



"Meditate  
upon these things;  
give thyself  
wholly to them;  
that thy profiting  
may appear unto all"

I Timothy 4:15

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Journal  
of  
Theology

**Church of the Lutheran Confession**

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" T H Y   W O R D   I S   T R U T H "

"In our teaching and preaching we rely wholly upon the Bible, the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We regard this Book of Books as the Word of God, verbally inspired and wholly without error as written by holy men of God. We consider our mission to be that of communicating the words and message of this Book to those who will hear them; and we know of no other divine source of true doctrine and instruction in the way of salvation and in God-pleasing living."<sup>1</sup>

This is and remains our church body's confession and belief with respect to the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. In the last two issues of this Journal,<sup>2</sup> we have demonstrated the Biblical origin and basis of this faith of ours in the full, self-authenticating authority of Scripture. In this present issue we shall direct our attention to several remaining topics -- all of which are important, inasmuch as they are part of the current theological debate concerning inspiration and inerrancy.

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WHY THE            It is no secret that the authority of the  
DENIALS?           Bible has come to be widely denied, also  
                      within churches which one or two generations  
ago fully shared our confession. What are the reasons  
for these denials? Have discoveries in the areas of  
science or history so undermined the message of the Bible  
that it is no longer fully credible? Have contradictions  
been found in the sacred record which are so serious as  
to discredit it as the divinely revealed Word in all its  
statements and utterances? We shall address ourselves  
now to these questions.

The Alleged Contradictions

The search for contradictions and other internal inaccuracies in the Biblical record is almost as old as

Christianity itself. The "index of errors" was begun by such pagan philosophers as Celsus and Porphyry, and has been supplemented by infidels throughout the centuries. The scoffers Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll worked on it, and so also such rationalists as Lessing and Strauss. It is truly amazing that modern-day liberals among the Lutherans should choose to associate themselves in this Bible-destroying effort with such questionable company. But so they do. A recent president of the American Lutheran Church, writing in the Lutheran Standard, boldly proclaimed concerning the narratives of the resurrection of Christ: "To be sure, you will find discrepancies in the several Gospel accounts; but they are the discrepancies that belong to a many-faceted story that is truthfully [?] told by witnesses who come to it with varying backgrounds and points of view."<sup>3</sup> When a letter to the editor subsequently protested this attack on the inerrancy of the Bible, the magazine replied: "One example of a 'discrepancy' is the time when the women arrived at the tomb. Mark says, 'when the sun had risen.' John says, 'while it was still dark.' Other questions involve the number of women or the number of angels."<sup>4</sup>

Robert Scharlemann is another of the growing number of Lutherans who have taken their stand among the skeptics and scoffers. In the Lutheran Scholar for April, 1963, he presented a series of anti-inerrancy arguments.<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that Scharlemann came up with nothing at all new; his allegations were merely rewordings of oft-repeated charges against Scripture. John Warwick Montgomery observes: "The alleged factual errors and internal contradictions in Scripture which are currently cited to demonstrate the impossibly archaic nature of the inerrancy view are themselves impossibly archaic in a high proportion of instances."<sup>6</sup>

Anyone who is acquainted with the history of Christian apologetics knows that the various alleged discrepancies have been dealt with in a variety of honest, scholarly, and effective ways. Is there, for example, a real, irreconcilable contradiction between Mark and John on the time when the women arrived at the tomb? The Greek text of Mark 16:2 can be translated literally: "They (the women) come to the tomb as the sun is rising."<sup>7</sup>

The text of John 20:1 can be rendered: "Mary Magdalene goes early when it is still dark to the tomb."<sup>8</sup> Surely William Arndt is correct in offering the following as a possible explanation for the alleged contradiction: "The difficulty is easily solved when the actual situation is looked into. To go to the grave, the women had to walk some distance. This was the case whether we assume that they lodged in Jerusalem or that they stayed at Bethany. When they left their quarters, it may have been still dark, and when they arrived at the tomb, which was outside the city walls, the sun may just have been coming into view. John is thinking of the time of departure for the grave, Mark of the time of arrival there."<sup>9</sup>

But what if we should come upon some apparent contradiction in Scripture for which we can offer no probable solution? Would we be thereby forced to abandon the doctrine of inerrancy? By no means. Johannes Ylvisaker well represents the answer of Christian faith to this question when he states in his Gospels:

"If we are to grasp the real significance of the Gospels, it is therefore a matter of the greatest importance that we understand the point of view and the purpose of the sacred writer. And since the evangelists do not presume to recount everything Jesus has spoken and done and suffered, we can not expect to find in their records the answer to all questions bearing upon chronology and harmony. But this does not give us the right to join hands with the spokesmen of destructive criticism and rear an insuperable wall of contradictions where no discrepancy really exists. Very frequently the men who exert all their energy and shrewdness trying to cover up divergences in the realm of secular history are just as eager to ferret them out in the Bible. This is very significant. Because our knowledge is imperfect, we shall encounter difficulties in the Gospels as elsewhere in the Bible, but real contradictions, never. And when obstacles sometimes arise, we should follow the example of Luther, remove our hat, go our way, and humbly admit that the Holy Ghost is wiser than we. We must often be content when we can say:

Thus it may be, even if we are unable to insist that it must be so."<sup>10</sup>

"He that believeth shall not make haste -- he shall not panic," says the Prophet Isaiah.<sup>11</sup> Christian faith is characterized by quiet patience and calm poise. It is willing to wait for that Day, described by the hymn-writer, when "all questions and doubts have been answered at last." (Lutheran Hymnal, 415:6) It is not shaken by problems encountered in the study of the Bible, for it recognizes that such difficulties are the result only of our own imperfect understanding. To charge the Bible with error because of seeming contradictions, as has become so fashionable among many theologians, is surely not a mark of such humble and confident faith. It is a manifestation, rather, of arrogant intellectual pride!

#### Alleged Problems from Science and History

It is, we would suppose, commonly thought that the findings of science are becoming increasingly hostile to claims for an inerrant Bible. The typical high-school or college biology text, for example, treats organic evolution as if it were a well-founded and indisputable fact. Treatises on geology confidently assign to some of the inorganic materials of this universe ages of over four billion years. Such extravagant claims have won a large following, and theologians by the thousands have felt compelled to modify their old beliefs in the direction of theistic evolution.

Meanwhile, however, we find a small, but increasingly larger number of scientists who have been publicly declaring their agreement with a literal understanding of the creation account of Scripture. An open and unprejudiced evaluation of scientific evidence has convinced them that evolution is no longer tenable as a theory of origins. Such evidence, they believe, fits far better into the framework of Biblical catastrophism -- the creation, the deluge, etc. The publications of the American Scientific Affiliation, and more recently the Creation Research Society, have done much to expose the fallacy of the evolutionary hypothesis. It seems strange

indeed to find an increasing number of scientists accepting a six-day creation, while more and more theologians are capitulating to some form of evolution!

Why do we mention these things? Not because we suppose that the data of science can ever instill in man's heart a belief, a fides divina, in the creation account as it is recorded in the Bible. For "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3), and "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). But we do think that there is less reason now than even a generation ago for raising questions about the trustworthiness of the Biblical record with respect to the scientific assertions which it makes.

The same is true also in the area of historical studies. Archeological finds continue to demonstrate the accuracy of Biblical history. "In point of fact, ... the present climate of research is more hospitable to an inerrancy approach than was the nineteenth century or the early decades of the twentieth. Archeological work daily confirms biblical history in ways which liberal criticism would have regarded as patently impossible a few decades ago."<sup>12</sup>

The higher critics of the last century devised elaborate theories to "prove" that the apostolic writings of the New Testament were of late date and reflect a long period of theological development in the primitive church. But then fragments of papyri from very early copies of the Gospels are discovered in the caves of Qumran and in Egypt, and give the lie to such theories. Indeed, the very stones cry out against them! Again, the form-critical techniques of Wellhausen, Bultmann, Dibelius, and their followers have raised doubts concerning the authenticity of many books of the Bible. But applications of these same techniques to secular literature have been sufficiently unsuccessful as to raise serious questions as to their validity. "All in all, the traditional position on inspiration is able to command more respect today than it has during any generation since the advent of rationalistic higher criticism."<sup>13</sup>

### The Philosophical Bias

In view of such considerations, one would think that the denials of verbal inspiration and inerrancy would be on the decline. But just the opposite is found to be true. Statistical surveys of religious belief in our country indicate a rapidly increasing breakdown in people's confidence in the authority and reliability of Holy Scripture. We have tried to show in the preceding paragraphs that the reason for this does not lie in the weight of any new factual evidence against the dependability of the Bible. Criticisms based on alleged internal contradictions are as old as Scripture itself, and have been adequately answered by believing scholars of the Bible. And if recent findings in the areas of science and history indicate anything, they tend to support the reliability of Scripture. Why, then, the pronounced falling away? The answer, as some have suggested, would indeed seem to lie in a philosophical bias, a naturalistic conception of reality which would deny that God can and does enter directly into the events of the world and the affairs of individual men. It is not the existence of God that is rejected, but rather the direct intervention of God in the on-going affairs of time. According to this dualistic naturalism, God is God, and history is history, and ne'er the twain shall meet -- at least not directly! Supernatural events simply must not be placed into the historical chain of natural events.

