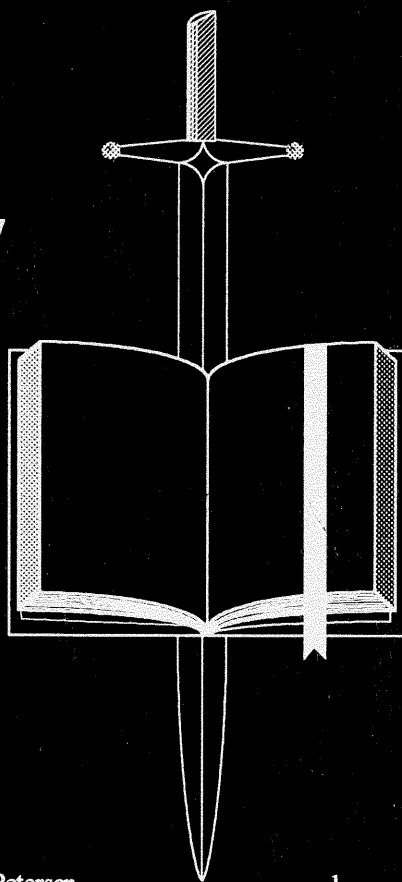


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# Lutheran Synod Quarterly



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## Lutheran Synod Quarterly

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## Foreword

By: Pres. Wilhelm W. Petersen

As the Evangelical Lutheran Synod observes the seventy-fifth anniversary of its reorganization we include in this issue of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* a sermon and some theses on church fellowship. The sermon by Herman Amberg Preus — who served as president of the old Norwegian Synod from 1862 to 1894 — was delivered at the ordination of Otto Christian Ottesen, son of Jacob Aal Ottesen, one of the theological leaders of the old Synod. The sermon was preached on February 3, 1884, during the Election Controversy. Interestingly, the District President refused to ordain Otto Ottesen because he accepted “the other position,” that is, the Synod's position. Alluding to this, President Preus says that the ordinand had already endured hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Our thanks to Pastor Herbert Larson for translating this sermon from the Norwegian language.

The article entitled *Unity, Union, and Unionism* is a reprint from the 1936 Convention Report of the reorganized Synod. This was the Synod's response to the invitation from the old American Lutheran Church to enter into doctrinal discussions, with a view to establishing fellowship. These theses reflect the position of the ELS on church fellowship.

Also included in this issue is an article by Mr. William Overn entitled *Cosmology Challenges Theology: A Biblical Response*. Mr. Overn is a strong advocate of creation science and takes issue with the claims of modern cosmology. Mr. Overn is a member of Heritage Lutheran Church, Apple Valley, Minnesota, and serves on the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran college and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. †

## **Sermon at the Ordination of Otto Christian Ottesen**

By: Herman Amberg Preus  
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota  
February 3, 1884

“Therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” —  
2 Timothy 2:3

### ***Enduring Hardship as a Good Soldier of Jesus Christ***

It is to his disciple Timothy who was installed as bishop in Ephesus that the apostle Paul directs this admonition. When Paul here lays it on Timothy’s heart to get used to suffering as a good soldier, he does not, however, by emphasizing this aspect of Timothy’s work, want to have it described as its substance. No, the apostle describes his chief work as being an instrument, when in the Epistle to the Corinthians he places it alongside his own when he says, “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1Co 4:1). He himself gives a further explanation of those words in the words with which he makes his moving departure from the elders in Ephesus, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over that which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood!” (Act 20:28).

Yes, Timothy was to serve the congregation as a servant of Christ who is subject to and obedient to the Word of Christ and answerable to him alone as the church’s Head and King, and as a steward of the mysteries of God care for it by guiding it into good pastures of the Gospel and leading it to the still, flowing waters of Siloam. As the Master is called “The Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6) and comes as the angels sang in order to bring “peace on earth,” so are his servants to be bearers of a message of peace by proclaiming the blessed tidings of the Gospel to people who are lost and condemned on account of sin, to consciences which are troubled because of the judgment of the Law that man’s sin was atoned for by the blood of

Jesus, that God is a reconciled God, and by exhorting sinners, “Be reconciled with God” (2Co 5:20).

However, precisely because this is the chief work of the servants of Christ and of the Word, precisely because they are to proclaim the Gospel of Christ above all else for the conversion of sinners and their translation from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, precisely for this reason their position becomes a position of conflict. For this reason, a servant of Christ, a bearer of the message of the Gospel, becomes a soldier of Christ. The Prince of Peace himself proclaims this when he says, “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division” (Luk 12:49, 51). And how could it be otherwise?

He came of course to free us from Satan’s power and was therefore to “demolish the devil’s stronghold,” as the stronger man comes upon the strong and overcoming him takes away his armor which he trusted, and divides his spoils (Luk 11:22).

How was it possible that the devil and his army should look peaceably upon this? On the contrary, he raged bitterly and sought not merely to employ all his cunning and power in order to hinder the work of the Lord, but furthermore, walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour, or he puts on the guise of an angel of light in order to deceive even the elect if that were possible. When he can, he blows up a storm, so that the church’s ship will sink. And the world, his bride, is of the same sort. Therefore Jesus says, “The world hates you, because it hates me” (Joh 15:18). The servant is surely not above the master but the servant ought to be as his master. Now, because it is also the chief work of the servants of Christ to demolish the devil’s strongholds through the preaching of the Gospel, they have to be exposed to his enmity and aggression. The enemies of Christ must be and remain their enemies. In a never-ending battle they must win their spoil from them and preserve the flock of God in peace. Without a battle there is not victory. Without a victory there is no crown, no peace.

Thus do we see that a servant of the Word, a bearer of the Gospel, must also be a soldier of Christ. More than that, a servant of Christ must be on guard constantly, be in battle unceasingly, so that neither he himself nor anyone else is to be offended by this. If he abandons his power, runs from battle for the sake of an easy life, or out of a false love cries, "Peace, peace!" where there is no peace, and wants to reconcile the truth with lies, then he shows himself thereby not a servant of Christ, but a hireling, a belly server.

Surely, every Christian has already enlisted as a soldier of Christ through Baptism and is assigned to battle against the enemies of Christ under the banner of the cross. At our Baptism we of course promised our God to renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways. In this battle formation of the Lord, the servants of the Word have the leading, but also the most dangerous post and the one most full of responsibility. They are to lead the way into battle under the supreme command of the Lord's Christ.

You also, my young friend, are placed here by the Holy Ghost through this congregation's call to be such a servant of the Word and such a soldier of Jesus Christ! I know how your pious mother, as Hannah previously, promised you to the Lord and his service already when she was carrying you under her heart, likewise how your venerable father has not let there be a lack of admonition and discipline, so that you might become a willing instrument of the Lord in his service. And the Lord heard the many prayers which were offered up on your behalf and he has blessed your mother's nurture and your father's admonition, so that both they and we have the great joy of seeing you present yourself here today to be ordained to the work of the Holy Ministry according to the old apostolic practice of prayer and the laying on of hands, after you first, as we have heard just now, have acquired for yourself the necessary knowledge and been declared fit for the work. Here, you are now by God's grace, through the preaching of the Law to awaken sinners who are sleeping and cause secure sinners to tremble before the judgment of the Law. Here, by the preaching of the Gospel you are to lead weary, sin-oppressed souls to Christ so that they can be

blessed in him. Always active, so that you can tear some soul from Satan, you are to stand at your post as a good soldier of Jesus Christ in order to protect the flock committed to you against the devil's attack, so that none of the souls won to Christ shall be ensnared by the enemy and again come under his power.

But as to how you are to carry on your Lord's battle as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, I will only remind you of how the apostle Paul describes the armor in which a soldier of Christ is to be arrayed ,

Therefore put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints (Eph 6:13-18).

