

Evaluation of Homiletical-Exegetical Material Produced Since the Mequon Conference in 1976

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The two volumes of "Homiletical Studies," the first of which was produced by ten men, and the second by sixteen men, including four senior students at the Seminary in Mequon, have been issued in mimeographed form, the final copy having been prepared by Mrs. E.H. Wendland, and the duplicated copies having been produced in the office of Executive Secretary Robert J. Voss. I have been asked to review this material with special reference to the advisability of publishing it in more permanent form.

I have no way of knowing how much editorial work on the part of Missionary E. H. Wendland was necessary to produce the text of the final copy, but as the sermon studies read in the published text they are well written, with only a few grammatical lapses. The sentence structure is for the most part simple, and the studies seem to avoid the long periodic sentences so often found in the literary productions of those who have spent much of their academic efforts on classical Greek and Latin literature. My guess would be that much editorial sentence restructuring has been done.

Not only are they well written, but the content of the studies is in the main of superior quality. It would appear that the dearth of scholarly material produced in the Wisconsin Synod is surely not due to a lack of talent. If these studies were to be issued in a hard-cover book we would not need to hang our heads in shame or embarrassment. Even if it is not the best collection of sermon studies ever produced on this earth, it would surely be of value not only in our mission fields but also for our pastors in general. On the other hand, if we are going to wait in our publication efforts until we have produced the best possible scholarly work on any particular subject, we will surely do even less publishing in the years to come than we have produced in the past. Classics also in the field of theology are as rare as in any other field.

We need to remember, however, that a reluctance to appear in print on the part of our pastors and professors is not the only hindrance to increased publication in our midst. We have been told repeatedly that one of the chief reasons for our very limited production of printed materials is to be found in the limited market for our publications and in the lack of buyer appeal in material produced by our publishing house. The shelves of our warehouse space, filled with unsold books, are a constant source of discouragement to the members of the publishing house board.

The solution to that problem is not the concern of this review, but if I understand my assignment correctly, we are in this connection to explore the question of what can be done to produce, publish, and make available material such as this to the pastors and laymen of our churches and missions at home and abroad.

In dealing with this problem it seems to me that WELS pastors and professors have somewhere and somehow picked up the notion that writing and publishing books is an unseemly way of pushing oneself forward into the public eye. When we are tempted subconsciously to subscribe to such a view, we might remember that from the viewpoint of unregenerate psychology it may well appear that choosing a profession that calls for us to walk out of a front door in a large auditorium before hundreds of people and perhaps to sit in the chief seat in the "synagogue" might also appear to be an unseemly way of calling attention to oneself. But we do it nevertheless, perhaps with a prayer that the Holy Spirit may expunge all pride from our heart, because we are convinced that we are rendering a service that will bring temporal and eternal benefit to those whom we address in our preaching.

What we need to learn is that by writing and distributing God's truth we are also rendering a service, or to put it into more theological terms, fulfilling our ministry. And in a certain sense, it is the same ministry that is

fulfilled in the pulpit. Only, as Luther says, with the pen one can speak so loudly that one can hear it a hundred miles away.

Moreover, if we take a salary for what we do in the pulpit, we need not be embarrassed to offer for sale a book in which the same message is proclaimed, particularly when there is no personal profit involved. I say this, because I am sure that our problem is not only to persuade some pastors or professors to write, but also to persuade all of our pastors to offer for sale the books produced by their brethren.

To take a concrete example. Many of us have found real profit and enjoyment in reading *To Africa with Love*. But while this book has enjoyed a wider sale than many other Northwestern publications, I have heard a NPH board member commenting on the thousands of copies still on the warehouse shelf. I would venture to predict that if every one of our pastors would this fall at the end of the mission festival service in his church announce that the Ladies' Aid has a marvellously interesting book on our African mission for sale for the low, low price of \$4.50, NPH would have to run off another printing before the year is up. Why are we so hesitant about doing such things? We are not selling books. We are spreading the good word.