That such naturalism should be captivating the minds of people is hardly surprising, for the Bible itself has foretold that this particular kind of unbelief would characterize the thinking of men in the last days of this world. We read in 2 Peter 3:3-7:

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed

with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Note the targets of these scoffers -- divine creation by the almighty Word of God, the deluge as a direct judgment of God upon the unbelief of men, and the coming of Christ in glory on the Last Day. Men prefer to believe that all things occur in a uniform, undisturbed fashion, according to purely natural laws and processes which have been in operation since the beginning of time. That God has broken into the course of history in the past, and shall continue to do so in the future, is not only denied by them, but becomes the target of their mockery. And note also that the apostle characterizes their unbelief as willful ignorance. They refuse to believe what Scripture says, in spite of all external evidences for the fact of God's intervention in history. Their wills are perverted, and they therefore reject even those telling facts that stand directly before their very eyes!

How does this relate to our present subject, the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture? Those whose minds are captivated by this unbelieving philosophical bias are, of course, forced to deny the supernatural occurrences in the Bible as literal history. The giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai, the story of Jonah, the predictive nature of much Scriptural prophecy, the incarnation and virgin birth, the miracles of Christ, the resurrection -- all such things are either set aside as the imaginings of unenlightened people, or they are reinterpreted in some naturalistic fashion. And, of course, the miracle of verbal inspiration must also go, for that the Spirit of God could have employed the holy writers in such a way that they wrote only His thoughts and His words, that the eternal Word of God should be revealed through the medium of human language, is just too much for them to accept!

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LUTHER AND INSPIRATION      The liberals among the Lutherans do not want to give up their confessional label. They would like to be known as genuine followers of the Reformer. And so they assert that Luther did not teach the absolute and complete inerrancy of the Bible. He took a much freer attitude toward Scripture, they say, regarding only that as inspired and inerrant which related directly to Christ and the Gospel.

It is indeed baffling how men of scholarship can depict Luther's beliefs concerning the Bible in this fashion. For in reading his commentaries, sermons, and letters, one becomes convinced that he held a very high view of Scripture, a position no different in essence from that of the 17th-century Lutheran dogmaticians and of our own theological forefathers, such as Franz Pieper and Adolf Hoenecke. It is true, of course, that we do not find in Luther's writings a long and exhaustive treatment on this subject, nor would we expect it. For the inspiration of the Bible was in his day not really in dispute.<sup>14</sup> But we do find abundant remarks in which the Reformer reveals to us clearly and unmistakably his attitude toward Scripture.

### Luther and Verbal Inspiration

The technical term, verbal inspiration, had not been devised by the time of Luther, but he indeed did teach the doctrine denoted by this term. And he reveals a belief in such inspiration in some of his earliest writings. In his Lectures on the Psalms, 1513-1516, Luther frequently expressed his high regard for the Scriptures. Dr. Reu has assembled a series of quotations from these lectures: "They [the Scriptures] are the fountain from which one must dip. Each word of the same is a source which affords an inexhaustible abundance of water to everyone who thirsts after the saving doctrine. God's will is completely contained therein, so that we must constantly go back to them. Nothing should be presented which is not confirmed by the authority of both Testaments and agrees with them. It cannot be otherwise, for the Scriptures are divine; in them God speaks and they are His Word."<sup>15</sup> Reu points out that already in these

lectures "Luther regards the expressions, 'God speaks,' and 'the Scriptures speak,' as convertible. To hear or read the Scriptures is nothing else than to hear God. They are His sanctuary in which He is present. Therefore we dare not despise one single word of the Scripture for 'all its words are weighed, counted, and measured.'"<sup>16</sup> In one place, Luther did not hesitate to use even the term calamus (writing-reed, pen) in speaking of the Biblical writer as an instrument of the Holy Spirit in inspiration.<sup>17</sup>

Again and again Luther points to the Holy Spirit, or God, as the true Author of the Bible. In his Table Talk, he alludes to the fact that "the Holy writings contain histories that are certainly written very briefly but very well. They exhaust everything with one word.... Few words about matters of great importance, because here the Holy Spirit is speaking."<sup>18</sup> In his second reply to Jerome Emser (1521), Luther defends the Apostle Peter's view of the New Testament priesthood because "St. Peter's words are God's words, which permit none other than the one universal priesthood to stand."<sup>19</sup> In the spring of 1522, he published a booklet in which he exhorted his readers to avoid the doctrines of men and briefly explained a number of passages frequently misused in the interest of such human teachings. In this booklet he asserts: "And the Scriptures, although they too are written by men, are neither of men nor from men but from God."<sup>20</sup> Again in 1522, in his exposition of 1 Peter 3: 15, he recommends: "If people refuse to believe, you should keep silence; for you have no obligation to force them to regard Scripture as God's Book or Word. It is sufficient for you to base your proof on Scripture."<sup>21</sup> Several years later, in his Confession Concerning Christ's Supper (1528), Luther sharply rebukes those who deny the clear meaning of the words of institution: "For if they believed that these were God's words, they would not call them 'poor, miserable words,' but would prize a single tittle and letter more highly than the whole world, and would fear and tremble before them as before God himself."<sup>22</sup> In his Commentary on the Fifteen Songs of Degrees (1531-1533), Luther complains about the unintelligible Latin translation of Psalm 127:3, and then

adds: "Not only the words (vocabula), but also the manner of speaking which the Holy Spirit and Scripture use, is from God."<sup>23</sup> In 1532, as he introduces his Commentary on the 51st Psalm, Luther states: "Where is there a man who could speak about repentance and the forgiveness of sins the way the Holy Spirit speaks in this psalm?"<sup>24</sup> Several times in his sermon Commentary on the 15th Chapter of 1 Corinthians (1533), Luther clearly identifies the Bible and the Word of God: "Scripture, or God's Word."<sup>25</sup> How much more strongly could Luther speak concerning the inspiration of the Bible than when he says in his preface to a book by Urban Rhegius: "The Bible ... is the Holy Spirit's own special Book, Writing, and Word."<sup>26</sup> In his Commentary on Galatians (1535), Luther says under Galatians 1:9: "Nor should any other doctrine be presented or heard in the church except the pure Word of God, that is, Holy Scripture."<sup>27</sup> Again, in his Sermons on the Gospel of John (1537-1540): "For Holy Scripture, which is God's Word, says so; and I abide by what it states.... Holy Scripture did not spring from the soil of the earth (ist nicht auf Erden gewachsen)."<sup>28</sup> Near the end of his comments on the Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith (1538), Luther says: "There is not a superfluous letter in the Scriptures (kein Buchstabe in der Schrift vergeblich ist)... They are God's Scriptures and God's Word, which no man is supposed to or can interpret."<sup>29</sup>

Luther found many things in the book of Genesis which seemed to be of a common and even contemptible nature. But he repeatedly urged in his lectures (1542) that also such passages are designed for our learning and comfort, since they too are the Word of God. On Genesis 29:1-3: "Nor should you reflect or wonder why the Holy Spirit takes pleasure in the description of these servile and despised works. But listen to St. Paul when he says (Rom. 15:4): 'Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.' If we believed firmly, as I do, even though I believe weakly, that the Holy Spirit Himself and God, the Creator of all things, is the Author of this book and of such unimportant matters, as they seem to be to the flesh, then

we would have the greatest consolation, as Paul says."<sup>30</sup> On Genesis 30:14-16: "One must always keep in view what I emphasize so often, namely, that the Holy Spirit is the Author of this book. He Himself takes such delight in playing and trifling when describing things that are unimportant, puerile, and worthless; and He hands this down to be taught in the church as though it redounded to the greatest edification."<sup>31</sup>

Luther retained this belief in verbal inspiration throughout his life. In 1543 he wrote a Treatise on the Last Words of David, in which he confesses, on 2 Samuel 23:2-3: "We sing in the article of the Creed concerning the Holy Spirit: 'Who spake by the prophets.' Thus we attribute to the Holy Spirit all of Holy Scripture and the external Word and the sacraments, which touch and move our external ears and other senses.... David remarks that the Spirit of the Lord has spoken through his tongue.... Therefore these words of David are also those of the Holy Spirit, which He speaks with David's tongue." Later in this treatise, he cites the Gospel of John and then drops the following remark: "This is the speech of St. John, or rather, of the Holy Spirit."<sup>32</sup> In the year following (1544), continuing his Lectures on Genesis, he emphasizes: "We should know, then, that the sacred accounts must be scrutinized a little more deeply than the profane histories and the deeds of the heathen.... Now, however, one must note that the author of this book is someone else, namely, the Holy Spirit."<sup>33</sup> In the preface to a book written by M. Joh. Freder (1545), Luther again identifies the Bible and the Word of God: "God's Word or the Holy Scripture."<sup>34</sup>

So central was the fact of inspiration in Luther's thinking, that he was led several times to allude to it in personal inscriptions in books given to his friends. "Holy Scripture is God's Word, written and (as I might say) lettered and formed in letters."<sup>35</sup> "This is the Holy Spirit's book, namely the Holy Scripture."<sup>36</sup> "This is surely a comforting passage [Is. 55:11], if only we could believe that God is speaking to us, and that whatever we read or hear in the Bible is God's Word. Then we would find and feel that it is not read or heard without fruit or in vain. But our accursed unbelief and our

miserable flesh does not let us see or notice that God is speaking with us in Scripture, or that it is God's Word. Rather we think that it is the word of Isaiah, Paul, or some other mere man, who has not created heaven and earth."<sup>37</sup>