We see from this that a soldier of Jesus Christ has to be arrayed in the armor of God. Even a Goliath's armor is not appropriate and good for a David who wants to wage the Lord's war. But we see that more than anything else, faith, justifying and saving faith, is what it means to be arrayed in the armor of God. Through faith alone are you clothed in the righteousness of Christ, do you have peace and skill in the Gospel of peace. Through faith alone can you protect yourself with the shield which quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one and properly use the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and with which alone the enemy can be slain.

But in the next place it finally also applies to a soldier of Jesus Christ that as Paul says to Timothy immediately after the words of our text, he "strive lawfully," that is, in the manner which the Lord has prescribed for his soldiers in his Word, so that you do not act according to your wisdom, liking or thoughts, or according to what you think appropriate and helpful, but so that you set aside all worldly sorrows and cares in reliance on Jesus Christ and his Word

and direct yourself entirely according to the will of the Lord revealed in the Word.

I surely know, my dear friend, how, as a pious and obedient son you have often answered your father, “I will do as you wish,” even when what he asked could have been contrary to your own liking and inclination. How much more will you not now strive to be obedient to your heavenly Father in everything and say, “Not as I will, but as you will” (Mat 26:39).

However, we do not wish to look extensively here at the armor of a soldier of Jesus Christ, or at how he is to do battle in general, but rather, to dwell for a while on the apostle’s special admonition about

### ***Enduring Hardship as a Good Soldier of Jesus Christ.***

My friends, this admonition is very profitable and necessary. How many an inexperienced young man does not enter the ministry with the best intentions about fighting the battle in the armor of God, with the highest expectations of successful progress. In his mind’s eye he sees how larger and larger crowds will flock around his pulpit, how opponents will be convinced and fall at his feet, how the erring will let themselves be straightened out, sinners converted and forsaking the broad way, the troubled letting themselves be comforted, how the entire congregation will look up to him with confidence, love and gratitude, willing and glad to let itself be led by him to the true fear of God and to be encouraged to outdo each other in every good work to the glory of God and the welfare of the church. In one word, he sees himself working in his congregation in peace and quietness surrounded by children and adults, as a father by pious, obedient and happy children.

When he now begins his work and his battle, and life’s bitter experiences soon meet him, he sees his beautiful expectations disappointed and that so often he must live to see the exact opposite of all that which he expected should be the constant fruit of his labor. When added to this there comes a lack of proper appreciation of his honest intention, backbiting, mockery and persecution of all kinds,



poverty and want, then, if he isn't prepared for "enduring this hardship," if he hasn't firmly impressed this on his heart that it is part of being a soldier of Christ "to suffer hardship," that the cross is precisely his proper trademark, — if he does not remember this, then even the most capable, the most zealous and the most stouthearted will easily be tempted to grasp at carnal means and seek human ways out in order to conclude a false peace, or become fainthearted and despondent.

He begins to think, "You're not the right man here. You haven't approached the matter the right way. You haven't used the proper weapons. You have not been arrayed in the proper armor. Otherwise it would not have gone like this. You wouldn't have had such sad experiences and not met such opposition." He begins to doubt his faith, his state of grace, or the power of the Word and God's help, and it ends perhaps with his letting down his guard, abandoning his power, giving up, and trying something which pays better. Or, what is by no means better, he continues the work of the ministry disheartened and indifferent. He works for his livelihood as a kind of machine which runs as long as it is greased. Or, he makes a disgraceful truce with the enemy and betrays his Master and his cause.

Now, if this is not to happen, then it is very necessary that a servant and soldier of God familiarize himself with the fact that as such he must "endure hardship," so that when the rough days come upon him unexpectedly, he isn't going to be confused and offended by the cross, and with it, by Christ himself.

Therefore this admonition of the apostle in our text is so extremely helpful and it is extremely necessary that we earnestly take it to heart. Note, the apostle does not say, "If you have to endure hardship, then ..." No, he assumes it as taken for granted that a soldier of Christ must endure hardship but he calls upon and admonishes Timothy now to be prepared for it and not to retreat from suffering but to take it upon himself willingly and to endure the hardship, and to endure it as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

When the soldier marches to war he knows that he has to endure hardship, that it goes along with his calling to be exposed to fatigue, to suffer from the cold and the heat, from thirst and hunger, wounds and mistreatment, imprisonment, sickness and death. And should a soldier of Jesus Christ expect an easy life in the Lord's war? No, enduring hardship is a part of his war too.

We heard above that he is concerned with routing Satan from his fortifications, that he does not have to wrestle with flesh and blood, that is, with human wisdom and might, but with the army of spiritual wickedness in high places since it is the devil who shows himself active in the children of unbelief.

We heard also that they do not want to sit peacefully and wait for the attack. As our Lord Jesus Christ was lead into the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry to be tempted by the devil, so does he also try his hand against us in order to inflict on us all the hardship, all the suffering he can.

He soon tempts us, especially in bodily and spiritual distress, to doubt concerning the divine truth, about God's faithfulness and gracious help, and in this way, to unbelief and despair, or, in unbelief, to make flesh our arm and in pride to rely upon our own knowledge, gifts and ability; soon, to despondency and faintheartedness by hindering the work in the congregation, since, in part, he arouses a lack of proper appreciation and discord, in part, seduces to error and ungodliness. He soon arouses the people's outcry, the hatred of the powerful in order the frighten the Lord's servants and to lure them into unfaithfulness, to preach to itching ears, and to seek the favor and support of the majority, the friendship of the powerful. He soon tempts them with the riches, goods and pleasures of this world and holds out the prospect of one thing: Of how much unpleasantness one can spare oneself, how easily one can make oneself the friend of everyone when one does not wrestle so conscientiously with the proclamation of the truth, but cons the people, uses ambiguous expressions and adapts the Word, a little here and a little there, to the wishes of his adversaries, yes, gives

the impression that in this way brotherly love shows itself at its best.

But if these attempts of the devil are in vain, if the servants of Christ stand firm against his attack, then he sets all kinds of traps in their way as he did before the Master and he pursues and torments them with the world's hatred and contempt, the lack of proper appreciation and the backbiting of false brethren, and with the breakup of and defections from the flock, or, with removal and expulsion from office.

We heard that it is the work of the Lord's servants to rebuke sin, to admonish sinners to abandon their false gods, to forsake the devil and to hold on to Christ. They are to be the salt of the earth; but this, we know, is sharp and biting. The proud, self-willed and defiant heart of man will not tolerate the humbling testimony of the truth. The correction and prick which the testimony leaves behind in conscience and which often disturbs men's rest and happiness, irritates them and they often pay those who bring them the most precious eternal treasures, but who like the surgeon need to use the sharp knife before they can apply the salve or pour the healing ointment into the wound, with slander, hatred, and persecution.

The apostle Paul was an experienced soldier in all kinds of suffering. To the Corinthians he writes,

Even to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure it; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now (1Co 4:11-13).

The apostle knows what that meant; therefore this admonition to Timothy, "Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!" You also, my friend, have really not yet entered into office but still you have already been obliged to have the experience that is called "enduring hardship" when one will not yield, but holds firm to the Word of God and "the form of sound doctrine" (2Ti 1:13). But the more do you need both the admonition and the comfort which lie in the apostle's words, "Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!"

You are not to go looking for suffering nor invite it. It will come in its time. But when it does come then you are not to get out of its way, but face it with hope, willingly and patiently bear it, and, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ hold out until God changes it. How terrible it would look for a soldier to flee because he saw the enemy approaching, or to abandon the colors in the heat of battle, or run from his post because of cold or rough weather, or because his life was in danger! He would be treated as a cowardly wretch or disgraceful traitor, as one who went back on his word.

But how much more disgraceful would it not be, if we who fight under the banner of The Most High, who have Jesus Christ himself for our Commander, who strive for the Gospel's cause, not for a corruptible crown but for the incorruptible crown of life, if we, I say, would forsake the Lord's cause, leave our post and flee as hirelings! It would surely be the most shameful treachery against the Lord who redeemed us, and against his redeemed flock.

