writer had in mind and what the import of his statements was. We must know what literary form a book of the Bible belongs to before we can understand it properly and suggest how it should be interpreted."¹² Prof. J. P. Koehler, professor of Theology at the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Wauwatosa until 1930, is quoted as follows in the mimeographed notes taken from his course in Hermeneutics: "... we are first confronted with the questions concerning the form of the text and the validity of the Scriptures as a divine document. After that we must consider the questions resulting from the historical relations of the original documents, concerning national characteristics and individuality of the authors as well as the languages." And further: "The character of the nation from which the Scriptures have come forth must be taken into account in the interpretation. Israel is the chosen nation in Christ. This fact gives its history a distinctive character (over against the rationalistic-historical school). Hence the doctrines of Scripture, also those of the New Testament, must be understood in accordance with the mental and spiritual thought complex of Israel, not of bor-

12. Steinmann, Biblical Criticism, p. 17. -

dering Gentile nations. This national character must not, however, govern the interpretation to such an extent, that the clear ecumenical (world-wide) character of the New Testament is questioned. ... The personality of the various writers must receive consideration. We understand the language of the writer, if we know him personally according to his descent, his spiritual makeup, the situation in which his book was written, and when we thereupon apply all this in our interpretation, in order to understand just how the book in all its parts came to be what it is." But Koehler adds, significantly, "This mode of interpretation need never be at odds with the fact that the various books of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Ghost." Much of the theology developed at Wauwatosa during that period which some call the period of the "Wauwatosa Gospel" came about as a reaction against the dogmatic, proof-passage type of theology which seemed to rob the Law and Gospel of its living, vital quality. The Bible is not a series of proof texts, all arranged and catalogued in order. Too formal an approach to biblical studies makes the Christian religion a dead, lifeless thing, it was felt. So Prof. Koehler, Pieper, and Schaller became exponents of what may be termed a historical-exegetical theology. We must not make the mistake, however, of equating their methodology with that of the modern historical-critical theologians. The Wauwatosa men retained the same presuppositions of Luther and the Lutheran theologians, namely, as Koehler put it, that biblical interpretation is not to be at odds with the fact that the books of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in Europe, a type of theology developed that was destructive of the reformation theology. While it, like the interpretation methods used by the historical Lutherans, made use of historical, linguistic, and archaeological studies in its work, its presuppositions were vastly different. This was the so-called period of rationalism which, based as it was on scientific and philosophic investigation, rejected miracles and also rejected the inspiration of Scripture as we confess it. The work by some of the significant men of the period (Astruc, 1753; Eichhorn, 1783; DeWette, 1805; Ewald, 1823) brought forth the "documentary hypothesis" of the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. This hypothesis theorized that these five books, rather than having been written by a single author, Moses, had their origin in a combination of a series of documents by various

authors, and were not written down until several centuries after the time of Moses. Eventually two scholars, Graf and Wellhausen, synthesized the various hypotheses into one essential form. G. T. Manley, in his article "Modern Criticism" in The New Bible Handbook, gives the background of this hypothesis as follows: "Not believing in the possibility of miracles, they elaborated a theory which pictures the religion of Israel as a gradual evolution from primitive animism, through a stage when Jehovah was taken as a tribal god, like the gods of the heathen, until, under the influence of the later prophets, a lofty level of monotheism was reached. The whole Old Testament was radically affected by this theory; the sources of the various books were dated in accordance with it, using as a criterion the stage of development which they were thought to reflect. The late dating of the documents opened the way for attributing their supernatural elements to the growth of myth or legend, and the history was completely reconstructed from this point of view." As another theologian puts it, the proponents of these hypotheses "were guided in their study and interpretation of the Bible by two positions: 1) all were certain that the new criticism must be applied indiscriminately to the Bible, and 2) all had adopted a new and freer view of what the Bible was and what was involved in Biblical revelation."¹³

Let us now examine one important instance of how the documentary form of the historical-critical method operates. The theory declares that its purpose is to determine the "real" authorship of a certain book of the Bible. Books which have been particularly affected by this method are the Pentateuch, Isaiah, the Gospels and the epistles of St. Paul. Modern critics, following Graf and Wellhausen, have determined that the five books of Moses were in reality written by at least four authors, identified as J (those parts of the Pentateuch that use the term Jehovah in speaking of God), E (parts which use Elohim as the name of God), P (for priestly, thought to be related theologically to Ezekiel and concentrating on the Aaronic order of the priesthood), and D (the author of the book of Deuteronomy). Further exponents of the method believe that they have identified at least three authors beside the foregoing, in addition to several possible sub-authors (authors of frag-

13. Surburg, Implications of the Historico-Critical Method in Interpreting the Old Testament, p. 52.

ments of larger sections). One thing that all the theories have in common is that none of the authors performed his work earlier than c. 850 B.C., and that some parts of it were written not earlier than c. 400 B.C. These same critics look at the book of Isaiah and determine that it was written not by one individual, but by at least two; chapters 1-39 are ascribed to Isaiah; chapters 40ff to a so-called Deutero-Isaiah (second Isaiah). Some critics speak of a Trito-Isaiah and ascribe to this third author chapters 56ff. The same approach has been made to the New Testament, at least as far as the Gospels and the Pauline epistles are concerned.

The critics have denied uniform authorship of various books because of the existence in them, for example, of accounts of events that are repetitious. For example, "Judges 4 gives a prose version of Deborah's victory, while Judges 5 is a poetic account of the same historical event."¹⁴ However, Cyrus Gordon, an archaeologist, has shown that "in Egyptian literature historic events were recorded 'simultaneously in prose and poetic versions, with the major differences appropriate to the two literary media.'" How much simpler and more correct is not the historic Lutheran interpreter's position that both accounts, being the inspired word of God, must stand. the one not contradicting, but rather, filling out the other!

The J-E-P-D hypothesis has been refuted quite adequately through examinations of other forms of literature, especially those which were not set down in one continuous task of writing, but were set down (perhaps as records or diaries) over a period of time. We also place into the picture an individual writer who has edited his own writing of some time ago. It has been demonstrated by linguists that such authorship, even though known to have been done by the same individual, by using the methods of the modern critics, can be shown to have been done by two or more individuals -- on the basis of differing styles of writing, different terms for the same thing, etc. It is strange, indeed, that while in other literary fields the same critical techniques have been given up as unfruitful, in the field of theology the method has been so tenaciously clung to by modern theologians!

