CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY

Table of Contents

From Reinhold Pieper to Caemmerer:
How Our Preaching Changed

Adam C. Koontz

In 1964, shortly after the Wisconsin Synod broke fellowship with the Missouri Synod, Robert Schultz (1928–2018), a professor of theology at Valparaiso University, wrote a triumphal article in the *American Lutheran* about the history of preaching in the Missouri Synod entitled "From Walther to Caemmerer."[1] In that Missouri Synod antebellum era,[2] Schultz could write with great confidence that after C. F. W. Walther (1811–1887) had understood and promoted the distinction between law and gospel, the Missouri Synod had finally rediscovered how to distinguish law and gospel well in the person of long-serving Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, homiletics professor, Richard Caemmerer Sr. (1904–1984). Schultz discusses no one between Walther and Caemmerer, no homiletical treatise of any kind, nothing about the synod's half-century-long run of the *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik*,[3] Theodore Graebner's (1876–1950) *The Expository Preacher*,[4] or John H. C. Fritz's (1874–1953) *The Preacher's Manual*,[5] which was 1941's edition of the homiletical series, *The Concordia Pulpit*.[6] Missouri had evaporated, and the

---

[1] Robert C. Schultz, "From Walther to Caemmerer: A Study in the Development of Homiletics in the Missouri Synod," *American Lutheran* 44, no. 7 (July 1961): 7–10, 25. A similar estimate of pastoral theology more broadly: "Since 1940 the evangelical approach to pastoral theology has been strongly reiterated [since Walther] in the Missouri Synod. Many men have contributed to this spirit, but none has nourished it more vigorously than Caemmerer." Robert C. Schultz, "Pastoral Theology," in *The Lively Function of the Gospel: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Caemmerer on Completion of 25 Years as Professor of Practical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*, ed. Robert W. Bertram (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966), 9–22, here at p. 12. A comprehensive obituary for Schultz is available at https://www.valpo.edu/valpomag/ 2019/01/29/in-memoriam-5/.

[2] I.e., before the 1974 walkout at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

[3] Cf. a dissertation supervised by Richard Caemmerer, Lester Zeitler, "Preaching Christ to the Glory of God for the Salvation of the Hearer: An Analysis of the Preaching Proposed in the *Magazin Für Ev.-Luth. Homiletik und Pastoraltheologie*, 1877–1929" (ThD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1965). Available at https://scholar.csl.edu/thd/40/.

[4] Theodore Graebner, *The Expository Preacher: A System of Inductive Homiletics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1920), a revision of *Inductive Homiletics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1918).

[5] John H. C. Fritz, *The Preacher's Manual: A Study in Homiletics with the Addition of a Brief History of Preaching, Sermon Material, Texts for Various Occasions, and Pericopic Systems* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941).

[6] *The Concordia Pulpit* picked up where the *Magazin für Ev.-Luth. Homiletik* left off and ran from 1930–1990. *Concordia Pulpit Resources* (1990–present) continued the tradition of homiletical

---

Adam C. Koontz is Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He can be contacted at adam.koontz@ctsfw.edu.

Missouri of 1964 at long last was articulating law and gospel in a way faithful to Walther, or so said Schultz.

Unmentioned, too, was the only person who both took homiletics with Walther and later authored a homiletics textbook. The introduction to that treatise on preaching, all 474 pages of it in two identical editions from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, even mentioned the author's consultation of his student-produced *Collegienheft* filled with Walther's observations on preaching and commentary on the primary homiletics text of early Missouri, John Jacob Rambach's (1693–1735) posthumously published treatise, *Praecepta Homiletica* (1736).[7] Reinhold Pieper (1850–1920) wrote the Missouri Synod's and the Synodical Conference's most comprehensive work on homiletics, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Homiletik*,[8] but after a long career of service to Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, followed by two more parish pastorates at Chatham and Riverton, Illinois, he also evaporated.[9] By 1964, it was as if he had never existed; Schultz skips over him along with Graebner, Fritz, Louis Wessel (1864–1933)—Pieper's longtime Concordia, Springfield, homiletics colleague—and many other homiletical thinkers inside and outside the synod's professorial posts through the years. You would search in vain for mention of Pieper's book in Caemmerer's 1959 homiletics treatise. Between Pieper's death in 1920 and Caemmerer's *magnum opus* in 1959, Missouri's dominant homiletic and so also Missouri's preaching had become altogether different.

What had changed was something more than the content of bibliographies, and a closer look at Pieper's homiletic alongside Caemmerer's will reveal the depth of that change. Caemmerer's differing understanding of the word of God, articulated in his *Preaching for the Church*[10] and clarified in his *Concordia Theological Monthly*

---

discussion and help under its first editor, Erwin Kolb. Caemmerer supervised Kolb's doctoral dissertation ("A Study of Applications Used in the Sermons of *The Concordia Pulpit* of the Years 1955–1964" [ThD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1967]), available at https://scholar.csl.edu/thd/26/.

[7] Johann Jacob Rambach, *Erlauterung über die praecepta homiletica: von dem seligen auctore zu unterschiedenen mahlen in collegiis vorgetragen, nun aber aus dessen manuscriptis herausgegeben*, ed. Johann Philipp Fresenius (Giessen: Johann Philip Krieger, 1736).

[8] Reinhold Pieper, *Evangelisch-Lutherische Homiletik: Nach der Erläuterung über die* Praecepta Homiletica *von Dr. J. J. Rambach* (Milwaukee: Germania, 1895). Concordia Publishing House reprinted the text without any change in 1905.

[9] See Adam C. Koontz, "Reinhold Pieper's Classical Lutheran Homiletic," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (January 2021): 23–36, for more biographical detail and description of Pieper's method on its own terms rather than by extensive comparison to another's.

[10] Richard R. Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959).

journal articles,[11] will help us understand how the Missouri Synod's homiletic changed between the early and mid-twentieth century. Pieper's articulation of the Scriptures as verbally inspired and as being the word of God produced a different homiletic than Caemmerer's more elusive understanding of the "Word of God."[12] A new homiletic came forth from a new hermeneutic.

When they wrote their homiletical treatises, both Pieper and Caemmerer had been preaching for decades and teaching preaching for at least several years—Pieper about five years when the first edition was published, Caemmerer for two decades when his *Preaching for the Church* appeared in 1959. Pieper taught a great many more subjects than Caemmerer because academic specialization was largely unknown to the Synodical Conference seminaries of the early twentieth century, but Caemmerer preceded the advent of specialized homiletics doctoral programs. His master's degree and doctorate from Washington University, St. Louis, were not in theology.[13] Neither man was narrowly trained in an academic subdiscipline, but both were engaged in wide-ranging conversations—Pieper with an orthodox Lutheran past and Caemmerer with a burgeoning neoorthodox present.[14]

---

[11] Chief among these for hermeneutics and preaching are "Lutheran Preaching and Its Relation to the Audience" (December 1947): 881–888; "A Concordance Study of the Concept 'Word of God'" (March 1951): 170–185; and the three-part 1966 series in which Caemmerer became much more explicit about his acceptance of biblical higher criticism and its relationship to exegesis and preaching: "Current Contributions to Christian Preaching" (January 1966): 38–47; "The New Hermeneutic and Preaching" (February 1966): 99–110; and "Preaching and the Recovery of the Church" (March 1966): 146–157.