No, endure hardship, as it becomes a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The apostle has himself given us an excellent example of this. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed ... but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (2Co 4:8, 9, 16). Scripture also says about the Savior that he came to his own but his own received him not (Joh 1:11). He had no place where he could lay his head (Mat 8:20). In his final suffering he had to suffer the fact that all forsook him (Mar 14:50). But he bore the suffering patiently, as a lamb which is led to slaughter (Isa 53:7). He held out and worked while it was day and then finally he trod the wine press alone (Joh 9:4; Isa 63:3). Follow that example!

You will perhaps find now and then that your work for the conversion of sinners is met with indifference and coldness, that your striving for the building up and progress of the congregation in the knowledge and fear of God does not find the support which could be expected, yes, is perhaps counteracted especially by those in whom you had hoped to find faithful co-laborers. You see little or

no fruit from your work, but that sin prevails. Willfulness and self-conceit are spreading and errors want to creep in. You are tempted to think: “They’re not worth it, these ungrateful people! I will shake off the dust from my feet and be on my way!” Or, you get to thinking to yourself: “It’s your fault. You don’t have the necessary ability, the right gifts, etc. It’s best that you give up your place to a more capable man.” Or, doubts about the power of the Word arise in you and the temptation to seek that through other means, for example, through bazaars, societies and lotteries to get people to make the contributions which the love of God and the preaching of his Word cannot bring them to do, or, by means of Methodistic prayer — meetings, anxious benches, or so-called new strategies, or through one’s own works, to bring about the conversion which alone is the work of the Spirit through the Means of Grace, or finally, through the preaching of the Law to want to work the true fear of God which alone is the fruit of the faith which is worked through the Gospel, etc.

But brethren, instead of all this, Scripture says, “Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry!” (2Ti 4:5). Let the thought of your own frailty serve to make you properly humble so that the power of God can be made perfect in your weakness! But comfort yourself with this that “the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes,” that the Word, however often it is still refused and despised, however, never returns void, but as the rain and the snow water the earth and make it fruitful, says the Lord, “so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Rom 1:16; Isa 55:10, 11). It is up to us to plant and to water, but for God to give the growth.

Your honest intentions are perhaps misjudged, you are slandered and made fun of, and confidence in your honest and integrity is undermined. It hurts deeply, but the Word which assures you of God’s grace and friendship keeps you on your feet. You say with Paul: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a man’s judgment,” and thus you go calmly on your

course further “by good report and evil report, by honor and dishonor” (1Co 4:3; 2Co 6:8).

Yes, you perhaps live to see that you are denounced because of your faith, because you are not willing to yield a tittle of the Word of God you are ousted and exposed to poverty and need. There can then be sufficient temptation for you to bitterness, hatred and revenge, or desponding, to give up everything. But in the Word you have found a solid rock to stand upon. It gives power to endure hardship and to hold out. It hurts you deeply to see such great blindness or wickedness among them who want to pass for children of God because you know the Lord has said, “He who despises you despises me” (Luk 10:16). But you will not be ashamed of our Lord’s testimony but will endure hardship with the Gospel through the power of God. You comfort yourself knowing that the Lord says, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mat 5:10-12). So you go your way cheerfully, glad that people cannot, however, take your Jesus and the kingdom of heaven from you; and you sing with the poet:

Thy way and all thy sorrows,  
Give thou into His hand,  
His gracious care unfailing,  
Who doth the heavens command;  
Their course and path He giveth  
To clouds and air and wind;  
A way thy feet may follow,  
He too, for thee will find.

The church’s need oppresses you. You see that it has happened as the apostle predicts: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned

aside to fables” (2Ti 4:3, 4). You see errors increasing, enemies swarming up from all sides, storms howling and the waves pounding sky-high around the ship of the church and threatening it with destruction while most of the people onboard stand by like indifferent onlookers, or, confused, run here and there. You, however, will not be disheartened nor despair concerning truth’s victory. You know that Israel’s Watchman is not sleeping, that he is with you in the ship, and that one, “Lord, save us, we perish!” awakens him who still commands the wind and the sea, and they are calm (Luk 8:24). And you say,

Well I know, that  
The Church of God shall sail,  
And as though lost, must oft the fear bewail  
The ’whelming waves will it sink;  
Yet, I am glad,  
And by the faith am cheered,  
That in His Church’s ship  
Jesus Himself did step;  
Crash ’gainst it, O, wind and waves,  
Beat with all your might its sides,  
It is never going to sink!

Because it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Mat 16:18).

Satan rushes in upon you with severe temptations whether you do after all possess the necessary ability for the difficult work or whether you have not misunderstood your calling. You feel so unworthy of so holy a work. Yes, your state of grace is made doubtful for you because of frequently recurring weaknesses and slips, and the depth of sin of which you are more and more aware in your heart. Your sins reach over your head. They have become a heavy burden for you. But, especially do you dread the future, how you are going to remain constant in the great falling away. The enemies’ number increases. One after the other of your friends forsakes the colors. And what is your own strength and ability in comparison with the enemies’ wisdom and cunning?

How are you to keep out the gnawing anxiety, withstand the growing power, avoid the threatening danger? “Do not fear, little flock,” Scripture says then, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom!” (Luk 12:32). He, the great God, has, however, redeemed you and called you that you shall become one with him in suffering, but then also in glory! He who has begun the good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ (Phi 1:6). Therefore, grasp again the shield of faith with which you can quench the fiery darts of the wicked one and sing boldly:

Who will now accuse me  
 And for judgment drag me  
 Off to Sinai?  
 Sin I am confessing,  
 And to Jesus turning,  
 Free in Him am I.  
 Meet me, then, at Golgotha!  
 He shall plead there my case for me.  
 Who will then accuse me?

Who will then condemn me?  
 When I do immerse me  
 Deep in Jesus’ blood;  
 All the world over,  
 Will God’s judgment go then:  
 “This man, he is free,  
 He is washed in Jesus’ blood;”  
 Satan, sin and death must flee then;  
 Who will then condemn me?

Thus the suffering brings you comfort through the Gospel so that you can the better comfort others with the comfort wherewith you yourself are comforted (2Co 1:4). Thus strengthened anew in faith, you rely alone upon him and his powers who sits on high at the right hand of majesty but who has promised, “I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). And you say hopefully: “Whom shall I fear? If God is for me, who can be against me?” (Psa 27:1; Rom 8:31). As you know that he will direct all things for the best and do all things well, so are you certain that “he



is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day” (2Ti 1:12). Thus, instead of letting yourself be frightened by afflictions, losing heart and giving up, you learn by “enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” to “glory in tribulations” because you know that “tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience hope; and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us!” (Rom 5:3-5).

Thus ever striving after being arrayed in the full armor of God, armed with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, you will be able to hold your position against every enemy and beat back his attack. Yes, even when it can seem darkest and as if errors were going to triumph and the truth succumb, then you, however, sing fearlessly:

Still must they leave God's word its might,  
 For which no thanks they merit;  
 Still is He with us in the fight,  
 With His good gifts and Spirit.  
 And should they, in the strife,  
 Take kindred, goods, and life,  
 We freely let them go,  
 They profit not the foe;  
 With us remains the kingdom.

And when you thus have fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith, then you can also add cheerfully with the apostle, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day” (2Ti 4:7, 8). Therefore, my friend, “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!” To that end may God grant you his grace through Jesus Christ!

And with this, then, have I also wished for you, dear congregation, in this young man whom you have called to be your pastor, the best gift from God. May he give you grace to receive him as such!