The most commonly practiced type of historical-critical methodology is, perhaps, that which is termed form-criticism. In the Old Testament this chiefly involves the study of "oral

14. Surburg, op. cit., p. 57.

tradition." By making a literary and historical study of the forms in which the literature of the Old Testament was cast, the critic has determined that those writings which were set down at the time of David and Solomon or later have reliability as documented history. Before that time, however, they assert that history was merely handed down from one generation to another as "a mass of legends clus-tering about cultic formulas which gave them their meaning." The formula is to be seen in terms of the history of salvation (Heilsgeschichte). The critic claims that the tradi-tions which were transmitted orally are not reliable, be-cause of various additions and changes (legendary in nature, miracles, "beefed-up accounts", etc.). It is, therefore, the task of the critic to establish what material in the Pentateuch is reliable and what is not. Obviously, that which is miraculous has been sloughed off in the process. By a study of literary forms, the modern critic sees only that there are parallels in secular legends and epics, such as the Babylonian flood epics. He regards Scripture in the same light, and claims that to get at the real, historical event in the Heilsgeschichte one must rid the record of all that does not belong. What his intellect cannot rationally accept, is, evidently, for him at least, the part that must be separated out and discarded.

Form-criticism, as applied to the New Testament, has chiefly involved the so-called "quest for the historical Jesus." While we could agree with the modern critics who claim that the Scriptures must be read historically (after all, just reconsider what Prof. Koehler wrote on that matter some years ago), yet for them that means that the Scriptures are to be read in no way differently from any other book. They speak of the Bible as being historically conditioned. By that they are saying that what is written there in the Gospels need not necessarily have been factually accurate, merely that it was as accurate as the author's knowledge at the time could make it. This, of course, omits the fact of divine authorship of the New Testament. (Again, we see that a major presupposition of historic Lutheranism has been sur-rendered in the historical-critical method.) Modern the-ologians make the assumption that the writers of the Gospels had their own axes to grind, and, consequently, their accounts are not primarily history or records of events, but rather doctrinal documents; they are docetic, rather than factual accounts of a historical event. The quest for the historical Jesus, as they have carried it out, has proved to

be both fruitless and hopeless. If they will not trust the divinely-inspired account of the evangelists, they have nothing to which to turn.

Form-criticism, then, according to Bultmann, is the attempt to isolate and analyze the various types of traditional materials dealing with Christ's life and message. Let us see what these forms are, in the methodology of the modern critic, (and with his interpretation of them) in the Gospels. They are given as the following:

"A. Miracle stories. These are stock stories and fables taken over from Hellenistic narratives and having the same basic structure throughout.

"B. Apothegms. These are hero sayings, or controversial utterances, often given in the form of a counter response to a question or in the form of a brief parable. These sayings are mostly unauthentic, according to Bultmann. The context and setting is always fictitious. For instance, the story of the disciples not fasting (Mark 2:23-26; 7:1-8) was made up by the later church and words put into Jesus' mouth to justify the action of the disciples.

"C. Parabolic Saying. The parables are often put into different settings by the evangelists and not understood by them. Most of them cannot be traced back to Jesus and were merely 'worked over under the faith of the community.' Often the original meaning was utterly changed.

"D. Proverbs. Such aphorisms, Bultmann says, are not characteristic of Jesus and are therefore the most unauthentic of all.

"E. Apocalyptic Sayings. These are partly authentic, but usually later additions and supplementations were made.

"F. Legal Sayings."¹⁵

Aside from being, first of all, impressed with the arrogance of the modern critic, who thus in a most open way denies God's Word, we see that for him the New Testament gives very little accurate information about Jesus. What have the modern critics scrapped? First of all, all miraculous occurrences must either be outright fictions, or else borrowed from Hellenistic (Greek) mythology. Secondly, there is no unity of purpose or plan in the Gospels or in the epistles. Neither is there an errorless revelation. Proponents of the historical-critical method simply take for granted that there are discrepancies and contradictions, as well as errors, in the Scriptures. And, finally, the Scrip-

15. Preus, op. cit., p. 99.

tures must be regarded, by them, as an ordinary book, subject to the same investigative techniques as any other. As Preus puts it, "lip service may be paid at times to the so-called 'divine side' of Scripture but the historian studies the Bible as a human document arising out of its own cultural and religious climate, not as the Word of God."¹⁶

Someone might comment that form-criticism is merely a method. Christians have in other endeavors adopted the so-called scientific method of analysis, observation, extrapolation, etc. Why cannot the method be used together with Lutheran presuppositions? The answer is fairly simple, actually. "Historic Lutheranism in its Confessions holds to the divine origin of Scripture and of Biblical doctrine. The historical-critical method holds to the human origin of Scripture and of Biblical doctrine."¹⁷ We have seen that the whole doctrine of verbal inspiration must be scrapped by the practitioner of the modern historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation; also the concept that the Scriptures possess a unity. The modern method is blasphemous by its very nature and constitutes a denial of God.

3.

And now, having examined the Sola Scriptura principle as it was espoused by the historic Lutheran confessions, and having further compared it with the historical-critical method of Biblical Studies practiced today, we must ask ourselves: What are the implications for us today, the members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession?

We need to remind ourselves that the leaven of unrighteousness is very powerful; we also need to encourage one another to remember the sacred warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!"

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has been a church that venerated its leaders. This, in itself, was not wrong; but there was a tendency to hold their church fathers in such esteem that they were looked to for answers in all doctrinal and exegetical questions. It was not uncommon to refer questions to the theological professors of the Seminary for answers. And what Pieper, or Walther, or Fuergringer, or Stoeckhardt, or Fritz, or many another, wrote on

16. Preus, op. cit., p. 100.

17. Robert Preus, "A Response to 'A Response,'" Christian News, April 17, 1972, p. 6.

a particular subject seemed to settle the issue. The fault lay not in accepting the truth when written by these men; the weakness lay in accepting their sayings without further study on the part of all.

Perhaps, the reaction in Missouri was a natural one. Sociologists know that immigrant sons try desperately to cast off their immigrant characteristics, even to the point of changing names and moving away from the parents' neighborhood. Missourians who no longer wished to remain outside the main stream of American theology cast off their fathers and went searching for new teachers and new "idols." They found them in Barth, Dibelius, Bultmann, Kierkegaard, Stendahl, Elert, and Barr, among others. Much of what these modern theologians said was accepted at face value by the young Turks among the Missourians. They found their spiritual fellowship among such individuals rather than among fellow Missourians, especially those who still followed their former leaders.

