

An Apt Description Of Truths Treatment By “Modern” Theologians Of The Lutheran Church.

2 Timothy 4:4

[An Essay read at the convention of the Minnesota District : WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN SYNOD : New Ulm, Minnesota : August 1, 1966]

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We have the promise of our God that all things will work together for good to them that love the Lord. This promise is unconditional and universal. All things, without exception and under all circumstances, will work together for good to them that love God. It is often difficult for us to see that this is so: but here, too, we must remember that we walk by faith and not by sight, and that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; it is being sure about what we do not see.

However, there are times when the Lord lets us see the truth of this glorious and comforting promise demonstrated before our eyes. When Joseph was being led into Egypt by the Midianites after having been sold by his own brothers and when he languished in prison in Egypt, he must have found it difficult to understand how all things could possibly work together for his good. But when he became ruler in Egypt and was able to save thousands of Egyptians from starvation and to provide food for the brothers who had sold him into slavery, he knew that God meant it for good, “to save much people alive,” as he himself confessed.

In the same way it may sometimes seem that there is nothing good that can possibly be gained from the present state of Lutheranism. When liberal tendencies seem to reign supreme in the Lutheran Church, when the truth and the inerrancy of the Bible is being attacked, when some of the grandest miracle stories of the Bible are labeled as myths and legends by some of the leading scholars of the church of the reformation, we may wonder how this could possibly work together for good to them that love God. The Lutheran Confessions very correctly say (SA,III,IV) that the Gospel offers counsel and help against sin “through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren.” By the same token, when those who want to be our brethren, and whom we have learned through the years to regard as brethren in Christ, begin to question the truth of the Bible and thus cast doubt also on the Gospel, this can be a very severe trial to our own faith. As they may strengthen us by a good confession, so they may also weaken us by their denial of the truth.

And yet, their very questioning of the truth of the Bible is evidence that ought to help to convince us ever more firmly of the everlasting truth of the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. When Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, his very betrayal helps to establish the fact that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, for it had foretold that the Messiah would be betrayed for that exact number of silver pieces. When the Jews stood around the cross of Christ and ridiculed his claims to deity and Messiahship, their ridicule helps to establish those very claims, for when they said, “He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God,” they were repeating almost the exact words with which David, in Psalm 22, had predicted that the Messiah would be mocked. When men reject the doctrines of the Bible and call them foolish, they only help to show that the Bible is right; for St. Paul said, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.” When a man therefore says, “I could never accept what the Bible says, for this is utter nonsense and foolishness,” we can see in him a living advertisement of the truth of Holy Writ. His testimony against Scripture only serves to show that the Bible is right and that he himself is a natural man.

In this same way; the present doctrinal confusion in the Lutheran Church and the denials of the truth of the Bible, which so often threatens to weaken our faith, ought really to strengthen us in the conviction that the Bible is true. For this very thing is clearly foretold in the Scriptures. God has told us that this would happen, and when it does come to pass, we ought to trust him and his Word so much more confidently. On the night before he died, the Lord Jesus told his disciples, "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them." And long before that, when the children of Israel asked Moses how they could distinguish the true spokesmen of the Lord from those who only claimed to speak for God, Moses told them, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken." And if it surprises us that this could have happened in the Lutheran Church, we might call to mind that St. Paul said to the elders of Ephesus, where he himself had preached the Gospel, "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."

In 2 Ti 4: 3 and 4, St. Paul predicts, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." It should be noted especially that in the original Greek text, the word which in our English version is translated as "fables" is the word *mythous*, which is our English word "myths", so that, as the margin in our Bible suggests, we may just as correctly translate, "They shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto myths."