After those preliminary remarks, we return once more to the specific review of the Homiletical Studies, and by way of a second introduction I want to make a few remarks about such publications in general. After men have been urged to overcome their modesty which prompts them not to write for publication and begin to produce scholarly or popular theological literature, they often begin to develop also a proud spirit that echoes Pontius Pilate's "What I have written, I have written." What I mean to say is this: When we have submitted items for publication, we must without resentment not only permit but expect an editor to make changes. And, on the other hand, a good editor ought to make such changes without fear of offending the feelings of the brother whose work he is reviewing. No one is learning very much when he is being patted on the back, and every single one of us can profit from honest suggestions for improvement in our way of presenting the truth.

It is with these principles in mind that we now turn to specific suggestions and criticisms (constructive, we hope) in regard to the homiletical-exegetical material produced since the Mequon conference.

Proof Reading

We begin with the least important matters and list the typing errors that were discovered, by volume, page, paragraph, and line.

- 1) I, 53, 4, 1 January 2 should be January 1.
- 2) I, 92, 3, 5, Χριστοσις should be Χριστος is
- 3) I, 118, 2, 6 ΣΚΙστησατε should be σκιρτήσατε
- 4) I, 153, 4, 1 Πτερύριον should be πτερυγιον
- 5) I, 196, 4, 1 29-30 should be 19-20
- 6) I, 197, 4, 1 and 2 Greek words missing
- 7) I, 238, 2, 1 Rev. 21 should be Rev. 20
- 8) II, 15, 6, 6 Βαστράζω should be Βαστάζω
- 9) II, 32, 4, 4 Σπλαγνίγομαι should be σπλαγχιζομαι
- 10) II, 34, 3, 3 ὀλητῆ should be two words
- 11) II, 79, 3, 4 Περισπαώμαι should be περισπαομαι
- 12) II, 99, 2, 9 recieve should be receive
- 13) II, 131, 4, 2 Βασαζει should be Βασταζει
- 14) II, 156, 1, 1 ἄ δης should be ἄδης
- 15) II, 156, 4, 1 Πατηρ should be πατερ
- 16) II, 167, 2, 1 it should be is.
- 17) II, 195, 3, 8 ἡδικία should be ἡλικία
- 18) II, 201, 3, 1 Σαδδουκαίδι should be Σαδδουκαίοι

- 19) II, 202, 2, 1 Saccucees should be Sadducees
- 20) II, 230, 2, last 1 Corinthians 11 should be I Corinthians 1.

In this connection a few words are probably in place in regard to the Greek words and phrases included in the text. When this is done the cost of printing is disproportionately increased. If the inclusion of the original serves a useful purpose the added expense may well be justified. But it seems to me that at the least 75% or more of the parenthesized Greek words could be omitted without in any way lessening the value of the book. Is there really any point in including the Greek words Θεός in parenthesis after the word “God” or the word πύργος after the word “tower” or the word Σωτήρ after “Savior?”

Grammar and Style

Progressing to more important things we next call attention to some grammatical improvements that might be made, listing them again by volume, page, paragraph and line.

- 1) 1, 12, 4, 7 “whether we are a believer or an unbeliever” could be improved to “whether we are believers or unbelievers.”
- 2) 1, 23, 3, 3 “power to receive bribes” could be improved to “power to extort bribes.”
- 3) 1, 142, 3, 3 The antecedent of “this” is either not clear or else the sentence is questionable.
- 4) 1, 247, 2, 1 “the kind of peace as the world gives” would be better style if the “as” were omitted.

Questionable Statements (Non-doctrinal)

There are also a number of incidental remarks made which strike me as inaccurate. At best some of these raise questions which draw attention away from the main thought. I find, as I listen to sermons, that my thoughts are distracted when statements are made which I know are not correct or questionable, even if they are doctrinally harmless. I am well aware that the points which I intend to list next are trivia and could easily be characterized as carping criticism. My intention, however, is to help make a good book better. Moreover, if it is true that some of our hearers have their attention distracted from the message by such minor inaccuracies, we ought to eliminate them as much as possible.