Then, too, there has been in Missouri a striving for recognition in theology. In the search for degrees, the Missouri theologian has often rubbed shoulders with the heterodox and blasphemous theologians who have developed the type of Biblical studies we have been reviewing.

There is certainly a place in Lutheran educational circles for scholarliness and learning. We do not object to a teacher's seeking out a higher degree, provided that the degree, in itself, does not become his goal and, above all, provided that his advanced learning serve as a handmaiden to his calling; in other words, it is to serve him, not rule him, as he teaches and professes the truth before those who come to him to learn. Yet, in the field of theology, particularly, there is "poison in the cup." We must remain on our guard that we do not apply to the heterodox (yes, even the blasphemous) to be taught the highest pursuit of all -- theology.

God calls upon us to examine what is taught in the light of His clear Word. He has set before us the blessed example of the Bereans to encourage us in this endeavor. They searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether the things told them by St. Paul were so. How do we examine the theology that is being taught in our Church? For one thing, we publish a Journal of Theology four times a year. In this magazine, appears the type of theology held by our pastors, teachers, and professors. All members of our church are urged to read this Journal carefully, that they may know

what is being taught.

We need to know what our pastors, teachers, and professors themselves profess in this matter of Biblical studies. I do not wish to be understood that I am herewith encouraging a "witch-hunt" or a type of sneaking about, trying to catch one another in a false step. I am, rather, urging a mutual strengthening of one another, and so much the more as we see the Last Day approaching.

Then, too, may we all in devout prayer urge our Heavenly Father to protect our beloved CLC from this insidious enemy. Let us thank Him for His marvelous gift of a divinely-inspired Scripture, by which alone ("sola Scriptura") the Holy Spirit has wrought faith in us; and may He, by His grace, preserve us in Scriptural truth, until all shall be revealed in Heaven!

J. Lau

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CONVENTION SERMON*

Text: Deuteronomy 8:3

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Fellow Redeemed in Christ Jesus, the Living Bread from Heaven:

Before the children of Israel entered into the promised land after forty years of desert wandering, Moses warned them of some of the dangers and pitfalls which would prevent them from obtaining the blessings God had prepared for them. He pointed out how the Lord had cared for them and met all their needs in the wilderness. He reminded them of their total dependence on the promises of the Lord. As they looked forward to the prosperity of Canaan, Moses warned Israel against becoming proud of its accomplishments and forgetting the Lord and all His benefits. In this connection, Moses taught that the people of God do not live by bread alone but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of their God. Old Testament history reveals that these people failed to heed or understand the words of Moses.

This is a lesson that is essential for Christian living. It was this same temptation that Satan used when he confronted our Lord and Saviour Jesus. After Jesus had fasted forty days and nights, the Devil suggested that Jesus use His divine power to satisfy His own physical needs. Jesus realized that, as important as our bodily needs are, it is more important that we do the will of our Heavenly Father. Jesus turned back the attack of Satan by quoting and applying the words of Moses: Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

In this modern age, we face the same old line of attack. It becomes very easy for us to slip into a style of life

* Sermon delivered July 12, 1972 at the Communion Service held during the 10th convention of the CLC.

which reveals that we think we live by bread alone. It is essential for us as a church body to heed the voice of Moses and understand what he is saying. It is fitting that we take time during the business of a convention to look at God's gracious dealings with us and be reminded not to forget our total dependence on the Lord. Today the Holy Spirit would remind us that we have received BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

I.

In order to understand what Moses is saying it is essential that we grasp his first premise. Moses begins with the fact that man does live by bread. God does not expect us to cut ourselves off completely from the things of this world. It is obvious that man needs food and drink to sustain physical existence. God in His grace provides these things, not only for His people, but for His entire creation. God supplies bread from heaven.

This should have been obvious to the children of Israel. This same Lord who had led His people out of Egypt, opening the Red Sea for them, opened His hand and for forty years miraculously fed them. When the people reached the other side of the Red Sea, they complained that Moses had brought them out into the wilderness to die of hunger. The Lord responded by sending them manna from heaven every morning. They simply had to go and gather this wondrous substance from the desert floor. This manna was in a very visible way bread from Heaven. Everytime they ate manna, they were reminded of their total dependence on the sustaining hand of God. It should have been obvious that they lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.

As a church body, we should take time to acknowledge that we too receive bread from Heaven. It should be obvious to us that our existence is entirely a result of God's sustaining hand. Like the children of Israel, God has humbled us and permitted us to know hunger in order that He might prove His care for us. At this our tenth convention, we look back not too many years to those days when there was no Church of the Lutheran Confession. We look back to the human impossibility of beginning Immanuel Lutheran College as tonight we worship in this new field house. We look back on small budgets and large deficits. The history of our church body has been the story of God's strength being revealed in connection with human weakness. Lest we become

proud of what we have accomplished, we should perhaps note that there are congregations larger than the entire CLC and having larger budgets with which to work. The Lord would teach us that we receive our bread from Heaven.

As Israel prepared to enter into the land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, the danger was very real that they would forget their dependence on the Lord. God had sought for forty years to impress on His people the fact that they should trust in Him above all things. However, amidst the prosperity of Canaan, Israel felt safe in disobeying the Lord's command to utterly destroy the various heathen tribes that occupied the land. History has revealed that prosperity and success are among the greatest temptations that the people of God face. This is especially true of church organizations. We tend to attribute success not to the power of God's Word, but to size and programs. Outward achievements become a god in themselves.

We need to be reminded that we receive our bread from heaven. We pray this every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Everything that we are and have is a gift from the Lord.

II.