This is an apt description of the treatment that is being given to truth by our modern theologians and also by theologians in the Lutheran Church. Almost ten years ago, a paper was read to the faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, by one of the members of that faculty, in which it was said that the book of God's truth, that is, the Bible contains errors. That statement has never been retracted to this day, although, as we shall see presently, it was revised slightly. The author of that paper was asked to present his views to several pastoral conferences of the Missouri Synod. At these conferences he made the statement that "the time has come to insist that word inerrancy is inappropriately used of the Scriptures." He also stated that when a Lutheran pastor takes his ordination vow and swears that he accepts the Bible as the only "infallible rule of faith and practice," "this is quite something different from insisting that every piece of information given in the Bible is factually accurate in our contemporary sense." He said that truth, in the Bible, never means "factual precision." He spoke of the "historical inaccuracies" of the book of Daniel and said that the evangelists made mistakes. (The Bible as Record, pp. 12-14.)

The author of those statements continued to defend that proposition that the Bible contains errors, until it was pointed out to him that the constitution of the Missouri Synod says that the Bible is inerrant. From that time on he modified his position and said that the Bible is inerrant, if the word "inerrant" were defined properly. An error, he said, is an intentional misstatement of fact that is made in order to deceive. Such errors one will not find in the Bible, and in this sense, and in this sense alone, we can say that the Bible is inerrant. There are many mistakes in the Bible but many of these were not made intentionally. The holy writers shared all the primitive views, the scientific misconceptions, and the commonly accepted ideas of their time. They wrote from "within their own personal limitations in terms of historical, geographical, or scientific information," (Op. cit., p. 12) and therefore they made many mistakes in what they said simply because they did not know any better.

In some cases however, the holy writers were very likely aware that what they were saying was not factually accurate, but again they should not be charged with error, because when they

recorded events that never happened, or when they embellished their accounts of the events which they recorded, they did this not to deceive the public but only to set forth more clearly and more emphatically the great spiritual truth that they intended to convey. They were not intent upon passing on accurate information or furnishing us with a factually precise account of a certain moment in history. They wanted to bring their reader face to face with the truth, which must never be confused with the facts.

Just as error has been given a new definition, so “truth” has also been redefined in this new theology which has invaded also the Lutheran Church. It is said that the equating of truth with fact is a modern heresy. Truth, they say, is something much more wonderful and far more glorious than objective fact. Facts are sometimes much farther removed from the truth than fiction.

According to this new theology, which we call neo-orthodoxy, truth is not propositional, that is, truth is not a quality of statements. The truth in its real sense is never expressed in statements or in words or in sentences. Even the statements about God that we find in the Bible must never be viewed as absolute truth. A well-known leader of world Lutheranism, Anders Nygram, tells us that we should not think of religious statements as being either “true” or “false,” (G. Wingren, *Theology in Conflict*, Philadelphia: Muehlenberg, 1958, p. 3) from which it would seem to follow that we should not speak any longer of true doctrine and false doctrine. Martin Scharlemann has written, “The comprehension of man is unequal to the task of putting fully into words what God has done to break the silence of eternity,” and, “God’s ways are never completely captured in a formulation, whether it be a perfect deduction, or a neatly structured syllogism,” and “Our everyday language is much too shallow to contain the Biblical revelation without major and even fatal adjustments.” (Op. cit., pp. 5 and 7) Truth, according to these men, is a quality of persons; it is found in people rather than in propositions or statements.

Perhaps an illustration will help to make clear what they mean by all this. Several years ago, a young pastor of the Synod to which I once belonged, said that Jesus made a mistake when he ascribed the first five books of the Bible to Moses, for Moses most assuredly did not write the Pentateuch. When I said that this meant that Jesus did not speak the truth, he answered that Jesus certainly did speak the truth because he was honestly convinced in his own mind that Moses had written these things because that is what everybody at that time believed, and, as a child of his time, Jesus just did not know any better. He concluded by saying, “we have a different definition of truth than you have.” One can conclude from this only that a person speaks the truth when he expresses the honest convictions of his mind and heart. Truth, therefore, would seem to be that of which you are convinced and not necessarily that which corresponds to reality. This new approach to truth helps us to see a little more clearly how it is possible for ecumenically-minded Lutherans, who have taken an oath on the Lutheran confessions, which so often state, “We condemn those who teach otherwise,” to listen with respect and consideration to the most horrible perversions of God’s Word as views that have a perfect right to exist in Christendom and in the Lutheran Church. After all, these views are the honest convictions of the men who hold them. For them, this is the truth; whereas for us, the truth may be a direct contradiction of those views.