[12] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 1, "Preaching utters words. Yet when it is truly preaching, it is the Word of God to man and the power of God at work in man." This event is conditioned by what "truly preaching" is, which Caemmerer does not define, not by what "the text says" or "the Bible says."

[13] Richard R. Caemmerer, "The Moral and Political Ideals of Livy" (MA thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, 1933), completed during Caemmerer's pastorate at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, St. Louis, and "The Education of Representative German Princes in the Sixteenth Century" (PhD diss., Washington University, St. Louis, 1944), completed after his 1940 call to the Concordia, St. Louis, faculty, on which he would serve until the formation of Christ Seminary—Seminary-in-Exile (Seminex). He taught at Seminex from its beginning in 1974 to his death and its dissolution in 1984. More autobiographical or biographical detail is available in Richard R. Caemmerer, "Stance and Distance," in *The Lively Function of the Gospel*, ed. Bertram, 3–6; Richard R. Caemmerer, "No Continuing City: A Memoir of Change toward Deepening and Growth in Jesus Christ," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 5 (October 1977): 270–315; and George W. Hoyer, "*Preaching for the Church*: An Appreciation," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31, no. 2 (February 1960): 117–118.

[14] The contrast is clear in an article that ironically appeared in the same issue of *Concordia Theological Monthly* with Arthur Repp and George Hoyer's glowing endorsements of Caemmerer's *Preaching for the Church*; the article makes clear what has changed in Barth's theology from the period of orthodoxy: "[In Barth's theology,] there is no longer a problem connected with higher criticism of the Bible, 'errors' in the Bible. Barth can grant all this, and still say that the Bible is also divine, inspired." Robert D. Preus, "The Word of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 21, no. 2 (February 1960): 115.

Pieper is dependent on a preceding tradition of homiletical theory, beginning experientially with his classes in preaching from Walther. Walther's textbook, Rambach's *Praecepta Homiletica*, was augmented with commentary and elucidation, recorded in Pieper's *Collegienheft*[15] and presumably condensed into the section on preaching in Walther's *Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*.[16] Pieper's citations of Walther directly are almost entirely from Walther's sermons with some excerpts from Walther's pastoral theology. Among the Lutheran orthodox homileticians, Pieper used John Benedict Carpzov I (1607–1657),[17] Christian Chemnitz (1615–1666),[18] John Förster (1496–1558),[19] John Gerhard (1582–1637),[20] Andrew Adam Hochstetter (1668–1717),[21] and John Andrew Quenstedt (1617–1688).[22] More frequent than quotations from the orthodox writers are Pieper's quotations from nineteenth-century German Lutheran homileticians such as Claus Harms (1778–1855),[23] Christian Palmer (1811–1875),[24] Henry August

[15] Pieper, *Ev.-luth. Homiletik*, iv, mentioned that this collective production of Walther's homiletics students revealed Walther's "almost verbatim" repetition of Rambach's homiletical teaching.

[16] C. F. W. Walther, *Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, 4th ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1897); a translation of the 1872 first edition is available now in English as *Pastoral Theology*, ed. David W. Loy, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017).

[17] J. B. Carpzov, *Hodegeticum brevibus aphorismis pro collegio concionatorio conceptum* (Leipzig: Johannes Bauer, 1652 and often reprinted), available in a modern bilingual edition: *Hodegeticum brevibus aphorismis pro collegio concionatorio conceptum: Ein Wegweiser für Prediger in Leitsätzen: Lateinisch-Deutsch*, ed. Reiner Preul (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014).

[18] Christian Chemnitz, *Brevis Instructio Futuri Ministri Ecclesiae* (Jena: Nisius, 1660).

[19] Johann Förster, *Methodus concionandi* (Wittenberg: Roth, 1635 and often reprinted).

[20] Johann Gerhard, *Methodus studii theologici* (Jena: Steinmann, 1620 and often reprinted), available in English as "Method of Theological Study," in *On Interpreting Sacred Scripture and Method of Theological Study*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Joshua J. Hayes, Theological Commonplaces I–II (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 135–241; *The Method of Theological Study: Presented in Public Lectures at the University of Jena in 1617*, trans. Paul A. Rydecki (Malone, Tex.: Repristination Press, 2017).

[21] Andreas Adam Hochstetter, *De recta concionandi textumque sacrum cum exponendi tum adplicandi ratione commentariolus* ([n.p.], 1701; 3rd ed., Tübingen, 1767), available in English as "A Short Treatise on How to Preach Aright and How to Expound and Apply the Sacred Text," trans. Joshua J. Hayes, in Wilhelm Loehe, *The Pastor* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 337–358.

[22] Pieper used an abbreviated translation that had appeared in the *Magazin* of Quenstedt's large pastoral theology, *Ethica pastoralis et instructio cathedralis* (Wittenberg: Mevius, 1678).

[23] Claus Harms, *Der Prediger, wie ihn die Pastoraltheologie sein und thun lehret* (Kiel: Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1837).

[24] Christian Palmer, *Evangelische Homiletik* (Stuttgart: J. F. Steinkopf, 1857).

Schott (1780–1835),[25] and Frederick Ernest Ziegler (1807–1882).[26] Among non-Lutherans, Pieper used the English-language preaching textbook[27] of James Mason Hoppin (1820–1906), a Yale professor of homiletics and art history, and a German edition of Charles Spurgeon's (1834–1892) *Lectures to My Students.*[28] Pieper also cites several articles from the "Yellow Bible," the *Magazin für ev.-luth. Homiletik*, and, in a couple places, his seminary homiletics notes from Walther and George Schaller, a professor instrumental in the *Magazin*'s flourishing in the late nineteenth century.[29]

In addition to homileticians, Pieper also cites the chief rhetoricians of classical antiquity, Aristotle's (384–322 BC) *Rhetoric*, Cicero (106–43 BC), Quintilian (AD 35–100), and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (first-century BC).[30] His treasury of preachers ranges from the patristic era to the Lutheran Reformation with Luther as the chief exemplary preacher and John Philip Fresenius (1705–1761),[31] John Jacob Rambach,[32] Philip Jacob Spener (1635–1705),[33] Adolph Hoenecke (1835–1908),[34] and Walther[35] also often referenced or cited as examples of good preaching. Pieper

---

[25] Heinrich August Schott, *Die Theorie der Beredsamkeit mit besonderer Anwendung auf die geistliche Beredsamkeit*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Barth, 1815–1849), and his abridgement, Kurzer Entwurf einer Theorie der Beredsamkeit (Leipzig: Barth, 1815).

