

The Role of Religion in a Lutheran High School in a Changing World

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[Wis. State Teachers Conference, Nov. 5 & 6, 1964, 1:40 – 2:40p.m.]

I have been asked to speak to you on the role of religion in secondary education in our changing world. This is one of those broad subjects that can be made to cover a multitude of words. We could perhaps, under this heading, speak of the religion curriculum in our secondary schools, but while this might be of much interest to the men who teach in the religion departments, it might be of little practical value to this group as a whole.

We might, on the other hand, discuss the aims and goals we have in mind when we add religion to the curriculum of our secondary schools and why such goals are of special importance in these days when atheism is well on the way to becoming the established religion of America. Such a topic ought surely to be of some interest to all those who are gathered here, for it is closely allied to the whole reason for the existence of the schools in which we teach. Our Lutheran high schools are established, built, and maintained only in order that we might have the opportunity to give to our sons and daughters a religious training. This is done at great cost to our parents and congregations and often at great sacrifice on the part of our teachers, who could at times earn twice as much or more teaching the same subjects in the public high schools of our cities. The only ones among us of whom this is perhaps not true are those of us who teach exclusively in the area of religion. The subject that we have before us ought therefore to be of special interest particularly to those of you who teach in what are generally called the secular areas of the curriculum. If *you* are not convinced of the value and the benefit of religion in education, then those of us who teach the religion courses would not long have the opportunity to teach our subject in the high schools and colleges of our Synod.

Proceeding from this point of view, we might consider the ways in which the teaching of religions truth might be introduced and incorporated into the teaching of the secular subjects. This, too, would surely produce much fruitful discussion, and with all the years of experience that are represented here it is to be hoped that our biology teachers would come up with something more significant than the statement that the Bible talks about ants, and our mathematics instructors with something more valuable than the observation that there are some interesting numbers in the Bible.

I have chosen, however, to ignore those aspects of the subject and I should like instead to speak to you about the attitudes that are prevalent today in state and church toward religion and the teaching of religion on the secondary level of our educational systems and the dangers of which we should be aware if our Lutheran high schools are to maintain their character and the distinctiveness that is the justification for their existence, and if they are in some measure at least, to fulfill the high hopes that moved the hearts of those who felt so deeply that such schools are worthwhile that they were willing to bring great sacrifices to establish them.

Religion is not only a part of the curriculum of a Lutheran high school. If that were the only place that it holds in our secondary school system, it would be far better and more economical to agitate for and to put into effect a far reaching program of released time instruction on the secondary level.

We do not only teach religion courses, but we begin each day with a period of worship in which faculty and student body express their devotion to and their faith in a common Savior. Besides this, all of our teachers are to be confessors of the Christian faith in word and deed and proponents of the Christian world-view whenever the opportunity for such witness arises in the classrooms and corridors of our schools. But even this is not the end of the role that religion should play on our campuses. It has something to say to us about our relationship to each other as faculty members, about our attitudes toward and our dealings with our students, and about the relationship that exists between the individual members of our student bodies toward each other. If the consciousness that we as teachers in a Christian, school, are redeemed and believing children of God who stand in a classroom before other redeemed and believing children of God who look to us for guidance and help, and that we are united with other redeemed and believing children of God who are striving together to

build the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, if this consciousness does not make any difference in our teaching and in our attitudes and in our whole approach to our students, our subjects, and our profession, then religion has failed to play the role in our own lives that it ought to play, and unless it does this, it will never fully play the role in the whole educational process which we ought to assign to it.