The Bible, however, makes it crystal clear that truth is not to be defined as being in any way dependent on any man’s honest convictions. In the third chapter of Romans, St. Paul speaks of the great blessing that God had showered upon Israel when he gave them the Old Testament Scriptures. While the Jews gave outward lip service to these writings and called them the Word of God, yet the great majority of Jews did not really believe the message that was set forth in those books. According to the modern view of truth, we would have to say that these unbelieving Jews had a truth of their own which did not happen to agree with the views of the Old Testament

prophets. This was, however, not the judgment that St. Paul rendered in this case. He did not say, "Let us enter into dialog with these Pharisees and Sadducees so that we may learn from them and they from us, so that we may see truth in fuller measure and with greater clarity, for we must not deprive ourselves of the insights that have been granted to them." One can only be persuaded that Paul's reaction to such a proposal would have been a resounding, "God forbid." When he thought of this unbelief of the Jews, he wrote, "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid. Yea, let God be true and every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and overcome when thou art judged." According to St. Paul, a man makes a liar out of himself when he does not agree with what is written in God's word. It would not seem that St. Paul would be inclined to call denials of Scripture doctrine truth, no matter how honestly these denials were made.

This new definition of truth finds a corollary in the new doctrine of revelation. Neo-orthodoxy says again and again that revelation also is not propositional, that is, it does not come to us in statements. God reveals himself, they say, but he does this on a personal level. God makes himself known to men in personal communion. But his revelation does not consist in this that he gives us all sorts of information about himself.

But when you read your Bible, you find that it is full of propositions, full of statements, -- statements about God, statements about men, statements about their relationship with each other, and statements about God's Son, Jesus Christ. The fact that God sent his Son into the world to die for our sins and to assure us of everlasting life in heaven is a propositional statement. It is information that God has given to us, information that could never have been discovered by centuries of scientific observation or millennia of pious meditation. How is it possible for those men, therefore, to say that revelation is not propositional, that it does not come to us in statements about God?

Two things should be kept in mind here. First of all, we must be very careful to distinguish clearly between the revelation that God gives us of himself and the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost, which he works in the mind and heart of man in conversion. If we fail to distinguish properly here, we shall quickly be led astray by an argument consistently used by neo-orthodoxy. Neo-Orthodox theologians are fond of saying that a man can know everything in the Bible and yet not be a Christian, and from this they draw the conclusion that it is therefore obvious that the revelation of God cannot be found in the statements of the Bible. If we had time, we ought to say a few things about the use of the word know in that sentence, but we shall forbear. However, it should be noted that instead of saying that the fact that a man can be acquainted with every statement of the Bible without recognizing God as his heavenly Father proves that the revelation of God is not to be found in these statements, we ought to say that man's spiritual blindness is such that he does not see the clearest revelation for what it is. His failure to find God in these statements of Scripture is due to his unbelief and not to any inadequacy in the Biblical revelation of God. If a blind man does not see the sun, that does not prove that the sun is not shining.

Secondly, while neo-orthodoxy will admit that the Bible is made up of statements, the advocates of this theology will still insist that the revelation of God is not propositional, because many of the spokesmen of neo-orthodoxy hold that the Bible is not itself the revelation of God. If some of them, such as Emil Brunner, still say that the Bible itself is the revelation of God, it is this only in a very limited sense. In the primary sense, the Bible is rather a human record of and a human witness to the divine revelation. While it may still be said that in one sense God reveals himself to us in the Bible, yet it would be far more correct to say that in the Bible pious children of God tell us how God revealed himself to them. This record of their experiences can be a means that

God uses to reveal himself to us, but, strictly speaking, the record itself is not the revelation. God's revelation of himself takes place through mighty acts in which God makes himself known to his people in personal communion. In the Bible we have the human account of these divine acts; and because it is a human account, it must contain inaccuracies, mistakes, and contradictions.