[26] Friedrich Ernst Ziegler, *Das Fundamentum Dividendi oder von dem logischen Verhältnisse zwischen dem Hauptsatze und den Theilen der Predigt* (Dresden: Adler and Dietze, 1851).

[27] James Mason Hoppin, *Homiletics* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1881).

[28] Charles Spurgeon, *Vorlesungen in meinem Predigerseminar* (Hamburg: Oncken, 1896), available in the original English in many editions.

[29] Much more information on the *Magazin* and Schaller's contributions among many others is available in Zeitler, "Preaching Christ to the Glory of God."

[30] As all of these rhetorical texts are available online in original and translated versions, titles will be helpful for checking Pieper's sources: Aristotle's *The Art of Rhetoric* (*Rhet.*); Cicero's *De oratore, De inventione,* and his *Topica*; Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (*Inst.*); and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (*Rhet. Her.*).

[31] Joh. Phil. Fresenius, *Auserlesene heilige Reden über die Epistolischen Texte* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Brönner, 1755).

[32] In addition to the homiletical text cited above (n. 7), Pieper used Rambach's hermeneutical works (*Institutiones Hermeneuticae Sacrae* [Jena: Hartung, 1723] and *Erläuterung über seine* Institutiones Hermeneuticae Sacrae, ed. E. F. Neubauer [Giessen: Krieger, 1738]) and his books of sermons (*Christus in Mose*, ed. Joh. Phil. Fresenius [Frankfurt and Leipzig: Spring, 1736]; *Erkenntnis der Wahrheit zur Gottseligkeit* [Halle: Waisenhaus, 1727]; and *Betrachtungen über den Rath Gottes*, ed. Joh. Phil. Fresenius [Giessen: Krieger, 1737]). For more information on Rambach's hermeneutics, see Benjamin T. G. Mayes, "The Mystical Sense of Scripture according to Johann Jacob Rambach," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (January 2008): 45–70.

[33] Philipp Jakob Spener, *Deß thätigen Christenthums Nothwendigkeit und Möglichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Zunner, 1680).

[34] A. Hoenecke, *Wenn ich nur Dich habe* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1893).

[35] In addition to Walther's pastoral theology, Pieper utilized (in chronological order of publication) *Amerikanisch-Luth. Evangelien-Postille* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1880); *Amerikanisch-Luth. Epistel-Postille* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1882); *Casual-Predigten und Reden* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1889); *Gnadenjahr* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1890); *Predigtentwürfe* (St. Louis: Concordia,

worked self-consciously inside a tradition of preaching and thinking about preaching stretching back to and beyond Luther, and though he does not cite any writer or preacher with the same frequency as Walther would, he is clearly aligned with a homiletical tradition centered, as we will see, on an orthodox understanding of Scripture and a concomitant fivefold application of Scripture.

Caemmerer describes his treatise as the result of decades of preaching and teaching preachers to preach. His main text has no notes, and each chapter ends with pedagogical questions and exercises similar to a creative-writing textbook. An absence of citation is not an absence of influence, and Caemmerer's suggestions for further reading are more revealing than his main text. The large "For Further Reading" section of Caemmerer's treatise is not an index of Caemmerer's own reading or even his own homiletical experience. His student years at Concordia St. Louis were still under the domination of Francis Pieper, whom Caemmerer admired for his vigor,[36] and the paucity of German-language material in Caemmerer's recommendations is more likely his estimate of his readers' linguistic capacity than his own. Nonetheless, the recommendations in Caemmerer's annotated bibliography tell us much about his homiletical thinking's sources.[37]

Caemmerer's suggestive citations of Scripture at the top of each recommended reading section are intriguing but unexplored, so it is unclear how he would develop those large passages of Scripture in connection with the specific topics throughout the book.[38] Of the texts or preachers important to Reinhold Pieper, Caemmerer recommends only two: Luther and Walther. The Luther recommendation is only of

---

1891); and *Gesetz und Evangelium: Vorträge* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1893). Walther dominates the "table of chiefly used works" on Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, vii–viii.

[36] Caemmerer's reminiscences of Francis Pieper are in the *Oral History Collection of the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism*, ed. A. Kendrick and H. Knubel (New York: Lutheran Council in the USA, 1984), 23, and are cited along with other valuable summaries of Caemmerer and other Seminex professors in Donn Wilson, "The Word-of-God Conflict in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in the 20th Century" (MDiv thesis, Luther Seminary, 2018), 76.

[37] Clear statements about his theological changes are found in his memoir, written many years after those changes and several years after Seminex when he had greater clarity and calmness in evaluation: see Richard R. Caemmerer, "No Continuing City," especially on his change in understanding the meaning of the word of God, 281–282.

[38] For example, Caemmerer asserts that the "chief tract on preaching in the Scriptures is 2 Corinthians 1–7 (1 Corinthians 1 and 2 supplement); in the sayings of Jesus, John 17; in the Old Testament, Isaiah, especially Chapters 40 and 52. Paul's principle of Law and Gospel is summarized Galatians 3 and 4 [sic]," *Preaching for the Church*, 297. The claim about 2 Corinthians 1–7 is especially fascinating because of the intensely personal character of 2 Corinthians and its relationship to Paul's self-evaluation of the purpose and nature of his apostolic ministry, but the connection between exegesis and homiletics remains loose in these brief mentions.

his sermons on John's Gospel,[39] a much smaller portion of his corpus than Pieper's *Homiletik* references. The Walther recommendation is for (first) the German edition of his *Die rechte Unterscheidung zwischen Gesetz und Evangelium*[40] and (second) W. H. T. Dau's (1864–1944) English translation, *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel.*[41] Some German capacity is presumed by this recommendation, but none of Walther's preaching (then only in German) nor his own chapter on homiletics in his (also then only in German) pastoral theology are commended to the reader. Of the rhetoricians Pieper cited, Caemmerer recommended Aristotle's *Rhetoric.*[42]

Most of Caemmerer's recommendations are much more specialized than Pieper's sources, reflecting the explosion of academic specialization and the entry of Missouri Synod preachers and homileticians into an anglophone intellectual universe. Books on audience psychology, Rudolf Flesch's assorted composition textbooks, art history volumes on Christian symbolism in the fine arts, and communications texts on overcoming common public-speaking difficulties all have a place. Now-forgotten mid-century Missouri Synod sermon volumes and homiletical helps such as O. A. Geiseman's (1893–1962) sermons on the epistle texts for the entire Christian year,[43] W. G. Polack's (1890–1950) sermonic studies on Lenten hymns,[44] and many books of sermons from prominent preachers of mid-century Missouri—including Walter A. Maier (1893–1950) only with palpable disinterest[45]—are present in a profusion astounding by comparison to Pieper's. The Missouri Synod's own literature and sermons had become sufficiently numerous to be available on nearly all the different subjects Caemmerer covers.

