

The Lost Note in Much of the Present-Day Preaching. *David H.*

Bauslin. Commencement Address, Philadelphia Seminary, 1920.

Issued in pamphlet form.

We have read voluminous books and laid them aside in disgust, because they contained little or nothing that was worth while; and we have read brief addresses, lectures, or essays which contained much that was good and filled our heart with delight. The commencement address by Dr. Bauslin belongs to the latter class. Dr. Bauslin makes a plea for *doctrinal* preaching as the only kind of preaching that is commanded, that is needed, that will keep the Church right, that will save souls, and that will insure an audience for the preacher.

"In anxious efforts to make the pulpit fit into the times, it has been transformed into a school of sociology with Jesus Christ left out or into a forum for the discussion of what are alleged to be living and up-to-date current questions." After this arraignment of the modern pulpit, Dr. Bauslin says: "You are never going to get the ethics of Jesus from men who reject the theology of Jesus. . . . The personality of God, the deity of our Lord, the atonement by the cross, the regenerated life implied in the use of Word and Sacrament, life beyond the grave—these and the related doctrines of grace must be restored to their rightful place in our preaching if the truth and grace of the Gospel are to dominate the hearts of the people, and if good works are to be manifest in their lives. . . . The vast public ignorance of Christian doctrine and history are among the most deplorable and ominous dangers among us. . . . It is not believing on Christ as I have conceived Him, . . . but rather believing on the Christ that is set before me in the Gospel, that saves men."

The commencement speaker directs himself against the superficial preaching of the "men in the ministry who are too mentally indifferent to think hard and long" when he says: "In our sermons we must, at least at intervals, get below the surface and deal greatly with great realities."

The *ceterum censeo* of the speaker addressing a class of ministerial graduates is: Preach doctrine! "The preaching, then, I take it, for the religious conflicts of the day will consist in a revival of doctrinal preaching. . . . There is need of a stiff evangelical interpretation of the Gospel which shall meet the real needs of man's nature. The age needs pre-eminently in its pulpits preachers, not lecturers; a Gospel, and not a philosophy; a message from heaven, and not a theme earth-evolved; a real message of hope and glad tidings of no dubious sound." Quoting Phillips Brooks, he says: "No preaching ever had any strong power that was not the preaching of doctrine. The preachers that have moved and held men have always preached doctrine. . . . Preach doctrine, preach all the doctrine that you know, and learn forever more and more; but preach it always, not that men may believe it, but that men may be saved by believing it."

Doctrine has long ago been the "lost note" in the preaching from sectarian pulpits. That our Lutheran pastors are still preaching doctrine is due to a large measure of grace which God has given us. But the warning of Paul, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," is applicable also here. The tendency of the time is to rob us of doctrinal preaching and thorough doctrinal instruction of our catechumens, both children and adults. Our strenuous life, the multiplicity of a pastor's duties, overorganization in the Church, the frequent requests made to preach on a great variety of topics, the insistent demands of a "practical age," indifference finding its expression in the union movements in the Church: all these things are temptations to neglect doctrinal preaching and instruction. The study of the Scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew, of the Book of Concord, of Luther, and of sound theological books needs to be much encouraged.

FRITZ.