When once this view of truth and revelation has been adopted, nothing in the Bible remains firm and sure. It may seem, when we speak of these things in an abstract way, that this new theology is not so very dangerous, but there is scarcely a truth of God's Word which is not called into question by this new approach. What is really involved will become clear if we look at several concrete applications of these principles to the interpretation of the Bible.

A good place to start is with the first chapters of Genesis. These chapters are usually among the first that come under the ax of this new theology in the Lutheran Church. The stories of creation, of the fall, of the ante-diluvian patriarchs, the flood, and the tower of Babel are openly called myths, although some of the advocates of this view express the caution that one should perhaps not use the term "myth" when speaking to laymen or to older pastors, who would perhaps be upset by this word. Instead it has been suggested in all seriousness that it would be better to speak of the parable of creation or the parable of the fall, since our laymen are familiar with that term from the New Testament. Others suggest that these chapters should be called sagas, or poems, or symphonies.

These theologians assure us that when they use the word "myth" in this connection, they do not mean that these stories are not true. The myth of creation, they say, expresses a great spiritual and religious truth. Through this myth, God is revealed to us today still as the Creator of the Universe. All that they want to make clear by using the terms "myth," or "parable," or "saga," or "poem," or "symphony" is that we should not read the first chapters of the Bible as though they were historical accounts of supernatural events or actual natural occurrences.

According to this view, God did not create the universe in six days, nor did he create it in six distinct eras. It is said that one can believe in a six-day creation only if one believes in an arbitrary God, and that the present order in the world came into existence by a long process of evolution. It is also said that the purpose of God in giving us the first chapters of Genesis was not to tell us how God created the world, but only that he created the world. We might well ask why, then, if God did not intend to tell us how he created the universe, he went to all the trouble of telling us how he did it? It would certainly seem that if all that God intended in the first chapters of Genesis was that we should know that he created the world, he would only have given us the first sentence of Genesis one, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The answer to this objection is that in Genesis one and two, several different writers have given us an account of how they thought the world had come into being. The revelation that God had created the world came to them as they meditated on the wonders of the universe and they expressed this great truth in mythical fashion because this is the only way it could be done in that prescientific age. After they had composed these mythical accounts of the origin of the visible world, God accepted this account with all its primitive ideas and mistaken notions and made it his own. In this sense these chapters can be called God's Word.

In the same way it is said that there never was an individual called by the personal name "Adam." Men developed from animals and there never was a single pair of human beings from whom all others are descended. The fall into sin also is not a historical event, or at least, the story of the fall as we have it in the Bible is not a historically accurate account of something that happened thousands of years ago. Commenting on this, the academic dean of a large Lutheran seminary said, "Snakes don't talk." The account of Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil is rather a mythical way of setting forth an experience that all men have. There comes a time in the life of most men when they are overcome by a sense of guilt, when they become conscious that they are sinners, and this universal experience is described for us in the saga of the fall as we have it in the Bible. It seems unbelievable that such things should be said in a Lutheran Church and taught in Lutheran colleges and seminaries, but this is only one fruit of this new approach to the Bible.

There are always those, also in conservative Lutheran churches, who tell us that we ought not to get excited about these things because our salvation is not involved. While they themselves would never teach such things as this and will even go so far as to say that such views contain the "seeds of heresy", yet they are unwilling to characterize them as false doctrine and to apply proper doctrinal discipline when such things are taught to the youth of the church. "We are not much interested in evolution," they say, "because we are not saved by the fact that the world was created in six days, and so it makes little difference whether such things are taught or not." But perhaps if we taken an even more insignificant teaching of the Bible, we can make clear, at least to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, why we ought to be concerned about the factual and historical nature of the Biblical records.