It would be foolish to stop here. Moses acknowledges that man lives by bread provided by the hand of God. But he also reminds us that man does not live by bread alone. This is a distinction that many churches have failed to make. Many people equate Christianity with a full stomach and the good life. More and more churches are turning their programs toward social action, the bettering of life here and now. In so doing, they are giving up their birthright. They are unable to satisfy the needs of man for there is more to life than eating and drinking. What is missing from every man's diet is supplied by Moses who tells us that as important as bread is, man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

We also need to examine our attitudes and priorities. Not only does God richly bless us with the things of this world, but He feeds us with His Word. Through His Word God gives us life. In that living Word, God proclaims a message of forgiveness and everlasting life. Through the Word, we have been made rich beyond measure. Only the child of God grasps what it means to live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

In convention too our activities center in the creating Word of God. As we are setting our budget and salaries and deciding where to open mission stations, we need to pause and remember the words of Moses. As necessary as these things are, there is more to the story of our existence as a church body. What makes us blessed is not our budget or our campus but the gracious Word of God. Through His Word God has created faith in us and unity in our midst. With our problems, our weaknesses, and our fears we have the sure and certain revelation of God in His Word.

The Lord feeds us through His Word. He, Himself, gives us the assurance that in connection with every word that comes from His mouth we will find answers and meaning for our lives. The most important food we have is the Bible. To ignore even a part of God's Word is to fall into the trap of Satan. In a day when man worries about the chemicals and additives that are put into his food, he should realize that when things are added to the Word of God, the Word is adulterated.

It becomes very easy for us to pay lip service to the Word of God. We need to be reminded by the Lord Himself of the need for total dedication to the Word. This must come first in our lives and in our church body. As pastors it is very easy for us to be little more than professional theologians. This becomes the way that we make our living. How rich and full our lives can be as more and more we learn to live in the Word of God. God feeds us with Bread from heaven. He gives us food and drink without price in His Word.

Jesus carries this to completion by speaking of Himself as the Bread of life from heaven. Jesus draws our attention to the intimate connection between Himself and the Word of God as revealed in the Scriptures. As we are fed from the Word of God, we are fed with Jesus. After Jesus had fed the 5,000 people with five loaves and two small fishes, the people were visibly impressed with Him. They wanted to take Him by force and make Him their bread King. Then there would be no more welfare, no need to work; no taxes, But Jesus pointed their attention to something even greater that He had to give them. Jesus offered them a bread of which if they ate, they would never hunger again. Jesus claimed that if one would come to Him, he would never thirst again. As wonderful as was the miracle of manna, Jesus had an even greater gift. This Jesus promised to satisfy the deepest needs of man. This He did by becoming man and giving

Himself into death for the sins of the entire world. Whoever believes on Jesus has what He promised -- everlasting life.

The entire message and ministry of Jesus concerned itself, not primarily with the physical needs of man, but He came to restore what was lost in Eden -- life in its fullest and complete sense. It is a perversion of Satan to lose sight of this. Jesus is the Bread of Life. God now and every day of our life feeds us with the assurance of free forgiveness in Jesus' name. Jesus shows us that we do not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

This is so evident, yet how many of us could claim that we have at all times kept this priority straight in our own lives? The giving of our church body reflects that we have much to learn about trusting in God who has promised to feed us with bread from heaven. May the Lord who so richly gives us even more than we need of the things of this world, teach us to live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. O Lord, feed us till we want no more.

"Oh, well for me that, strengthened
With heavenly food and comfort here,
Howe'er my course be lengthened,
I now may serve Thee free from fear!
Away, then, earthly pleasure!
All earthly gifts are vain;
I seek a heavenly treasure,
My home I long to gain,
My God, where I shall praise Thee,
Where none my peace destroy,
And where my soul shall raise Thee
Glad songs in endless joy.

-- Lutheran Hymnal #316:5

John Schierenbeck



AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF I TIM. 4:15.16.A Translation

PRACTICE THESE THINGS, BE IMMersed IN THEM, SO THAT YOUR PROGRESS MAY BE EVIDENT TO ALL. GIVE ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND YOUR TEACHING. BE PERSEVERANT IN THESE MATTERS. BY DOING THIS YOU WILL SAVE BOTH YOURSELF AND THOSE THAT HEAR YOU.

A Summary by C. M. Zorn

Now the apostle refers to everything he has said in this section (verses 12-14) and writes to Timothy that he should diligently concern himself with it. He should give himself to his work completely, so that his progress would be evident to all in the congregation. For indeed he was to be an example to the believers and in this way win respect for himself and his ministry.

Oh, how wonderful it is when a servant of the Word who is proficient in his ministry - and this proficiency is always a gift of God's grace - and who adorns his ministry with genuine personal piety, grows, advances, makes progress in these matters so noticeably that all the Christians entrusted to him joyfully observe and approve.

Finally then in his abundant and ardent love for Timothy and the Ephesian Christians - again in connection with what has been said before (verses 12-15) - the apostle advises Timothy very cordially to give heed first of all to himself, his own person, and then also to his teaching, his ministry, whose heart and core of course was the teaching of God's Word. He was to continue and persist in these two duties in the afore-mentioned way. For, the apostle says, if he does this, he will save both himself and those that hear him. In his heart and mind the matter of chief importance, yes, in fact, the only thing of real value, must be this resolve: I want to be a blessing; I want to save people. This must be the ultimate goal of every servant of the Word: I want to save people. I want to save myself; I do not want to preach to others and be damned myself (1 Cor. 9:27). And I want to save those who hear me, the flock that is entrusted to me. He who has this attitude is a true shepherd, teacher, overseer, evangelist, missionary, president, or visiting elder, pleasing God and of real value to

the Church. Each one of us should wish to be such a shepherd and should ask God to make us such a shepherd. We should in love admonish one another to become such pastors, even as God admonishes us in His Word. Through such admonition the Holy Spirit will arouse us.

- A free translation of C. M. Zorn's "Vom Hirtenamt," pp. 84-85.

Questions and Comments

1. Does *μελεῖται* mean "meditate," as it is translated in the King James Version?

The word *μελεῖται* is used only twice in the New Testament, here and in Acts 4:25. "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" This is of course a quotation from Psalm 2.

The Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon lists three meanings of the word. The first is to take care, endeavor.

The second meaning is to practise, cultivate, take pains with. Since the context indicates that meaning of the word here, the Lexicon lists our passage under this second meaning.

The third meaning is to think about, meditate upon. In this way the word is used in Acts 4:25.

It seems most probable that Paul is here telling Timothy: Now practice these things, exercise yourself, concern yourself with these matters. The word would seem to have an athletic picture in it rather than the picture of a student in calm contemplation at his desk. Of course the practice of these things will by its nature involve hard thinking and deep meditation.

