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The Sesquicentennial of Our Independence.

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The readers of this article, I have no doubt, are agreed that our nation has abundant reason to thank God for the freedom which was achieved through the struggle inaugurated by the famous Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. While the history which began on that day is partly written in blood, some of it the blood of brothers who fought each other in the Civil War; while it is marred here and there by accounts of injustice and corruption; while party strife has dominated our political life frequently instead of true patriotism; while our judiciary at times has failed to function for the protection of the citizens, for instance, at the time of the World War, when innocent men were set upon by fanatical, bloodthirsty mobs; while the American Indian, once the owner of the land we now call ours, has a tale of woe to tell with respect to the treatment he received all too generally; nevertheless, viewed as a whole, that venture undertaken 150 years ago has been markedly successful and has brought in its wake a constitution and a government for which we cannot be too thankful. Dean Inge, a number of years ago, remarked that we cannot escape human limitations and imperfections when setting up a government. If we establish an autocracy, we shall, *ceteris paribus*, have a government that will be honest, just, and efficient, but it will be at the expense of personal and political liberty. (Witness Italy these days under Mussolini.) If we choose a democracy, we shall have freedom, but it will be at the expense of efficiency; there will be corruption, bad, ill-advised legislation, and party rancor. You have to choose between two evils, such was the conclusion the reader had to draw from the remarks of the prominent Anglican scholar, and can you be sure which will be the lesser one? The pessimism of the "gloomy Dean" is shared by few, if any, of my readers, I am sure, even if there is some justification for it. On the contrary, to us the liberty which we enjoy here is a priceless boon, and we

Another "Specimen of Modern Historiography."

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Edwin Charles Dargan, D. D., LL. D., formerly professor in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Kentucky, has written *A History of Preaching* in two volumes and purposes to write a third on *Preaching in the United States*. His

history of over a thousand pages is, without question, a most notable contribution, worthy of the study and attention of every preacher. No ambassador of God will lay it aside sorry for having read it, even though it has its faults and imperfections like various other histories.

Misrepresentation of the Lutheran pulpit of the seventeenth century occurs in Volume II, p. 63 f., where Dargan writes: "In respect of the refinements of scholasticism and pedantry we find abundant examples . . . in the homiletical principles that were taught and practised in this unhappy epoch. . . . They fall into a particularity of distinction and precept which is tedious in the extreme. Thus the limit was reached in a work of J. B. Carpzov the elder, who specified a hundred different 'modes' of preaching. . . . But even John Gerhard, one of the best preachers of the time, in advocating a still simpler method, distinguishes and expounds eleven 'modes' as follows: 1. The grammatical; 2. the logical; 3. the rhetorical; 4. the histrionic; 5. the historic; 6. the ecclesiastical; 7. the catechetical; 8. the scholastic; 9. the elenctic; 10. the mystical; 11. the heroic. He admits that these are merely technical distinctions which may be variously modified and combined in practise, but he seems to think of them as workable and valuable guides in the composition of sermons, and that under his so much simpler system the more elaborate schemes of other homilists may be reduced. Doubtless all such strained and tedious homiletical theories broke down under their own weight in actual practise, and failed of complete exemplification in preaching; but it is unfortunately true that they did not utterly fail of recognition." Dargan refers to C. G. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Predigt in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands von Luther bis Spener*, p. 122 f., as his authority regarding the hundred methods of Carpzov the elder and the eleven of Gerhard, neither of which ever existed as described, and, therefore, could not have "broken down under their own weight in actual practise."

Twenty-five years ago the sainted Doctor A. L. Graebner wrote an article entitled "A Specimen of Modern Historiography," *Theol. Quart.*, Vol. V, p. 47, produced the *corpus delicti* in question, the *Hodegeticum* by Carpzov the elder, and quoted proof from the same in the original Latin to show that, on the sixty pages of his small octavo volume, this much-maligned homilist pilloried by one historian after the other as the outstanding crank on homiletical methods, definitely mentions but two methods, the analytical and the synthetical, defining them in a very clear and precise manner,

and asserting: "Et ad hanc methodum, sive *analyticam* sive *syntheticam*, omnes conciones debent referri." Graebner refers to more than ten pages of the *Hodegeticum* to substantiate his contention that historians had produced but a bugaboo in telling the world about the homiletical horror of Carpzov the elder. But where did the historians exhume this unsightly corpse? Graebner goes on to show that J. B. Carpzov the younger republished his father's *Hodegeticum* with certain additions of his own. But did he add ninety-eight methods to the father's two? The younger Carpzov is thus quoted: "Although besides the two methods . . . there is no other, yet there are more dispositions of a sermon to be held on one text, each of which follows either the analytical or the synthetical method." The younger Carpzov offers an even hundred *dispositiones*, outlines or skeletons for sermons, but does not invent that number of methods. He clearly distinguishes between outline and method. If the curio collectors among historians would like to report a find dug out of a very dusty volume, then let them state that J. B. Carpzov the younger submitted one hundred outlines on one text, Ps. 14, 7.