The Bible tells us scores of times that the words of the first five books of the Bible were spoken and written by Moses. This truth is openly denied today in Lutheran churches that were once conservative. This denial may not seem very important, and yet the truth of the Scriptures is attacked in this attack on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and not only the truth of Scripture, but the truthfulness of our Savior. We have already noted how it is being said that the Lord Jesus made a mistake in this matter, and we might in this connection. We'll recall the words of the Savior to Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" There are Lutherans today who will say without apology, "Just because the Bible says that Moses wrote something does not mean that he wrote it." But this is the same Bible that tells us that Jesus died for our sins. Shall we also say, "Just because the Bible says that Jesus died for us does not mean that he did?" And lest anyone imagine that there is no connection, it is actually being said in at least one Lutheran college that we should no longer sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," because the Bible might be wrong. This little hymn is actually being denounced as fundamentalistic and not Lutheran, and it is argued that if we believe that Jesus loves us, we must have far better authority for this assurance than a statement of the Bible. But what more powerful and persuasive call to faith came from the prophets than their, "Thus saith the Lord?"

We spoke earlier of the new definition of error that is being promulgated in Lutheranism and in accord with which it is said that the holy writers should not be charged with error when they are guilty of factual inaccuracies, because they misstated the facts not to deceive but to teach a far higher type of truth than factual precision. As an example of this, we might examine a little more closely the neo-orthodox treatment of the exodus and the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

Neo-orthodox theologians often say that the greatest Word of God in the Old Testament is the exodus from Egypt. According to them, the exodus was one of the mighty acts by which God revealed himself to the Israelites. The account of the exodus, as we have it in the Bible, is far from factually accurate. The ten plagues were purely natural calamities that befell Egypt, but they were sent by God. The first plague, in which the waters of the Nile turned to blood, for example, is perhaps to be explained as the result of unusual erosion of reddish soil in the upper reaches of the river. The crossing of the Red Sea very likely was made possible by the fact that Moses, who had

traveled that way several times, knew a way through the swamps. The armies of Pharaoh did not have such expert leadership and many of the chariots and horses were lost in the quicksand. The manna was very likely a natural food substance produced only for a few weeks each year by several species of plant lice. There were not 600,000 men involved because the Sinaitic peninsula can support at most only a few thousand people. But nevertheless God was active in all these events.

As men with prophetic insights in later ages meditated on these events they recognized the hand of God in the way in which Israel was able to escape from Egypt to become a great nation. To make this truth, that they had discovered and that had come to them as a revelation from God, clear to others, they embellished the historical record with all sorts of miraculous features, so that the common people, too, might be able to see that God had been at work in the history of the Jewish people. They exaggerated, or “beefed up,” the number of Israelites in order to make their deliverance, their crossing of the Red Sea, and the supplying of the manna so much more glorious and to make clear that the hand of God was in these events. They added to the factual account these non-factual details because they wanted men to glorify the God of Israel. They did not intend to deceive but to magnify the praises of the Lord and therefore they cannot be charged with error.

While it may seem to some that this has little bearing on our salvation, yet this approach to the Scriptures very quickly undermines the truth of the Gospel account of our Savior’s work. The story of the virgin birth, for example, is given the same cavalier treatment as the story of the exodus. Some years ago a Lutheran pastor asked, “Do you mean to say that you think that someone who does not believe in the virgin birth does not belong in the Lutheran ministry?” and when he was told that anyone who does not believe that the virgin birth of the Savior is an actual event, that it really happened, does not belong before a Lutheran altar confessing the Apostles’ Creed and that he does not belong in a Lutheran pulpit, preaching on the Christmas Gospel, he answered, “That is a very narrow-minded position to take. What if those parts of the Bible which speak of the virgin birth are not factually correct?”

