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CONTENTS

	Page
ENGELDER, TH.: Ein modern-lutherischer Beitrag zur Eschatologie.....	641
KRETZMANN, P. E.: The Inspiration of the New Testament.....	655
MUELLER, J. T.: Introduction to Sacred Theology.....	666
KRETZMANN, P. E.: Schreibfehler in den Buechern Samuels.....	679
ARNDT, WM.: The Preacher and Allegorical Interpretation.....	684
Dispositionen ueber die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Serie alttestamentlicher Texte.....	697
Theological Observer. — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches.....	705
Book Review. — Literatur.....	713

Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weiden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Woelfen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren und Irrtum einfuehren. — *Luther*.

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24.*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
1 Cor. 14, 8.

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2 Sam. 24, 13. Auch hier ist es wieder ein Zahlzeichen, das den Scheinwiderspruch mit 1 Chron. 21, 12 verursacht hat. Das Zahlzeichen für drei ist 3, das für sieben ist 7, und darum war eine Verwechslung beim Abschreiben sehr leicht möglich. Jedenfalls ist drei zu lesen statt sieben.

2 Sam. 23, 34. Zu diesem Verse vergleiche man 1 Chron. 12, 35. 36. Wahrscheinlich ist der Text so wiederherzustellen, daß man liest: Eliphelet, der Sohn Urs; Gopher, der Maachatiter.

Wenn wir auf diese Weise ganz sachlich und objektiv, genau nach Luthers Vorbild, Textstudien treiben, dann werden wir durch Gottes Gnade unserer Sache immer gewisser. P. E. R e e m a n n.



The Preacher and Allegorical Interpretation.

(A Conference Essay.)

In discussing this subject, I am well aware that I am not plowing in virgin soil, but merely following the furrows of various width and depth made by Lutheran theologians ever since the days of the Reformation. Allegorical interpretation has been a big theme in books of the prominent leaders of our Church on dogmatics and hermeneutics. Our own fathers looked into its status and merits, as several synodical reports and various books of Dr. Walther testify. Hence it is an old matter that we are here subjecting to scrutiny. But it will appear, I think, that its consideration, even in so practical, matter-of-fact, superficial an age as ours, which has no time to waste on allegories, types, and symbols, will not be superfluous. We are to-day intending to approach the subject of allegorical interpretation especially from the point of view of the preacher.

The first thing for the preacher to remember is that according to the intimation of the Scriptures themselves there *are* allegories in the Bible. Before I enlarge on this, it will be necessary to define the term. What is an allegory? "An allegory," so says the *Standard Dictionary*, "is an extended simile, with the comparative words and forms left out." It is, so the dictionary continues, "a form of the figure of comparison in which the real subject is never directly named, but left to be inferred." An extended simile, with the comparative words and forms left out—that is a good definition. Let me illustrate. George Washington stood in his day and time like a sturdy oak whose roots have penetrated far into Mother Earth and whose massive trunk bids defiance to all the winds that blow. That is a simile. Here you have the word of comparison, namely, "like." When I say, however, George Washington was a sturdy oak whose roots have penetrated far into Mother Earth and whose massive trunk bids defiance to all the winds that blow, I no longer have a simile,

but a metaphor; the comparative word is left out. Now, how can we get an allegory out of this? Somewhat in this fashion: In the second half of the eighteenth century a sturdy oak stood in America whose roots penetrated far into Mother Earth and whose massive trunk bade defiance to all the winds that blow. That is a little allegory. The comparative word is left out and the subject of the comparison is not mentioned, but left to be inferred, in agreement with the second sentence from the *Standard Dictionary* which I read before. The matter will become still plainer to us if we think of some well-known allegories in the English language. The most famous one, of course, is *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, which ostensibly is the story of an individual who after much trouble and many harassing experiences finally reached the distant city which he had made his goal. Bunyan used this method to depict a Christian's trials and temptations, because he felt it was a very effective device. That he in this manner gave us a far more gripping work than a straightforward recital of the experiences of a Christian would have been nobody will deny. To think of American literature for a minute—Hawthorne was very fond of writing allegories. In the *Mosses from an Old Manse* there is one of great power entitled "Young Goodman Brown." It tells the story of a young man who, in spite of the entreaties of his good wife, called "Faith," went forth one evening to keep an appointment with a companion who resembled himself very much. The result of the adventure was that young Brown lost all confidence in his wife, his pastor, and in other fellow-Christians and finally died without any hope. The story evidently is to portray the evil that results when one follows the wicked impulses of one's own heart and gives room to doubts. Here you have allegories, extended similes, comparisons, the words of comparison being omitted and the objects or persons that the writer wishes to speak about not being mentioned, but left to be inferred. Through the curiosity which is aroused and the joy of discovery which the hearer or reader feels as he makes plain to himself the points of the story this method of presenting lessons or truths gets to be very telling.