- 1) I, 9, 5, last: Is it really true that before the end of the world “the laws of nature will be changed?”
- 2) I, 11, 4, 2 and 4: Is it really true of the members of a Christian congregation that “Our heads are sick from too much drinking” or that we hope “to find relief from our troubles in drunkenness” and would it not be better to say that this may be true.
- 3) I, 28, 3, 5: Did Mary “sing” the Magnificat?
- 4) I, 38, 6, 1: In order to avoid all carping criticism, it might be well to point out that in Egypt the census was made according to families, even though this was not the ordinary Roman way of administration.
- 5) I, 77, 4, 4: Did the farmer use a large fork to pick up the chaff?
- 6) I, 83, 1, 8: Are we sure that the disciples at the time of the wedding of Cana numbered “five?” Only five are mentioned in chapter 1, but several days intervene. Moreover, we create problems for ourselves and for our people very often when we assume that verbal inspiration means exhaustive and complete reporting. Many things happened which are not recorded at all and even in events that are recorded many details are omitted. Jesus could have had five more disciples who are not mentioned in the account.

- 7) I, 107, 1, 5 and 110, 2, 1 and 4, 5: In view of the fact that Luke 6:13 specifically speaks of a special call to apostleship, can we say that Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John as apostles after the miraculous draught of fishes? Why not call them apostles in the second paragraph on page 110?
- 8) I, 117, 2, 8: We can raise all kinds of questions in the minds of weak or uninformed believers by describing Christians in terms which do not apply to all of them. Is it really true that when a Christian thinks of his inadequate response to the love of Christ, this “brings tears to his eyes?” I remember the near despair to which I was driven in my childhood by description of a Christian which did not describe me.
- 9) I, 203, 4, 4f: We find here a “solution” to a “Bible difficulty” which has been offered repeatedly. Supposedly the varying form of the inscription on the cross as reported in the Gospels is to be explained by saying that the inscription was in three languages. The difficulty with this solution is that there are four variations of the inscription, and we need four languages to make the solution fit.

In itself the criticism which I am making is almost ridiculous. But I believe that by such “solutions” we are creating difficulties for our people by implying that verbal inspiration implies a verbatim report of what was said and a detailed and complete report of what was done. Verbal inspiration means only that the words are given by the Holy Ghost and that the report is therefore correct even if the wording is widely at variance from the original wording of the statement being reported.

This understanding is especially important in our time when we must wrestle with variations both in the reading of the original text and in the translation itself which are brought into focus for our people by new translations of the Bible. We need to learn to distinguish once more, as the orthodox dogmaticians did, between the essence and the form of the Word of God. When the author of this sermon study says in this same paragraph, “The meaning of this inscription remains the same, no matter which report is followed,” he has said all that needs to be said to solve the imagined “difficulty.”

- 10) I, 233, 4, 4f: There would seem to be no justification for the statement that “Solomon’s porch” was a part of the temple built by Solomon. “It was very likely a part of Zerubbabel’s temple.
- 11) I, 253, 4, 4: It is implied here that Matthew refers to the ascension in Matthew 28:16-20. A careful reading of the text will uncover no mention of the ascension. In fact verse 16 definitely locates this event in Galilee, whereas Luke definitely says that the ascension took place on the Mt. of Olives. In view of the use that has been made of this supposed “contradiction” between Matthew and Luke, it surely behooves us to be careful even about such seemingly insignificant details.
- 12) II, 57, 3, 4: In the account of the man called to follow Jesus (Lk 9:59f) it is often said by commentators that his father had died, as is done also here. This may be true, but it may also not be true. It may be that this man wanted to wait for years until he was free of all family responsibilities before following Jesus. I find it very difficult to believe that Jesus is here forbidding this man to make a quick trip home for his father’s funeral.
- 13) II, 87, 4: It seems to me that the logic of this paragraph leaves something to be desired. I am not sure that commentators are missing the point with the remark quoted. It seems to me that they make the same point concretely rather than abstractly, and therefore even more effectively. While I know nothing about eggs and white scorpions, yet I am sure that there was a similarity in appearance between the hard rolls baked by the women of Palestine and stones.