---

[39] Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1–4* (1537–1540): vol. 22, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–76); vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–86); vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), hereafter AE.

[40] C. F. W. Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium: Aus seinem schriftlichen Nachlass gesammelt* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1893).

[41] Caemmerer used a 1901 edition of the German text cited in note 35 above; the English is *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia, 1928); *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, ed. Charles P. Schaum, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010).

[42] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 298.

[43] O. A. Geiseman, *Old Truths for a New Day*, 2 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1949), "sermons with pastoral note and insight thoroughly evident," Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 308.

[44] W. G. Polack, *The Seven Ways of Sorrow* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1948).

[45] Maier is listed with Billy Graham as an evangelistic preacher, Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 304, and as having "fertility of Gospel variation," but with a style not suitable to the parish, 307. Caemmerer warmly recommends the sermons of Maier's largely forgotten successor, the third Lutheran Hour Speaker, Armin Oldsen (1910–1994), *A Message from God* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953). See https://www.lutheranhour.org/history.asp for more information.

The preachers and the homileticians among the great number of Caemmerer's recommendations are much less often Lutherans than among Pieper's sources, and when they are Lutherans such as Gustav Wingren (1910–2000)[46] or Edmund Steimle (1907–1988),[47] they are likely not from the Missouri Synod or the other churches of the Synodical Conference, which was on life support in 1959.[48] Caemmerer's favorite homiletical treatise was by the Iowa Synod theologian Michael Reu (1869–1943), cited in the 1924 English translation from Wartburg Publishing House.[49] The Southern Baptist John Broadus's (1827–1895) *Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* was for Caemmerer the classic "review of all factors in the preaching process,"[50] and alongside Broadus, there is bibliographic information for everyone from Episcopalian preacher Phillips Brooks (1835–1893)[51] to liberal Protestant leading light Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969).[52]

The world had changed drastically, and the recommended reading reflected that. What had changed more than reading primarily in English, or reading a greater variety of books on a great array of topics, or reading more non-Lutherans than one had in years past, was the theology of preaching, and Caemmerer's annotated bibliography states that clearly. He knew and promoted a "revival" in homiletics due to a new understanding of what the word of God is.[53] He recommends Karl Barth's

---

[46] Gustav Wingren, *The Living Word*, trans. V. C. Pogue (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960). Caemmerer also used the 1955 German translation from the original Swedish and assessed the work as valuable because it "illustrates the motif theology," Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 298.

[47] Caemmerer admired the textual radio preaching of Steimle on *The Protestant Hour* printed in Edmund Steimle, *Are You Looking for God?* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957). An overview of Steimle's biography and bibliography, including his more theoretical works, is available at the *Day1* (the former *The Protestant Hour*) website: https://day1.org/speakers/5e8f61ac6615fb11a600006f/ view/.

[48] Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2000), 348–358.

[49] J. Michael Reu, *Homiletics*, trans. A. Steinhaeuser (Columbus: Wartburg, 1924).

[50] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 297. The edition Caemmerer used was John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* (New York: R. R. Smith, Inc., 1930), a reprint of the 1870 original. Many versions of Broadus's work are edited and revised by assorted later writers. For example, the 1944 Harper edition printed in New York was J. B. Weatherspoon's revision of C. S. Gardner's revision of E. C. Dargan's revision of Broadus's original text. Distortion could enter into the process as revisions were made and rewriting was done, but the fate of Broadus in his church body was still to be known and to some degree read. Pieper, along with Wessel and others, was first ignored and then unknown in his church body after his death.

[51] Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching: Delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College in January and February 1877* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1877).

[52] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *What Is Vital in Religion* (New York: Harper, 1955), cited by Caemmerer for good examples of preaching without a text and also for his sermons in the *Great Pulpit Masters* series.

[53] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 297.

(1886–1968) *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (in German), vol. 1, part 1, for its ample portrayal of the meaning of "the Word,"[54] and he understands homiletics to be living from the exegetical labors of C. H. Dodd (1884–1973)[55] and Leon Morris (1914–2006)[56] on the early Christian *kerygma*. Caemmerer also understood Luther to agree with these theologians on the basic meaning of the "word of God" as the message of Jesus' death and resurrection, not as the Scriptures.[57]

Uniting these fresh dogmatic and exegetical insights on the meaning of God's word and bringing them together for the sake of homiletics was Wolfgang Trillhaas (1903–1995), whose *Evangelische Predigtlehre*[58] Caemmerer describes as "valuable for integrating the entire process [of preaching] with the basic theology."[59] Trillhaas's treatise summarized the teaching on homiletics that he did alongside other topics in practical theology and dogmatics at both Erlangen and Göttingen. Trillhaas is valuable for his integration—to amend Caemmerer's formulation somewhat—of the continuing task of preaching with the new dialectical theology that Barth magisterially set forth in his *Church Dogmatics*. After distinguishing the discussion of the Christian sermon from the discussion of liturgics generally and specifying who should be a Christian preacher, Trillhaas begins his discussion of homiletics proper with a definition of the Word as principally Christ and secondarily the apostolic witness to Christ. Citing the same portion of the *Church Dogmatics* as Caemmerer had cited, Trillhaas polemicizes against verbal inspiration as a misunderstanding that predicates the emergence of a Bible-word independent from the apostolic witness to Christ directly from the Holy Spirit. Christian preaching is not dependent on the Bible but on the word of God in Christ and the apostolic witness to Christ.[60] Caemmerer's homiletic thus rests on the foundation of neoorthodox theology,[61] a fact with consequences for what preaching is—*inventio*

---

[54] Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I.1 (Zürich: Zollikon, 1944).

[55] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper, 1951).

[56] Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).

[57] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 297.

[58] Wolfgang Trillhaas, *Evangelische Predigtlehre* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1936).

[59] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 297.

[60] Trillhaas, *Evangelische Predigtlehre*, 34–35.