Now, in the Bible, as I said, we have allegories. That is something which even those who have only a very superficial knowledge of the Bible would expect to be the case. It is a book written not only in human language, but in live, striking language, betokening in many a case deep feeling, and whenever you have language of this type, pictures, figures, tropes,—an allegory is a trope,—come in in great number and quite naturally.

Let us be thankful that our Bible is written in such a style. God could have given His Word to us in a sort of scientific, technical language, reminding one, let us say, of the language of algebra, using liberally x , y , z and other colorless symbols. All His great truths He

could have given to us in the style of propositions like those that puzzled and wearied some of us in *Wentworth's Geometry*. But God in His great mercy chose to use a different vehicle for bringing to us the message of the great deeds He performed for mankind—our own speech, full of energy and emotion, pulsating with real life, simple and yet majestic, aglow in many places with the fervor of true poetry, abounding in passages of unsurpassed beauty and grandeur. What a garden for us to revel in, exhibiting the "rose of Sharon," the "lilies of the field," which the gorgeous raiments of Solomon could not begin to equal, the cedars of Lebanon, the vine and the fig-tree beneath which each one of us can dwell in safety. Where such a language is spoken, there it is likely allegory will not in vain ask for admittance.

That the Bible contains allegories is at once proved by St. Paul's statement in Gal. 4, 24: "which things are an allegory," *hatina estin allēgorumena* in the Greek. It is such a remarkable passage that we have to dwell on it a little. Paul, in this section of Galatians, is engaged in proving that the Ceremonial Law is no longer in force. We may imagine that the Judaizers whom he had to oppose quoted many texts from the Old Testament to show that Paul was teaching wrong doctrine. With great emphasis they undoubtedly referred to the institution of circumcision in Gen. 17, where God had said, vv. 13. 14: "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the circumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant." This institution, of course, was to be in force only so long as the children of Israel were to be the people of God in a peculiar sense, that is, during the Old Testament dispensation. The covenant was to be everlasting indeed, lasting to the very end of the existence of Israel as a special nation, more favored than other peoples. But the text, we need not doubt, was quoted to prove that Paul's teaching was absolutely wrong and wicked when he proclaimed freedom from the Law and circumcision. Now, in his violent controversy with these enemies of the saving truth he meets them on their own ground and quotes the Old Testament, too. They appeal to the Law. Very well, to the Law we shall go, he says. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law?" And then he tells the story of Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, and of her and her son's expulsion from the house of Abraham, "which things are an allegory," he adds, that is, this story has an allegorical significance. It points, as Paul continues to show, to the two covenants, the covenant of the Law and the covenant of grace, Hagar standing for Mount Sinai and Sarah standing for the heavenly Jerusalem. It indicates that all who place themselves on the Law as the means of salvation will ultimately be cast out and not reach the goal that the

children of God are striving for, the Jerusalem above. You may say that, when you read the Old Testament story, you never thought of its having such a significance. But here you have the word of the inspired apostle. He is interpreting Scripture for you, and certainly the Holy Spirit, who had both Genesis and Galatians written for us, knew what He meant to say. It is a point to which I shall recur a little later. Here my interest is merely to show that the Bible itself asserts that it contains allegories.