- 14) II, 153, 2, 4: If a remark is made that goes contrary to commonly accepted opinion, there ought to be a footnote. I know no Arabic and therefore I do not know if it is correct to say that Mammon is the “Arabic name of a false demon.” The sources I have used, if my memory serves me well, all say that Mammon is the Aramaic word for “wealth.”
- 15) II, 153, 2, 1 (cp 158, 5, 1 and 3): I am not sure that we ought to call the account of the rich man and Lazarus a “parable.” I know that we have often done so, but I believe that there are good reasons for not continuing the practice. It is not called a parable in the Bible and there are features in the account that do not seem characteristic of parables (the name of Lazarus, the locale).
- 16) II, 175, 4, 3: Were the nine lepers who failed to return really Jews?
- 17) II, 188, 3, 3: It is not correct to say that the Pharisees were “laymen, not priests.” While the chief priests were for the most part Sadducees, many of the lesser priests belonged to the sect of the Pharisees. It might be more correct to say that Pharisee is not an official title, if this is what is meant.
- 18) II, 188, 4, 4: Perhaps there is little danger of misunderstanding here, but whatever danger exists could be obviated by saying that the Pharisees believed that “promises made to taxcollectors did not need to be kept.”
- 19) II, 194, 4, 3: What is the justification for the remark that this was the “only visit” of Jesus to Jericho? It is the only visit mentioned.
- 20) II, 211, 2, 2f.: When people spoke of World War I as the “war to end all wars,” they did not speak in this way because they believed that it was the “end of the world.” Rather, if it had any religious overtones at all, they were millennialistic.
- 21) II, 223, 2, 2f: I do not believe that this sentence says what the writer meant to say. When we look for the point of the parable we are practicing interpretation. What he evidently meant to say is that in the interpretation of some parables we have direct guidance from Jesus and in other cases we must do without such direct help. (“We interpret a parable, of course, when Jesus interprets it for us. Otherwise we simply look for the main point of the story.”)
- 22) II, 227, 3, 4f: I do not believe that the enemies meant that Jesus claimed to save others from God’s judgement. This is a guess. They did not say that he *claimed* to save others. Their words make perfectly good sense if “save” here, as it often does, means to save from illness.

Exegetical Questions

The above remarks deal with relatively unimportant matters. We turn now to questions of exegesis.

I am aware that we are here still in an area where there may very well be a wholesome latitude of opinion. However, I also believe that it is healthy for us to keep on questioning our personal exegetical insight with a sincere desire to achieve unity also in matters of exegesis. While a wrong exegesis that still supports a correct teaching of God’s Word may not lead anyone astray, it does at times trouble our laymen when they hear two differing interpretations from pastors of the same fellowship. We need to remember, too, that the hermeneutical rule, “*sensus literalis unus est*,” is a deduction from the clarity of Scripture.

In making the following suggestions, therefore, I raise them only for editorial consideration, recognizing full well that some of the exegetical viewpoints expressed in the homiletical studies may be better than my suggested “improvements.” I only ask that the editor try them on for size.

- 1) I, 10, 5, 2: The comments on γενέα might have pointed out that γενέα can also mean race and that this is a prophecy which is fulfilled to our day. The Jewish people, as a race distinct from others, will continue to the end of time.