Wuest says that the word *μελεῖται* "was used by the Greeks of the meditative pondering and the practice of orators and rhetoricians, but the context in which it is found in I Timothy indicates that the meaning here is that Timothy is to carefully attend to the public reading of the Word, exhortation, and teaching." (Wuest's Word Studies: The Pastoral Epistles, p. 75)

2. To what extent should Timothy become involved in his work?

A certain Lutheran pastor was once asked a religious question by a layman and he responded: "I don't want to talk shop now." This pastor was able to divorce himself from his profession.

But Paul says to Timothy: *ἐν τούτοις ἔργοις*,

which literally means: BE in these things, that is, be completely engrossed in, wrapped up in, absorbed in, immersed in, this work. As P. E. Kretzmann has said, the minister should not expect pleasure or an easy life. Only a complete devotion to the work will satisfy the dignity and glory of this calling. We should not be satisfied with an outward slavish faithfulness to duty that does what is necessary but no more. No, we must give ourselves completely to this work, working at least as hard as the devil, as one of our pastors has said.

Once we put our hands to the plow, there dare be no looking back. In our minds we must forsake everything we have: houses, brethren, sisters, father, mother, wife, children, lands, for His name's sake. When there is no complete dedication, no earnest study, no personal involvement, everything becomes routine and mechanical. People then witness not progress, but deterioration.

Paul says the people should see progress, advancement, furtherance, in Timothy. It should be obvious to everyone that he is moving ahead. Not that his aim is to impress others. He is simply to do what his ministry calls for, and the rest will follow of itself. Then they won't despise Him for his youth either. They will glorify God for his progress.

On this general subject the renowned German pastor, Helmut Thielicke, has written: "Does the preacher himself drink what he hands out in the pulpit? This is the question that is being asked by the child of our time who has been burned by publicity and advertising." ("The Trouble with the Church," page 3)

"It is not sufficient for us that the preacher is subjectively imbued with the correctness of his conviction and that he is therefore not a conscious hypocrite. In order to be able to form a judgment concerning his credibility we would have to know whether he lives in the house of the dogmas he proclaims. This means that what the preacher says in the pulpit must have a relationship to what fills the rest of his existence. When does anything about Christ come out in his ordinary human conversation? When he talks about earthly things, his voice has that natural and casual tone. But when he talks about sacred things, the very timbre of his voice shows that he is talking about something which has been brought in from some faraway region." (the same book, p. 5)

"If I see no connection between his Christian and his

human existence then I am inclined to accept the conclusion that he himself is not living in the house of his own preaching, but has settled down somewhere beside it, and that therefore the center of gravity in his life lies elsewhere." (the same, p. 6)

"The man who bores others must also be boring himself. And the man who bores himself is not really living in what he - so boringly - hands out." (the same, p. 9)

"On the one hand, we are on the side of redemption, but on the other hand there are unredeemed areas within us which are still untouched by the renewing breath of the Spirit. God by no means confines himself to some religious province within me and leaves me free to manage the other sectors of myself." (the same, p. 10)

"If our preaching has lost life, it is because of this dichotomy of our existence. It is the problem of numbness in the extremities."

Unfortunately Thieliicke himself shows evidence of a rather large (to use his own strange expression) "unredeemed area" in his own life, for he is able to say in his book "Man in God's World," (page 79): "Nor can it make any difference to me whether ... I regard the divine creation of man as a sudden act, as the vivification of a clod of earth, or whether I see this creation as occurring within an evolutionary series."

As one common example I can't help thinking of the attitude of many pastors toward speed laws and other such governmental regulations. We teach the Fourth Commandment to others; we want them to live in this teaching. But we ourselves often act as though that 65-mile speed limit before our eyes were not the voice of God to us. But it is the voice of God, and as we are careful to apply the word of God in creation-evolution matters and in matters of church fellowship, so we should apply the word of God to this area of our life also. For is there any sector of our lives in which we want to be free from the influence of our God?

3. What then is the final goal and aim of every Christian servant of the Word?

The final aim and goal is that he himself is saved and those that hear him are saved. To this end Timothy should *ἐπιμελεῖται* : he should give his attention to two things: first, to himself, and then secondly, to his teaching. Compare Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:28: "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock." Notice also what is said of Ezra in Ezra 7:10: "For Ezra had pre-

pared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

How then should one give attention to himself? Some very practical advice on this was submitted by Eberhard Bethge, a student of Dietrich Bonhoeffer at the Finkenwalde Seminary in 1936. It is included in the book, "The Way to Freedom," (pages 57-61)

"Every day on which I do not penetrate more deeply into the knowledge of the Word of God in Holy Scripture is wasted. I can only go on with certainty on the firm foundation of the Word of God. And as a Christian I learn to know Holy Scripture only by hearing sermons and by meditating prayerfully. ...

"I cannot expound Scripture unless I let it speak to me every day. I will misuse the Word in my office if I do not keep meditating on it in prayer. If the Word is often empty to me in the daily office, if I no longer experience it, that should be an unmistakable sign that for a long time I have stopped letting it speak to me. ...

"The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love. And just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation. Do not look for new thoughts and connections in the text, as you would if you were preaching. Do not ask 'How shall I pass this on?' but, 'What does it say to me?' Then ponder this Word long in your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you."...

"We may never give up this daily concern with Scripture, and must begin it straightway, if we have not already done so. For it is there that we have eternal life."

How important it is that we give attention to ourselves and our own soul's salvation. "The Reformed Pastor" by Richard Baxter is really a long exposition and application of Acts 20:28. Listen to a few quotations to whet your appetite for reading the whole book.

"Take heed to yourselves lest you perish while you call upon others to beware of perishing, and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare food for them. ...

"Take heed to yourselves that you believe that which you persuade them daily to believe. ...

"Take heed to yourselves lest you live in those actual sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be

guilty of that which you daily condemn. ... (Romans 1:32)

"Take heed to yourselves lest your example contradict your doctrine, lest you unsay with your lives that which you say with your tongues. One proud, lordly word; one needless contention; one covetous action may cut the throat of many a sermon. O how carefully have I heard some men preach, and how carelessly have I seen them live. We must study as hard how to live well as how to preach well. You will as well ask concerning the money in your purse as the words from your mouth."

There is more, much more, in this same vein throughout the book.