Nor did Luther limit this divine inspiration to those portions of the Bible that treat of Christ and salvation, as do so many of his errant followers. In his Table Talk (1538), he says regarding the book of Jonah: "This story of Jonah is so great that it is almost unbelievable, and it seems as absurd as one of the tales of the poets. If it were not in the Bible, I would laugh the whole thing off as a lie."<sup>38</sup> But he didn't, for it was God's Word that was here involved! In 1541 Luther published a chronology of world history, in the preface of which he states concerning secular historians: "I make use of them in such a way that I am not compelled to contradict Scripture. For I believe that in Scripture the God of truth is speaking."<sup>39</sup> Thus he recognized the Bible as authoritative in those matters of history which it treats. In 1535 Luther began his great Lectures on Genesis. In the first chapter of this book he was, of course, confronted with statements of a scientific nature. Did he suggest that in these matters it was not necessary to yield to the Scriptural account? Quite the opposite. He states as a matter of principle: "We Christians must, therefore, be different from the philosophers in the way we think about the causes of these things. And if some are beyond our comprehension (like those before us concerning the waters above the heavens), we must believe them and admit our lack of knowledge rather than either wickedly deny them or presumptuously interpret them in conformity with our understanding. We must pay attention to the expression of Holy Scripture, and abide by the words of the Holy Spirit."<sup>40</sup> In his preface to the Sermons on Genesis (1524), Luther says bluntly: "When Moses writes that God in six days created heaven and earth and all that is in them, let it stand that it was six days ... But if you can't understand how it was six days, then accord to the Holy Spirit the honor that He is more learned than you. For you should treat Scripture in this way that you think of how God Himself

is saying this."<sup>41</sup> Surely the epistles of Paul contain items that are quite far removed from the Gospel message proper, yet everything that the apostle says is to be heeded: "God forbid that there should be one jot or tittle in all of Paul which the whole church universal is not bound to follow and keep!"<sup>42</sup>

Did Luther believe in what we now call verbal inspiration? How can there be any doubt about it? Says Engelder: "It is one of the mysteries of the ages how theologians who claim to be conversant with Luther's writings can give credence to the myth that Luther did not teach Verbal, Plenary Inspiration.... Read only volumes I - IX and XIV [of the St. Louis ed.], and, says Pastor W. Bodamer in the article 'Luthers Stellung zur Lehre von der Verbalinspiration' (Theologische Quartalschrift, 1936, p. 240ff.), you will find 'more than a thousand statements' of Luther which unequivocally assert Verbal Inspiration and identify Scripture and the Word of God." But Engelder realizes that the liberals are very set in their ways, and he therefore sighs: "The moderns are going to believe the myth [that Luther did not teach full inspiration] till doomsday."<sup>43</sup>

### Luther and Inerrancy

We have already seen that Luther regarded the historical and scientific statements of Scripture as authoritative and true. How far he was from charging even a single passage of the Bible with error! "As for me, every single verse makes the world too narrow for me."<sup>44</sup>

Luther moreover specifically spoke of Scripture as being inerrant and free from contradictions. "Scripture has never yet erred." "Scripture cannot err." "It is certain that Scripture cannot disagree with itself.... For it is established by God's Word that God does not lie, nor does His Word lie."<sup>45</sup> And still another strong assertion -- which might indeed fit also some of Luther's professed followers: "It is impossible that Scripture should disagree with itself, which thing can happen only among the senseless and obstinate hypocrites."<sup>46</sup>

It is not that Luther did not at times find difficulty with some passages of the Bible, The chronology in

the case of Arphaxad (Gen. 11:11) seemed confused to him, but he did not charge Scripture with error: "Some give one answer, others another.... As I stated above, our faith is not endangered if we should lack knowledge about these matters. This much is sure: Scripture does not lie. Therefore answers that are given in support of the trustworthiness of Scripture serve a purpose, even though they may not be altogether reliable."<sup>47</sup> An even more perplexing chronological difficulty arose in connection with the story of Abraham: "In the instance of Abraham himself we are sixty years short." But he refused to ascribe error to the inspired text: "It is senseless to imitate the foolhardy geniuses who immediately shout that an obvious error has been committed whenever such a difficulty arises and who unabashedly dare emend books that are not their own. As yet I have no real answer for this question, even though I have carefully computed the years of the world." He humbly admitted his own lack of knowledge, recognizing that "it is the Holy Spirit alone who knows and understands all things."<sup>48</sup> Luther had trouble also in harmonizing the accounts of Matthew and John on the purging of the temple. Again he did not accuse the apostles of making a mistake, but offered a tentative solution and added: "Be that as it may; whether it happened sooner or later, whether it happened once or twice, this will not prejudice our faith."<sup>49</sup> As to the differences in the wording of the four records of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Luther suggested that the Holy Spirit purposely ordered it so: "The Holy Spirit studiously arranged that no evangelist should agree with another in exactly the same words."<sup>50</sup>

In spite of copious evidence that Luther believed in and taught the full inerrancy of Holy Scripture, repeated attempts have been made by opponents of this doctrine to show that he on several occasions wavered in this conviction. Dr. Reu and other Luther scholars have examined these attempts, and have demonstrated that any such charges against Luther are lacking in substance. For while he may on a couple occasions have said that a certain holy writer produced a confusing passage, he did not charge him or the Spirit with being confused. Such confusion he attributed rather to his own lack of under-

standing, and not to the mind of the Spirit or the writer. Chapters five and six of Reu's treatise, Luther and the Scriptures, are well worth reading in this connection. The titles of these chapters reveal Reu's conclusions: "Luther Never Admitted Any Error in Scripture ... Even Those Parts of Scripture That Do Not Concern Our Salvation Were Considered Errorless by Luther."<sup>51</sup>

Luther recognized well what is involved when Scripture is charged with error at even one point: "For it is certain that whoever does not rightly believe in one article of faith, or does not want to believe (after he has been admonished), he surely believes no article with an earnest and true faith. And whoever is so bold that he dares to deny God or to accuse him of lying in one word, and he does this maliciously in opposition to that about which he was once or twice admonished and instructed, he also dares (and he certainly does it, too) to deny God in all of his words and to accuse him of lying. For this reason we say that everything is to be believed completely and without exception, or nothing is to be believed. The Holy Spirit does not let himself be divided or cut up so that he should let one point be taught and believed as trustworthy and another as false."<sup>52</sup> And what happens to one's faith when the inerrancy of Scripture is called into question? "No one will ever persuade me that a person should be able to believe with earnestness a book or writing of which he would be convinced that even one part (not to speak of three parts) would be false."<sup>53</sup>

Luther has been most sadly misrepresented by those who wish to destroy his testimony concerning the full inerrancy of the Bible. They allege, for example, that only that in Scripture was binding for him which proclaimed Christ. The fact of the matter is that all of Scripture was binding for Luther, simply because it all did proclaim Christ. "Every Christian can see how Scripture agrees throughout, and how all examples and histories, yea, the entire Scripture from beginning to end (durch und durch), aims at this, that one come to know Christ."<sup>54</sup>

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THE CONFESSIONS  
AND INSPIRATION

True, we admit that the Lutheran Confessions do not contain separate articles devoted to a discussion of verbal inspiration and inerrancy. We do not need the liberals to point this fact out to us. Nor would we expect the Confessions to contain such articles, for the divine authority of Scripture was not a major issue of controversy during most of the 16th century. Robert Preus points out: "Before the rise of the Jesuit controversialists in the late sixteenth century Lutheran theologians had never considered the inspiration of Scripture as a separate locus, although Chemnitz, for instance, expended a great deal of effort on defending the Lutheran position regarding canonicity and authority of Scripture in his celebrated polemic, Examen Concilii Tridentini. Huelsemann [1602-1661] also adds the interesting remark that the Augsburg Confession, although it does not specifically treat of a doctrine of inspiration, nevertheless presupposes that Scripture was the inspired Word of God. This is also the judgment of Leonhard Hutter [1563-1616] in the preface to his Libri Christianiae Concordiae. Hutter was acquainted personally with the framers of the Formula of Concord. He says that the sola scriptura principle cannot be upheld unless the inspiration of Scripture is predicated. According to the dogmatists, the inspiration of Scripture, as taken for granted in the confessions, becomes a confessional principle."<sup>55</sup> (Cf. also the quotation from Preus cited below under "The Dogmatists and Inspiration -- The Historical Background").

One surely does not have to read far in the Confessions to recognize that a belief in verbal inspiration and inerrancy lies in them implicitly, if not explicitly. Doctrinal statements are based on individual passages of Scripture, and often a theological argument turns on the meaning of single words. Nor is the authority of the Bible limited to teachings which are directly concerned with Christ and the Gospel. It should hardly be necessary to illustrate these obvious facts with specific quotations.

But is it true, actually, that the Confessions have nothing at all to say on the matter of inspiration and inerrancy? We think that they do. Consider, for example,

the full implication of the following broad principle, enunciated by Luther and subscribed to by the Formula of Concord: "The Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine, to which the writings of no man should be regarded as equal, but to which everything should be subjected."<sup>56</sup> (The Latin text significantly uses "the sacred writings" as a synonym here for "the Word of God.")

Lut us note well what this sentence states: The writings of no man should be regarded as equal to the Bible; all things should be subjected to the Bible. What are we to do, then, when modern-day science contradicts the creation account of Genesis 1? Our Confession says, Follow the Bible! Or what are we to say when learned scholars assure us that the New Testament is in error when it points to Moses as the writer of the Pentateuch? Again our Confession says, Follow the Bible! Surely Montgomery is correct when he says concerning the above quotation from the Formula of Concord: "Clearly, the Bible is held to stand in judgment over all other books -- in all fields -- and no man is permitted to judge Scripture in any particular."<sup>57</sup> Could the Bible occupy this supreme position of judgment if it were not infallible? The answer should be obvious!