Another specimen of modern historiography is the reference by Dargan to the "so much simpler system" of John Gerhard's eleven "modes." The well-deserved renown of this great theologian ought to cause every historian to make careful research before accusing him of homiletical absurdities. We have consulted various authors, but only one, Wilhelm Beste, *Die bedeutendsten Kanzelredner der aelteren lutherschen Kirche*, — Schmidt's work was not at hand, — gave us the needed information. In fact, Beste quotes Gerhard at length, Vol. III, Preface, pp. 8—11, and thus enables us to understand and value the sound homiletical advice of this man, who proved himself, in more than one respect, to be a professor of sterling value to his students. Beste also reprints two sermons by Gerhard, which are very clear, textual, evangelical, well-arranged, appropriately illustrated, and not too long.

Gerhard's "eleven methods" are nothing more than a classification of the preachers of his day whose eccentricities or good qualities he enumerates and cautiously criticizes. We are not always quoting in full, but mostly summarizing in the following.

1. Pastors who explain the text according to the Hebrew and Greek sources, introducing many foreign words and even quoting pagan writers to the same end, might be said to be using the *modus docendi grammaticus*. Even though it is useful and necessary that the text be interpreted according to the original Hebrew and

Greek, and this may be mentioned at times (*bisweilen*) in sermons, yet it is not advisable to introduce much of foreign tongues in the pulpit. The preacher should diligently search the true sense of the text at home, and before the congregation he should not present his own doctrine, but seek the improvement of his hearers. (Gerhard violated this rule himself and used Latin terms in his sermons.)

2. The *modus docendi logicus* is observed by those preachers who piecemeal the text by offering numerous divisions and subdivisions and sub-subdivisions. An outline of the text properly and intelligently arranged is useful for the preacher and for his congregation, but too much parceling and slicing is not good for the simple. It results in what Seneca has expressed in these words: "Quae nimium dividuntur, in pulverem rediguntur."

3. The third class comprises those preachers who are guilty of fulsome oratory and strain after rhetorical effect. Their sermons are replete with bombast and beautiful words, numerous exclamations and apostrophes. "This we might call the *modus docendi rhetoricus*." Oratory and eloquence are special gifts of God, which are to be recognized and employed in gratitude to the Giver. Certain rhetorical figures may be used to good advantage, but let every preacher bear in mind what St. Paul says 1 Cor. 2, 1. 4 f.

4. Gerhard then speaks of the actor-preacher, who observes the *modus docendi histrionicus*, greatly favored by the Jesuits of his days. He means the man of many gestures and peculiar bearing (*wunderbaren Gebaerden*). Elegant and fitting action is in order, but there should be a difference between a preacher of the divine Word and an actor. The preacher should be concerned about reaching the heart of his hearers, the actor strives to please the eye.

5. The historians among the preachers are addicted to the *modus docendi historicus*. For the entertainment and incitement of their audiences they introduce all manner of stories, borrowed also from pagan writers. Stories may serve as living examples for the truths contained in the Word, but there must be moderation, especially in using stories of the heathen stamp, otherwise the nuisance (*Unrat*) will follow that the hearers will anxiously expect some amusing story, pay little attention to the divine Word, or despise it as something known and common.

6. There are preachers who wait upon their congregation with all manner of quotations from the ancient fathers of the Church to exhibit how they have explained certain texts. Gerhard is pleased to call this the *modus docendi ecclesiasticus*. The church

fathers should be read diligently, and it may be profitable for the congregation to hear some apt quotation from them now and then, but also in this respect due moderation must be observed, in order that the faith of the Christians may not be based upon the authority of men, and the church fathers be placed on a level with the holy apostles.