May the Lord bless his coming in and his going out among you, so that he may save both himself and you! Amen. †

## Unity, Union, and Unionism

A reprint from the 1936 Convention Report of the Norwegian Synod

### *Foreword*

Two years ago the following words were addressed to our annual convention:

The Melanchthonian spirit of synergism, compromise, and unionism all but succeeded in preventing the giving of the Augsburg Confession to the World. After Luther's death the same spirit raised its head again and made protracted and insidious attacks on Scripture truth as confessed at Augsburg. This time it brought forth an Altered Augsburg Confession. It has been active ever since, though its voice has at times been somewhat muffled and its operations varying in degree of boldness.

The forces thus set in motion within the early Lutheran Church, and which have their deep-set roots in natural man's reason and inclination, are today bringing forth a bountiful harvest of indifference to, and misuse of, God's Word, of compromise and of related sins. Throughout the length and breadth of our land a strong, influential voice is now reverberating, bearing the message: "God's Moment is Now" for "recognition and fellowship" among American Lutherans. Voices are also lifted in the interest of the "whole problem of American Church Unity" which express the hope that "the tide toward a true, free national church in America" may set in.

The wave of indifference and unionism that threatened to swamp us, and that did wash overboard many of our friends and brethren two decades ago, was relatively small and timid as compared to the great and bold wave now advancing on orthodox Lutheranism in America and the world. The prevailing winds are against us, the tides and currents are contrary; the sea is rough. Brethren, the need of the hour is faithful, — I repeat, faithful, fearless, consecrated captains with firm hands to the helm, eyes fixed on the compass and chart — the open Bible — and a vigorous "get thee hence, Satan," to every suggestion of reason, convenience and self-aggrandizement.

Since then the wave has continued to advance and has increased in boldness. Realizing the imminent danger, and awake to their responsibilities as watchmen, our pastors are sounding the warning.

### ***The Theses***

In view of the fact that continued efforts are being made to unite all Lutherans in one fellowship, we adopt the following theses as expressing the principles which must guide us in seeking to effect such fellowship:

#### ***Thesis 1***

The spiritual unity of the Holy Christian Church, which is the body of Christ, is not dependent upon any such externals as a common organization or language, but alone upon the possession of the saving faith in Jesus Christ. True Christians will, however, “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and will therefore also seek to establish and maintain church fellowship with all who are one with them in confessing the true faith (Eph 4:3).

#### ***Thesis 2***

We acknowledge one, and only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practice, namely the Word of God; and only one God-pleasing procedure in striving for unity: That “the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God lead holy lives according to it.”

#### ***Thesis 3***

Through such teaching of the Word, unity and (when deemed desirable) union have been attained in the past. Examples: the early New Testament Church, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Synodical Conference.

#### ***Thesis 4***

We hold that inter-synodical committees are useful in promoting Christian fellowship only

- when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit, and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact;

- or where it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly” (Act 18:26).

### ***Thesis 5***

Where such evidence of unity is lacking, or where it is clear that those in error do not sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly,” but such committees nevertheless are elected to confer with them with the view of church fellowship, there is grave danger that the work of these committees will result in indifference and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and practice. (For examples of this, consider the mergers and unions of recent years among Lutherans.) The duty of testifying to the truth of God’s Word and thus promoting unity rests at all times upon all Christians (1Pe 3:15).

### ***Thesis 6***

Scripture warns us clearly and emphatically against entanglements with errorists (Rom 16:17; Tit 3:10; 1Ti 6:3-5). Any reluctance to heed these warnings and commands of Scripture is unionism already conceived in the heart, which if allowed to develop, will result in full-fledged unionism, as history also attests.

### ***Unity, Union, and Unionism***

Before considering the several theses, we pause here to ask Why not subscribe to the the U. L. C. Statement of 1934: “Inasmuch as our now separated Lutheran Church bodies all subscribe to these same confessions, it is our sincere belief that we already possess a firm basis on which to unite in one Lutheran Church in America ...”, and thus be done with statements of principles governing fellowship (Conv. Report, 416)?

Answer: We would gladly do this if observation and experience had not disillusioned us and taught us that “the real standpoint of a church is not the one written and subscribed to on paper, but manifests itself in her actual teaching, life, and practice” (Bente 10).

We need no further experiments to learn “that there is no guarantee of peace in words when men do not agree in things” (Krauth in Bente, 183).

It is truly regrettable that the many expressions of admiration for our uncompromising stand from other Lutheran quarters and their declarations of full agreement with us in doctrine must be met with hand cupped to the ear and saying, “What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say” (Emerson in Bente, 166).

Alas many honor Lutheranism and its confessions with the lips, but their teaching and practice are far from it.

### *Thesis 1*

The spiritual unity of the Holy Christian Church, which is the body of Christ, is not dependent upon any such externals as a common organization or language, but alone upon the possession of the saving faith in Jesus Christ. True Christians will, however, “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and will therefore also seek to establish and maintain church fellowship with all who are one with them in confessing the true faith (Eph 4:3).

This thesis is fundamental to the matter in hand. We speak of the Holy Christian Church, and in order that there shall be no misunderstanding and confusion, it is necessary briefly to explain what we mean by that name, or what it is we call “The Holy Christian Church.” We refer to the same thing as we confess in the third article of the Apostolic Creed with these words: “I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.” We say that the Christian Church is the body of Christ because the apostle Paul, being moved and guided by the Spirit of God, compares the church to the body and its members, and shows that as the members of the physical body of man each have their peculiar work and use and by the creative act of God are fitly joined together to form one body, so are also the individual members of the Church given each their particular place and work in the Church and constitute one communion. And he ends his arguments by saying to Christian members of the Church at Corinth: “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1Co 12:27, Rom 12:3ff). From this we learn

that the Church consists of individual believers, each one given his particular place and work, so as to form a spiritual body.

The "Holy Christian Church" consists only of those persons who have a true and living faith in Jesus Christ, having been called by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel of Christ which "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16); "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3:24); "who have been regenerated," "born of water and of the Spirit", and made "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Joh 3:5; Rom 8:17); and of whom it is said, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit 3:5). Only those are the members of the "Holy Christian Church," then, whom the Holy Ghost has called by the Gospel, redeeming them by the blood of Christ "which cleanseth us from all sin," and "purifying their hearts by faith" (1Jo 1:7; Act 15:9).

From this it is evident that the Church of Christ or the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, as the Lord Jesus declares to the Jews: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, 'Lo, here!' or 'Lo, there!' for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luk 17:20-21). For that reason we confess that we "believe the Holy Christian Church." It is only by the revelation of the Word of God and by faith in that Word that we know of that One Holy Church; for we cannot look into the hearts of men and observe the kingdom of God, we confess that the Holy Christian Church is "the communion of saints." This indicates spiritual union. In this sense, the Church is the aggregate of all who truly believe in Christ as their only Savior. It is all believers collectively. By "the Church" we denote not a mere abstract concept or idea of Christianity as a whole or in general, disregarding the individual persons who constitute the Church. For the Church of Christ consists of individual persons who truly believe the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, being "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1Co 1:10).

The faith and hope of the individual persons who constitute the Church are centered upon the same thing and sustained by the same means, and thus they constitute one body, as the apostle declares, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:4-6). The Christian Church is, therefore, one Church, not many churches. It consists of many persons who are the saints of God and dwell together in one communion and fellowship with one another in one faith and one hope. There is a perfect unity in the Church of Christ, which is not established or created by external organization or one language, but which the Holy Ghost has created by converting the hearts of sinners through the power of the Gospel of Christ.

That this unity of the Church is not a product of outward organization or external fellowship of church bodies is evident from the description of the Church and its members by the apostle Peter when he writes “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the blood of Jesus Christ,” and tells them: “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1Pe 1:1-2; 1Pe 2:9-10). The unity of the Church is, therefore, a spiritual union which binds together many individual persons, scattered among different peoples, nations, and tongues, but nevertheless, have fellowship with one another in the same mind and the same Spirit.