- 2) I, 15, 5, 5: While a tetrarch was originally the ruler over the fourth part of a country, it might be pointed out that this was no longer strictly the case in later usage.
- 3) I, 16, 1, 6: I believe that it would be helpful to point out not only that μετανοεω means to “change,” but that it involves a change of mind, a new way of thinking about sin and a new way of thinking about salvation.
- 4) I, 16, 2, 2: In view of the translation of εις φεσιν in the Living Bible, it might be well to point out that the Baptist argument that εις should be understood as indicating cause rather than direction or goal lacks true linguistic justification, and that the concept of forgiveness as a result of baptism is expressed without the use of a preposition in Acts 22:16 and Ephesians 5:26.
- 5) I, 24, 2, 4: I would only ask what is the authority for defining ισχυτερος as meaning more powerful “in authority.” So far as I know ισχυρος has the connotation of strength, and the reference here would seem to be to the omnipotence of Christ.
- 6) I, 40, 1, 3: Too much is read into the expression “first-born.” In view of the Mosaic regulations regarding the first-born son, it is very apparent that a Jewish male-baby who was the first son born to his mother would always be called the first-born from the moment of birth without any reference to later children. The caution expressed in the next paragraph is very much in place. Such questions do not belong in a sermon, but they may well be discussed in a Bible class.
- 7) I, 41, 1: While this paragraph cites the Greek words for “Savior” and “Christ” (they could just as well be dropped from the text), I was a little surprised not to see a comment on the word “Lord.” Here the Greek word κύριος might have been cited for comment, especially in view of this that in this section of Luke particularly the word κύριος is used as a translation of the tetragrammaton (cp 1:16, 46, 68, 76). In fact, I think it would be rather easy to prove that in every one of the fourteen cases where the word κύριος is used to this point in Luke’s Gospel it is the equivalent of Yahweh.
 In this paragraph, too, it should have been pointed out that the NIV translation of μη φοβεῖσθε leaves something to be desired. The present imperative with the negative particle usually calls upon men to stop doing what they are doing. What the angel said is: “Stop being afraid.” The words are not a general prohibition, for it is right that sinful men should be afraid of God. But it is also right that they should stop being afraid of God when the message of salvation comes to them. In this case, the form of the Greek word could inject a very important insight into the sermon (cp also 1, 110, also 1, 221, where it is treated correctly).
- 8) I, 41, 1, 3: We are so used to saying that Jesus means “Savior” that it might be of some value to point out that it actually means “Jehovah saves” or “Yahweh is salvation” See 1, 55.
- 9) I, 41, 4: In this paragraph also I see little use in the Greek words that are cited. It would, however, have been of some value to point out that the NIV translation is based on the commonly accepted variant reading “ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας”. It might also be helpful to point out that a similar phrase “*bene rezono*” is found in the Dead Sea scrolls. The Hebrew suffix in this case definitely demonstrates that it is God’s εὐδοκία and not man’s that is in view. It should be said also that it is not a genitive of quality but a Hebraistic genitive, similar to the “children of wrath” in Ephesians 2:3. They are not “angry children” but people who are the objects of God’s wrath. In view of everything that has been said about the synergism implicit in the reading ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας, it would seem important to discuss this point in a modern homiletical study of this text.
- 10) I, 46, 4, 2: In view of Luke 1:6, where it is said that Zacharias and Elizabeth were “righteous before God,” I seriously question whether the statement that “righteous” here “simply means...that God approved of Simeon’s heart and life.” If it does, I again see no point in

including the Greek word, which surely ought to alert us to the verb form of the same root and its significance. I believe that “righteous” here points to his imputed righteousness.

- 11) I, 46, 4:1 would like to see at least a reference to Isaiah 40:1 in this paragraph, and perhaps also a reference to Noah and Lamech’s statement that this child (Noah) would comfort men in connection with the curse that God had pronounced on the ground (Gn 5:29).
- 12) I, 48, 4: In view of the misuse that is made of the word “father” in this text by opponents of the virgin birth, it might be well to point out that this word in no way casts any reflection on the virgin birth of Christ. Joseph was really Jesus’ adoptive father.
- 13) I, 58, 3: Because of the vicious mistranslation of “The Word was God” by the Jehovah’s Witnesses it seems to me that our pastors deserve some exegetical help to guard them against the kind of grammatical mayhem that is practiced by the JW’s. At the least it should be pointed out that “*logos*” must be the subject of the sentence in spite of the fact that “God” comes first in the Greek sentence. It should be pointed out, too, that the presence of the article before God (which JW’s insist would be required for our translation) would actually be a false doctrine, since it would convert the sentence into a Unitarian assertion.
 To help our people and to protect them against the proselytizing of the JW’s, the pastor might also be alerted to remind them in a sermon on this text that verse three definitely demonstrates that Jesus is not a creature of God.
 Because of the misuse of the name “Word” by neo-orthodox theology this paragraph ought to say something about the use of the term “Word of God” and also more explanation of the significance of that term as applied to Jesus.
- 14) I, 67, 2, 6: Because many people seem to be under the impression that the exclusivistic Jewish views of salvation can be traced back to the OT, it might be well to indicate in some way that the OT is not to be blamed for that exclusivism.
- 15) I, 86, 1, 1: While the conclusion is correct that we cannot say that the guests here were drunk, it is hardly justified by making the Greek word mean less than it does. The translation of the NIV is undoubtedly correct, but the steward is speaking about feasts in general, as is said in line four of this same paragraph. The Greek word means “to have too much to drink, to be drunk.”
- 16) I, 90, 2, 5: Are we justified in speaking of twelve disciples at this stage in Jesus’ ministry (cp Lk 6:13)?
- 17) I, 94, 2: It might be pointed out that Jesus does not only proclaim the cancellation of debts during the acceptable year of the Lord, but also release from the bondage of sin and restoration of the old homestead lost in Eden.
- 18) I, 116, 2: Is it not possible that in this beatitude Jesus is talking about people who are literally poor because they had forsaken all to follow Him and who could be happy in spite of their poverty? I am inclined to read this beatitude as a paradox rather than a syllogism. Is it the same beatitude as in Matthew, or could Jesus have said both things?
- 19) I, 128, 3: What can be done to clarify this paragraph I do not know. The damage is done by the division of the text. Luke 6:37 can never be correctly understood if it is separated from vv. 39-42. Somehow, however, it should be made clear that this is not a prohibition of all judging, for Jesus in other passages commands us to judge. What He forbids is a judging that is not in accord with God’s law (cp James 4: 11).
- 20) I, 140, 3: More stress might have been laid on what is meant by “fulfilling” His exodus.
- 21) I, 150, 5, 4: I am not sure the grammar is correctly interpreted here. When the noun precedes the copulant it does not need the article to be definite. The devil did say, “If you are the Son of God” cp John 1:49.