[61] On the apparent similarity in structure and terminology to Lutheran orthodoxy along with a real and large dissimilarity in meaning, see the discussion of Barth and neoorthodoxy's understanding of the Bible and the word of God in Henning Graf Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation, Vol. 4: From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 390–392.

in classical rhetoric[62]—and for how preaching should be done—*dispositio* in classical rhetoric.[63]

This differs greatly from Pieper's articulation that the norm of holy eloquence (*heilige Beredsamkeit*) is "the holy Scripture, the inexhaustible source of heavenly truths."[64] The affirmation of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture was Pieper's throughout his homiletic with no qualification. He does not engage with the growing number of biblical higher critics in American seminaries and divinity schools.[65] For Pieper, preaching expounded the Scriptures and was normed by the Scriptures: "The preacher who would carry out his office rightly must be diligent in finding the actual, true sense of Scripture with certainty."[66] As we compare the topics of *inventio* and *dispositio* in Pieper and Caemmerer, we will find their great differences are all traceable back to their differing understandings of the word of God. Differing hermeneutics produced differing homiletics.

I. Inventio

Both Pieper and Caemmerer professed that sermons should be textual or, in Pieper's German, *textgemäß*, an adjective less vague than the English "textual," specifying that the sermon should conform to the text or should be in accord with the text. Pieper required every Christian sermon to have a text as its basis and its content, whether the text was found in a church lectionary or the preacher's choice.[67] A search for the same discussion in Caemmerer could be confusing because the linguistic shift means that what Pieper describes as, respectively, analytic and synthetic sermons is similar to how Caemmerer discusses textual and topical sermons.[68] For Pieper, an analytic sermon draws its themes and major divisions

---

[62] Classic definitions and discussions of *inventio* from Pieper's sources in Aristotle, *Rhet.* I; Cicero, *De inventione*; Quintilian, *Inst.* III; and *Rhet. Her.* I.3, II.1, III.3-7, 10.

[63] Classic definitions and discussions of *dispositio* from Pieper's sources in Aristotle, *Rhet.* III.13-19; Cicero, *De oratore*, II.291-332; Quintilian, *Inst.* III-VII; and *Rhet. Her.* II.27-46, III.1, 16-18.

[64] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, xviii. All translations from the German are the author's.

[65] The intellectual options on the nature of biblical authority were differently formulated in the 1890s and the 1950s, but the move beyond and away from a verbally inspired text of Scripture similar to Caemmerer's move under a Barthian aegis was available to Pieper. Pieper did not live in a time isolated from challenges to the doctrine of verbal inspiration. See J. D. Campbell, "Biblical Criticism in America, 1858–1892: The Emergence of the Historical Critic" (PhD diss., University of Denver, 1982).

[66] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, xviii.

[67] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 22–25.

[68] For Pieper's analytic and synthetic distinctions, see *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 82–84. For Caemmerer's distinction between textual and topical sermons, see *Preaching for the Church*, 71–72.

from the words of the pericope, and a synthetic sermon draws the theme and major divisions from the preacher's arrangement, whether for catechetical or evangelistic purposes. Caemmerer's distinction of textual from topical sermons is different from Pieper's traditional analytic-synthetic distinction. Caemmerer was aware of the traditional analytic-synthetic distinction[69] but utilized textual and topical instead as, respectively, preaching directly on a Bible text (perhaps even as much as a book at a time)[70] and preaching on something that begins in the preacher's mind and uses biblical materials, if not also some biblical text.[71]

What changed? In Caemmerer's formulation, the preacher's relationship to the text even in a textual sermon, let alone a topical sermon, is looser than in Pieper's understanding of the biblical text's relationship to the sermon. Under the heading "Using the Text," Caemmerer employs an unusual prepositional phrase, "from the text," because the predominant element for the preacher is not the text—which indeed may or may not be present in a sermon although it should normally be present—but the preacher's desire to preach Christ.[72] Indeed, if the text does not speak of redemption through Christ, the preacher should nonetheless proclaim the gospel *stricte dictu*,

> But the text is only a section of a larger picture, and the preacher cannot afford to have it fence in the essential vitality of his message. True, the sermon should not become untextual, but it should not cease to be Biblical and persuasive or the good news.[73]

Note the oppositions between the specific "text" and the "larger picture," between the text as a fence and the preacher's message, and between what is textual and what is "biblical." The controlling element in the relationship between the preacher and the text for Caemmerer is "his total understanding of Scripture, his 'theology,'"[74] not the actual text and its words.

The text is not unimportant, but Caemmerer's metaphor of the preacher as a geography teacher shining a light on a particular part of the globe—the text—shows two things: the preacher's control over the sermon and the text's relative importance. Relative to all of the preacher's "theology," the text is just one text and may not be about the main thing that the preacher wants to proclaim in every

---

[69] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 71.
[70] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 67–68.
[71] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 71.
[72] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 5, inter alia.
[73] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 90.
[74] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 69.

sermon—salvation through Christ.[75] The exploration of textual diversity is controlled by the unity of the preacher's theology as the globe depicts a given small country as part of something much larger. The text does not drive the sermon and serves instead as a "cue" for the message the preacher prepares "on the basis of his total understanding of Scripture, his 'theology.'"[76]

Caemmerer's now famous formulation of homiletical method as "goal-malady-means"[77] governs the sermon. If a text does not provide all three of these "primary components of preaching," then the other one or two components should be developed from other portions of Scripture.[78] The distinction between textual and topical preaching is not very apposite[79] because, extending Caemmerer's geographic metaphor, whatever country the teacher is showing us, he is always anxious to point out that we all live together on a globe. The geography teacher may be gesturing to Burkina Faso or Vanuatu, but one does not ever forget that the whole globe is there. The part is always subsumed by the whole, and if my theme is pine trees or polar bears and I cannot find pine trees in Burkina Faso or polar bears in Vanuatu, I will have to find them somewhere else.

Comparison to Reinhold Pieper's different articulation of textuality is easiest in looking at the differing uses of the words *truth* or *truths*. Caemmerer is at pains to distinguish the preacher's calling as doing full-time what all Christians do part-time—witness to the gospel—again, detached from any specific text of Scripture.[80] The pastor's unique calling as a "full-time Christian witness" is "the calling of speaking the truth, that is, God's redeeming plan fulfilled in Christ (Eph. 4:7–16)."[81] "Truth" is here the gospel *stricte dictu*, not all true things or all scriptural things generally, as in Pieper's formulation of the contents of Holy Scripture as "heavenly truths."[82] Caemmerer's "truth" is narrower than Pieper's and detached from Scripture as Pieper's is not.

---

[75] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 90, "As the preacher plans his sermon, he must make clear to himself how he intends to *amplify the teaching of the bare text* so that he can fully preach the Word" (italics mine). The "bare text" is opposed in this formulation to the "full" preaching of the "Word," which is not the text of the Bible.

[76] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 69.

[77] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 35–40, 68, 88–89.

[78] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 68.

[79] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 69, 71.

[80] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 10–13. Caemmerer's egalitarian reading of Ephesians 4:12 as describing the ministry of all Christians is possible because the pastor's particular knowledge of the word is not about a specific capacity to grasp the text in the original languages or some similar skill. Instead, he says full-time and in every circumstance of his ministry the very same gospel-in-the-narrow-sense message that the laity proclaim.