Surely Timothy was to give attention to his teaching. His teaching must certainly be orthodox. But together with his concern over orthodoxy Timothy must also put his mind on himself and his life. The refrain is repeated again and again: PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH. Be an example. How you live is a teaching as well as the teaching. If one concentrates on his teaching without concentrating on one's life, harm will result. If one concentrates only on one's life and not on the teaching, harm will result. Both are necessary. Holy living and sound teaching go together even as we have them together in Luther's explanation of the first petition. He who wants to teach others must first teach himself.

This is not a one-time thing either. He must persevere in these matters. *ἐπιμενε αὐτοῖς*. If he does this faithfully by the grace of God working in him, the result will be salvation for himself as well as for many of those that hear his sound teaching.

In his comments on this verse Wuest says (Wuest's Word Studies: The Pastoral Epistles) that the salvation meant here cannot be the salvation of the sinner nor his preservation in salvation, since these are not man's work but God's work. Therefore he understands this to mean salvation or deliverance from the teachings of the demon-influenced men of verses 1-3. That is, they will be saved from entanglement in these heresies.

But such an explanation is surely not necessary. "All the imperatives (in this section) are based on a prior gift: the bestowal of faith, the gracious creation of the new man within. At the end there can be the gift of salvation only because at the beginning there is the gift of faith. Faith at the outset is the gift of God's mercy; continuance in the faith is the gift of God's mercy; dying in the faith is the

gift of God's mercy. Therefore, though grace does not exclude but includes the striving and the battling, it is grace alone that saves." (Concordia Commentary on First Timothy, page 94)

Phil. 2:12-16 and 1 Cor. 9:23-27 are especially instructive on this point. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." "And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Yes, we are saved by God's grace. But God's grace directs us in just this way: to watch our lives, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, to run that we may obtain the crown, to keep our bodies subject to God's will lest we become castaways, to strive and struggle to enter in at the narrow gate, to fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life, etc. When this is all over and the victory is won, we shall of course have to admit we didn't do this ourselves; it was all the grace of God. See Eph. 2:6-8 and Titus 3:3.

Stoeckhardt says in his commentary on Ephesians (page 265): "In the first section of Ephesians Paul had reminded the Christians of their eternal election. This last section contains an admonition to fight the good fight of faith and to remain steadfast. These two, the assurance of final victory and the admonition to remain steadfast, are entirely congruent. It is just such an admonition as this one that God employs as a means for preserving His elect in the faith, for He alone is the Author and Finisher of our

faith."

In conclusion we hear the words of August Pieper: "Faithfulness requires a heart that is faithful to God and to those entrusted to his care: the sincere concern that the whole gracious will of God toward His flock be done, the heartfelt concern for the salvation of every soul entrusted to him. ... The most important part of true faithfulness in the ministry is finally this that one cares even more for his own soul than for the souls of others."

That may sound strange to our ears, but note the order of Paul's words to Timothy: "GIVE ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND YOUR TEACHING." Also note the order in Acts 20:28 and Ezra 7:10. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

Pieper goes on: "Do you imagine that God wants unbelieving, unconverted, unspiritual servants in His kingdom of grace? (Ps. 50:16-17) Or do you tell yourself that the Lord will be pleased with all your other zeal in your ministry, if you are unfaithful in regard to your own soul? Is it not written, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2:12)? Would you care for the souls of others, and neglect your own; be faithful for others and unfaithful for your own soul? Did not our Lord have something to say about a hypocrite who wanted to pull a mote out of his brother's eye, and was not aware of the beam that was in his own eye? Did not Paul have something to say about preaching to others, and himself becoming a castaway? What does it mean, 'Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?' Would you want to make others perfect men in Christ, and not make yourself one? Don't you know the word of the Lord, 'The disciple is not above his master'? Can a teacher teach his pupil more than he knows himself? So no pastor, professor, or teacher can, as much as in him lies, make better Christians of people than he himself is. Therefore it should be the foremost concern of every pastor and public teacher in his ministry, to save himself first, and then those who hear him. I may have ever so high an office in the kingdom of God, the highest office is to care for my own soul. This office is included in every office in respect to others as the first and foremost element. Whoever is unfaithful in this, is

also unfaithful in his ministrations to others. Read Rom. 2:17-24."

"We must ask ourselves whether we are not to a great extent to blame (for the declining spiritual life in our congregations) because of our unfaithfulness in our ministry or because of our own spiritual indifference and stagnation."

"This is our defect, that we use the Bible only officially altogether too much. Whoever wants to study the Scripture properly and with blessing, - so that he himself becomes illuminated, warmed, and filled with the Holy Ghost and with power from on high, must above all read, search, meditate, and study for his own heart, for his own edification and strengthening. ... Scripture study in this sense alone is true, wholesome, fruitful, and fills one with the Holy Ghost. This is precisely what is missing among us. ... Unless we turn back from our merely official study of the Gospel and study the Scripture for our own edification and spiritual strengthening, and that in the spirit of the 119th Psalm, the Church will die in our hands, and God will remove His Word from us and give it to others."

"True faithfulness in office consists in this that we care more for our own soul than for the office. We must study the Scripture for our own soul's salvation. ... The start has to be made by us, the teachers of the Church. We must through diligent study of the Scripture learn ever better to experience its divine power in our own hearts, then our words will also convey it to others and create a new spirit in our hearers also. ... Study the Scripture prayerfully for your own heart, and the Synod will experience a regeneration that will still be noticeable generations hence." (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, April 1965, pp. 98ff.)

David Lau



AMERICAN PIETY

So reads the title of an interesting, and quite readable, book published by the University of California Press in 1970 as a part of that school's Survey Research Center's "Research Program in Religion and Society." The book is jointly authored by Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock, and is the first in their three-volume study of religious commitment in America. The subtitle of the volume indicates its scope: "The Nature of Religious Commitment." Succeeding members of the series explore the social and psychological sources (vol. 2), and the social and psychological consequences (vol. 3) of religious commitment in our country.

The authors, in their introduction, lament the "paucity" of research of any kind on religious behavior in America, particularly at the level of individual behavior, and the "unsophisticated quality" of most of the research that has been done. Their professed aim is to fill in somewhat the resulting religious "knowledge gap." In exploring religious commitment they draw upon two bodies of data: an elaborate questionnaire study of three thousand church members in four counties of northern California, and a national sample of approximately two thousand adult Americans. The meagerness of data on Jews and members of other non-Christian faiths forced them to restrict their investigation to Christian churches and sects.