- 22) I, 154-156: I know that the interpretation of the third temptation espoused here is very common in our circles, but I have been uncomfortable with it for a long time. I am not at all sure that the omitted phrase is so significant. Moreover, I am not at all sure either that if the phrase is kept it means what it often said to mean, namely, that God promises us protection only if we are doing what is right. If “in all thy ways” means anything at all it surely means “wherever you go.” The inclusion of the phrase might actually have served the devil’s purpose. It is obvious also that Jesus did not stress that point in His answer to the devil. He could have quoted Deuteronomy 4:2 if this omission had been the main point of the devil’s temptation. What the devil is trying to do here is to get Jesus to attempt to test by experimentation whether the Scriptures which He has been quoting are really so reliable as He seems to assume. The devil is saying, “Let us perform a scientific experiment to see whether this promise is really true?” and to that Jesus replies, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” This lays the groundwork for a tremendously important observation, especially in our modern empirically minded world.
- 23) I, 174, 1, 5f: I am not sure that the aorist means that the father “kept on showering him with kisses” (cp 11, 39).
- 24) I, 228, 6, 2: The Greek word does not necessarily justify the comment that Peter “throws himself into the water.” βάλλω is sometimes a very mild word (cp Mt 9:17; Jn 18:11).
- 25) I, 246, 1, 4: Again I am not sure that παράκλητος means “someone called to give aid.” My opinion is that it more often denotes someone who calls encouragement to us from the sidelines.
- 26) II, 41f: The exegesis is good, but it might help to give a clear example of this usage of “because,” to indicate the basis on which a conclusion is reached, e.g. “It snowed last night because the ground is white.” Cause and effect are actually reversed in such a sentence.
- 27) II, 49, 2, 2: Was the main problem of the Jews’ not rather misunderstanding concerning Christ’s *work* much more than about Christ’s *person*?
- 28) II, 117, 2: Does the “grinding of teeth” indicate pain or is it an expression of anger (cp Ac 7:54)?
- 29) II, 172f: Is this an anachronistic statement? Were lepers isolated because the disease was considered contagious or because the Mosaic law commanded it?
- 30) II, 198, 1, 2: The significance of the perfect participle might have been stated more pointedly: “that which exists in a state of destruction.”

Having listed only what appear to me to be places where improvements can be made in the text, I want to emphasize once more that on page after page I found nothing that needed improvement, in my opinion. But the above points I would consider very seriously if it were my assignment to edit this work for publication.

Doctrinal Questions Raised

There were also about a score of places where I felt that the presentation of doctrinal concepts could stand some sharpening. Before I list these, let me say again that I found no clearly enunciated false doctrine in these two volumes. However, I do believe that there are a few places open to serious misunderstanding, and these are being listed here.

- 1) I, 10, 3, 6: Would it not avoid the implication that the power of Christ as ruler of the universe is not being exercised now if we would say, “when Christ will openly exercise His power?”
- 2) I, 62, 3, 4f: What does it mean to say that Jesus is the “very substance of grace and truth?” May this sentence be understood in a Gnostic way?