One class of passages containing figurative language I have no doubt you have been thinking of for some time and have been waiting for me to mention it — the parables of Jesus, those exquisite little gems in the New Testament which stand without a rival in all literature. There is a debate on about the question whether they should be called allegories. That they meet all the requirements of the definition given above seems plain. Terminology here is not uniform. It must be remembered that in the New Testament the noun *allegoria* does not occur. We have the participle *allēgorumena* (Gal. 4, 24); that is all. The ancients, in the literature that has come down to us, use the term a good deal in books that deal with style. The word needed no explanation, the etymology was sufficiently clear. They used the verb *allegoreo*, as Liddell and Scott inform us, thus: "to speak so as to imply something other than what is said." The author of the famous work *On the Sublime*, known as Longinus and supposed to have been a contemporary of St. Paul, uses the word *allegoria*. He says that the stories about the gods in Homer, sublime though they are (in his view), have to be taken *kat' allegorian*, by way of allegory; otherwise they are irreligious and improper. But the word was used in an indefinite way. It could be applied, it seems, to cover all cases where a person spoke or interpreted something in such a way that the sense was different from what the words seemed to say. As far as I can find, the Greeks would have been willing to call the parables of Jesus *allegoriae*. With respect to the word *parabolē* (parable) we have to say that it is used a number of times in the New Testament and in a very free way. In the gospels it occurs in the sense of proverb, Luke 4, 23; then in the sense of maxim or principle, Matt. 15, 15; and then in the sense of stories that involve a comparison. That, of course, is what the word really means, a comparison. Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews the tabernacle of the Old Testament is called a parable, that is, a prophetic representation, type (cf. chap. 9, 9, where the Authorized Version translates: "which was a figure for the time then present"; cf. also chap. 11, 19). It all goes to show that the word *parabolē* was used freely to denote something, a saying or story, that had a somewhat hidden meaning or application. It seems, then, that according to New Testament usage, *allegoria* and *parabolē* were practically synonymous.

In our Lutheran Church, however, an *usus loquendi* grew up according to which a differentiation was made. The text-book on hermeneutics which was used in our Concordia Seminary in the good old days, when Latin had not yet been compelled to surrender scepter and crown, was Hofmann's *Institutiones Theologiae Exegeticae*, reprinted here in St. Louis in 1876 — a valuable little book. In a special section it discusses the mystic sense found at times in the Scriptures, and it says that this mystic sense occurs in three classes of passages, namely, in allegories, in parables, and in typical prophecies. So here allegories and parables are looked upon as being different from each other. What is the definition of each of these classes? About the allegorical sense Hofmann says that it is found in those passages of Scripture whose true literal sense pertaining to something actually said or done is transferred by the Holy Spirit into a different realm to signify spiritual matters. His definition of parables is this: We have a parable when an event which is probable in itself is related as if it had happened, while in reality it has not happened; and this is done to illustrate a spiritual truth. Concerning types he submits this: A type is found when a matter in the Old Testament, according to the will of the Holy Spirit, was ordained to be a picture, or image, of something belonging to the New Testament. Now, this is certainly a very usable differentiation and one that is widely employed: An allegory is an account which relates a historical fact, but which is used by the Holy Spirit to denote something different, something spiritual; a parable is simply a fictitious story, illustrating a spiritual truth; a type is an account, or description, of something historical which was meant to foreshadow New Testament events or institutions. Perhaps I had best first give an example for each. One of the examples for allegory that Hofmann adduces is Ex. 12, 15, 17, where Moses tells the children of Israel that before the celebration of the Passover all leaven would have to be removed from their houses and no leavened bread should be eaten during the festival. Here we have an allegory, says Hofmann. He proves it by pointing to 1 Cor. 5, 7, where St. Paul says: "Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Moses spoke of removal of leaven from the homes of the Israelites, there is no doubt about that. But, so Hofmann holds, the Holy Spirit teaches us through this order of Moses that the leaven of wickedness must be removed from our hearts and lives; in other words, that our life must be a sanctified life. I ought to add that Hofmann here, in my judgment, does not adduce an example of real allegory, satisfying his own definition. St. Paul, 1 Cor. 5, 7, does not say that the account of