What is most amazing is this that such men feel perfectly free to recite the creed and to preach on the virgin birth. The truth, after all, must not be confused with the facts. The doctrine of the virgin birth may be true, according to them, even if Jesus is the actual son of Joseph or of some Roman soldier stationed near Nazareth. They hold that if our purpose in confessing or preaching the virgin birth helps the laymen in the pews to appreciate more fully what a wonderful and unique person Jesus was, we are conveying to them the important spiritual truth which is hidden behind this myth. If the doctrine of the virgin birth is important for someone’s faith, we should not deliberately destroy it. Our laymen, however, did not all fall on their heads when they were babies, and it sometimes does not take them long to catch on to what is happening in the pulpit. So a laywoman of another Lutheran synod said to one of our Wisconsin Synod laymen not so long ago, “You Wisconsin Synod people are going to have the last laugh after all, I just can’t feel comfortable in church anymore. When my pastor recites the Apostles Creed, all I can think of is this that he does not mean the same thing with those words that I do.” And often the pastors do not mean by the words of the creed what the Church has always meant by them up to modern times. When Lutherans began to speak of the story of Jonah as a myth, some of the so-called “prophets of gloom” in the Lutheran Church predicted that it would not be long before Lutherans would also begin to question the factual accuracy of the resurrection of the Savior, since the Lord Jesus himself had compared Jonah’s stay in the belly of the whale to his own rest in the grave. The defenders of these modern heretics told us that such a prediction was unwarranted, and even those who felt that it might be justified were not prepared to see it come true as quickly as it did. There are Lutherans today who are saying that while we all believe in the resurrection of Christ, it is possible that the

bones of Jesus are still mouldering in some unknown Palestinian grave. They say that the various accounts of the resurrection are so contradictory that we probably will never know exactly what happened on that first Easter Sunday Morning. One of these neo-Lutherans has written that the Bible makes it clear that the resurrection of Christ, was “Not the resuscitation or the reassembly of a corpse” (Paul Malte, *Celebrating Deep*, St. Louis: LLL, 1966, p. 24). It seems rather strange that when men say that we can no longer be sure of what did happen, they suddenly become very sure of what did not happen.

If this trend continues in the Lutheran Church (and there are few signs of improvement anywhere), it may not be long before Lutheran congregations will be asked to confess their faith in the creed used in the Community Church of a suburb of Chicago, where the congregation on Sunday morning joins in confessing:

I believe in one God, the Father, all-loving; Maker of all that is; and in Jesus Christ, loveliest of his many sons, our friend; who was born of the Mother, Mary; moved by the Spirit of God; suffered under the systems of men; was crucified and died for the sake of truth and right. Yet he lives again in the lives made beautiful by his truth, ascending into the hearts of men, and working at the right hand of God, the Father, who works all that is good. I believe in the Holy Spirit of truth, beauty and goodness; the ministering Christian Church; the communion and cooperation of good men with God and with each other; the destruction of sin by righteousness; the worth and beauty of human personality; and the everlastingness of the life that is in God. Amen.

It seems rather strange that at the same time that some Lutherans are saying that even though they believe in the resurrection of Christ, yet they believe that his body may have decayed and that his bones may still be somewhere in Palestine, and that the resurrection of Christ was not the resuscitation of a corpse, other Lutherans, (though sometimes they are the same men), are saying that the immortality of the soul is not a Christian doctrine, but that this belief in the survival of a part of man after death is a heathen doctrine brought into Christianity from Greek philosophy.

These men do not deny that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is taught in the Bible. They know as well as we, for example, that the book of Ecclesiastes says that at death the dust shall return to the earth as it was, that is, the body shall decay, but the spirit shall return to God who gave it, but they will say that this book could not possibly have been written by Solomon because it must have been written after the time of Plato, from whom the Jews learned about the immortality of the soul. According to these men, the ancient Jews knew nothing of any immortality of man after death. It is interesting, by the way, to know that Luther turn this argument around and said that Plato had learned from Solomon, which is not as far-fetched as it may seem to some.

These deniers of the soul's immortality also know that the Gospel of St. Matthew tells us that Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul,” but they are not convinced that this is a Christian doctrine nevertheless. Some of them say that Jesus, as a child of his time, shared the mistaken notions of the people among whom he lived and that he was as wrong about the immortality of the soul as he was about the authorship of the Pentateuch. Others say that Jesus never said anything like that, that he was much too Christian ever to say anything like that, but that this is only what Matthew says he said.