There are those who feel that religion viewed in this way, will become a restrictive force that stifles initiative and destroys our personal liberty and academic freedom. In our day academic freedom has become the freedom to attack the cherished beliefs of the fathers and to advocate principles of morality view and ethics which would subvert the whole Christian view of right and wrong and of good and evil. It is held by many that strong, religious convictions, especially if they are conservative, hamstring all freedom of inquiry. Unless we are alert to the dangers posed by this situation, we may still in the lifetime of at least some of us, see the day when academic freedom will be the freedom to attack religion, in the sense in which we define the terms, but not the freedom to propagate it. The Supreme Court decision on the prayer issue, for example, while it seems superficially to be in harmony with our Wisconsin Synod position on prayer fellowship, nevertheless has some aspects which do not bode well for the future. The attitude of many scientists and liberal theologians in this matter is well summed up by Max Otto of the University of Wisconsin, who wrote years ago in his *Science and the Moral Life*, "The type of religion which looks to a realm other than the world about us for criteria of the good life is not a religion in man's interest. Those who aid in furthering that religion, whether they recognize what it implies or not, are making such contribution as they can to man's intellectual and moral defeat." One can well imagine what sort of edifice one of our misguided social and economic planners will build on that foundation.

For many the symbol of that restriction on academic freedom is seen in the Lutheran Confessions and our confessional oath and obligation. One sees this attitude reflected also in the many statements one hears today from liberal Lutheran theologians concerning the fear that used to keep them from expressing their real opinion and of making the results of their researches public, and they laud the new atmosphere of freedom which makes it possible for them to attack and deny the official position of the church which employs them.

There can be no question that to the unbelieving world the scope in which a Lutheran teacher operates, because of the religious nature of the school in which he works, appears to be impossibly narrow. One of the tragedies in the field of religious education in our day is the fact that this worldly attitude has in many cases become the dominant attitude in the church. But the person who feels restricted and hemmed in by his confessional oath and by the confessional nature of the institution he serves does not really belong in a Lutheran school. For him, academic freedom ought to mean the freedom to talk a walk. For myself, and I am sure that I speak for all of you, at least I ought to be speaking for all of you, I know that I feel much more free in a Lutheran school that I could possibly feel in any secular institution. Here, in a Lutheran school, I can say what I want to say without feeling that I am taking unfair advantage of my students or betraying the trust of those who pay my salary. In a public school I could not defend the truth of Scripture as I can in the place where I teach. The things that I say in the classroom here are the things which I want to say and which I know to be in the best interest of my students. And if someone were to come to me tomorrow and tell me that the Wisconsin Synod as my employer has released me from every obligation to the symbols of the church, I do not know of anything that, I would add or subtract from my teaching. In other words, I have all the academic freedom I want, and the person who wants to be free from all obligation to the Lutheran confessions ought to seek such freedom elsewhere then in a Lutheran school. I would not want to teach in a public school because I would have to surrender my academic freedom to do so, or else the officials of that school would soon have just cause to remove me from my position for what they might well call sectarian activities. For example, I want to be free to say in the classroom that those who think that they will go to heaven by being good will go to hell. Can you imagine what would happen if such a remark were made in all seriousness in a public school class room?

By the same token, we, as teachers in the schools of the church, have a special obligation to the congregations from which our students come, to the pastors who have a special charge from God over the souls of these young men and women, and to the parents who commit their sons and daughters to our care. We ought

to remember that we too, with our students are part of the body of Christ, and our high schools are never to work at cross purposes with our congregations. We are an educational arm of the church of Jesus Christ, and as such we have the duty to uphold and to perpetuate the theology to which our congregations are committed. We all recognize, of course, that this is true only so long as the congregations continue in the Word of Christ, but it is also true that history teaches us that when the church forsakes that Word it is usually not the congregations but the higher schools of the church which lead God's people astray. We have seen too many schools founded by pious, God fearing, Bible-believing Christians degenerate into hotbeds of unbelief to imagine that this cannot happen to the schools of the Wisconsin Synod. In this changing world also churches change and not always for the better.

If we remain vigilant and conscious of this danger, we may, however, stem the decay and delay it for a little longer than the process might otherwise take. We must, of course, first keep watch over our own hearts and over our own lips. Secondly, we ought to manifest a loving concern for the brother who may have his doubts and misconceptions. But beyond this we might as well reserve a justified measure of scorn for those who take the church's money and receive the church's sons and daughters into their spiritual and academic care and then use their position to weaken the faith of God's people and to undermine the church's doctrinal stand and to undercut the church's purpose in calling them to serve.