Moses' giving an order for the removal of heaven is allegorical. He merely uses metaphorical language, suggested by the fact that Christ is our true Paschal Lamb. The other examples of Hofmann are not satisfactory either; but we are here concerned with his definition of the term allegory. For parables I need not mention any of Hofmann's examples; they are the well-known parables of our Savior. As an instance of a typical prophecy he points to what the Old Testament says about Melchizedek, especially in Ps. 110, 4, where this Old Testament priest and king is placed before us as a type of our great Redeemer. We see, then, that according to Hofmann the only difference between allegory and type is this, that the type always points forward, containing a prophecy of New Testament times and blessings, while an allegory does not possess this characteristic. Both allegory and typical prophecy refer to real events or institutions. Parables, on the other hand, are stories that did not happen. Whatever definitions we adopt, it must not be overlooked that the term allegory may well be taken in a wider sense, including typical prophecies and parables, and such in my opinion is the use of the word in Gal. 4, 24, the events touching Hagar and Sarah being a typical prophecy. Concerning the question whether the Bible contains any allegories of the type the above-mentioned works of Bunyan and Hawthorne represent, many exegetes point to the Song of Songs, holding that it allegorically describes the relation between Jehovah and His people and between Christ and His Church. According to this view, the Song of Songs is not an allegory in the sense of Hofmann's definition.

Before we proceed, I ought to stress two points. In the first place, Hofmann and those who follow him do not deny that allegories, parables, and typical prophecies have their own literal sense. I alluded to it before, and to avoid misunderstanding, I repeat it here. Furthermore, it must not be thought that by assuming the existence of allegories in the Bible we overthrow the grand fundamental principle of hermeneutics: *Sensus literalis unus est*; the intended sense of a passage is one. There has been a good deal of debate on this point in the Lutheran Church; but all are agreed that the fundamental rule just quoted is not violated by the assumption that there are allegorical passages in the Scriptures. The allegorical (and typical) sense is best looked upon as merely a special application which the Holy Spirit Himself has ordained for the passage in question. The story of Hagar and Sarah actually occurred, but God now tells us that He let these events take place in the way reported in Genesis in order to foreshadow something thereby, namely, to bring out the inferiority or incompleteness of the covenant of the Law. Hence the passage in Gen. 21 must not be said to have two meanings, but merely to be given a special application by the Holy Spirit Himself.

In the second place, let the preacher remember that a passage must not be assumed to be allegorical unless the Scriptures themselves indicate that God intends the respective section to serve as an allegory. This rule rests on an axiom of human speech which can be expressed thus: Words are taken in their native sense unless the writer or speaker indicates that he wishes them to be understood otherwise. Language is for the purpose of communicating our thoughts to other people. If a person had the right to assume that everything I say might be allegorical, then there would be no possibility of intercourse between him and me any longer. Utter chaos would result. The Bible speaks to us in human language. We must assume that its words are to have the native meaning unless we are told that there is something allegorical or parabolic in them. When the Bible does not make any such declaration, then we have no right to assume the existence of an allegory in the passage we are dealing with. *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur* — that is a great rule, and it is absolutely right. You have the right to be the interpreter of your own speech. Let us, then, not fail to grant the same right to the Holy Scriptures.

Here, as you are aware, there opens up a big and rather sad chapter in the history of exegesis. Allegorical interpretation — what a rôle it played in the Church! If a person did not understand a passage or could not give it a proper application, he blithely declared it to be allegorical. Much of the blame for the introduction of this method of treating the Holy Scriptures must be given to a Jew, to the philosopher and Bible scholar Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of Jesus and the apostles. He was a very learned man and had drunk deeply at the fountains of Greek philosophy, being a follower of Plato and the Stoics. Many things in the Bible appeared too crude to him. If they were taken literally, he felt convinced that the heathen, whom he tried to win for the true God, would not accept what he considered very puerile matters, so he assumed that much of what the Scriptures mention must be taken in an allegorical sense. He wanted to help the Bible with this device, just as Uzzah, 2 Sam. 7, thought he had to help the Ark of God, because the oxen that were drawing the wagon on which the Ark was conveyed were shaking it or were stumbling. Apparently a very pious method, proceeding from good motives, it was really impious, proceeding from spiritual arrogance, although Philo was not aware of the impurity of the source, I suppose. In theory he did not want to be wiser than God, but in practise he demeaned himself as if he had greater wisdom than the Author of the Scriptures. He took his readers to the marvelous divine tree of the Word and said, as it were, As the tree stands there in its natural state, it is not beautiful. We have to put a veil over it. Then, when there is a little green to be seen here and

there and everything gets to be more indefinite, real beauty will confront our gaze. Philo in many a passage rejected the literal sense altogether. He says, for instance, in writing about Gen. 1, it would be a sign of great simplicity to think that the world was created in six days or indeed at all in time (Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 142). Six, therefore, is only mentioned, so Farrar gives the meaning of Philo, because it is a perfect number, being the first which is produced by the multiplication of two unequal factors. When Philo does keep the literal sense, he declares it to be of minor importance, something for the ignorant *hoi polloi*.