\* \* \* \*

#### THE DOGMATICIANS AND INSPIRATION

The Lutheran dogmaticians of the 17th century, including such theological giants as Gerhard, Calov, Quenstedt, Baier, and Hollaz, have been much misunderstood and maligned, not only by their theological opponents in the Catholic and Reformed churches, but also by liberals among the Lutherans. In our own day also it has become popular to label the doctrines of verbal inspiration and the infallibility of Scripture as an invention of these German theologians. Because of their frequent use of the term dictatio in describing the mode of inspiration, they have been charged with teaching a theory of mechanical dictation, in which the holy writers were passive and unthinking as they penned the words of the Spirit. Beyond this, they have been criticized by

some as leading the church toward a type of dead orthodoxy, in which Christian faith and piety were neglected through an overemphasis on pure doctrine.

Robert Preus has made a valuable contribution toward a correct understanding of the so-called age of orthodoxy through the publication in 1955 of the volume, The Inspiration of Scripture.<sup>58</sup> In this well documented and scholarly treatise, he not only presents the words and thoughts of some twenty of the 17th century Lutheran dogmaticians on this vital doctrine, but also shows how their efforts were in large part a response to the theological needs of their day.

### The Historical Background

During most of the preceding century there were no serious or large-scale attacks against the inspiration of Scripture, its authority, inerrancy, or clarity. But by the end of the 1500's the situation was rapidly changing. Catholic theologians, in an effort to destroy the Lutheran doctrine of sola scriptura, began to question these doctrines. If it could be shown that the Bible was not the Word of God in all its statements and words, or that its teachings concerning salvation were unclear or incomplete, then there would indeed be a need for some extra-Biblical authority in the church, such as tradition, the pope, or councils. A victory by the Catholics on this crucial issue concerning the nature and authority of Scripture could destroy, not only the entire work of the Reformation, but also the glorious spiritual freedom of believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Preus states: "In his Vindiciae S. Scripturae John Huelsemann [1602-1661] asserts that had it not been for the rise of the Jesuits the inspiration and divinity of the Scriptures would not in his day have been questioned. Except for a few rather free-thinking Catholic theologians like Erasmus and Albert Pighius most Catholics before the seventeenth century spoke of the origin of Scripture in terms very like those employed by the seventeenth century Lutheran dogmaticians."<sup>59</sup>

As the 17th century moved onward, such able and scholarly Jesuits as Bellarmine, Huntlaeus, and Bonfrere

became ever more subtle and persuasive in their attacks, making it necessary for the Lutherans to respond with increasingly precise, and lengthy, formulations of their beliefs. But these dogmaticians were finding it necessary to defend the full inspiration and authority of Scripture against enemies from other quarters also. During the half century after the death of Faustus Socinus, Socinianism, with its rationalistic approach to Scripture, experienced a remarkable growth. Then additional troubles arose within the Lutheran camp itself, with the syncretism of Calixt (d. 1656) and the Helmstedt school of theology. Thus during the 17th century "the formulation of the doctrine of verbal inspiration as it was presented by the old Lutheran dogmaticians underwent a definite development which at the close of the century culminated in Calov, Quenstedt, Baier and Hollaz. Although all the old dogmaticians held the same view concerning inspiration, the later representatives of this orthodox Lutheran tradition go into the subject in much more detail. For instance, they are more explicit in teaching that the very words of Scripture were inspired, and they are quick to avoid embracing a mechanical theory of inspiration, whereas the earlier dogmaticians, while certainly not teaching such a doctrine, made less conscious an effort to reject it. This high degree of doctrinal formulation has its origin at least partly ... in the polemical tendency of the day and in the ever-present threat of Romanism, syncretism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and mysticism."<sup>60</sup>

### Monergism and Dictation

The dogmaticians indeed stressed the monergism of the Holy Spirit in the process of inspiration. Yet this doctrine, according to the dogmaticians, "does not imply that God dehumanized his amanuenses and reduced them to mere mechanisms. They spoke consciously and out of understanding and experience and they wrote in the same way.... Not only did the writers write consciously, they were enlightened intellectually and spiritually so that they understood very well what they wrote under inspiration.... This monergistic doctrine does not imply that

the amanuenses were forced to write Scripture. They wrote willingly, but not of their own free will. God made them willing penmen. As Christians whose wills were ruled by the Spirit of God they wrote willingly. They themselves chose what they would write. Therefore the apostles and prophets had the same purpose in writing Scripture as did God. God did not violate the wills and personalities of His penmen but conditioned them and made them what they were. He prepared their intellect and incited their will to write what they did.... This monergistic doctrine of inspiration does not imply that the amanuenses lost their identity or that they did not retain their various stylistic differences.... The obvious diversity of style between the various books, written by different authors, is explained by the fact that the Holy Spirit accommodated Himself to the circumstances, abilities and natural endowments of the amanuenses; in such a way a musician might adjust himself to the various chords and tones of a musical instrument, and yet the notes which all musical instruments play are the same."<sup>61</sup>

The dogmaticians repeatedly used terms like "pens" and "hands" in referring to the holy men of God. They did not wish thereby to dehumanize them, but desired only to exclude any kind of cooperation on the part of the writers which would make Scripture a divine-human product. Through such terms they sought "to emphasize their conviction that God was in fact the auctor primarius [primary author] of Scripture and the apostles and prophets the means or instruments through whom God reduced His Word to writing."<sup>62</sup>

The word dictatio as used by the dogmaticians does not mean what its English derivative, dictation, implies, but suggests rather the idea of Eingebung. Therefore when they state that the writers of Scripture could record only what was dictated to them, they do not mean that they wrote as lifeless automata, but rather that they wrote only those words which the Holy Spirit actually imparted to them.<sup>63</sup>

### The Piety of the Dogmaticians

Dr. Preus quotes extensively from the dogmaticians

during the course of his book, and from these quotations we have become even more fully convinced that these men ought not be charged with a furthering of dead orthodoxy. Their faith and piety is often manifested through the things they say.

Consider, for example, this beautiful statement from Calov: "This article [sola scriptura] is to be used in the following manner: (1) We are to recognize and accept without reservation the holy Scripture -- all of it, the Old Testament no less than the New -- as the Word of Almighty God, and we are to regard and cherish it as the most precious of treasures. (2) We are devoutly to give audience to God speaking in the Word, we are to reflect upon His Word day and night and we are to explore it with true piety and utmost devotion. (3) We are to turn neither to the right nor to the left from Scripture, nor are we to suffer ourselves to be moved to the slightest degree by the solicitation of others or the desires of our own flesh, lest in some way we introduce something in doctrine or life which is contrary to better knowledge or against our conscience. (4) We are to accord faith to the Scriptures in all [their utterances] and place our trust only in the Scriptures, or the Word of God, and bravely fight with them as with the sword of the Spirit against whatever temptations may arise. (5) We are to gain comfort from them alone in every necessity of body and soul, and through patient consolation of the Scriptures have a sure hope of life and remain steadfast to the end of life."<sup>64</sup>

\* \* \* \*

#### THE DANGER OF DENIALS

The liberals employ many specious and fine-sounding arguments in defense of their freer attitudes toward Holy Scripture. They claim, for example, that their approach, which allows for discrepancies and inaccuracies in the non-Gospel portions of Scripture, makes it easier for people in our day to come to faith. An insistence upon verbal inspiration and inerrancy, they say, can serve only to drive thinking individuals away from the Bible.

Such subtle sophistry serves to cover up the dread

danger that lies in their attacks upon the trustworthiness of the Bible. At stake is nothing less than the sola scriptura principle, which God restored to us through His servant, Martin Luther, and for which the Lutheran dogmaticians fought so valiantly. If indeed there are errors in the Bible, then there is need for some authority outside of the Bible to separate these errors from the truth. Who is to perform this necessary service for us, fraught as it is with eternal consequences? Shall we entrust this task of separating the chaff from the wheat to seminary faculties or synodical conventions, even as congregations in some large Lutheran bodies are doing? Then we are back once more to the popes and councils of Catholicism. Or shall we employ our own reason and common sense in the effort to find the divine in Scripture? Then nothing in the Bible would long be safe, as the history of rationalism clearly shows.

But, the liberals say, we give you a principle whereby you can indeed isolate the truth in Scripture: whatever involves Christ and the Gospel is most assuredly true! To which we respond, What proof can you offer us for the validity of this principle? Or how can we determine just what doctrines of the Bible do pertain to Christ and the Gospel? We listen for their answer, and we hear none, for they have none to give. For by this time they have come to realize that any such proof or answer, to be convincing, would have to come from the Bible itself -- the trustworthiness of which they themselves have called into question!

Luther surely understood the matter far better than these rebellious children of the Reformation who still wish to claim him as a father, but who are in fact opposing him with the weapons of a Bellarmine and a Socinus. With Scripture, it is an all-or-none situation. Either the entire Bible is divinely authoritative, or none of it remains certain. But let Luther express it, in his own simple and inimitable way:

"We must be able to 'stand against the wiles of the devil,' for the devil does not come in a gruesome black garb and say: I am the devil, beware of me!

No, he slinks like a serpent and adorns himself with high sounding words from the Bible and the name of God. He quotes the Scriptures and Bible verses which we love and upon which we base our faith; he feigns piety and devotion and appears like a faithful and god-fearing preacher, who seeks nothing else than God's honor and the salvation of souls. He asks only that we grant him his own opinion in a little word and unimportant doctrine here and there.

"If we grant (Satan and the errorist) but one doctrine, he has then gained the victory. It is as though we have granted him a right to change every doctrine, and we have lost Christ. For all (doctrines) are bound together like a golden chain where, if one link is broken, the entire chain is torn and everything falls apart.