[81] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 12.

[82] Pieper, *Ev.-luth. Homiletik*, xviii, 12, inter alia.

Compare Pieper's definition of divine preaching as having a pericope of the divine word as its basis, not merely as the foundation of a building lies underneath the building but as the source of the sermon's content. Because Holy Scripture is perfect (*vollkommen*), it contains everything necessary for faith and life (*Wandel*).[83] The definition of preaching is yoked inseparably to the nature and authority of Scripture. There is no element controlling the text, not even "theology," so that although Pieper notes Luther's or Claus Harms's occasional textless preaching, he censures the phenomenon severely. Preaching must confine itself to canonical texts because preaching on non-canonical texts, although this was done in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Pieper notes, means preaching that cannot communicate divine truths. If you are going to preach, why not, Pieper rhetorically asks, have a *divine* word as your basis?[84] The divine text is so free that Pieper will engage in criticism of his forefathers from previous centuries and a preacher whom he admires in Harms—something rare for him—when and where their preaching was unmoored from the canonical divine Scripture: "The careful study of the text leads the preacher more and more deeply into the holy Scripture . . . the more he [the preacher] reads into the Scripture, sinks into it, and lives for it, the more will he also preach according to the text (*textgemäβ*)."[85]

These differing articulations of what preaching is—communicating the truths of a specific text for Pieper as opposed to proclaiming the gospel generally for Caemmerer—are especially clear when the text's scope is examined. The determination of the scope of a text or of a sermon will provide a clear view of the consequences of differing hermeneutics of the Bible and of how that will result in sermons very differently apportioned for congregations. "Rightly dividing the word of truth [ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον]" (2 Tim 2:15)[86] will turn out to be vastly different from Pieper to Caemmerer.

---

[83] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 24–25.

[84] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 25.

[85] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 23–24.

[86] The LXX's use of the same verb at Proverbs 3:6 (ἵνα ὀρθοτομῇ τὰς ὁδούς σου) and 11:5 (δικαιοσύνη ἀμώμους ὀρθοτομεῖ ὁδούς) indicates cutting a straight path through a field or making a straight way to travel upon, a meaning also found in Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.136; Thucydides, 2.100.2; and Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.309. Plato uses the metaphor "cutting a road" in *Leg.* 7, 810E for a previously cleared, metaphorical path in a discussion down which the conversation can fruitfully progress. Paul is adjuring Timothy to make a straight way for sound doctrine in his preaching and teaching. "To 'cut the Word of truth straight' is wisely to give and apply it for the hearer's use," Johann Gerhard, *Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy*, trans. Joshua J. Hayes (St. Louis: Concordia, 2017), 145. All Scripture quotations are the author's translation.

II. Scope

In the preparation and delivery of a sermon, one can speak of its scope—what it is about and where it is headed. It is not in the delivery of a key idea or theme that Pieper and Caemmerer differ very much. What Pieper recommends as the necessity of a clear theme in sermon composition is contained within the pairing of "theme and goal" or "central thought" in Caemmerer.[87] Their major difference in delivery is that Pieper insists on the memorization of a manuscript as far superior to a more extemporaneous delivery, whereas Caemmerer is less insistent on a particular method of delivery while favoring essentially the same delivery as did Pieper.[88] One would have no sense from either writer that the normal Missouri Synod sermon would be about thirteen minutes of reading a manuscript. That has perhaps changed radically, but not because of our chief homileticians.

Difference is evident in the exegesis of the sermon text. Caemmerer's "theme and goal" presupposes a text's intention to apportion the word of God in a particular way for the hearer that should be reflected in the preacher's apportionment of his sermon's major divisions and applications. Inside the text of Scripture and inside the sermon, that "theme and goal" is also called a "central thought," defined also as "the area of chief accent, so that secondary materials recede and the persuasive thrust of the text appears."[89] The term of relative importance, "secondary," requires something primary, so how should the preacher determine what is primary and what is secondary in a text so that he can compose a sermon reflecting those grades of importance? There is some degree of activity on the preacher's part as he must remind himself according to Caemmerer that "I do what I can to get this text to speak to my people, speak the Word of God to them, to the goals of their life."[90] The preacher must "get this text to speak to [his] people" because the text is not per se active in Caemmerer's definition. The text should speak on its own terms without the crutches of commentaries read before reading the Bible, and if commentaries are read, they should not "sponsor the presuppositions of antisupernaturalism or comparative religion."[91] But those are hermeneutical rules for the preacher provided without further discussion by Caemmerer. He gives no more guidance on how to

---

[87] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 69–79; Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 85, 108, and 313–314, particularly for crafting and recrafting the central thought with greater specificity to the day's focus.

[88] Pieper on functional (but not verbatim!) memorization for delivery, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 423–426; Caemmerer on "functional memorization" (his own term), *Preaching for the Church*, 126–129.

[89] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 85.

[90] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 85.

[91] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 84.

read the Bible well or indication that his guidance is the Bible's own guidance. The text is less important than the theological questions brought to the text by the preacher. The text is inert unless the preacher is asking the right questions. Caemmerer's homiletic is full of questions that the preacher should ask himself:

> The best meditation on a text, the best grappling hook for holding the preacher's mind to the text until it speaks to him, functions as he ceaselessly says to himself: "What does this text have to say to me and to my hearer? How is he like the people in this text? How do his problems and handicaps compare with theirs? What does God have to say to him that he was trying to say to them?" These questions aim at the preaching values of the text. Those values are more than its exegetical difficulties, much more than its curiosities and novelties; they are the cues for the Word of God to the hearer.[92]

The word of God for Caemmerer here is not identical to the text of the Bible. It is instead something to which the text of the Bible can cue the preacher so that he can enact it in his preaching. The text is central, but one must ask it the right questions; it is a reluctant informer. Some of what the text says may be "secondary" or mere "curiosities and novelties." No way to determine those things is provided in the few pages of specifically exegetical discussion in *Preaching for the Church*. The ways to discern what is central and what is peripheral will be provided in the goal-malady-means formula. Caemmerer's method of application (*dispositio*) will govern his method of exegesis (*inventio*). The text lies inert until the Lutheran preacher asks it the right questions.