Now, we could laugh about these vagaries and absurdities if we did not meet the same phenomena in the Christian Alexandrian Scripture exegesis, which, in turn, became the ruling method of treating the Scriptures for about thirteen centuries, namely, up to the Reformation, and has not quite vanished even to-day. Clement of Alexandria and, still more, his really great pupil Origen, through their vast influence and their powerful writings, made allegorical interpretation very popular in the Church and spread it far and wide. According to Origen the Scriptures have a threefold sense, just as man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit. The three senses are the literal, the moral, and the mystic, or allegorical, sense. He endeavored to prove this from the Bible itself, pointing to Prov. 22, 20 (LXX). Literally translated, the LXX here says: "Do you write these things in a threefold way?" The Vulgate renders the word in question *tripliciter*. The right translation of the passage, however, is: "Have I not written unto thee excellent things (*shalishim*) in wisdom and in knowledge?"

Now, how does Origen apply his rule of the threefold sense? The literal and moral sense he seldom refers to. It is the mystic sense that fascinates him. Just a few examples quoted by Farrar (*History of Interpretation*, pp. 199 ff.): "When we are told that Rebekah goes to draw water at the well and so meets the servant of Abraham, the meaning is, according to Origen, that we must daily go to the wells of the Scripture in order to meet with Christ." In the fact that there were six water-pots at the house in Cana when the wedding took place, he sees an indication that the world was created in six days. What strange sermons these men must have preached to their audiences! Let us hope that the common people, as a rule, did not understand them and in all simplicity clung to the words of the Scriptures which were read to them.

How Origen's method was adopted and cultivated in the Middle Ages, how the scholastic theologians developed an exegesis which was built on the supposition that Scripture had a fourfold sense, has often been told. Many of us have learned and remember, I have no doubt,

the two hexameters, in which the exegetical wisdom of that age flowered forth:—

*Litera gesta docet, quid credas, allegoria;
Moralis, quid agas; quo tendas, anagogia.*

The theologians illustrated this fourfold sense in applying it to the word Jerusalem. This word meant, they said, first, a city, namely, the city of Jerusalem in Palestine; secondly, a faithful soul; thirdly, the Church Militant; fourthly, the Church Triumphant. (Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 295.) Thomas Aquinas explains the great command of God "Let there be light" thus: It refers, first, to the act of creation of light; secondly, in an allegorical way it means, Let Christ be love; thirdly, it means that we be mentally illumined with Christ; fourthly, it means that we be led by Christ to glory. Whoever was most ingenious in pointing out the four meanings, I suppose, was considered the best exegete. But, naturally, there was the greatest arbitrariness in the whole procedure. What one man thought might legitimately be found in a certain passage was rejected by another. And who could decide which of the two was right? It is not very surprising that the poor theologians placed themselves, not on such a foundation, but rather on the teachings of the Church, which were not exposed to such treatment. Farrar says correctly: "This method made the Scriptures an apocalyptic book with seven seals, which only priests and monks were able to unlock. It made a standing dogma of the 'obscurity' of Scripture, which was thus kept safely out of the hands of the multitude. It made the Pope the door-keeper of Scripture, not the Holy Spirit." (*Op. cit.*, p. 296.)

The poisonous fog that hung over the Scriptures in the form of allegorical interpretation was at length dispelled when God raised up the great Reformer Dr. Luther, who not only led the people back to the Bible, but also showed how it was to be interpreted. Perhaps we think Erasmus should have done this, the great scholar and humanist. But Erasmus, with all his brilliancy and his many accomplishments, still held, *e. g.*, that without the mystic sense the Book of Kings would be no more profitable than Livy. While he himself, as a rule, avoided all allegories in the interpretation of the Scriptures, he did not possess enough spiritual insight, faithfulness, and courage to remove the shackles from the hands of Bible expositors. This was the work accomplished by Luther.