If we, as members of the faculty of a Christian, Lutheran school are thus united in a common faith and a common purpose, our religion will become much more than a part of the curriculum. It ought actually to be the glue that holds the curriculum together. It is the integrating factor that gives a common purpose to all of our joint and individual efforts. In a Lutheran school, for example, the study of science becomes the study of our Father's world and the discovery of the laws of nature becomes a process of thinking God's thoughts after Him. And the Christian character of such teaching will often manifest itself in what is not said as by what is said. Somewhere, if my memory serves me well, Martin Luther says that after the study of God's Word man can find no nobler pursuit than the study of God's creation. In such an atmosphere the teaching of science will reinforce the teaching of religion and though the facts remain the same, yet the whole contest in which the facts are seen and understood and interpreted will be different. In such a school, language will become more than the sophisticated grunting of higher animals, but it will be viewed as a creation of God which is intended above all else to be the greatest means of God's revelation to man. In such a school the study of literature becomes an exercise for the development of Christian judgment on the basis of God's Word, and history truly becomes His story to the interpretation of which we again bring our Christian point of view as we interpret the actions of men and nations. The revelation of God as we have it in the verbally inspired Scriptures will thus serve as the constant factor in the pursuit of truth and learning. This is the one thing that does not change but stands as a foundation and anchor for all of our teaching in every area of the curriculum. About these things, the things that are settled by God's Word there can be no doubt. To say this in this present context is surely another case of belaboring the obvious, but we do need to be reminded of it again and again.

We must be aware, however, that such an attitude again lays the way open for the charge that we make truth static, and that we close the door to all progress while we remain chained to outmoded patterns of thought. To such a charge we might paraphrase the reply that G. K. Chesterton gave when he wrote, "I am proud to be fettered by antiquated doctrines and to be enslaved by dead creeds, as my journalistic friends so often tell me; for I know very well that it is the heretical creeds that are dead and it is only the reasonable doctrine that lives long enough to be called antiquated." The only change that we would be inclined to make is to change the word "reasonable" to "Biblical" in that sentence.

In our changing world even truth is coming to be considered to be ever changing. And if we define education as the pursuit of truth, this basic attitude will be reflected in our whole approach to our work. The pragmatism of William James and John Dewey has robbed our world of all final truth and of all firm criteria by which truth might be determined, and the field of religious education has not been untouched by this development. In fact, if I were asked what is the basic characteristic of most of the religious teaching that is going on in our time, I would say that it is the studied attempt to create doubt and to arouse questions in regard

to the ethical principles and the moral values and the theological truths which have been held to be valid by Christians through the millennia of church history.

Here again we must admit that in some areas, at least, this attitude of doubt has been one of men's most productive attitudes. Much of the progress that man has been able to achieve in the last century has been the direct result of doubt about some previously accepted view. A hundred years ago, for, example, there were competent and respected scientists who were able to demonstrate logically that the flight of heavier-than-air aircraft was mathematically impossible. Today, a kind kindergarten pupil looks into the sky and knows that it can be done, but only because two bicycle repairmen dared to question the views of college professors who were far more learned than they.

Modern education, having noted the remarkable progress that has followed the application of healthy doubt to the solutions that had been previously accepted as the final answers to problems proposed by the human mind, has therefore deliberately fostered the implantation of doubt in the minds of the young, especially on the higher levels of the educational enterprise.

At the same time, it has become fashionable to ascribe all the narrow dogmatism in every field of knowledge to the church so that in our day the church and the Christian religion are often made the scapegoat that is held responsible for every road-block that was placed in the way of progress by those who stubbornly clung to the views of the past. The pressure that was brought by the church to force Galileo to recant is cited to the point of nausea. While it is true that churchmen must bear their fair share of the blame for some of the scientific dogmatism of the past, yet an examination of the history of scientific development will show instance after instance in which scientists were persecuted and ridiculed by their fellow scientists for departing from, or questioning the scientific orthodoxy of their time. When Harvey announced his discovery of the circulation of the blood, it was not so much the churchmen of the time as his fellow-physicians who ridiculed and rejected his views because they knew that such a thing was impossible. And when Edison invented the phonograph, it was not a meeting of the Wisconsin Synod, but all the scientists of the Paris in solemn assembly gathered, who declared the phonograph to be a fraud and a trick because, they said, it was scientifically impossible to reproduce the voice on a disk. All this took place less than a hundred years ago, and it is safe to say that we have not seen the last of this witch hunting and these heresy trials conducted in the halls of our scientific laboratories. In our own day, for example, it is hardly possible for a scientist to maintain a reputable standing among his fellow scientists if he does not subscribe to the dogma of evolution. This is not said to disparage the work of the scientists, nor to devaluate science, but only a plea for fairness in pro judgment in this area.