7. The *modus docendi catecheticus* is the guiding star of a "very good class" of preachers, as Gerhard calls them. These explain the text in clear and intelligible words according to parallel texts, circumstances of the text, and the context. They illustrate the text with stories from the Bible and make application in a useful and edifying manner. "This mode of teaching is certainly the best for the plain people, because thereby God's honor and the hearers' edification are taken into account. By such sermons the simple, who are in the majority in the congregation, can be bettered and be instructed to their salvation by doctrine, comfort, exhortation, and warning. Heretofore all faithful teachers and preachers have especially devoted themselves to this kind of preaching."

8. The *modus docendi scholasticus*, as Gerhard pleases to call it, is the favorite mode of those preachers who evolve one certain doctrine from the text, treat it at length, adduce reasons from Scriptures, and explain it thoroughly *juxta leges methodi*. This, like the foregoing method, is useful and edifying, as long as the capacity of the hearers is duly considered, and the text is not forced to say what it does not say, as sometimes happens.

9. The favorite interpretation of certain Bible texts by opponents is met by such pastors as make use of the *modus docendi elencticus*. These men present the false interpretation of the adversaries, show what they adduce from certain texts to prove their errors, and then explain the text correctly to refute the false doctrine with the heavenly truth. It is useful and by all means necessary that the people should be warned of false doctrines and that corruption of Scriptures should be confuted, "but this requires befitting modesty. A preacher should not always be tearing into, and fighting, the false teachers, but strive also to build up and better his congregation." Gerhard counsels to disprove, in all meekness, those errors which require attention at the time and the place.

10. The tenth class of preachers, the exponents of the *modus docendi mysticus*, are concerned about the edification of the inner man, offer allegories and spiritual interpretations of stories of the

Old and New Testament, direct to Christ, and, in points of doctrine, aim at furthering their hearers in true knowledge of the inward depravity of their natures, in true and living faith in Christ, in fervent love towards God, in the rejection of temporal things, in yearning for eternal treasures, etc. Such preaching Gerhard considers most necessary in his day, but it requires diligence, prayer, and devotion, for what should go to the heart must come from the heart. Wisdom must be exercised in apportioning milk and strong food, as Scriptures indicate, 1 Cor. 3; 1 Pet. 2; Heb. 5. Allegories and spiritual interpretations must be used with care. If Christ is preached into the heart, newness of life will necessarily follow, contrariwise all external works will be mere hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness.

11. Some preachers, in expounding the text, are accustomed to adduce various points of doctrine, but, at times, deviate quite far from the text, and still understand, in an artful and convenient manner, to return to the same. This is the *modus docendi heroicus*. Not every one should copy this mode readily, but choose the well-beaten path. It should rather be admired than followed.

The final advice of Gerhard to use, to the edification of the congregation, whatever may be the best in these classes clearly indicates his aim in making these distinctions. The faults should be avoided and the good qualities copied.

Preachers of to-day may well ponder this wise counsel. We have reproduced it here in substance principally in answer to Dargan's unfounded claim that Gerhard was the father of eleven different methods of preaching, reducing them considerably if Carpzov's one hundred methods are a fact and not fiction. We may assert quite confidently that Gerhard's homiletical rules may be readily accepted "as workable and valuable guides in the composition of sermons," and we believe that he did not only seem to think this, but that he offered them as a professor who was thoroughly acquainted with his subject and possessed a goodly portion of theological acumen. Moreover, there are signs that some of the "*Unrat*" which caused Gerhard to pen his lines is creeping more or less stealthily into our ranks. A thorough discussion of his remarks and suggestions, at pastoral conferences, no doubt, would prove quite profitable.

Historians, it appears, are bent upon making out a strong case against the so-called dead orthodoxy of the Lutheran Church in the seventeenth century. All manner of evidence is, therefore, produced to justify the existence of Pietism. Hence we must also

hear of "the homiletical principles that were taught and practised in this unhappy epoch," and the ghost of a hundred methods must serve as an example, and the lesser phantom of eleven methods must also appear on the scene. So it happens that Dargan speaks of "the rescuing work of Spener and his Pietist followers," II, 51, and "the great movement known as Pietism," II, 62. Again, II, 70: "Far more important for the history of preaching are the preachers of the rising Pietist tendency." No, it was not a "great movement," but a great blight; not "rescuing," but ruinous work, for Pietism, with its separatism, indifferentism, syncretism, and destructive influence on the scientific training of theologians ignored the substantial counsel of Luther to Spalatin: "Verbo victus est mundus; Verbo servata est ecclesia, etiam Verbo reparabitur." — But we are going afield.