The unity of the Church is a creation of the Holy Ghost, established and maintained by Him through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. To regard it as a result of external organization or any contrivance of man is contrary to the doctrine of the Word of God (Luk 17:21). It is, indeed, true that members of the

Church of Christ are visible persons present in this world, and their fellowship and unity is manifested by their assembling of themselves together to hear the preaching of the Gospel and to use the Sacraments in accordance with the institution of Christ. The Lord Jesus prayed for His Church and its members, saying, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that shouldest keep them from evil" (Joh 17:15). And they are earnestly admonished not to neglect coming together for mutual edification of the day of the Lord's appearing: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb 10:25).

From these and other passages it is clear that the Church of Christ and its members are actively present in the world in assemblies and congregations where the Word and Sacraments are used. Jesus has promised to be present in the assemblies of His disciples, whether they be large or small: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat 18:20). "Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 18:19). But it is evident that His promises are based on the fact that they are gathered together "in His name" and "agree to ask in His name." It is the duty of, and indeed a great blessing for the disciples of Christ to practice outward fellowship with each other; but only those are the disciples of Christ who keep His Word: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Joh 8:31-32). And again: "Verily, Verily I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death" (Joh 8:51).

As disciples of Christ, we love the brethren and would fellowship with them, but since we cannot know the hearts of men, we know not who are the disciples of Christ except by the confession of the Word of Christ; that is, we can fellowship only with those assemblies or congregations which teach the pure doctrine of the Word of God and "observe all things whatsoever Christ has



commanded us.” (Mat 28:20). We are admonished to avoid those who cause divisions and offenses by teaching other doctrines than we have been taught by the Word of God, as it is written, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which yet have learned; and avoid them” (Rom 16:17).

Fellow believers, be assured the Church of Christ is a unit; it does stand a solid phalanx against sin and the devil. Christ’s promise: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat 16:18), is an impregnable fortress surrounding it. Why then, “O ye of little faith,” this feverish concern for mergers and unions of visible groups, as if they could save the Church from being swamped by the surging tides of godlessness and unbelief? It is the Word of God alone that can build, support, and defend the Church. Therefore, we are interested in the visible church only in so far as it fulfills its divinely appointed function, namely of being the agency for administering the means of grace through which the Holy Ghost grafts branches on the vine, Jesus Christ (Joh 15:5).

### *Thesis 2*

We acknowledge one, and only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practice, namely the Word of God; and only one God-pleasing procedure in striving for unity: That “the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God lead holy lives according to it.”

By the closing remark on Thesis 1, grafting was brought to mind. Grafting of trees and shrubs has been practiced a long time. St. Paul makes figurative use of it in Romans 11:17 and following. That the principle of grafting was fully understood by him, is clear from verse 17. “... grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.” In surgery a graft is defined as a “juncture between a piece of animal tissue cut from a living person or animal and the tissue of another subject.” The success or failure of grafting depends upon whether or not the life-fluid of the grafted body can be induced to flow through the engrafted part. It is, indeed, axiomatic in plant- as well as animal-tissue grafting

that the life-fluid is the only power that can unify the scion and the host, that is, cause the parts grafted together to unite into one living organism; therefore, no procedure is even attempted which is not based on this fact. In plants the life-fluid is called sap, in the human body it is called blood. It is the blood that carries life to every part and tissue of the body, and it is the blood that must nourish a part engrafted upon the body and thus unite it to the body. "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11).

The Word of God is the lifeblood of the Church. Sinners can not, as branches, be engrafted on the vine, Jesus Christ and, therewith, become a part of the Church, unless that lifeblood, the Word of God, is made to course through the "stony hearts" and spiritually dead souls with its quickening power (John 15:5; Eze 36:26). It is the Holy Ghost alone (meaning one other, and He, unassisted) who performs this miracle of grace.

The much-vaunted character of the lodge-member, the works of the self-righteous Pharisee, the conduct, attitude, "forhold," of the synergist have never aided this process of grafting a particle, nor have "science," modern learning, or "civilization" helped. That the Eskimo, e.g., learned to desire the white man's food and ways of living; that he has been introduced to the use of soap; that rules of sanitation have been adopted and have decreased infant mortality; that he has learned to read and write English and can run a motor boat instead of paddling a kayak — all this has not engrafted a single Eskimo on the vine, Jesus Christ. The "Social Gospel" is impotent to produce life, for it is a bloodless Gospel.

### *Thesis 3*

Through such teaching of the Word, unity and (when deemed desirable) union have been attained in the past. Examples: the early New Testament Church, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Synodical Conference.

"When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity," a God-pleasing method for attaining unity has been instituted. Compromise with error, hedging on disputed points, cowardly failure to teach all things whatsoever the Savior has commanded, is not, and

cannot be, the basis for the establishing of a true union, nor of true unity. Union without unity, without unanimity in doctrine and practice, is unscriptural and therefore impossible to us. Loyalty to the truth of God's Holy Word, orthodoxy in doctrine and practice, opposition to all error and heresy, fidelity to the symbols of Christendom and to the confessions of our Lutheran Church, will promote true unity.

Such unity may lead to union if union be thought desirable, advantageous or necessary. It need not lead to outward organic union as an integral or component part of its essence. Circumstances may be present which (conceivably) would make such union unprofitable or impracticable. Ordinarily, we will grant, some kind of external union will be deemed desirable so that the work of the Kingdom of God may be carried out as effectively and efficiently as possible, since "in union there is strength."

In support of this proposition we appeal to the past. The records of the early New Testament Church, of the Lutheran Reformation, and of the Synodical Conference prove that that which we hold to be "the only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practice" has indeed brought about, established, promoted, fostered and maintained unity, and that from such unity, church unions of various types have resulted.

The divinely inspired sources of the History of the Early Christian Church, the Church of the Apostolic era (c. 30AD - 75AD) tell us of the church in Jerusalem: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Act 2:42). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Act 4:32). The persecutions, although disrupting the visible union of the church to a large extent, did not violate the existing unity, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Act 8:4). There can be no doubt from the language of the text, even if the express words are lacking, that it was the same word that was being preached by all those who were scattered abroad. Whether it was in the cities of Judea, or in Samaria, in Phoenicia, in Cyprus, in

Antioch or in Damascus the same message designated as the Word was preached. Philip expounding Isaiah to an Ethiopian eunuch, Ananias strengthening Saul of Tarsus, this same Saul witnessing for the truth, Peter preaching in Cornelius' house, — all preach the same Gospel of repentance, baptism, and forgiveness of sins. Paul's questions: "Walked we not in the same spirit? Walked we not in the same steps?" are to be answered in the affirmative (2Co 12:18). They show that there was unity among Paul and his coworkers and that this unity was brought about by the preaching of the pure Word of God. James, Cephas, and John give Paul and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship," "as if they would have said, 'We, O Paul, in preaching the gospel, do agree with thee in all things; therefore, in doctrine we are companions, and have fellowship together therein;' that is to say, we have all one doctrine, for we preach one gospel, one baptism, one Christ, one faith" (Gal 2:9; Luther). As there was purity among the teachers, there was unity among the churches, so that they exchanged letters, greetings, and gifts. Who will deny that this unity was founded on the teaching of the pure Word of God?

That dissension and disputation, false doctrine and divisions are to be found in the early New Testament Church is true. But these were due not to the pure preaching of the Word of God, but to the perverseness of the human heart and the wiles of the devil. The preservation of the truth demands, however, not only that unity of doctrine be maintained, but also that error be combated, as the leaders of the Apostolic church did.

The Church of the Reformation shows us, again, that unity must be based on the pure preaching of the Word of God. The work of Luther and his co-laborers in Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, based on fidelity to God's Word, resulted in a God-pleasing unity. For example, when the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 was signed, Luther said to the representatives of the South German cities: "Because you stand thus, we are one, and we acknowledge and receive you as dear brethren in the Lord." The strife and divisions within the Lutheran church after the death of Luther were due

not to insistence on *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone) but to a willingness to compromise. It was only the consistent and persistent testimony of men like Andreae and Chemnitz, who remained faithful to the pure Word of God, the continued preaching of the Word of God in all its truth and purity, and their opposition to all error and to indifference, that eventually restored unity to the strife-torn Church, as evidenced by the adoption of the *Formula of Concord*.