- 3) I, 75, 5, 3: It is, of course, not true that the anointing of Jesus took place at His baptism. A more exact statement would be that the public manifestation of His anointing took place at that time (cp Schaller's Christology, p. 93).
- 4) I, 79, 3, 1f: Actually, I suppose, this should have been included under the exegetical questions. Does not the baptism of Jesus reflect the fact that God has laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and that He wants to be numbered with the transgressors also here?
- 5) I, 148, 6, 2f: It would be far more in keeping with a clear presentation of the Gospel if we would simply say, "This salvation is there for everyone" instead of adding the limiting phrase "who confesses and believes." Or else we ought to say, "This salvation is appropriated by everyone who confesses and believes."
- 6) I, 207, 5, 2 (cp also 11, 18, 35): When we speak of the great mystery of the death of Christ, would it not be well to say that God died, rather than God's Son died. The statement is, of course, perfectly correct, but in view of the fact that there have been attempts in the Lutheran church to get away from the bare statement of the Formula of Concord, which says that we must speak of God's death and God's blood, would it not be good if the *WELS* in its literature would echo that terminology rather than the relatively weak "God's Son died," to which even modernistic theologians would subscribe? It is bad enough that "0 grosse Not, Gott selbst ist tot" has been replaced by "0 sorrow dread, God's Son is dead."
- 7) I, 217: In this discussion of what is to be stressed in an Easter sermon I find nothing to criticize, except that the last statement, "Paul doesn't attempt to prove what has been sufficiently attested to by chosen witnesses" seems to me to involve an internal contradiction. How does one prove any historical event? Among the chief proofs in matters of historical fact are those found in the testimony of witnesses. Historical proof is like that in a courtroom, not like that in a laboratory. In historical-critical scholarship Paul is actually accused of making an ill advised attempt at proving the reality of the resurrection by citing the evidence in I Corinthians 15.

I would agree with the remark that the emphasis should be on the meaning of the resurrection. However, in view of the neo-orthodox approach to the resurrection, it does need to be stressed that a non-existent resurrection can have no real meaning either. The statement of the Apology about historical faith and justifying faith needs to be taken seriously by us. Justifying faith is faith in the history, but is also more than that.

- 8) I, 220, 2, 4: I wonder whether a sermon on this text (Jn 20:19-31), in which the ministry of the keys is so strongly set forth, should not point out that the NIV translation of verse 23, "if you do not forgive" is really inadequate. It is not only a withholding of forgiveness that is spoken of here. Rather it is a positive fastening of sin to the impenitent, a forceful preaching of law, rather than a withholding of the Gospel message, that is here set forth. In general, I would like to see a more complete presentation here of the ministry of the keys as it relates to objective justification. Here there would have been good reason for pointing to the tense of the verbs "are forgiven," and "are retained."
- 9) I, 222, 6, 5f: In my ears there is something that does not quite ring true in the sentences, "Seeing is not always believing. Believing, rather, as the Lord says, is very often not seeing." Even in this case what Thomas believed was more than he saw. He confessed that Jesus was his Lord and his God. That reality he had not seen. What he had seen was that Jesus was alive. In the Bible faith and sight are contrasted to one another, and faith is actually defined as being sure about things one does not see, and even the first half of that definition teaches the same thing in view of Paul's question, "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" At the very least the sentence ought to be revised to read "Believing is in most cases not seeing" and I am not sure that even that is adequate.