It is true that Luther himself at first carried the chains about with him when he explained the Scriptures in his sermons. For instance, in his sermon on the Gospel-lesson for the Sunday after Easter, where the text says that Jesus entered the house of His disciples through locked doors, Luther has this remark: "Das bedeutet nun die *Figur*, dass Christus durch die verschlossene Tuer hineinkommt und mitten unter die Juenger tritt und steht. Denn das Stehen ist nichts

anderes, denn dass er in unserm Herzen steht; da ist er mitten in uns, also dass er unser sei, wie er dasteht und sie ihn bei sich haben," etc. "Die Figur!" He is not yet quite free from the thralldom of allegory. In discussing the Gospel-lesson for the fourth Sunday in Advent, he starts a new section with these words: "So fleissig schreibt der Evangelist Johannes Zeugnis, dass er auch der Staedte gedenkt, da es geschehen ist; denn es gross an dem Zeugnis liegt, zu bekennen, und es viel Anstosses hat. Doch er hat ohne Zweifel ein geistlich Geheimnis darin wollen anzeigen; davon wollen wir nun weiter sehen. Das ist die Summa davon: In diesem Evangelium wird uns ausgemalt das Predigtamt des Neuen Testaments, wie sich das halte, was es tue und was ihm widerfahre." "Ein geistlich Geheimnis!" There is still a hunt for the mystic sense. But he soon freed himself from this bondage to a system whose earmarks were trivialities and absurdities.

In his exposition of Deuteronomy, written 1525, he utters this remarkable declaration: "Das ich sonst oft ermahnet habe und gewarnet, will ich wiederum warnen und abermals ermahnen, dass der christliche Lehrer den groessten Fleiss anwende, zu suchen den Sinn (wie man ihn nennet), den der Buchstabe anzeigt, welcher allein das ganze Wesen des Glaubens und christlicher Theologie ist, der da auch in Truebsal und Anfechtung alleine bestehet und die Pforten der Hoellen samt Suende und Tod ueberwindet und gefangen fuehret zum Lobe und Herrlichkeit Gottes. Aber der verborgene, fremde Verstand (so man auf griechisch Allegoria nennet, das ist, eine fremde Rede, die der Buchstabe nicht gibt) ist oft ungewiss und taugt nicht, den Glauben zu staerken, und ist ganz unsicher, als die da gar oft in menschlicher Willkuer und Wahn stehet, auf die, so sich jemand verlaasset, lehnet er sich auf den Rohrstecken Aegypti." (Cf. St. L. III, p. 1389 f.)

In succeeding ages the old type of allegorical interpretation, while not entirely dead, could not recover from the blow Luther had struck it. But something akin sprang up in the excessive cultivation of typology, that is, in the tendency to give to almost every incident or person of the Old Testament a typical or prophetic meaning. Of Professor Koch (Cocceius) in Leyden, Farrar (*op. cit.*, p. 385) says that in Isaiah he found passages which, as he thought, depicted some striking events or characters in New Testament church history. Is. 19, 2 we read: "And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians, and they shall fight every one against his brother and every one against his neighbor; city against city and kingdom against kingdom." In this prophecy, Koch saw a description of the dispute between the successors of Constantine. Is. 23, 11 is another passage in which he found a rather startling prediction. There we read: "He stretched out His hand over the sea, He shook the kingdoms.

The Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city to destroy the strongholds thereof." Here he thought the history of Charles the Great was typified. Again, he gave a special significance to Is. 34, 7, where we read: "And the unicorns shall come down with them and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood and their dust made fat with fatness." In this general description of conflict and war and disaster he found a clear reference to the death of Gustavus Adolphus. In our own days, Mrs. Eddy, on the other hand, went back to straight allegorical interpretation. She says: "The Book of Genesis, spiritually followed, is the history of the untrue image of God, and Adam, the synonym of error, stands for the belief in mortal mind." But, generally speaking, ever since the Reformation the principle is recognized in Protestant circles that the Bible must interpret itself and that allegories or types must be assumed to exist only in such passages as the Scriptures themselves designate to be allegorical or typical.