Nor is it an assertion that the church's skirts are perfectly clean in this matter, but, so far –as churchmen are concerned, they might well have avoided for themselves and for the church much ridicule if they had only kept in mind the words of Scripture, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." That passage applies also to the world of science and education. With the understanding of what is involved in this inspired sentence, churchmen might well have hesitated before giving full devotion to some scientific or educational theory or complete credence to some well-nigh universally accepted conclusion. The errors of theologians in this regard, therefore, are not to be charged to the Christian religion or to the Holy Scriptures, but rather to the failure of men to apply Scripture principles correctly. The man who remembers the words of the Bible, "Let God be true and every man a liar," will surely maintain an attitude of healthy skepticism over against every assertion that rests only on the wisdom of men or the testimony of the senses, trained though they may be in the scientific method. Long ago, before the days of Kant, Martin Luther already said that there is no argument from human reason that cannot be overthrown by another argument from reason.

On the other hand, however, it does not follow that this same attitude of doubt and skepticism ought to be cultivated in the area of religion and theology. But just this has happened in our day in the teaching of religion. The complaint about religious education that one hears again and again from students at Christian colleges and seminaries is this, "We never get any answers. All we get are questions. And what makes the situation so hopeless is this that when this bitter complaint is conveyed to those who administer the program or

who do the teaching, the complaining student is summarily accused of immaturity and lack, of understanding; and the program and the system are defended as being the only proper way to teach religion in this modern scientific age. Many of the teachers who are responsible for this situation actually feel that they are doing God a service by instilling this attitude of doubt over against accepted religious truth, because they insist that this is the way to make students think about these matters. And it is always implied that those who present religious truth as fixed and final are only contributing to spiritual apathy and religious atrophy and theological obscurantism.

But we ought to remember that our first task as teachers of religion or as teachers in a Christian school, whose whole attitude toward life and learning has been shaped in a Biblical matrix and ought to be a reflection of the Christian faith that lives in our hearts, is to build and to foster that same faith in the hearts of those who are committed into our hands for a Christian education. If we grant this premise, as we surely must, we must also conclude that fostering and arousing doubt in the minds of our students over against the truths of our most holy faith is opposed to all that we are called upon to do, for doubt is the very opposite of faith, -- it is incipient unbelief.

This does not mean that it should be our aim to train our students to accept uncritically whatever we say to them, at least, we ought not to expect them to accept it alone. There is a sense in which we ought to encourage in our students a questioning attitude toward our teaching, if only for our own good. There are few teachers who will not admit that their own concepts even in the field of religion are clarified and refined by the incisive questioning that has come to them from their classes and which has compelled them to reexamine and to rethink their own views. It was the persistent questioning of some of my former students which forced me to revise some of my Missourian views on church and ministry, which I had for many years regarded as these until these questions made clear to me some of the logical leaps of which I was guilty in interpreting the Scriptures. And if it had not been for this I might perhaps today no longer be a member of the Missouri Synod but I would in all likelihood also not be a member of the Wisconsin Synod either.