The authors of the *Formula* solemnly declare, “We entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance with our utmost power that unity (and peace) by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ” (1095, 96). Such was the godly peace and true Christian unity restored by the *Formula of Concord* to the Lutheran Church. And what it did for her it is able to do for the Church at large. Being in complete agreement with the Scripture, it is well qualified to become the regeneration center of the entire present-day corrupted, disrupted, and demoralized Christendom.

Accordingly Lutherans, the natural advocates of a truly wholesome and God-pleasing union based on unity in divine truth, will not only strive to impart its blessings also to others, all the while praying incessantly, fervently, and trustingly with the pious framers of the *Formula*: “May Almighty God and the Father of our Lord Jesus grant the grace of His Holy Ghost that we all may be one with Him, and constantly abide in Christian unity, which is well-pleasing to Him! Amen” (837, 23) (Triglotta, I, 256).

The unity which existed among the signers of the *Formula of Concord* existed, and still exists, among their spiritual heirs, the members of the Synodical Conference. The Synodical Conference was formed in 1872 as “an expression of the unity of the spirit existing among the respective synods.” Concerning a preliminary meeting which was held at Fort Wayne (November 14-16, 1871) Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote in the *Lutheraner*:

We speak the truth, when we assure you, that this Convention in Fort Wayne reminded one of that picture of the Church, which the saintly Luke sketches in the words: “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul” (Act 4:32). It was not a matter

of first establishing unity, much less of producing the appearance of unity from without by all sorts of forced joint resolutions and formulas, but of giving expression to the already existing unity. With joy those present recognized, that not the counsels of men and church politics, but true unity of faith and confession had brought them together, so that the inner unity appeared also outwardly through the bond of peace. It did, indeed, see that there was justification for it when the enemies of (confessional) fidelity declared disdainfully that such fidelity calls forth only division; but God, who requires nothing from His stewards but that they be found faithful, has helped hitherto that now everyone must recognize that fidelity to His Holy Word does not separate but truly unites.

That divisions arose within this body (e.g. the Predestinarian Controversy) was due again to the false teachings of those who did not adhere to all the words of Jesus. Heresy and error is always the disuniting force; purity of preaching is the unifying force. The records of the Synodical Conference bear out this contention.

The lesson of history, then, is clear: the only truly unifying force (leading at times also to outward union) is the preaching of the Word of God in its truth and purity. Error causes divisions and such division have been found throughout the history of the Church. Let us ask God to preserve to us His pure Word that we might thereby help to bring about unity, praying, too:

Thou Fountain whence all wisdom flows,  
Which God on pious hearts bestows,  
Grant us Thy consolation,  
That in our pure faith's unity  
We faithful witnesses may be  
Of grace that brings salvation.  
Hear us, cheer us by Thy teachings;  
Let our preaching and our labor  
Praise Thee, Lord, and bless our neighbor.

#### ***Thesis 4***

We hold that inter-synodical committees are useful in promoting Christian fellowship only

- when the various groups or synods have, through their public ministry of the Word, given each other evidence of an existing unity in spirit,

and it remains merely to establish the fact of such unity and to arrange for some public recognition and confession of that fact;

- or where it is clear that those in error sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly” (Act 18:26).

In the early history of the Lutheran Church in this country so-called Free-conferences were frequently held (Columbus, Ohio, 1856; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1858; Chicago and Fort Wayne, 1860; Rushford, Minnesota, 1870; Decorah, Iowa, 1872; Minneapolis, 1877; St. Ansgar, Iowa, 1881; Roland, Iowa, 1882; Menomonie, Wisconsin, 1883; and many, many others) to discuss the difference in doctrine and practice separating the various synods. These Free-conferences were open to all Lutherans who wished to take part, laymen as well as clergy. One hundred sixty-five pastors from four different synods were reported present at Roland and a large number of laymen were active participants. The attendance at some sessions of the meetings was estimated at one thousand. The Free-conferences were, as a rule, held in response to an invitation extended by some congregation, not by resolution of synods, nor was it customary that anyone was officially authorized to speak for the synod to which he belonged. Synodical committees were sometimes appointed to make minor preliminary arrangements for a proposed conference meeting (*Kirketidende*, 1872, 142). The purpose of these public discussions was to get a clearer view of the doctrinal position held by members of each synod, and, if possible, to come to a God-pleasing agreement. It should also be noted that quite full and detailed reports of the Free-conferences were given general publicity through the synodical organs concerned. Outstanding speeches were quoted and the speakers named. Thus the general membership and pastorate of the several synods were kept well informed.

During the last three or four decades, it has become more and more common for groups and synods to negotiate through specially appointed smaller committees. Though such inter-synodical committees are not, as a rule, vested with authority to make final decisions on behalf of their respective synods, they do, nevertheless, through their official standing possess a prestige which is certain to

go a long way in shaping popular opinion in regard to the results of their negotiations.

Within the proper sphere such committees can no doubt fill a real need and useful purpose. When it is quite evident that unity of spirit exists between various groups or synods, they may be very helpful in formulating a definite declaration of principles in doctrine and practice; they may be able to suggest what real and alleged errors, if any, must be specifically and clearly renounced; to work out a basis for organic union, if desirable, or suggest rules for cooperation in their work, if they choose to continue under their existing organizations.

The question may pertinently be asked, "How can a synod discover whether or not real unity of spirit exists between it and other synods?" We answer, "Through their official organs and the published reports of conventions and other meetings, through addresses made by representative members on important occasions, through their constitutions and by-laws, and through the discipline practice, on their congregational and synodical level, a fairly accurate judgment may be formed." More intimate and dependable knowledge of a synod may be gained in this way than can be obtained through questions and answers and guarded discussions in relatively small committee meetings.

In the earlier periods of the Lutheran Church in this country, while new settlements were constantly being established, new synods were organized in various states. That error of doctrine should creep into some of them is not strange. At that time there were instances where great blessing resulted from negotiations with brethren who, by the grace of God, had reached a higher degree of Christian knowledge and experience. If it should appear today that any group or synod which may err in some points, sincerely seeks to know the truth and is willing to listen to the doctrine, reproof, and correction of the Word of God and stands ever ready to renounce what the Word denounces, God forbid that we should ever lay a straw in the way of negotiations with them. In such cases, committees may accomplish much good.



**Thesis 5**

Where such evidence of unity is lacking, or where it is clear that those in error do not sincerely desire to know “the way of God more perfectly,” but such committees nevertheless are elected to confer with them with the view of church fellowship, there is grave danger that the work of these committees will result in indifference and in compromise of Scriptural doctrine and practice. (For examples of this, consider the mergers and unions of recent years among Lutherans.) The duty of testifying to the truth of God’s Word and thus promoting unity rests at all times upon all Christians (1Pe 3:15).

Today conditions have become quite well settled, so that there can be little excuse for not knowing the spirit which prevails in the various Lutheran synods. Every group has its own official organ, through which it gives expression to its position in doctrine and practice. Extensive articles, written by prominent members, are published from time to time dealing with different doctrines and various phases of their church work. Although the authors have not always been designated as spokesmen for the whole group, yet, so long as no protest is made and the same doctrine and principles are repeatedly held forth and defended, it must be regarded as the acknowledged stand of the whole synod. If the contention is made that the synod gives room for various views on important Scriptural doctrines, the synod thereby brands itself as being so indifferent and unionistic that an orthodox church cannot have fellowship with it.

At the present time there is also little excuse for any Lutheran Synod to continue in error through ignorance. Hitherto, except during periods of negotiations between inter-synodical committees, erroneous doctrines and unscriptural practices have always been publicly pointed out and corrected. All possible encouragement has thereby been given to those in error to examine carefully their doctrine and practice in the light of God’s Word. If they still persist in their errors, they are without excuse.