Now we get back to our preacher and his sermonizing. He must in his sermons refrain from giving allegorical interpretation to passages where Biblical warrant for this procedure is lacking. This is not at all such a gratuitous rule or precept as one might imagine. A sermon, if it is of the right sort, is an exposition of a Scripture-text. It rests on interpretation. One cannot preach without interpreting. It is very true that interpreting, explaining, expounding, must not constitute one hundred per cent. of the sermon. There have to be illustrations, and especially application must not be wanting; but no one can relieve the preacher of the necessity of interpreting. Hence it is of the highest importance for him to hold correct principles of interpretation, and the one just mentioned belongs to these principles. "Do not allegorize where the Bible does not tell you to allegorize." But probably it will be replied by a minister that he has a wealth of good, useful, edifying Scriptural thoughts which he can bring into his sermon in expounding a certain text, provided he be granted the privilege of allegorizing. Must we not in such a case permit him to travel the road he longs for, merely stipulating that he must not fall into wrong doctrine? Our reply must be, No. It is his holy task to preach the text to his congregation, the text as God has given it, with the meaning that the Holy Spirit has put into the words. *Exegesis*, not *eisegesis*, is the preacher's business. What right have we to import things into the text that God has not put there? *Eisegesis*, no matter what pious mask it wears, is really a species of falsifying practised upon the words of Scripture. But the thoughts are so beautiful, so wholesome, it will be said. That does not change the situation. We have to be unrelenting and tell the brother in question that he must put those thoughts on a different peg, that they do not belong where he places them.

If it should happen perchance that a minister thinks he cannot help using the text in an allegorical way, even though the Scripture warrant is missing, then he ought to tell the congregation that what he is presenting, while suggested to him by the text, is not contained in the text. If he follows that course, he at least is not falsifying the Scriptures. But it seems to me that the preacher who has come to a vivid realization of what his task really consists in, namely, the proclamation of the Word of God to his hearers, will not find much occasion for employing this little piece of homiletic strategy. The majesty of the text will overawe him, and instead of importing and changing and adorning by drawing on his own fancies, he will be quite content to preach just his text to the congregation; of course, unfolding and applying its thoughts to the best of his ability.

However, another objection is likely to be made now and then, which probably carries more weight. It will be said that certain texts are so barren of edifying thought that the only method of drawing from them anything wholesome must involve a recourse to allegory. St. Augustine in his great work *De Civitate Dei*, when he comes to discuss the Garden of Eden (Book XIII., chap. 21), apparently does not find in the straightforward narrative of Genesis much material for good, gripping, instructive comment, so he takes to allegorizing; and then some marvelous avenues for providing wholesome thought open up to him. Eden in his presentation signifies the life of the blessed. The four rivers point to the four virtues; the trees in the garden stand for all useful knowledge; the fruits of the trees depict the customs and habits of the godly. The tree of life is a symbol of wisdom itself. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil signifies what we experience when we transgress a divine commandment. But St. Augustine, it is curious to note, at once adds a different explanation, which he likewise considers possible. He says (to quote him in a free translation): "These matters can also in the Church be understood in this way, that we rather accept them as prophetic statements pointing to future things, namely, that the Paradise is the Church itself, just as the Song of Songs speaks about it; that the four streams of Paradise are the four gospels, the fruit-bearing trees the saints, the fruits of the trees their works, the tree of life the Holy of Holies, namely, Christ Himself, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil one's own will and decision." He concludes the discussion with these words: "These and perhaps some other more fitting things may, without interference from anybody, be said about the spiritual understanding of Paradise, while, of course, the truthfulness of the *story*, coming to us in an absolutely reliable narrative, is believed too." Evidently St. Augustine felt that the simple account as we have it in Genesis is not sufficiently fruitful soil for great meditations and cogitations; so he looked for deeper mean-

ings. But he made a sad mistake in this respect. The simple Bible narrative pertaining to Paradise as given in Genesis speaks of the great power and wisdom and love of our God. If St. Augustine did not wish to dwell on these subjects, he should not have discussed the passage at all.