But aside from any benefit that we might derive from such a questioning attitude on the part of our students, we ought to encourage them in this so that their faith might not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. If the only ground that they have for accepting a certain teaching as true is the authority of some respected and beloved teacher, there is a wide chink in their spiritual armor that the devil will not fail to exploit. We need always to remember the judgment that God pronounced on the Bereans when He said that these people of Berea were more noble than those of Thessalonica because they searched the Scriptures to satisfy themselves that the things that had been preached to them by Paul were so. If it was noble in those days to examine the teaching of the apostle Paul and to compare his doctrine with the teachings of the Old Testament to determine its validity, then surely none of us ought to object when our teaching is subjected to the same close scrutiny, yes, we ought to do all that we can to encourage our students to do this very thing. After all, we also do not come outside the scope of the divine directive that says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test spirits whether they are of God; for false prophets have gone out into the world" It is therefore a caricature of an orthodox teacher if men insist that the only teaching of which he is capable is a rote transmission of stereotyped words and stock phrases. We want our students to think and to test, but this can be done without giving them the shock treatment that callously knocks all the props out from under their faith, and a truly Christian teacher ought to know the difference between testing the spirits and tempting God.

This questioning attitude toward our own teaching which we want to develop in our students is a far cry from the attitude of doubt over against the Word of God which is fostered today in so many schools that once called and often still call themselves Christian and even Lutheran. Deliberately to create doubt about some teaching of God's Word in order to make students think is unworthy of a Christian teacher, and what is still more reprehensible is that often this questioning of the truth and reliability of the Bible is coupled with an inflexible insistence that the teacher's methods are not open to question.

The teaching methods that insist upon an unquestioning acceptance of that which is clearly said in God's Word is often described as authoritarian, and if the matter ended here we would gladly grant the argument and

accept the epithet. But this is usually said in a tone of voice that makes it clear that the mere word is enough to condemn such methods and to rule them out of consideration. It is often said that modern students will not submit to that approach, and those who do submit to it are characterized as sheep who blindly follow where ever they are led.

That sort of argument ought surely not to frighten us, and to be cowed into submission by the dominant voices either in theology or education is surely just as sheepish or spineless, and moreover it is a blind following of the blind. But entirely aside from this, it should be understood that submission to authority is not an evil thing in itself. It may even be that if we had more of the authoritarian approach in our educational system, we might have less of the rebellion and the rioting and the delinquency that is rotting the fabric of our society. There are some things that ought never to become the subject of debate, even apart from the authority of Scripture. Even the devil might well be loath publicly to defend rape, adultery and murder. An open mind is not necessarily virtuous or even desirable. Someone has said that the only reason one ought to open one's mouth is to shut it again on something solid. And a man whose mind is always open is as ludicrous as one who stands around all day with a mouth that is always open, and the trouble with a lot of open minds is they are open on both ends.

At the time, it, might be said that a man who insists that there is only one way to discover and to establish truth and that an authoritarian approach in religious education is a priori to be rejected can scarcely boast of having an open mind. There are, after all, many ways of knowing. One may know by intuition, by rational insight, by authority, by revelation, as well as by controlled experimentation. And one way of knowing is not necessarily superior to the others. The immense prestige that had been acquired by the scientific method of verification by experiment has led many to conclude that this is the only way to arrive at solid truth. Often the very men who set so much store by the scientific method still accept even most scientific facts on the basis of authority, and they even believe many things for which there is little more proof than the intelligent guess of some respected leader in the field. When this is pointed out to them, it is readily admitted, but they insist that these scientific leaders are rightly considered to be able to speak with authority but that this can scarcely be granted in the case of the Bible, the writers of which were acquainted with neither the canons of modern historiography or the rules of modern science.

It ought to be obvious, however, to any orthodox Lutheran that authoritarian and dogmatic approach in the teaching of religion is not only not inconsistent with our faith or confession, but it is actually required by that confession and faith. The very moment that a man admits that the Bible is the inspired revelation of God to men) the authoritarian approach will be taken for granted. This again ought not to become an excuse for academic laziness nor a cloak for intellectual fossilism and it does not mean that we should be dogmatic in the bad sense of the term nor that we should confuse all our pronouncements with the Word of God, but it does mean that when and where the Scriptures have spoken, the matter is settled once and for all time. Neither does it mean that we ought to treat the very normal doubts of our teenagers as unforgivable sins, or even to deal with unsympathetically but it does mean that we should make a conscious effort to instill in them the attitude which accepts the pronouncements of the Bible as the last word in every argument to which those pronouncements apply. Our students need to be helped to overcome their doubts and not encouraged to believe that doubt is a virtue when it is applied to the Word of God.