"The articles of our faith are clearly and firmly based upon every Word of God. We must hold fast to them and not let them be explained away by man-made interpretations nor be twisted so as to make them agreeable to human reason. But when they (the errorists) come with human reason and thereby attempt to make you uncertain in your faith, then you must say to them: Here is God's clean (dñrre) Word and my faith in it. By these I will remain nor will I enquire further nor investigate whether it will agree with what man thinks nor will I listen to others, regardless of what verse and passage they bring and apply according to their brain and contaminate by their drivel.

"The connivers come with the false argument that one should not be so exacting about one little article of faith and thereby disturb Christian love. If there is only one little error, while there is agreement in all other points, one can give in a little and so retain brotherly and Christian unity and fellowship. No, my dear man, don't talk to me about peace and unity at the cost of yielding God's Word, because with such loss we have lost eternal life and all things. Here we cannot yield to please you nor any other person, be he friend or foe.



Besides, the Word has not been given to establish outward and worldly unity, but to give us eternal life. The Word and doctrine itself will create unity and fellowship. Where there is agreement in these, the rest follows. Where there is no agreement in these, there no unity can be maintained. So don't talk to me of love and friendship, where one wants to shorten the Word of God, for we are told that not love, but the Word gives us eternal life, God's grace, and all heavenly treasures."<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, much is at stake in the present controversy. We do not speak at all too strongly when we profess as a church body: "We therefore reject as sacrilegious and destructive every effort by which the intellect or science of man would modify or set aside a single inspired word. We deplore the widespread apostasy, now common even in former 'conservative' church bodies, which reduces the Bible to the status of a human document containing errors and myths."<sup>66</sup>

May our faithful God graciously forgive us any sins of carelessness, indifference, or unthankfulness in the use of His Word, and through the Gospel of His Son preserve us in the confession:

"Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth,  
To Thy Word I now give heed;  
Life and spirit Thy Word beareth,  
All Thy Word is true indeed.  
Death's dread power in me is rife;  
Jesus, may Thy Word of Life  
Fill my soul with love's strong fervor  
That I cling to Thee forever."

(Lutheran Hymnal, 296:1)

C. Kuehne

#### FOOTNOTES

1. "Statement of Faith and Purpose of the Church of the Lutheran Confession," p. 2.

2. Journal of Theology: Dec., 1972, pp. 22-35; March, 1973, pp. 1-15.
3. Lutheran Standard, April 24, 1962, p. 6.
4. Idem, July 3, 1962, p. 20.
5. Cf. John Warwick Montgomery, Crisis in Lutheran Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), vol. I, p. 19.
6. Ibid.
7. The aorist circumstantial participle, ἀνατείλωντος, can denote action simultaneous with the main verb of the sentence, ἔρχονται. This is particularly true of such participles when they follow the main verb. Cf. Mark 15:30: σώσον σεαυτὸν καταβάς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, which can be rendered in English: "Save yourself by coming down from the cross."
8. It is common knowledge that the verb in question, ἔρχεται, can have the sense of our English verb "go." Cf. John 21:3: "Simon Peter says to them: 'I am going (ὑπάγω) fishing.' They say to him: 'We too are going (ἐρχόμεθα) with you.'"
9. W. Arndt, Does the Bible Contradict Itself? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 82. It is to be regretted that this useful booklet has gone out of print and has not been reissued.
10. Joh. Ylvisaker, The Gospels (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1932), p. 4. The minor improvements in the translation of this passage were made by Prof. Geo. O. Lillegard.
11. Isaiah 28:16. The idiomatic translation, "shall not panic," is suggested by H.C. Leupold in his Exposition of Isaiah (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), vol. I, p. 443f.
12. Montgomery, op. cit., p. 20.
13. Idem, p. 21.
14. Cf. Ewald M. Plass, What Luther Says (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), vol. I, p. 83, f.n. 22: "In fact, even the authority of Scripture was, in theory, never officially impugned by Rome, however badly Rome's practice nullified her public profession."
15. M. Reu, Luther and the Scriptures (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1944), p. 17. We agree with Montgomery's evaluation of Reu's book, that it presents an "impeccable

historical case" for the fact that Luther believed in the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. (Montgomery, op. cit., p. 36.) It is unfortunate, however, that Reu, in the closing chapters of his treatise, speaks of a "human activity and cooperation" in the process of inspiration. The word "cooperation" is subject to misunderstanding, such as that the Bible is a divine-human product. Nor is such a word consistent with the words ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ("being borne along by the Holy Spirit") of 2 Peter 1:21. The dogmaticians of the 17th century rightly emphasized the monergism of divine inspiration, and they did so without reducing the holy writers to unthinking automata.

16. Idem, p. 17f. Luther's Latin reads: "Omnia verba Dei sunt in pondere, numero, mensura."
17. Idem, p. 114.
18. Cited in Plass, op. cit., vol. II, p. 651.
19. St. Louis ed., 18:1361.
20. American Ed., 35:153.
21. Idem, 30:107.
22. Idem, 37:308.
23. St. Louis ed., 4:1960; Weimar ed., 40 III:254.
24. American Ed., 12:303f.
25. St. Louis ed., 8:1111, 1129.
26. Idem, 14:349.
27. Idem, 9:87.
28. American Ed., 22:6, 484; St. Louis ed., 7:2095.
29. American Ed., 34:227f.; St. Louis ed., 10:1018.
30. American Ed., 5:275.
31. Idem, 5:352.
32. Idem, 15:275f., 299.
33. Idem, 7:314.
34. St. Louis ed., 14:413.
35. Idem, 9:1770.
36. Idem, 9:1775.
37. Idem, 9:1800.
38. Idem, 22:1424.
39. Idem, 14:491.
40. American Ed., 1:30.
41. St. Louis ed., 3:21.
42. American Ed., 36:25.

43. Theodore Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken (Mora, Minn.: Hope, Inc., n.d.), p. 290f., f.n.
44. St. Louis ed., 20:788.
45. Idem, 15:1481, 19:1073, 20:798.
46. Idem, 9:356.
47. American Ed., 2:232f.
48. Idem, 2:238f.
49. Idem, 22:218.
50. Idem, 36:165.
51. Reu, op. cit., p. 65, 91. Cf. also Engelder, op. cit., p. 291, f.n.
52. American Ed., 38:308.
53. St. Louis ed., 20:2274f.
54. Idem, 3:18.
55. Robert Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture (Mankato, Minn.: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 1955), p. 26f.
56. Concordia Triglotta, p. 855.
57. Montgomery, op. cit., p. 43.
58. Cf. footnote 55.
59. Preus, op. cit., p. 26.
60. Idem, p. 73f.
61. Idem, pp. 57-61.
62. Idem, p. 67.
63. Idem, p. 72f.
64. Idem, p. 12.
65. From Luther's sermon on Ephesians 6:10-17, preached in 1532. St. Louis ed., 9:810ff. Translation by Pastor G.W. Fischer.
66. "Statement of Faith and Purpose of the Church of the Lutheran Confession," p. 2.



CHRIST OR MASONRY ?

EITHER/OR      Are Christianity and Masonry compatible?  
                   No -- as little as fire and water! It's  
 one or the other, but it can't be both.

How is it that so many Masons are members of Christian churches? How can it be that members of the clergy of Christian denominations are Masons? Either these people, including the clergymen, don't understand Masonry or they don't understand Christianity. A generation of liberalism and doctrinal indifference, together with the forces of ecumenism, have produced a condition of widespread religious illiteracy -- in the classrooms of seminaries, in the pulpits throughout the land, in the homes, and in the personal spiritual lives of individuals.

Can a Mason be saved? Only God can answer that question. If a Christian becomes a Mason in ignorance -- petitioning for membership in a desire to enhance his social life, make business contacts, or obtain the vaunted security of the organization -- his faith may well be preserved amidst the unknowing denial of that faith through his Masonic membership. But if a person knowingly and willfully petitions for membership or refuses to demit from the organization after the conflict between Masonry and Christ has been pointed out to him, he is openly denying the Lord and endangering his soul's salvation. The Word of the Lord is undeniably clear:

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Matt. 10:32-33.*

MASONRY --      Many Masons object quite vehemently when  
 Religious      it is suggested to them that Masonry is a  
                   religious organization -- until they open  
 their Masonic manuals and begin to read a bit. Albert G. Mackey is a universally recognized authority on Freemasonry in the United States: He was asked by the "Encyclopedia Britannica" to write the article on "Freemasonry." In the "Masonic Ritualist" he makes the fol-

lowing statements:

"Masonry is a religious institution." P. 44.

"Freemasonry is indebted for its origin to its religious and philosophic character." P. 46.

The Masonic edition of the Holman Bible contains

#### THE MASONIC BELIEF

There is one God, the Father of all men.

The Holy Bible is the Great Light in Masonry, and the Rule and Guide for faith and practice.

Man is immortal.

Character determines destiny.

Love of man is, next to God, man's first duty.

Prayer, communion of man with God, is helpful.

The above reveals that the three essentials of Masonic religion are GOD - MORALITY - IMMORTALITY. A little pamphlet, entitled "What is Freemasonry?", produced by "The Masonic Service Association of the United States" defines Freemasonry as follows:

"Freemasonry is an organization, membership in which is contingent upon a professed belief in God and immortality, subscribing to a moral philosophy founded on the principle of the Brotherhood of Man, taught by means of allegory and symbols." Pp. 8-9.

GOD -- to be sure!

BUT WHAT GOD?

Freemasonry is not atheistic; it is theistic. It is furthermore monotheistic, not polytheistic.

"The Masonic Belief" states very clearly and definitely, "There is one God, the Father of all men." This statement has a biblical ring -- almost an echo of Malachi 2: 10: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?"