If we are asked to negotiate through committees with groups and synods which by their public testimony plainly show that they continue to hold erroneous views on Scriptural doctrines in spite of warning and admonition, and in their practice fail to follow the

guidance of Scripture, what then? Scripture has made adequate provision for such contingency. To pastors it says, “Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season” (2Ti 4:2). It is made the clear duty of all Christians at all times to bear testimony for the truth in word and deed, not only to those that call themselves Lutherans, but to all men (1Pe 3:15).

The great danger of negotiating with confirmed errorists through synodical committees (a danger from which Romans 16:17, Titus 3:10, etc., graciously safeguard us) is indicated in the passages which describe the nature of those who teach false doctrine. In Ephesians 4:14 we read, “That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” And in Romans 16:18, after having admonished us to avoid those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the true doctrine, the apostle says of these false teachers, “And by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple.”

False teachers are shrewd, cunning, crafty, and are bent on deceiving. This description is not to be applied only to open enemies of the truth who consciously try to wreck the foundations of our Christian faith. It is equally true of all false teachers. Scripture does not distinguish between great and small error. All error is condemned, none condoned. Every error is a lie, and back of it stands the father of lies. Those who promote error, whether, humanly speaking, great or small, go the errands of the devil, whether they realize it and intend to do so or not.

When we elect a committee to be closeted in confidential negotiations with like committees from errorist bodies who will strive to gain acceptance of their false views, we have every reason to fear that we must reckon with the wily tactics of the archenemy of truth. If 1 Peter 3:15 is cited to justify such procedure, the passage is misapplied, and, though unintentionally, made to nullify Romans 16:17, Titus 3:10, etc. Let it be noted, too, that the prospects of convincing by our testimony to the truth a committee which represents a body confirmed in error, and through it the body itself, are very,

very poor indeed. Be it remembered also that the champions of false doctrine are usually satisfied if they gain for their error equal standing with the truth; hence every manner of compromise is resorted to. The danger is multiplied when, as is common, the errorists shower praises upon their opponents in order to gain their personal good will. When the champions of truth are brought to admire the errorists for their gentlemanly behavior and their fair-mindedness, and begin to think of the many able and good men and women whom they represent, then “the lust of the flesh” is near to victory.

Brethren, have we the right to expose ourselves or a committee to the machinations of the tempter? Are we so certain that we, or more especially our committee, shall be able to discover the snares which are laid for them and to hold unflinchingly to the truth? Scripture warns us very earnestly: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). This warning applies to sins both in life and doctrine. The apostle Paul, after having shown how the Jews have fallen away because of unbelief, warns the Christians in Rome against boasting of their superior knowledge in these words: “Be not high-minded, but fear” (Rom 11:12). And the disciples were reminded by their Savior: “The Spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak” (Mat 26:41).

Looking back upon the sad experiences of our old Norwegian Synod we have also historical reasons for taking the warnings to heart. An “heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.” That is the stern command of God. If we still continue to negotiate with errorists on intimate terms, the punishment will not fail to come. “God is not mocked.”

We believe it in place and beneficial to append here a short history of union movements among the Norwegian Lutherans in America which resulted in the compromise merger of 1917 and, as it seems, gave impetus to unionism and indifference and new hope to unionists throughout the Lutheran world.

### ***Historical Evidence***

Efforts to unite all Norwegian Lutherans in America into one body began very early. A series of seven so-called Free-conferences were held during the period of 1871 to 1887. Pastors and laymen calling themselves Lutherans were invited to take part in discussing doctrinal differences. Though these discussions may have been of considerable value to individuals as a means of getting information about the doctrinal position of other synods, there is nothing to show that any progress was made thereby toward real unity in doctrine.

At the last one of these Free-conferences, which was held in Willmar, Minnesota, October 6 - 12, 1887, it was decided to continue these meetings. No more general Free-conferences were held, however, owing to the fact that the Norwegian Synod shortly after this was divided as a result of the Election controversy, and the Anti-Missourian party became busy negotiating union with other bodies, which resulted in the organization of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church in 1890.

January 6 - 12, 1892, a so-called Delegate Meeting was held in Willmar, Minnesota. Thirty elected pastors and laymen from the Norwegian Synod and an equal number from the United Church assembled to discuss doctrinal differences. The printed report of the discussions would indicate that the prospects of attaining doctrinal agreement were now more remote than ever.

With the year 1900, the union movement entered upon a new era. The District meetings of the Norwegian Synod, held that year, passed resolutions inviting the United Church and the Hauge Synod through their respective presidents and the theological faculties to meet with a similar committee of the Norwegian Synod, for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences with a view to ascertaining the exact doctrinal position of each body, and, possibly, of arriving at a God-pleasing agreement. The United Church accepted the invitation, and a meeting of the joint committee was held shortly before Easter in 1901. It was decided to meet again the following year, but as Dr. F. A. Schmidt, contrary to the decision of the joint

meeting, published an account of the colloquy together with a sharp attack on the procedure followed in the discussions, the Norwegian Synod at its general meeting in 1902 passed a resolution to ask the United Church to appoint another man to take the place of Dr. Schmidt as a member of the committee. As an answer to this request, the United Church demanded evidence to prove the contention of the Norwegian Synod, that Dr. Schmidt "by his conduct during the long doctrinal controversy, as well as now, during and after the colloquy, had shown himself to be a hindrance, not only to reaching an agreement, but also to an understanding between the two synods." The Church-council of the Norwegian Synod published a pamphlet setting forth the evidence asked for. This brought out a bitter answer from the members of the United Church committee. It now seemed for a time that no more efforts would be made to continue these negotiations.

In 1905, however, an invitation to open negotiations between the Norwegian Lutheran bodies came from an unexpected source. The Hauge Synod, which up to this time had consistently refused to take part in these inter-synodical discussions, extended an invitation to all the Norwegian Lutheran bodies to open doctrinal discussions through committees, five members from each body. This invitation was accepted by the United Church and the Norwegian Synod, each appointing committees.

These committees held regular meetings once and twice a year, and in 1908 it was reported that theses on Absolution, Lay-preaching, The Call, and Conversion were agreed upon. No serious objection to these theses have been raised. A strong demand was expressed, however, especially by members of the Norwegian Synod, that antitheses would be added, in order to make sure that false doctrines formerly championed by other synods were no longer held by them. The committee members from the Norwegian Synod assured us that this would no doubt be done.

At the meeting of the joint committee held November 10 - 13, 1908, the doctrine of Election was taken up for consideration. A subcommittee had been appointed at the previous meeting to

prepare a basis for the discussion. This subcommittee reported that they had not been able to agree on anything to present to the plenary committee. Two sets of theses, one by Dr. Stub and the other by Dr. Kildahl, were presented, and a third set was read by Dr. Boeckmann. It was decided to make Dr. Stub's theses the basis of discussion. These theses were then discussed at this and the two following meetings, March 30 - April 2, and November 2 - 5, 1909. At this last meeting, the committee members from the United Church moved that question 548 in Pontoppidan's *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed* be made the basis for discussion, since no headway was made. It was decided, however, to elect a subcommittee to consider carefully if a satisfactory basis could be found, and to report at a meeting to be held March 30 - April 1, 1910. The subcommittee failed to agree on a report. It submitted three sets of theses. Though it had been decided at the previous meeting that the discussion should not be continued unless the subcommittee agreed on a report, a majority of the joint committee decided to continue the discussion on the basis of theses prepared by President Eastvold of the Hauge Synod. The committee members from the Norwegian Synod now left the meeting.