And this applies not only to those who teach in the religion department of our faculties. In our Lutheran high schools and colleges we are colleagues and coworkers in a far higher sense than this could ever be possible in the public school which is an adjunct of our pluralistic society. There ought not be one member of our faculties who is not intent on this that our young people shall be built up in their Christian faith. The teachings of Bible ought to be for all of us the constant to which all the teaching in the arts, literature, and the sciences ought to conform. If this is not done then the justification for our existence as separate schools in the community has been lost. Religion ought to be the chief stabilizing factor that keeps us from being blown to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

And if this is true, then it follows that all of us, no matter what our special field of competence may be, ought to be well-versed, as well-versed as possible, in the teachings of the Bible. This too is so self-evident that one almost hesitates to mention it lest one should again be accused of belaboring the obvious. But let me ask you, when did you last read some book dealing with some serious theological subject? When did you last read the Lutheran Confessions? How often do you pick up your Bible with the intention of giving serious, systematic, thoroughgoing study of its teachings?

If the Bible and its teachings are to have that honored place in our thinking, it follows also that if the day should ever come when our church will no longer subscribe to the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible and the inerrancy of Scripture, we will have gone a long way toward making the Lutheran high school an unnecessary luxury.

It is this fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us through a verbally inspired, inerrant, and infallible Bible which alone makes it possible for us to speak and teach with authority in matters of religion, and that gives us a right to demand that all our teaching in every nook and cranny of the curriculum should conform to this divinely given Word. That does not mean that our teachers should not be abreast of the times and know what is being said by those on the frontiers of science and every field of human knowledge, or that they should be satisfied with any theories of science so long as they do not conflict with the Bible, but it means, as the apostle says, that they should prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. That which is good is not necessarily the view which can in some way be reconciled with Scripture, for this is true, for example, of the ancient view of spontaneous generation, which is not only reconcilable with the Bible but which many churchmen, including Dr. Martin Luther, believed to be implied by the story of creation. But on the other hand, that which conflicts with the clear teaching of Scripture is summarily and necessarily to be rejected. We must, however, be careful that we do not read more into the Scriptures than the words actually say.

Because the Bible is the verbally inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, therefore the pedagogical approach which is intended to create all sorts of doubts about its teaching is inconsistent with a true view of Scripture. "We have a sure prophetic Word by inspiration of the Lord." There will be countless others to create doubt in the minds and hearts of our young people. What they read in their newspapers, what they see on the screen, what they learn from the world, all this will cause them to wonder whether the moral principles that they are called upon to follow are valid and whether the truths which they have learned from their church are true. As teachers in Lutheran schools of higher learning we are here to answer those questions with authority, to help them to overcome their doubts, to become ever more firmly grounded on the only foundation that will stand the test on the day of judgment.

There is also another reason why the questioning approach is out of place in the teaching of religion whether this is done in the formal religion classes or incidentally in any other class. It is often assumed, consciously or unconsciously, and sometimes this is true also of orthodox Lutherans who ought to know better, that man comes to religious faith and theological certainty by a process of natural reasoning. While the reason of man is involved in the process of conversion, and as the Lutheran confessions say, God has a different way of working in man who is endowed with reason than in a stone or block, yet reason is not the instrument by which that conversion is brought about. Rather reason is an object of the converting operation of the Holy Spirit. By His almighty power, working in the Word, He changes my reason so that it begins to look at reality with new eyes, that it begins to see as reasonable and true what previously appeared to be sheer nonsense. In reality, the Christian faith constantly requires the sacrifice of the intellect, and in every area requires the sacrifice of the intellect, and in every area of learning we ought to be conscious of the fact that there is much in the Christian faith which cannot be fitted into the world of science where every natural effect is assumed to have a corresponding natural cause. In such a world an iron ax head cannot swim and 5000 men cannot be fed with five loaves and two fishes.