Pieper's homiletic provides two sets of hermeneutical rules, which overlap in his sections on "research (*Erforschung*) into the text and meditation on the same," that is, exegesis, and on the exposition of the text in the sermon.[93] Prayer and the discovery of the grammatical sense of the text are the preliminary steps of research, and should the preacher discover that the grammatical sense is not the one intended by the Holy Spirit (e.g., the leaven in Matt 16:6 is not physical leaven), then the one intended sense of the Holy Spirit—also called the "logical" sense in Pieper and the orthodox Lutherans whom he cites frequently in exegetical discussion—should prevail.[94] For this hermeneutical rule and for all the others he provides in the discussion of exegesis, Pieper adduces examples from Scripture, his expressed rules serving as a compendium of scriptural evidence. The presumption behind the rules and the examples is that the Holy Spirit is the author of Scripture, who desires to communicate directly with the reader through the Bible text, and hermeneutical

---

[92] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 83.
[93] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 39–68 (exegesis), 207–215 (hermeneutical guides for exposition).
[94] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 55.

rules provide keys to how the Spirit has chosen to reveal His will in Scripture.[95] Scripture is active, the reader of Scripture is passive, and the Scripture reveals itself in ways that are sufficiently coherent and consistent that rules can be derived from Scripture. The contents that are revealed are "truths" in the plural.[96] The best interpreter of those truths will be someone who prays, meditates on Scripture, and has spiritual experience—Pieper's recapitulation of Luther's threefold formula for the making of a theologian.[97]

The exposition of Scripture—clear explanation of its meaning apart from its application—was for Pieper the basis of each Christian sermon even as he understood the didactic use of Scripture (discussed below) as the most fundamental to the Christian faith.[98] If Scripture had to be explained according to its sense, the preacher's task was to discover that sense and relate it to the congregation. There is no further goal nor any further questions apart from discovery and proclamation of the sense of the text:

> Preaching worthy of the name must flow from the portion of the divine Word underlying it and must be built upon it. The text must be the material or afford the content of the same; only when this is really the case, can it [the sermon] be textual (*textgemäß*) and scriptural (*schriftgemäß*). Only then is it called a sermon.[99]

So Pieper's twelve hermeneutical rules for exposition cover topics such as a review of the distinction between grammatical and logical sense, the weightiness for Christian doctrine only of the logical sense where it differs from the grammatical sense, what the mystical sense is, how preachers should use it, and why the preacher must say what the Scripture *definitely* says, not what it *in all likelihood* says.[100]

Such exposition in its breadth and depth will serve on its own—before the question of application and its method has been discussed—to edify the hearer. Pieper asks how edification will happen, how the hearer individually and the church collectively will be built up in the faith. He says that the answer is clear: through the word of God, by which he means the Spirit-intended sense of the Scripture because the Lord has given no other means to His church.[101] God's word and only God's word must be taught and preached for edification, and its sense will enlighten the

---

[95] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 42–44, 52.

[96] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 57.

[97] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 62–65.

[98] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 57–60, 293–295.

[99] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 215.

[100] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 212–222.

[101] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 215–217.

understanding, move the heart, and fortify the will.[102] The text itself does these things as it is relayed according to its sense in the sermon. The preacher's task is to discover what the Scripture means so that its meaning could be handed over, a humbler task than the discovery and existential questioning of Caemmerer's method.

III. Dispositio

The question of faithful disposition of a text's exposition and applications is according to Pieper the most difficult task in preaching because it must follow the text's logic rather than human wisdom.[103] This portion of what has changed in our preaching I have kept for now because (1) one has to comprehend the difference in meaning of the term "word of God" between Pieper and Caemmerer first before (2) one can understand how that affects their concept of what preaching is (*inventio*), because (3) this section on application (*dispositio*) has often startled those with whom I have discussed these things. An understanding of "law and gospel preaching" very familiar to us and to our hearers in modern preaching is absent from Pieper, whom Walther taught to preach, and something more familiar to us as "law and gospel preaching" is present in Caemmerer, whose ideal preacher was much less loosely attached to the text of Scripture than Pieper's. I do not want to trouble Israel, but Israel is sometimes prone to forget things about its past.

Applications for Pieper were either theoretical or practical. Theoretical applications occur when the preacher says that this or that miracle of Christ proves His divinity, for example, and Pieper's main burden in this uncomplicated affirmation is to discuss how that should be handled in the Old Testament.[104] His discussion of practical application is where his homiletic becomes unfamiliar to many of us. His understanding of application is governed (as are his hermeneutical rules) by the text of Scripture, which yields, according to him and many Lutheran homileticians before him, a fivefold use of Scripture, drawn from 2 Timothy 3:16 and Romans 15:4—namely, didactic (teaching the sense of Scripture), elenctic (refuting the opponents of Scripture), epanorthotic (exhorting the believer in the way of righteousness), paedeutic (training the Christian) (all from 2 Tim 3:16), and (uniquely from Rom 15:4) paracletic (comforting the Christian and the church).[105]

---

[102] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 57. This multifaceted description of the hearer with his varying faculties aligns to some degree with Caemmerer's different "accents in preaching" according to differing human maladies. The distinction between the methods of application lie more in the uniform law-gospel dynamic Caemmerer describes as dynamite on one hand and Pieper's fivefold, more varied application described immediately after mention of the various human faculties.

[103] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 116–122.

[104] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 277.

[105] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 289.

Like David Schmitt's helpful cautions about how Caemmerer's homiletic was not intended to be a sermon outline[106] (about which Caemmerer himself is clear),[107] Pieper avers that it would be a piece of "pedantic schematism" to make a fivefold application of every text in every sermon.[108] So how does a preacher know which applications to make from which texts? Preaching makes intense claims on the human conscience, such that Pieper spends much of the chapter on application handling how and why severe warnings about the consequences of sin should accompany the elenctic, epanorthotic, and paedeutic uses in particular.[109] With such serious things in hand, what informs the preacher as to which applications to make, whether theoretical applications of which doctrines to discuss or practical applications of which parts of life to handle? The text itself. Both kinds of application are discerned from the "content of the text,"[110] such as a theoretical application concerning the divinity of Christ or a practical application concerning contentment or fleshly wrath taken up in the text. One need not guess. If it is in the text, one discusses it. If it is not, one does not, and Pieper's discussion of how the fivefold use should be handled is confined to the means of delivery, not the means of discovery, which he has made clear in the assertion that the applications are also found in the Spirit-inspired sense of the text.

The German words for *distinction*, *law*, and *gospel* do not appear in the index of topics in Pieper's homiletic, and the discussion of the distinction between law and gospel is confined to a page-and-a-third in a section on composing textually sound outlines.[111] Citing Walther,[112] Pieper insists that sermons should be logically well-built, rhetorically well-said, and above all, what he, Walther, and others call "biblical-psychological," that is, the major divisions of the sermon are ordered in accord with how human souls are and how the order of salvation works.[113] Pieper

---

[106] First in David Schmitt, "Freedom of Form: Law/Gospel and Sermon Structure in Contemporary Lutheran Proclamation," *Concordia Journal* (January 1999): 42–55, and comprehensively in David R. Schmitt, "Richard Caemmerer's Goal, Malady, Means: A Retrospective Glance," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74, nos. 1–2 (January–April 2010): 23–38.