A perusal of the initial chapters of American Piety indicates how necessary it is to approach with caution any conclusions based solely upon statistical evidence. Because of their failure to ask what we would regard as the "right" questions, the authors drew a very questionable, if not false, conclusion in one major area of their study, their so-called "Ethicalism Index." The following two items on the questionnaire were selected to construct this index: "Doing good for others is absolutely necessary for salvation," and "Loving thy neighbor is absolutely necessary for salvation." Because of the presence of the qualifying phrase, "necessary for salvation," an orthodox Christian would have to answer both questions with a "No," since according to Scripture salvation is in no way based upon human works or love, but solely upon the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. But in answering negatively, these right-believing Christians would thereby score low on the survey's ethicalism index--as if they attached little importance to

good works. That the authors indeed drew this unwarranted conclusion appears from numerous statements in their book, such as the following: "Support for 'Love of neighbor' and 'Doing good for others' is highest in bodies where traditional orthodoxy is weakest. ... Ethicalism and orthodoxy can be mutually exclusive roots of religious identity. There is a slight tendency for Protestants to be either orthodox and non-ethical, or ethical and unorthodox. ... These data force the conclusion that concern for man-to-man ethics is for all practical purposes not a part of general Protestant religious commitment. ... Those who show considerable man-to-God commitment seem to have little interest in the traditional ethical component of their faith. ... The best contributors are those with unwavering orthodoxy, who reject the religious importance of loving their neighbors or doing good for others." The authors surely exhibit a remarkable lack of spiritual understanding when they thus conclude that those who reject good works as absolutely necessary for salvation therefore regard such works as religiously unimportant!

There were, we think, several other poorly phrased items in the questionnaire. How difficult, for example, it would be to give an unqualified "Yes" or "No" to the following question: "Holding the Bible to be God's truth is absolutely necessary for salvation." A positive answer is interpreted by the authors as an indication of orthodoxy in belief. Yet many truly orthodox believers would probably answer negatively, recognizing the possibility that a person could have saving faith in Christ and yet be in doubt about the verity of some passages in Scripture.

Yet another poorly worded question concerns belief in the existence of God. The authors asked: "Which of the following statements comes closest to what you believe about God?" To score high in orthodoxy, one would have to answer: "I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it." While a majority of those surveyed did select this answer, we wonder whether some truly orthodox Christians would not feel compelled in honesty to answer otherwise. For such believers are often plagued by doubts concerning even the most fundamental truths of the Bible. We would raise a similar objection to the item which explored belief in the divinity of Jesus.

One section of the survey concerned itself with religious particularism in America--a topic of special interest to the two authors. They define particularism as "the

belief that only one's own religion is permissible, that all others are false, foolish, or wicked." On the basis of a series of questions, such as whether only persons who believe in Jesus Christ may be saved, they conclude that particularism is the prevailing point of view in conservative bodies. While we have no reason to question this conclusion, we do feel that the authors fell for a moment from an attitude of scientific objectivity when they spoke disparagingly of such conservatives as having a "chauvinistic view of their own special religious legitimacy."

Most of our complaints with the book center in such matters as the above. But in spite of these objections, the book contains many conclusions which we could readily accept. For these conclusions had the support, not only of Stark and Glock's statistical evidence, but also of our own prior, although admittedly more limited, personal observations.

The authors, for example, conclude "that the overwhelming proportion of Americans today do not adhere to a pristine orthodoxy. ... It is clear that 'Old Time' Christian orthodoxy in all its certainty is not the predominant religious perspective of modern America." This decline in religious conviction has been accompanied by a similar decline in what the authors call "ritual commitment." They state that the majority of Protestants and Catholics fail to fulfill even such minimal standards of ritual commitment as church attendance and "saying grace" at meals.

Stark and Glock reached the following conclusion in their survey of Scriptural knowledge among professing Christians in America: "In summary, knowledge of the Scriptures is relatively low among the liberal and moderate Protestant groups, and very low among Roman Catholics, but very high in the most conservative bodies." It was a source of surprise to the authors, however, to see Lutherans, including Missouri Synod Lutherans, "fall way down on religious knowledge," and they raise questions concerning the effectiveness of the catechetical form of religious training which is practiced so widely in these bodies. In assessing the state of religious knowledge in the nation as a whole, they state: "Virtually everyone has a denomination, but few know even trivial facts about their faith."

In the latter part of American Piety, the authors comment at length about religious trends which they believe are existent in our society. They find substantial evidence that people who change their church tend to move from the

more conservative bodies to the more liberal ones. "It appears that denominational changes among American Protestants follow a pattern of movement to churches with more liberal, modernized theologies and away from the churches that are still foursquare for traditional orthodoxy. This greatly contradicts the prevailing belief that it is the more conservative denominations that are growing fastest these days. ... If these trends are accurate and continue the conservatives are likely to become an increasingly minor force in American religion." Does this mean that the more liberal bodies will grow in the number of their adherents? Not necessarily, the authors state, for "the leftward trend in denominational switching may not stop once people reach the most liberal denominations, but may carry many on out of the churches altogether."

In the final chapter, "Are We Entering a Post-Christian Era?", Stark and Glock present a rather gloomy picture concerning the future of orthodox Christianity in America: "What then are the main features of the changing character of American Christianity? The evidence leads us to two conclusions: the religious beliefs which have been the bedrocks of Christian faith for nearly two millennia are on their way out; this may very well be the dawn of a post-Christian era. While many Americans are still firmly committed to the traditional supernatural conceptions of a personal God, a Divine Saviour, and the promise of eternal life, the trend is away from these convictions. Although we must anticipate an extended period of doubt, the new reformation in religious thought reflects the fact that a demythologized modernism is overwhelming the traditional, Christ-centered, mystical faith."

In their discussion of this thesis, the authors point out that the cause for this decline in orthodoxy lies especially with the theologians--which surely comes as no surprise to any of us. They state: "The leaders of today's challenge to traditional beliefs are principally theologians, those in whose care the church entrusts its sacred teachings." The unbelief of the religious leaders is steadily infecting the masses of laymembers, so that already "a near majority reject such traditional articles of faith as Christ's miracles, life beyond death, the promise of the second coming, the virgin birth, and an overwhelming majority reject the existence of the Devil."