I suppose it will be quite generally admitted that the great Church Father nodded when he wrote about Paradise as he did. After all, everybody will say that Gen. 2 has a wonderful content without our looking at it through the colored glasses of allegorical vision. But if you, let us say, preach on an Old Testament book and the narrative which you happen to be treating refers to a very commonplace event, the description of a town, the capture of a city, a little journey, or the like, what are you going to do with it? We have to reply: Such texts should not be chosen. Why not be more careful in selecting a text, the whole Old and New Testament being available? And, besides, we say the preacher must remain honest. What is not in the text he must not put in there. Let him avoid allegories unless there is Biblical warrant for them. Whatever expedient he will use, he must not stoop to the employment of improper means to work up a good sermon. The end does not justify the means.

It is well known that our regular pericopes, the Gospel- and Epistle-lessons, do present some difficulty to the preacher who treats them year after year. In the case of some Gospel-lessons we have complete or almost complete duplications. In the Epistle-lessons the element of sanctification is very frequent. How is one to avoid repetition and monotony here without making an excursion into the land of allegory to gather a few extra flowers for variety's sake? Here, too, I shout my *ceterum censeo*: Do not allegorize! There are lawful and effective expedients you may use. The viewpoint from which you preach the text can be varied. You can take just one statement of the Gospel- or Epistle-lesson as your text now and then. Be frank to tell the congregation so; nobody will be offended. Of late the particular difficulty which has been alluded to just now has not been complained of much, because we have new series of Gospel- and Epistle-lessons, and free texts are frequently employed by the present generation of preachers. It may be that we have come to the very limit in this respect. But it is clear that the difficulty mentioned can easily be overcome.

We have to stress, too, it seems to me, the importance of keeping before our people the chief principles of the interpretation of the Bible, one of which is that we must not allegorize unless the Bible tells us to do so. The members of a church may look with wonder and amazement at the preacher in the pulpit when he gives a novel, interesting allegorical meaning, let us say, to the story of Ruth. But do not forget that such exegetical exhibitions may have serious

results. The Christian hearer may become afraid of using the Bible, thinking that it is an obscure book, which it takes special study to understand. Or it may be that he will consider allegorizing comparatively easy and try his own hand at it, with the consequence that to him soon everything in the Scriptures will be topsyturvy. But, pray, why should not the pew indulge in this sort of religious game if the pulpit does? The members of a church should not be misled by a bad example on the part of their pastor. They should rather be warned directly and explicitly against such use of the Scriptures. Let me emphasize: Our people must be told again and again that the Bible means what it says and that the interpretation which finds a deeper meaning in certain passages than the words themselves indicate must have the express authority of the Scriptures to rest on if it is to have any validity. It is a point that can be dwelt on well in connection with reference to the clearness of the Scriptures. Every now and then the preacher will have occasion to draw attention to this great and important quality of the Bible. Let him occasionally use these opportunities to speak to his hearers about allegorical interpretation.

It is not necessary to make a long conclusion. Let us be grateful that through the Reformation we have been freed from the chains of allegorical exegesis, which made the Scriptures a book of riddles, offering but little help to the poor soul searching for the truth. And let it be our endeavor faithfully to bring the message of the clear and open Bible to other people, handing the treasure which we ourselves received to others in undiminished grandeur, its beauty unobscured through coverings devised by science falsely so called. W. ARNDT.



Dispositionen über die von der Synodalkonferenz angenommene Serie alttestamentlicher Texte.

Vierzehnter Sonntag nach Trinitatis.

4 M o s. 21, 4—9.

„Ach wär' ein jeder Puls ein Dank und jeder Odem ein Gesang!“ so sollte es bei jedem Christen allezeit heißen. Ursache genug hat er zu solchem Dank. (Ausführen!) Leider steht es anders. Undank, Unzufriedenheit, Murren an der Tagesordnung. In unserm Text haben wir ein Beispiel dieses Murrens, das uns zur Lehre geschrieben ist.

Wozu hält uns Gott das murrende Israel vor Augen?

1. Damit wir erkennen, daß wir durch unser Murren Gottes Zorn verdient haben;
2. damit wir in wahrer Buße Gott um Vergebung anflehen.