But what looks alike and sounds alike may well be part of the Serpent's guile to deceive the unwary. For when one examines Masonic literature, it is immediately evident that the concept of "God" is purposely left vague and undefined. It's like the clay that little children play with -- twisting and shaping it into any form that meets their fancy. So it is that the "God" of the Masons

is called "the Father of all men" -- a biblically sound-  
ing name. But the same "God" is also called the "Eternal  
Supreme Grand Master of the Universe" -- a name reflect-  
ing the pride of the organization. But then the same  
"God" is referred to as "the Nameless One of a hundred  
names" -- a truly blasphemous designation for God. But  
so it must be, for Masonry is proud of its universality  
and broadmindedness in religious matters. This is how  
one Masonic writer states it:

"Freemasonry has taught each man can, by himself,  
work out his own conception of God and thereby  
achieve salvation." Ward, "Freemasonry: Its Aims  
and Ideals," p. 187.

This is undiluted idolatry and blasphemy. God  
created man in His own image and revealed His identity in  
the Bible. Freemasonry gives each man the right and duty  
to create "God" in his own image.

JESUS CHRIST --           What is the result when man creates  
Optional                   a concept of "God"? Man is unable to  
                                  rise above the level of the natural  
knowledge of God. All men, on the basis of observing  
the universe and by listening to their own consciences,  
know that there is a God. But the knowledge that there  
is a God is not saving knowledge. The devil also knows  
this and trembles. The question remains: Who is the  
true God?

When man answers that question by himself, he cannot  
but make Jesus Christ optional, that is, put Him on a  
"take it or leave it" basis. That is idolatry, pure and  
simple. Anyone who thinks of or prays to or trusts in a  
"God" that rejects Jesus Christ as essential to that  
"God" is worshipping a figment of his own imagination.  
Without Jesus Christ there is no God! The Holy Bible,  
which Masonry claims as its "Great Light," is so explicit  
on this point that it becomes dishonesty for anyone to  
say, "I can't see it." Consider these passages:

*All men should honour the Son, even as they  
honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son  
honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.  
John 5:23.*

*Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the  
Father. I John 2:23.*

St. Paul describes the Ephesians before their conversion in this way:

*.... ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Eph. 2:12.*

Applying these words to Masonry Paul is saying:

*"You Masons are without Christ. You are aliens from the Holy Christian Church. You have no hope. You, in fact, have no God!"*

NO CHRIST -- Any organization that confesses an un-  
NO SALVATION! defined "God," thus making Jesus  
Christ optional to the confession of  
God, automatically endorses and proclaims salvation by  
works. And that leads not to salvation, but to damna-  
tion!

We have suggested that many individuals get involved with Masonry because they either don't understand Masonry or they fail to understand the essence of Christianity. To put it otherwise: Most nominal Christians do not understand the essential difference between paganism and Christianity.

The basic question is this: How is a man saved? Christianity answers that God must save man since no man can save himself or even contribute to his own salvation. Paganism affirms that each one must in some way or another save himself or at least contribute to his salvation. The Bible reveals that our Savior-God has saved us by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Substitute. As our Substitute He entered the stream of mankind, born of the virgin Mary. He lived as we should live, but fail to live. He did all things commanded by the Law of God and left undone all things forbidden by that same Law of God. We do what the Law forbids and leave undone what it commands. Because of that we are guilty. So again the Lord Jesus, as our Substitute, was made sin for us and so suffered and died to take away our guilt. Thus Christianity can be reduced to but three words: HE FOR US! By contrast paganism can be reduced to four words: EACH ONE FOR HIMSELF!



MASONRY -- Masonry is pure, undilute paganism!  
 PAGANISM! Masonry answers the question of salvation  
 with three words: "Character determines  
 destiny." The character that will assure immortality is  
 character developed and shaped by Masonic moralism.  
 Masonry consistently asserts that every good Mason will  
 gain admittance into the Lodge above.

THE CONTRAST Many a Mason carries about in his wallet  
 a little card entitled "What Is a Mason?"  
 Many Christians carry about in their hearts Luther's ex-  
 planation of the Second Article of the Apostolic Creed.  
 The contrast reveals the irreconcilable conflict between  
 Masonry and Christianity:

#### WHAT IS A MASON?

A Mason is a man and  
 brother whose trust is in  
 God. he [sic] will meet  
 you on the level. and act  
 on the level. and act  
 upon the Square. Truth is  
 his Compass and he is ever  
 Plumb. He has grip on all  
 that is rite. He is loyal  
 to his order and whatever  
 his degree. he is master  
 of himself. In the lodge  
 of life he wears unstained  
 the white lambskin of in-  
 nocence. From his initi-  
 ation as Entered Appren-  
 tice he travels ever  
 toward the East in search  
 of light and wisdom until  
 he received the Final, the  
 divine Password that ad-  
 mits him into the inef-  
 fable presence of the  
 Eternal Supreme Grand  
 Master of the universe  
 GOD.

#### WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is a person  
 who says in his heart  
 "that Jesus Christ is true  
 God, begotten of the  
 Father from eternity, and  
 also true man, born of the  
 virgin Mary; and that He  
 is my Lord, Who has re-  
 deemed me, a lost and con-  
 demned creature, purchased  
 and won me from all sins,  
 from death and the power  
 of the devil; not with  
 gold or silver, but with  
 His holy, precious blood,  
 and with His innocent suf-  
 ferings and death; in or-  
 der that I might be His  
 own, live under Him in His  
 kingdom, and serve Him in  
 everlasting righteousness,  
 innocence and blessedness;  
 even as He is risen from  
 the dead, lives and reigns  
 to all eternity. This is  
 most certainly true."

THE LAMBSKIN      Freemasonry is a system of morality illustrated by symbols. One of the first, and so the basic, symbol that a Mason receives is his lambskin or White Leather Apron. The candidate for the First, or Entered Apprentice, Degree is told:

"You were presented with the Lambskin, or White Leather Apron, because the lamb has in all ages been deemed an emblem of innocence. He therefore, who wears the Lambskin, or White Leather Apron, as the badge of a Mason, is thereby continually reminded of that purity of conduct and life which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the celestial lodge where the supreme Architect of the Universe presides." "King Solomon and His Followers," p. 34.

When a Mason is buried, the ritual prescribes that -

"The Marshal then presents the apron to the Master, who unfolds it and says:

'The lambskin or white leather apron is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. The lamb has in all ages been deemed an emblem of innocence; by the lambskin the Mason is, therefore, reminded of that purity of life and conduct which is so essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above, where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides. This emblem I now deposit in the grave of our deceased brother.'

"The Master then throws the apron into the grave ...." "Ahriman Rezon, SC Constitution and Code," 1919, p. 280.

What a contrast there is between Christianity and Masonry! How can it be otherwise since Masonry is pure paganism! The Mason wears the "lambskin" as a symbol of his own righteousness -- which the Spirit of God describes in Isaiah 64:6 "as filthy rags." The Christian appeals for mercy to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. It's one or the other, either the "lambskin," symbolizing the Mason's own righteousness or the righteousness of the Lamb of God."

The Mason believes that his moral life, symbolized by his "lambskin," will gain him "the divine Password that admits him into the ineffable presence of the Eternal Supreme Grand Master of the Universe God." St. Paul

wrote the Galatians: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the words of the law (by moral living) but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2:16. Any Mason who trusts that his own moral living, symbolized by his "lambskin," will merit him the "Password" to eternal life is deceiving himself and will most assuredly hear those dread words from the Lord Jesus, the Judge of all flesh: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25:41. It can't be otherwise because Masonry rejects the Christ who said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6.

WHAT TO DO            If you have not been approached or are indirectly approached to petition for membership in the Masons or any of its affiliates, respond with a polite, but definite "Thanks, but NO THANKS!" Then be prepared to give a reason for your refusal and the hope that is in you.

If you have become a member without realizing that such membership is a denial of your faith in the Lord Jesus, there is but one step open: Demit, and that decisively. The Word of the Lord is clear:

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. II Cor. 6:14-18.*

Paul F. Nolting

---

COME BEFORE WINTER\*

There is a time for all below the sun,  
a time to every purpose under heaven:  
time to be born, and then a time to die;  
a time to plant, a time to pluck up plants;  
a time to kill, another time to heal;  
to break things down, some times to build them up;  
to weep somehow, and other times to laugh;  
we mourn when sad, and then again we dance;  
we cast stones off, or gather them to build;  
we scatter foolishly the things we need;  
some times are to embrace, some to refrain;  
time often kept were better cast away;  
sometimes we sew, at others better tear;  
keep silence once, again we ought to speak;  
a place there is in every human life  
for love and hate, for peace and war  
                                  --all these do alternate.  
The Speaker of the Ages speaketh thus.

As body is by grace, so is its spirit's death!  
--the death of sinful Adam, drowned each day.  
By Holy Spirit sent us from His Son  
we grow in Him, the very Christ, come down,  
on Jordan's bank announced by chosen John,  
the greatest son of woman ever born,  
                                  as Jesus named him so.

---

\* The message "Come Before Winter" was prepared for Immanuel Lutheran Congregation, Winter Haven, Florida, as a word of closing for the last Sunday of the church year. The editor asked Pastor Galstad to share this message with the readers of our Journal. The poetic genre in which this message is cast is an example of a form different from the usual prose of our sermons. Those who are thus gifted may consider using this mode as a variation. It is especially helpful when such a message is printed and thus can be read at leisure. Editor.

Our Brother in the flesh is Christ our God,  
Creator and upholder of the world.  
Epiphany made plain His mighty power:  
in Temple first at twelve He stood revealed,  
the Father's Son upon God's business bent;  
at Cana was shown forth His sovereignty  
when water blushed to wine and cheered the guests  
in happy merriment  
--a God for people's homes He came to be,  
to bless and do them well.