[107] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 96, "Isn't it true that the accent on persuasion, developed in the preceding chapter, will suggest the major division for every text: I. Goal, II. Malady, III. Means? No. . . . When the preacher can confront his hearers with Law and Gospel repeatedly in the same sermon without muddling his plan, then he is on the track of a good outline!"

[108] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 289.

[109] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 329–337.

[110] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 277.

[111] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 122–123.

[112] Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 109; *Pastoral Theology*, 128–129.

[113] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 122.

gives an example of a biblical-psychologically rightly ordered outline on the text "You were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20):

1. Awakening to repentance

2. Full of comfort for faith

3. Exhortation to sanctification

One could not put sanctification before repentance or repentance after faith. Pieper does not employ law and gospel to discuss either the meaning of Scripture or its application per se. Law and gospel order the sermon toward the salvation of the hearer but do not determine the sense of the text that must be delivered to the hearer. This resembles his teacher Walther's placement of the distinction between law and gospel within a discussion of pure doctrine as the first necessity of a sermon. The point is not that "law and gospel" are an outline or a hermeneutic overruling all others; rather, they keep the order of salvation clear in the sermon.[114] Walther maintains first that pure doctrine must be preached from the word of God, which also means that law and gospel must be distinguished,[115] but all of Walther's discussion of application is under the heading of the fivefold use of Scripture, as Pieper's is.[116] The disposition of the text in its exposition and application will happen according to Pieper by the text's own *fundamentum dividendi*—its own self-apportionment discovered through exegesis—on which he spends an extensive amount of time.[117] The text will make its own applications and have its own lessons to teach, things to encourage, things to discourage, comforts to bring. The preacher discovers those things in his meditation and then relays them to the congregation.

Caemmerer's method of application flows along the line of his goal-malady-means rubric in which the preacher discovers the divine goal for faith or prayer or family, the malady particular to that goal, and the divine means of righting what is wrong.[118] This meshes well with the terms of *law* and *gospel*, so that the process is summarized in Caemmerer's words as "the goals of preaching," "preaching God's

---

[114] One of Walther's most fervent pleas for studying the distinction between law and gospel is revealing about the distinction's place in early Missouri Synod practical theology. Walther speaks about the urgency of the distinction for pastoral practice generally, not in sermon construction: *Law & Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, 71–72. Walther's encouraging remarks in the twenty-eighth lecture (May 15, 1885) on difficulties in sermon writing and correct disposition (*Law & Gospel*, 328–332) concern the seriousness of preaching, humility about one's divine task, and the necessity of clear organization of one's material, not a dynamic particular to every sermon as found in Caemmerer's homiletic.

[115] Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 78–79; Pastoral Theology, 97–98.

[116] Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, 80–95; *Pastoral Theology*, 98–109; Pieper, *Homiletik*, 289–318.

[117] Pieper, *Ev.-Luth. Homiletik*, 133–154.

[118] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 36–39, 177.

judgment," and "preaching God's rescue."[119] This will occur in more or less every sermon—not as a wooden outline but as a rubric for how to preach. To this end, various law-gospel pairings or complexes are provided in different parts of the text, especially in Appendix III with a list of law-gospel pairings that would multiply over the years.[120] Preaching is not organized around the text but around a predetermined law-gospel dynamic that works the hearer through the malady the law diagnoses by means of the gospel to the divinely defined goal. This dynamic affects how the text is interpreted and how the sermon is arranged and makes no specific claim such as Pieper made about the human soul's need for varied application according to the fivefold use of Scripture. Instead, a particular experience of condemnation or destruction followed by forgiveness or restoration is how Caemmerer describes what occurs in sermons:

> God wants to use the preacher as a rifle through which the projectile of the Spirit sinks deeps into the heart of the hearer to kill death and explode into life . . . [The preacher] is like an engineer, building a road through a rocky defile, standing at the plunger of a charge of dynamite, half afraid of the upheaval about to come, half expecting that the charge won't detonate at all. Let the preacher brace himself for his task with cheer. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the *dynamis Theou*" (Rom 1:16).[121]

If Pieper's homiletic is focused on the Spirit-given sense and application of Scripture, Caemmerer's has abandoned the notion of a Spirit-given sense or applications for the sake of a free-floating dynamic of law and gospel untethered from any particular Scripture. The "Word of God" is not Scripture for Caemmerer; it is God's address of law and gospel to man.

---

[119] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 20.

[120] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 29–31, 330–331. Cf. similar ways of organizing law and gospel for preaching in Francis Rossow, *Preaching the Creative Gospel Creatively* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1983); Francis Rossow, *Gospel Handles: Finding New Connections in Biblical Texts* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2001); and Francis Rossow, *Gospel Handles: Old Testament Lessons* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2014). Rossow summarized the method and theology of preaching in this way in "Effective Biblical Proclamation of the Gospel," *Concordia Journal* (January 1978): 29–33; with reference to Caemmerer's *Preaching for the Church*, Gerhard Aho, *Sermon Theory I Notes* (Fort Wayne: CTS Press, n.d.), 1; and describing as "correlates" what Caemmerer called "complexes," Gerhard Aho, "Law and Gospel in Preaching," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 45, nos. 1–2 (January–April 1981): 1–4. Caemmerer's continuing influence in the Missouri Synod is recognized by at least one author, "Dozenten beider Concordia-Seminare der Missouri-Synode arbeiten heute in der homiletischen Linie von Caemmerer über Aho weiter," Daniel J. Schmidt, *Der Homiletische Entwurf von Gerhard Aho (1923–1987): Studie zur Rekonstruktion eines nordamerikanischen lutherischen Predigtkonzepts* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014), 384.

[121] Caemmerer, *Preaching for the Church*, 49–50.

You are likely familiar with the phrase "law and gospel preaching" but maybe not with the term *fundamentum dividendi* or many of the terms and concepts in Pieper's homiletic discussed in this article. This is because although the doctrine of verbal inspiration of Scripture is common to Pieper's homiletic and the modern LCMS, our common homiletical method is often quite different from his and resembles Caemmerer's more than Pieper's. Caemmerer's homiletic is based on a neoorthodox understanding of the phrase "word of God" that is emphatically not the same thing as Holy Scripture, and because the text is impotent without the preacher's law-gospel questions and dynamic, the preacher himself must make a law-gospel experience happen each time for his hearers. Sermons will inevitably sound the same because the same basic application of condemnation and absolution is occurring in every sermon. Caemmerer's homiletic and preaching, aligned with his prioritization of theological presupposition over exegesis, is out of line with Paul's affirmation that "all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, ready for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16–17). Pieper's homiletic fits much better with Paul's teaching that it is not the preacher's ideas or questions that are God-breathed but the text of Scripture, whose meaning and applications it is our joy to communicate to His people.