One is inclined to wonder what these men mean when they still speak of everlasting life. If the soul does not survive the body after death and if at the resurrection the dead corpses are not resuscitated or reassembled, then in what sense does man have any existence after this world and this life? Is this why some men in the creed, which they confess, speak of the everlastingness of the life which is in God? At a funeral service in a small Iowa town almost twenty years ago, a sectarian

preacher began his sermon with these words, "Maybe Mr. Smith is in heaven and maybe he isn't. I don't know. Maybe there is a heaven and maybe there isn't. I don't know. But this much I do know. Mr. Smith in departing from us has entered into everlasting life. Here is a man who will live on forever in the memory of his friends." How long will it be before we hear such things from Lutheran pulpits, when Lutheran Synods tolerate men in professors' chairs who say that Jesus did not believe in the immortality of the soul, even though Matthew quotes Jesus as saying that the soul cannot be killed?

That type of reasoning, which says that Jesus did not necessarily say what Matthew says he said, is of one piece with the assertion that just because the Bible says that Moses wrote something does not mean that he wrote it, and it demonstrates very clearly why it is so very important that we continue to insist that the Bible is the truth, that it is the inerrant and verbally inspired Word of God, infallible in everything it teaches. Without that foundation for all of our other doctrines, there is not one that can long be maintained and adequately defended. If the Bereans had had this attitude toward Scripture, which is becoming so characteristic of many modern Lutherans, they would never have listened to Paul and then returned home to search the Scriptures daily to determine whether what Paul had preached to them was really so. How long will it be before some of our Lutheran leaders, who have been charged by their call to supervise the doctrine of their church bodies, learn how right Luther was when he said that all the doctrines of the Bible are like a golden ring and that if we allow it to be broken at one place, the whole ring is broken?

As we survey the doctrinal situation in modern Lutheranism, we see how the words of St. Paul, "They shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables," are being fulfilled in our time also in the Lutheran Church. In separating itself from the Synodical Conference the Wisconsin Synod has given testimony to the world that it has taken its stand against this modern development. Those who have a sense of church history will know how remarkable it is that our Synod, at this stage of its history, could find itself in almost complete agreement in this matter. There are those who departed from us because they were not of us, but the unanimity which we have today on the doctrine of Scripture we ought to recognize as a special gift of God's grace to our church. It was not the outstanding intelligence of our leaders, it was not the superior training of our pastors, and it was not the greater dedication of our laymen that is responsible for this situation. It has come to us as a gracious gift of our God.

But this gift has been given to us to share with others. In other Lutheran synods there are countless pastors who are sick at heart, torn in their consciences about the path of duty. Just a year ago this month, a pastor of another synod received a call to one of our congregations. He asked his congregation for a release to serve our synod, but the members of that congregation pleaded with him to stay and said, "If you leave us, what kind of pastor will we get? Will we get another man who is loyal to the Bible or will we get one of this new breed? Don't leave us to the wolves. Stay with us and help us study the matter further, and if you want to join the Wisconsin Synod, maybe we will join the Wisconsin Synod with you." But whether these men join us or not, they look to us to encourage them and to strengthen them in the battle they must fight. Our clear, ringing testimony is important to other Lutherans.

But we have an even greater task than to strengthen these soldiers of Christ caught behind the lines of the enemy. We are only a handful of people, but we are the largest Lutheran body in the world that has remained loyal to the Word in these days of apostasy. We are being called upon to share this gift in widespread areas of our country and of the world, and just because we are a small church body, our pastors, our teachers, and our laymen must learn to pray and to work and to give as we have never given and worked and prayed before in all our history. We have the everlasting

Gospel to preach. We know that it is God's own truth. With St. Peter we can say, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables (or myths) when we made known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." We know that what is written in the Bible is no fable. We know that it is the inerrant, infallible Word of our God, made known to the world for the salvation of men through the vicarious atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. A church which carries that conviction in its corporate heart ought not to be able to rest until it has done every last thing that it is able to do to share what it has with others. Humanly speaking, the next decade will be a crucial one for our Wisconsin Synod, and this is no time for anyone in the Wisconsin Synod to be sitting on his hands, or on his pocketbook, for that matter. We have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. God grant that we may not be weighed in the balance and found wanting. Amen.