In Christ we grow to stature, full and tall,  
and by His fulness filled, our kith and kin,  
we are His brothers --born at Christmastide.

The time had come to plant:  
He made the Kingdom known in Galilee.  
He chose disciples, Twelve, His special men  
to tell abroad the news when time had come.

Before the building up, He must break down  
the hardness of hard hearts in hardened men:  
the Law must plow and break the trodden crust  
of Pharisee and publican alike  
till soil be soft, receptive to the seed.  
Some would spring soon and promise good return  
while some on trampled soil the devil stole;  
the cares and riches of this world choked some  
who had no time for Word and Sacrament.  
On good ground, kept and heard, the Word bore fruit  
to life eternal --glory be to God!  
Thus He did teach and tell.

The time to kill with stones arrived at last,  
or so the leaders in Jerusalem  
had made their pact to end the Son God sent.  
But He must die upon the cross, God said,  
upon a tree on Calvary upraised  
for all the world to see and rise with Him,  
together dead, together made alive!  
The risen Son returned to Father's right,  
to rule the world and all things for our good

--the Head of all things to His Church, the blest,  
in faith kept safe  
till He return again.

The time of hate then came, the time of war:  
a generation swallowed up in blood  
was scattered wide in all the world --a sign  
that all repent or die in equal doom.

The glory when He comes again will thrill:  
we have no words of noble syllable  
to say what is not seen nor dreamed by hearts  
full fixed on Him, their Treasure and their pride.

The springtime of our souls has meantime come  
(we do believe, and therefore are His own).

The summer of our growth in grace is here  
(we rise in stature as we grow in Him).

The Harvest Home remains to gather in  
(at His good time, on His appointed Day).

"I quickly come" to bring before the Throne  
of majesty and glory past the sun  
and moon and stars, all put to shame and flight,  
--no word can tell it all, we blush to try.

Yet one encouragement remains today:  
Hold fast to every promise Jesus made,  
before the winter of our discontent  
descends to freeze in outer banishment  
those left outside the door of Hope and Help!

Ten virgins came to nuptial feast intent  
to celebrate the marriage of God's Son  
and Church redeemed to be His holy Bride.  
Yet five were foolish, unprepared by faith  
to greet the Bridegroom, come as thief by night,  
in worldly things asleep  
to things by Spirit sent.

M. Galstad



BOOK REVIEW

A Study of Generations, by Merton P. Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972; 411 pages; Cloth: \$12.50.

In his review of American Piety, by Rodney Stark and Charles Y. Glock (Journal of Theology, September, 1972), Professor Kuehne alluded to the present volume under consideration, promising that "... we intend to review [it] in a future issue of this Journal." Inasmuch as A Study of Generations was furnished, free of cost, to every Lutheran congregation, college and seminary in the United States and Canada by a grant from the Lutheran Brotherhood, a fraternal life insurance society, we are sure that most, if not all, of our readers have become acquainted with it. They will have realized that a volume of this kind is not an easy task to read, let alone to absorb.

The book is described as "the first published results of the most comprehensive scientific study ever made of a religious group in the United States." The religious group studied is, of course, identified as "the Lutherans." How does one go about getting Lutherans to sit for their portrait (the metaphor employed by the authors)? A Study of Generations reports the results of a survey designed to supply the answers to certain questions believed by the authors to search out the essence of Lutheranism. Some of the questions, in summary, are: "What do Lutherans believe? How do they assign priorities and make choices in their day-to-day living? Where are they ready to act out their convictions? What are their opinions on: the mission and ministry of the church; the necessity of maintaining a continuing loyalty to the institutional church -- specifically, the Lutheran church; their relationships with other human beings? In what kinds of life styles do they operate? Who are they? Where do they live?" (p. 19)<sup>1</sup>

To provide the answers to the above questions, A

Study of Generations "reports the beliefs, values, attitudes, opinions, and religious life styles of a representative sample of 4,745 adults between the ages of 15 and 65. These people were members in 1970 of a representative sample of congregations in the three major Lutheran bodies in the United States: The American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod (LC-MS), and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA)." (p. 19) The book was given its title because it consciously attempts to contrast different age groups among the Lutherans it surveys. The generations selected for the study are as follows, by ages: 15-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50-65. The following sub-generations of the young are also included: 15-18, 19-23, and 24-29. The reason for this emphasis on surveying the young Lutherans is given as the concern that Lutheran church leaders have for the future of their church. For example, they would like to determine, if today's youth will support and help maintain the church in the years ahead; or if declining memberships and budgets must be expected because today's youth will no longer want to be members of a church.

It is obvious that a survey of this magnitude, conducted among representative samples of the whole panorama of American Lutheranism (except, of course, that minority of "conservative Lutherans" found in the Wisconsin Synod, the CLC, and other small Lutheran groups) will demonstrate an extremely wide range of beliefs and opinions. The range is so wide, in fact, that one is forced to question whether it can possibly be considered even by the most liberal Lutheran theologian as being includable in what has been termed "an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion"! The wide range can be attributed, partly, at least, to the fact that the authors did not limit their samples to those members of churches who might have been recommended by their pastors as being good members to interview. On the contrary, it does appear to this reviewer (with extremely limited knowledge or experience in the art of scientific survey conducting) that every effort was made to provide a truly random sampling, so that the results demonstrate not the beliefs and opinions of "good" Lutherans, or even of the "average" Lutheran; rather, what is shown is the true diver-



sity that exists among Lutherans in the church bodies surveyed. These diversities are based upon a number of factors, most of which are adequately indicated in the book itself.

Since the Study seeks to cover so many varying aspects of Lutheranism, every reader will have an opportunity to explore its findings in the areas that interest him. According to Appendix A ("How the Study was Conducted") there are 750 individual items or questions raised in the survey. These items were categorized into 78 scales or topics. Consequently, one of the most readable and interesting sections of the study is Appendix B, beginning on page 359, which lists and describes the 64 scales which the researchers deem important enough to be included in this appendix. Appendix C, beginning on page 366, is equally interesting, in that it lists 56 scales, categorizing them by title; quotes the particular item or question put to the respondent; and gives the responses by percentage. It is in this section that the casual reader of this book will be able to browse about and find much grist for any mill of discussion upon which he wishes to enter.

It seems to this reviewer that, in view of the current controversy in the Lutheran church over the Sola Scriptura principle and its application to Biblical studies (e.g., historical-critical methodology in Biblical hermeneutics), one might select this particular aspect from which to consider the book's value. Certainly, this is not to detract from the book's use for the sociologist, historian, students of liturgics, or the missionary, among others; however, it is an important point-of-view from which conclusions can be drawn.

One might begin by noting that according to the Study most Lutherans regard themselves as conservative. They were asked to describe their theological position and were given the choices: Fundamentalist, Conservative, Neo-Orthodox, or Liberal. It is not so surprising, however, that the largest group (44%) indicated "Conservative" when one examines the way the choices were presented. The choices with which to answer the question, "Which of the following theological positions is nearest your own?" are as follows: "A. I believe all things in

Scripture are literal and historical (Fundamentalist) - 14%; B. I hold or retain the essential beliefs of the Christian faith (Conservative) - 44%; C. I retain the basic faith but reinterpret it in the light of today's situation (Neo-Orthodox) - 10%; D. I am willing to change some aspects of the faith in the light of new understanding (Liberal) - 26%."

The distinction between Fundamentalist and Conservative in the choices given is somewhat muddy, to say the least. What is meant by "literal"? (God is a rock in Psalm 62, a fortress in Psalm 91, and a dwelling-place in Psalm 90.) What is meant by "essential"? ("Jesus is my personal Savior"?) The authors draw our attention to the fact that 44% of Lutherans regard themselves as conservative, but one must also be struck by the fact that over one-third (36%) hold to points of view C and D, Neo-Orthodox and Liberal, with most of that group (26%) being "willing to change some aspects of the faith in the light of new understanding." (p. 108)

An important item is Scale 44, which continues to examine the concept of Fundamentalism-Liberalism (pp. 378-382). Concerned as we are with the results of the Study in connection with the Sola Scriptura principle, which we regard as a sine qua non for Lutherans, it grieves us to learn that only 24% strongly agreed with the statement: "The Bible is the Word of God. God inspired men to report verbally what he said. The Bible in the original text contained no errors." Another 35% of the respondents indicated agreement for their own part, but added: "... exact agreement on this point is not necessary. There may have been mistranslations and slips in copying the original text of Scripture." This response, however, is not a clear statement. The second sentence in it does not disagree with the statement above that "the Bible in the original text contains no errors." The weakened position by this group is revealed by its willingness to grant to others the equal right to disagree with the first statement. The rest of the answers are divided as follows: "I agree in part. The Bible communicates the Word of God. But God spoke through fallible men. Therefore the Bible contains errors because of the human element, which we may judge by reason"

-- 34%. "I disagree. The Bible is the record of the early moral and religious progress of Hebrews and Christians. It contains much wisdom from great men. But we cannot be sure of any 'divine' element in it" -- 4%. "I strongly disagree. The Bible is only one of many collections of ancient religious writings. It is no more important for modern life than similar writings of other religions" -- 1%. (p. 378)

In the arena of religious controversy which we might label "the battle over inerrancy of the Scriptures" we must conclude that for most Lutherans those who contend for inerrancy have lost the struggle. This is, of course, a far cry from the clear statements of the Preface to the Book of Concord (which ought to represent "authentic Lutheranism" far better than a current study of what Lutherans of our day believe!). For example, when the confessors committed themselves to the Augsburg Confession, they did so "in accordance with the pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God."<sup>2</sup> And further on in the Preface, when speaking of individuals still within the pale of churches not in agreement with the confessors, the prayer is expressed that those individuals might turn to "the infallible truth of the divine Word."<sup>3</sup> The percentage of Lutherans who today disagree with the statements contained in the Lutheran Confessions is so overwhelmingly high that one must conclude that a tremendous shift has taken place. One wishes that a similarly exhaustive study had taken place about twenty years ago, so that one might determine with reasonable accuracy just how much of this shift away from an acceptance of the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture has taken place in that time. We suspect that a great deal of it must be laid at the gates of the Lutheran seminaries whose teachers have themselves departed from the Sola Scriptura principle of the Lutheran reformers.