The authors found also what they felt was an important generational break with traditional religion: "Among those

under fifty, orthodoxy differed little by age. But Christians over fifty are considerably more likely than younger persons to hold orthodox views." It will be interesting to compare this finding with the conclusions drawn in the recently published book, A Study of Generations, which volume we intend to review in a future issue of this Journal.

What is the solution for this problem of the drop in religious commitment in America? The authors are convinced that the solution is not a return to orthodoxy. "In coming days many conservative Christians will undoubtedly argue and work for such an about-face. We judge their prospects for success as minuscule. The current information in religious thought appears irrevocable, and it seems as likely that we can recover our innocence in these matters as that we can again believe the world flat or that lightening is a palpable manifestation of God's wrath. ... Sooner or later the churches will have to face these facts. This will require a forthright admission that orthodoxy is dead and, more important, a refusal to compromise with orthodoxy either theologically or institutionally. But it will also require (and here perhaps is the impediment) a clear articulation of an alternative theology, ethically-based or otherwise, and radical changes in forms of worship, programs, and organization to make them consistent and relevant with this new theology."

We state emphatically that we do not agree with the authors' contention that the solution to the church's problem does not lie in a return to orthodoxy. Such a return is, we believe, the only remedy for the spiritual ills of our country. Many centuries ago the prophet Jeremiah declared to the backsliding children of Israel: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Not all change is progress, particularly when it involves a wandering away from the truths of Holy Scripture. There is only one answer to the spiritual woes of twentieth-century America, pointed to by Christ in His exhortation: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Is the book, American Piety, worth its cost of \$2.45? In spite of what we regard as serious faults, we believe that it is. For it shows well the desperate state of Christianity in our land today, and cannot but remind us of the Bible's own prediction of a serious falling away from

the truth of God before the end of time: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth. and shall be turned unto fables."

May our Spirit-wrought response be a renewed zeal in behalf of the proclamation of the saving Gospel, a zeal which will be marked by the Savior's own sense of urgency: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." While the prospect of success may at times seem as bleak to us as it did to Elijah as he sat under the juniper tree, we have the promise of almighty God that His Gospel shall accomplish its saving purposes until the end of time: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Let our kingdom work ever be characterized by the confidence that this word of the exalted Lord should give us: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. ... And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

C. Kuehne



ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE.

Text: James 4:7-8a

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

We open this school year of 1972-73 with an enrollment of 150 students, the largest in the history of our school. We make this announcement with gratitude to God Who has moved the hearts of parents to send so many of their sons and daughters to ILC for the Christian training of their children that they might grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This training, under God, will produce consecrated and dedicated witnesses to Jesus Who has furnished the ransom price for the salvation of the whole world. We pray God that He will by His Spirit move many of you, young people, to enter into the full-time service of the kingdom. Some of you have already made this decision and others of you are seriously considering the great opportunities for service which may be yours in the teaching and preaching ministry.

Since it is your goal and aim, in any event, to serve the Lord in whatever field of activity He may choose for you, it is of great importance for you to consider most carefully this fact: you are enlisted in a warfare against a great and powerful enemy who desires not only to ruin you for time and eternity but will put forth every effort to discourage and turn you aside from the goal and aim of your Christian life. Of this we have just sung:

The old evil foe,
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight,
On earth is not his equal.

To accomplish his goal of death and destruction, he will use every trick and stratagem at his disposal. His purpose will be to lead you in his way and to break down every resistance to temptation. He will seek to lead you so that you may develop and maintain friendship with the world and so to become an enemy of God. He turns the spotlight on fashions and the life-styles of the world, presenting them in his own glamorous techni-color, in order that you may find them

attractive and pleasing to the flesh. He would put words into your mouths that are a profaning and dishonoring of the holy name of God and His Son Jesus Christ. When the Word of God is taught, proclaimed and preached he will seek to plug your ears so that you will not listen. He will try to harden your hearts so that you will not respond and submit. He is busy these last days of the world; busy breaking down the home, the institutions of marriage and government; busy enciting to lust and violence; busy promoting disrespect for father and mother, pastor, teacher and elders. You can be sure that he does not want the kind of teaching and Christian discipline that will be found at ILC. It is incumbent upon each one of us therefore to give heed to such words as are given in today's text: "Resist the devil." Paul put it this way in writing to the Ephesian Christians: "Neither give place to the devil." Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." The apostle John warns against him as he calls him the great dragon, the old serpent which deceiveth the whole world. Let us not make the mistake then of underestimating the power of the enemy! Let us not make any compromises nor negotiate peace with him. The conflict is on! The war is real! We are all enlisted! We have been brought in by the recruiting agency of the Holy Spirit. But let us not despair or give in to any thought of surrender. As Christians "resist the devil and he will flee from you." Thus saith our God. This is a promise and is made by Him Who does not lie or deceive.

Let us, however, not make the mistake of thinking that the power to overcome rests in our own power and might. This is the way of pride and it is against this evil that God is warning in this fourth chapter of the epistle of James. He who thinks he can carry on this warfare on his own is defeated already. Therefore it is important that we take to heart the Word of our text which says to us: "Draw nigh to God"; "Submit yourselves therefore to God." In Him we find our strength. In Him we have our salvation. And He comes to us not in some strange and mysterious manner but in and through His Word, the inspired and inerrant Holy Bible. Through the ransom of our Lord Jesus Christ, even His holy body and blood, the Gospel Word rings forth giving strength to lead a decent, honorable, Christian life. How important therefore that this Word should stand at the center of all education, giving to it its true meaning. Here you are

being invited day by day, hour by hour, to draw nigh unto God, to submit unto God, to find your hope and confidence and trust in Him Who gave Himself for us that we might be His possession to show forth His praises. We cannot stress too strongly, therefore, how important it is for every student to read His Bible, to absorb the Christian teaching here provided, to attend the chapel services and church services faithfully where the Word of God is proclaimed in its truth and purity. Here is our defence and don't you ever forget it. Luther in speaking of our warfare against the devil puts it very briefly and very simply: "One little Word shall fell him." And this is true because it is the Word of Him Who is our fortress, our shield and weapon. It is the Word of the valient one whom God Himself elected. Jesus Christ it is, of Sabbaoth Lord, and there's none other God; He holds the field forever. To Him we commit your souls and in His name we begin this school year. Amen.

C.M.G.



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