And the truths which we hold to be evident in our faith are not only at variance with the conclusions of science, but they conflict with universally accepted axioms also in other fields. It is hardly consonant, for example, with human ideas of justice that one man should be punished for the sin of another, and the whole

concept of hereditary guilt is obnoxious to natural man. And this is no modern discovery by any means. Already the people of the Old Testament complained about the unfairness of this teaching and said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." And anyone who thinks "normally" as the world would put it, will agree that if the fathers eat sour grapes it is their teeth and not the teeth of their children that ought to be set on edge.

By the same token it is obvious that the guilt of the sinner must be expiated by the sinner himself. We do not punish a man for the crimes of another, and when it happens we call it a miscarriage of justice. Yet, as Luther says, in God's court the innocent is condemned and the guilty are declared righteous. These truths are so familiar to us and we have lived with them and believed them so long that we have for all practical purposes forgotten that the Gospel is foolishness to the natural man.

And if we would keep this in mind, we would soon recognize what folly it is to arouse doubt in the minds and hearts of our pupils in order that their faith may in the end be more firmly established because it will have become a reasonable faith, the principles of which have been found to be defensible at the far of human reason and that are consistent with the findings of modern science.

We have altogether too much of such a rationalistically defensible faith in the church of our time. It is a faith which says that God created the world but not in six days, that Christ is the Son of God but that He was probably not born of a virgin, that He rose from the dead but that His bones still lie mouldering in some forgotten Palestinian grave, that the children of Israel were delivered from Pharaoh but that the story of the ten plagues is an exaggerated account of natural events, and so on. Such a point of view is then characterized as a "mature faith" and in case one or the other of us may find such a phrase appealing, we might be reminded that the Lord Jesus told us that his followers must become as little children. It is no accident that such conclusions are arrived at only a few years after the new approach to theology is adopted.

The true Christian faith is strengthened by a clear presentation of the Word. Through the Word men are ever more firmly convinced of the truths that are enunciated in that Word and the most adequate defense of the Christian faith is its fearless presentation. To teach with authority and not as the scribes with their endless questions must still be the goal of a Christian teacher. To attempt to defend the Word of God with reason is to use the scabbard to defend the sword and the head to protect the helmet, as Luther put it, and to use reason to illumine the Christian faith is to use a candle to find the sun. And what is called a "mature faith" is often only incipient unbelief.

This ought also to dispose of the claim that is often made that the Christian faith must be restated in terms that are relevant to modern man in a modern world. Anyone who would object to what those words say outside the context of modern theology would, of course, be a nincompoop. Of course, the truths of religion must be relevant to life and we ought to do all we can to apply the truths of religion to the changing conditions in our modern world. But in the context of present-day theology, the plea for relevance usually is a call for the surrender of every statement of the Bible that does not fit into the framework of the modern scientific world-view. The whole process called demythologizing is in reality nothing more than this. In facing up to this challenge, we need only to remind ourselves that it is not Christian, Biblical theology that needs revision,-- it is rather the perverted and blinded reason of man that needs enlightenment. In other words, it is not the Bible but the sinful heart of man that needs to be changed.

What all this really amounts to in reality is a plea addressed to the brethren in the Wisconsin Synod ministry that in this changing world we firmly cling to the old truths of Holy Writ and recognize them as the unchanging and immovable foundation of our faith and the faith of our students. The rapid changes that we have seen in our lifetime have not outmoded the teachings of the Bible. But as our Wisconsin Synod becomes more and more isolated from the ecumenical mainstream of theological thought developed by some of the so-called "finest minds in the contemporary church", it will become increasingly difficult to retain our individuality and to hold what is generally regarded as an impossible position. If I read the signs of the times correctly, we will find our point of view becoming more and more unpopular and from the human standpoint we are fighting a losing battle. But this is all the more reason to support and foster our own system of education

for so long as we are permitted to have it by a government which is rapidly encroaching upon our individual liberties. The machinery for an eventual throttling of our system of education is already in operation, but we need to remember that this is the Lord's battle and that with Him there is no restraint to save by many or by few, and when all is said and done,

The Word they still shall let remain
And not a thank have for it.
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit." Amen