- 10) I, 244, 3, 6: Must we not say more than that Jesus lives “in His disciples *through His Spirit?*” Does not Jesus promise to live in us personally as well as the Holy Spirit? The sentence as it stands is characteristic of modern theology.
- 11) I, 247, 3, 2f: Does the peace of Jesus give us “a heart which *is* not troubled, a conscience which *is* at rest with God,” or would it be more in keeping with reality to say that it brings peace to a heart that is troubled and can set at rest a disturbed conscience. I am here again concerned about describing a Christian in terms that may have a tendency to give troubled Christians in times of *Anfechtung* the impression that they have lost their place in the church. As has already been said in another connection, there is a tremendous danger in describing Christians in terms that are not true of all of them.
- 12) I, 254, 4: I wonder whether the low estimate of the importance of the ascension does not have a root cause which goes even deeper than that indicated here. Have we perhaps emphasized the priestly office of Christ at the expense of His kingly office? The Jews of Jesus’ time had a tendency to do just the reverse. They seem to have had great difficulty in reconciling the prophecies of the “Suffering servant” with those that spoke of a “conquering king.” This was so great a difficulty for them that they sometimes even spoke of two Messiahs. Even Peter suffered from this malady, when he said, “This shall not be unto Thee.” But in a general way we may say that they emphasized the kingly office at the expense of the priestly office.
- I know that when I think of Christ as my Savior I see Him on the cross. But we need to remind ourselves that He is still our Savior at the right hand of His Father, where He rules the world in such a way that we will remain safe in spite of all the dangers, both spiritual and temporal, that threaten us. I believe that we need to stress more the kingly office of Christ especially in our time. Once we learn to do that, we will have laid the foundation for a reevaluation of the importance of the ascension of the part of our people. In a certain sense the saving work of Christ is still going on as we wait for the redemption of our bodies. The *τετέλεσται* of Calvary does not mean that Christ is doing nothing now to bring our salvation to a successful conclusion, even though in our preaching we sometimes give that impression by what we do not say.
- 13) II, 84, 3: The comments on the Lord’s Prayer assume that the reading of the text adopted by the NIV is the correct one. This may well be true, but some of our people will know that in the AV of Luke’s Gospel the third and seventh petition are not omitted. Are we in such a case justified in saying only what is said here?
- In view of the charges of false doctrine that are made against our Synod because we allow our pastors to use modern translations which are said to “leave out some parts of God’s Word,” it seems to me that we must try to make clear to our laymen, and also to some of our pastors, that the variant readings are not a doctrinal issue. The zeal that is manifested by some of our laymen over against new translations may not always be according to knowledge, but I believe that we must do two things for them in such a context as this. We must make clear to them what verbal inspiration does and does not mean and then help them to understand what is really involved in the variant readings. If nothing is said in this sermon study about this, we ought to at least refer the student to some helpful information, and alert the pastor to the problems he will face here if he uses the NIV text. The doctrinal question raised here arises out of what is not said rather than what is said.
- 14) II, 126, 3, 3f: The discussion of the “resurrection of the righteous” in this sermon study ought surely to have included some instruction in regard to the misuse which is made of this phrase by millennialists. We often do not realize the extent to which millennialistic ideas have infiltrated our congregations, and we fail to do our duty in respect to the teaching of doctrine when we simply ignore commonly occurring doctrinal misconceptions.

15) II, 190, 1-4: This exegesis of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican raised more questions in my mind than any of the points here discussed. Exegetically I would be inclined to ask for a fuller treatment of the rather unusual word ἰλάσθητι, and at least suggest that basically the prayer is “Don’t be angry with me, a sinner.” Also it might be well to point out that the NIV addition in “justified before God” is not out-of-place even if there is no textual basis for the addition.

What really troubles me here is the treatment of justification. Everything that is said can still be understood correctly, but it can also be understood incorrectly. Several of the sentences, however, must be viewed at best as a rather careless use of language. First of all, “justify” is twice translated with “make righteous.” While I would prefer not to use that translation at all, I would at least expect that somewhere in the context it would be made clear that this is to be understood in a forensic sense.

The problem is compounded when justification is also defined by saying that “God filled him with His righteousness.” This is the kind of language used by Osiander in opposing Luther’s doctrine of forensic justification, and is easily understood as reflecting the doctrine of “analytic justification.”

It is also not completely in accord with sound doctrine to say that the publican was justified because he trusted. Justification does not come to us because of faith but through faith, never διὰ πίστιν but always διὰ πίστεως. This is one place where I would insist on some editorial revision, and I hope that it was a sermon study written by one of the student authors.

Conclusion

This concludes our comments and suggestions on the contents of these Homiletical Studies. Most of these comments have been rather insignificant, but I hope that they may lead to some improvement. I hope also that a way will be found to publish these studies in more permanent form, because I believe that they could be a blessing not only to our Synod but to others who are interested in the proclamation of the Gospel in all its truth and purity.