As a corollary to the response concerning the Scripture, Scale 43 explores the belief of Lutherans concerning the "Need for Religious Absolutism." From this study we observe that whereas 17% of the respondents disagree with the statement, "The true Christian is sure that his beliefs are correct," 25% disagree with the statement, "The true Christian believes honestly and wholeheartedly

in the doctrines of his church." Of course, the questions as stated do not ask the respondents to declare what they believe in these matters, but merely what they think the "true Christian" believes. Perhaps they are answering only as to their concept of an ideal. Another unclear proposition is: "What is different about Lutherans is that they have pure and true doctrine." (p. 378) With this statement 55% of the respondents find themselves in disagreement. Again, we do not know the basis of their disagreement. The general impact from this section, nevertheless, is that a large number of modern Lutherans do not rate sureness of conviction and faith very highly on the religious scale.

Returning again to Scale 44 (Fundamentalism-Liberalism), we note that certain statements and accounts, which in themselves are clearly taught in Scripture, are not necessarily accepted by Lutherans today. For example, fewer than half (40%) of those surveyed find themselves in strong agreement with the statement, "Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary without a human father." (p. 379) Probably the same 40% strongly agree with the statement, "God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus arose in his crucified body, left the tomb empty, appeared to his disciples and friends, and ascended into heaven." (p. 379) Only 19% strongly agree that Christ will some day return from heaven in personal and visible form. (p. 379) (On that point, nearly one-fifth of the Lutherans questioned agreed with the statement that "The return of Jesus to earth will be spiritual rather than in visible bodily form.")

What could be more vital to Christians than the vicarious atonement of Christ for the sins of the world? The Study reveals that only 37% of Lutherans strongly agree with the statement, "Jesus Christ died for sinners. As a substitute, he suffered the just penalty due us for our sins in order to satisfy the wrath of God and to save guilty men from hell." (p. 379) Surely, the doctrine of the Real Presence is plainly taught in Scripture. Yet, with the statement that "In Holy Communion we are given the true Body and Blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins" only 28% find themselves in strong agreement. (p. 380) Does God exist, or is He dead? Only 58% of

Lutherans find that the following statement describes what they believe: "I know God really exists, and I have no doubts about it." (p. 390)

A test of one's acceptance of the Sola Scriptura principle is found in one's reaction to the Bible accounts of miracles. Over one-fourth (29%) of the Lutheran respondents to the Study find themselves unable or unwilling to declare: "I believe the miracles actually happened just as the Bible says they did." The score on belief in the existence of Satan is lower. Only 53% find completely true the statement, "The Devil actually exists."

When the foundation of Sola Scriptura is no longer present, there is doubt and uncertainty about other matters as well. There is also a great deal of confusion. Some of this confusion among Lutherans is recorded in the chapter of the Study entitled "Mission and Ministry." It seems important enough to quote at some length:

"A general impression from the percentages is that most Lutherans endorse a traditional view of the missionary task with a strong feeling for joint mission work with other Christians." (No worry about unionism, evidently. -JL) "However, 40% agreed that other people should be left alone and that we should not try to change their religion. This indicates why the items would not form a scale. There is more going on in the minds of Lutherans than a simple question, 'Should we or should we not send missionaries to preach the Gospel?'"

"Three out of four Lutherans say all religions lead to the same God, yet three out of four Lutherans, and some of them must be the same people, say belief in Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary for salvation." (Note that this means that one-fourth deny that belief in Jesus is necessary for salvation! -JL) "Half of the respondents reject the statement that all religions are equally important before God, but only 13% agree that being ignorant of Jesus prevents salvation. Something very curious is going on." (p. 169)

What this means for the authors is that "most Lutherans appear to say belief in Jesus is necessary for me and the Christian faith is right and true for me. They appear to reject statements implying the same for the other person." (p. 172) In other words, in their view Lutherans have gotten considerably enmeshed in the swampy mires of existentialism. It seems to this reviewer, however, that one could with as much authority point to the fact that attacks on the Sola Scriptura principle by liberal seminary professors and their equally liberal proteges have made the whole matter of religion a cloudy uncertainty for many modern Lutherans. If you cannot be sure that Scripture is a sure and certain, infallible and inerrant guide, then you cannot be convinced that the world of mankind needs to know its teachings about Jesus Christ. Since 72% of the Lutherans believe that "most religions lead to the same God," and since 50% believe that "God is satisfied if a person lives the best life he can," it is not surprising to find a declining zeal in proclaiming the Gospel. After all, as the Study reveals, 59% of the Lutherans believe that "The main emphasis of the Gospel is on God's rules for right living." (p. 369) Rules for right living are found in all religions, they must believe; therefore, why seek to lead others to accept your religion, especially if you cannot be sure that you have the truth? In his review of this Study, Raymond F. Surburg writes: "For many Lutherans the Bible is not the Word of God and the source for obtaining a correct world view, but they allow philosophy, human reason or the current feelings and beliefs to determine their Weltanschauung. Millions of Lutherans are as bad off as the heathen, because like the latter they do not know the plan of salvation. Since for a significant minority Christ is not God, he cannot be a Savior. Many Lutherans deny the need for a Savior and believe in salvation by works. Again for at least one-fourth of Lutheranism this life constitutes man's existence."<sup>4</sup>

Just a few years ago, in a chapter entitled "Is the Bible Really the Word of God?", J. Schoneberg Setzer attempted to express the problem facing the modern scholars who were making their "scientific" studies of the Bible with the tools placed at their disposal in the historical-

critical methods. He stated it this way: "But then the practical problems began. The biblical scholars knew that they were discovering truth. They knew that in the process they were making some mistakes and were working with unfinished theories. For in every scientific endeavor the progress of knowledge is from a vague theory drawn out of some data to a clearer theory drawn out of more data. But the most acute problem that faced the scholars was -- and still is -- How do you inform the Christian layman about these scientific critical findings when the Christian layman for nearly two thousand years has been taught that the Bible is indeed the perfect Word of God?"<sup>5</sup>

Setzer found his answer, for one thing, in the book from which the above excerpt is cited. Beginning with his answer to the question stated as the title of the chapter mentioned ("No," "Yes," and "Perhaps"), Setzer proceeds through the historic teachings of Christianity and of the founders of his own Lutheran church, and attacks them from the standpoint of "modern scholarship" and "scientific evidence" -- even becoming so blasphemous as to regard some of the inspired writers of the Old and New Testament as being in sympathy with his endeavors. Those who disagree with his contentions that the Bible, after all, is the imperfect product of human, prone-to-error writers who were doing the best they knew how to reveal what they understood God's will to be, are scornfully termed "fundamentalist." On the other hand, he wants his readers to regard him and his ilk as being almost martyr-like in their belief that "An honorable frankness and openness to facts is the only clear path to truth."<sup>6</sup> Yes, Setzer's book and many others like it may have been extremely influential in leading not only the members of his own congregation (Lutheran), but also fellow seminarians and pastors, to follow him in his denial, for example, of the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the grave.

It is our understanding, furthermore, that what we have been hearing in recent years of the turn at the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's seminary at St. Louis toward the historical-critical method of Bible studies is but the parroting of what the faculty members have

learned in their graduate studies at various other seminaries, divinity schools, and universities. It appears that at St. Louis they are still attempting to defend their methodology by asserting that they are safeguarding the truth by making use of Lutheran presuppositions as they handle the Word. Whether or not their sincerity can be trusted, it becomes increasingly evident that in other Lutheran seminaries around the country, the attitude toward the Bible has deteriorated more badly still.

It is apparent, it seems to this reviewer, that because of what is and has been taught regarding Biblical studies at many Lutheran colleges and seminaries during the Fifties and Sixties, many of the younger Lutheran pastors have already brought about changes in the former confessions of congregations.

The picture that one receives from reading A Study of Generations is a depressing one. Yet, it would be a serious error in judgment if one would choose to ignore that so much of Lutheranism is in such a bad way. The Study surely does show us why so many Lutherans (two out of three) are fully ready for the merger of all Lutherans into one body: it is because of the lack of conviction, ignorance of the Bible, and perhaps above all, indifference to doctrine that the Study reveals to be prevalent among Lutherans. And all of these conditions are to be found where people do not any longer regard the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God.

This review has but scratched the surface of A Study of Generations. It appears to be a reliable survey describing the state of Lutheranism of our day. It surely will prove itself a useful book for study. Our readers are urged to examine it carefully for themselves.

J.L.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Page references in parentheses are from the book in review, A Study of Generations.

2. The Book of Concord, Transl. and ed. by T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 8.



3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Quoted in The Christian News, February 19, 1973,
- p. 6.
5. Setzer, J. Schoneberg, What's Left to Believe?  
(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 16.
6. Ibid., p. 18.



Editor's Note: "Christianity Or Masonry" is available in tract form and may be ordered from the author: Paul Nolting, P.O. Box 801, West Columbia, SC 29169.

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