The 1910 District conventions of the Norwegian Synod endorsed the theses prepared by Dr. Stub. The President of the United Church, Rev. T. H. Dahl, in his annual report to the convention of this body blamed the Norwegian Synod committee members for breaking up the negotiations, and denounced the doctrines held by the Synod as "unbiblical and un-Lutheran." The committee members from the United Church issued a pamphlet entitled, "Election and the Union Movement," which was given wide publicity, in which they stressed their synergistic doctrines as strongly as they had ever done before. There is nothing in this pamphlet to indicate that they in any way had profited by the discussions which for many years had been carried on in the inter-synodical committees.

In the meantime there seemed to be much dissatisfaction within the United Church with the action of their committee members. Seventeen pastors published a protest in the Norwegian press, and

demanded that a new committee be elected. In response to this demand, a new committee was elected at the convention in 1911. The Norwegian Synod magnanimously followed their example, though no dissatisfaction with the old members of the committee had been expressed. The Hauge Synod, which had not taken part in the Election Controversy, did not take active part in the deliberations which followed.

This new committee met in the fall of 1911. After this first meeting, several of the committee members from the Norwegian Synod expressed themselves to the effect that they had never suspected that there was such a great doctrinal difference between the United Church and their own Synod. However, a subcommittee was elected, two men from each of the conferring parties, to prepare theses to be considered at a later meeting. The whole committee met again in February 1912, and the sessions were continued about eight days. The result of these deliberations was the so-called "Opgjør," in which the conferring parties declared that they had reached a full agreement on the doctrine of Election. One of the members of the Norwegian Synod delegation was asked by a friend after coming out of the last session: "Well, did you get what you wanted?" He answered, "Not exactly, but we pressed them pretty hard."

A better characterization of Opgjør than this remark has probably never been given. Nevertheless, the result of the committee's deliberations was heralded throughout the length and breadth of the land as the Lord's doing. A wave of enthusiasm swept over the congregations of the conferring bodies. Little or no effort was made to put the new theses to a real test. The rank and file of the people simply refused to discuss them. They were satisfied with the assurance which the authors of Opgjør gave them that a real settlement of the Election controversy had been effected. And it is to be feared that history will always repeat itself in this respect under similar circumstances.

A considerable part of the Norwegian Synod voiced strong objections to Opgjør at the district meetings in 1912; but the

committee members were on hand, offering oral explanations on the disputed points, explanations which never became a part of the document itself, nor were they ever endorsed by the committee members of other bodies. This, together with the strong pressure which was brought to bear by the popular demand for union, squelched the opposition, and Opgjør was accepted by a large majority of votes at these meetings. The theses of the former committees were also endorsed, and no opportunity was given for adding the much needed antitheses. No opportunity was ever given for a fair consideration of the agreement. Unscrupulous leaders made full use of the popular demand for union to intimidate and browbeat the objectors, and the consummation of the merger was hurried along with all possible speed.

The more influential Norwegian newspapers were requested by the leaders not to publish articles that might disturb the progress of the union movement. They complied. The church organs were practically closed to articles expressing dissatisfaction with Opgjør. The crusaders' cry, "God wills it," was heard on every hand. The regular general pastoral conference meetings were not held. The officers failed to arrange for and call said meetings.

The last act in breaking down the resistance of the objectors was the so-called Austin Agreement, a shrewdly formed, but meaningless document, intended to soothe the consciences of those who lacked the courage to stand up for the truth to the bitter end.

We, who have observed at close range and studied the history of the efforts made to bring the Norwegian Lutherans into agreement by means of committees, are constrained to say, when asked to follow this method again; "*Vestigia terrent.*" We are afraid of history repeating itself, and therefore consider it a God-given duty to sound a warning to all earnest defenders of the truth against exposing the true welfare of the Church of Christ to the dangers involved in this procedure.



## Thesis 6

Scripture warns us clearly and emphatically against entanglements with errorists (Rom 16:17; Tit 3:10; 1Ti 6:3-5). Any reluctance to heed these warnings and commands of Scripture is unionism already conceived in the heart, which if allowed to develop, will result in full-fledged unionism, as history also attests.

“God himself demands that we do not unite with errorists, that we separate from them, that we avoid them,” says Prof. Laetsch (CTM 6, 8). “Let us,” he continues, “study some of the pertinent passages.” This we have done and we endorse and subscribe to Prof. Laetsch’s expositions which we quote here:

In the well-known passage, Romans 16:17, we read, “Now, I beseech, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them.” The apostle speaks of such as cause divisions and offenses. The word divisions occurs only three times in the New Testament, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 3:3, and Galatians 5:20. It is derived from διχοστατέω, which is translated by Liddell-Scott “to stand apart,” or “to disagree,” Διχοστασία Cremer translates “*Verwirrung*,” i.e. “confusion.” The word “offense,” σκάνδαλον, means properly “a trigger,” then “a trap,” then “anything whereby one is trapped or caught, a stumbling-block, offense.” The articles before διχοστασίας, σκάνδαλα, and ποιούντας do not refer to any special class of divisions or offenses or to any special group of such as cause these special divisions and special offenses. The articles rather point to the whole class of divisions and offenses and makers of such irrespective of degrees, variations, etc., which may, and actually do occur within this class. The article is used in the same manner as in Romans 14:1, where not a special, well-known weak person, but the whole class of weak Christians is referred to. Every one and any one that is weak is the weak brother who is to be received. In like manner the article is used in John 10:12 (ὁ μισθωτός, ὁ λύκος — the hireling, the wolf). The Savior has in mind not a particular species of wolves or hirelings or only a well-known wolf or hireling; but every wolf, be he timber wolf or jackal or gray wolf, may be “the wolf” who is coming to destroy, and any and every hireling is “the hireling” of whom the Savior here speaks. Compare on this use of the article Romans 13:7 and Revelation 5:12 where the article is used but once, and verse 13, where it is placed before every noun. Any dissension, any offense, becomes the dissension, the offense, which an

individual is causing; and any maker of such dissension the maker of dissension, whom we should avoid.

The apostle therefore has not in mind only such outspoken, anti-Christian errorists as openly and flatly deny every fundamental truth of Christianity. He does not say, "Avoid such as subvert completely the Christian truth or as at least deny some of the basic doctrines of the Bible." He warns us against such as cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. Contrary to *παρὰ* (properly "beside, alongside of, side by side with"); hence these teachers may still be professing and teaching parts of the Christian doctrine. But side by side with this doctrine they make dissension and thus cause offenses. The reason for such dissension and offenses is the failure of such teachers to continue in the Word of Christ (Joh 8:31). They do not teach all things Christ commanded, but either add to, or take away from, the doctrine as revealed in the Bible.

In this manner they themselves are standing apart from the Word of Christ and are causing others to stand apart by creating differences of opinion, dissension, divisions, beside, and hence contrary too, the doctrine laid down, divisions that would be impossible if all accepted, and continued in, the words of Christ. In making such divisions, they are certainly putting stumbling blocks in the way of their fellowmen, over which many a person may fall, receive painful injuries, perhaps die. Through their false doctrine they will deprive people of the liberty which Christ has earned for them, fill their hearts with fear and trepidation, cause spiritual security, perhaps spiritual death. The makers of such divisions may not realize that they are teaching false doctrine. They may spread their errors with the purpose of serving God. Christ tells us that they who kill the Christians think they are doing God a service (Joh 16:2). And Paul confessed that in his bigoted zeal for the Jewish religion he thought that he was serving God by persecuting the followers of Christ (Act 22:3, 4; 26:9; Phi 3:6). We cannot look into the hearts of these errorists and determine their intentions. Neither need we do that.

What the apostle impresses upon us is, "Mark them and avoid them." By their words they are judged, and by their words they are condemned (Mat 12:37). And their words prove them to be creators of divisions, disturbers of that unity of the Spirit which characterizes the Church of Christ. Mark them, observe them, plead with them, patiently show them the error of their way. If they hear you, you have not only gained them, you have also removed the offense and restored peace and thus kept the unity of the Spirit intact.

But if they continue making divisions, if they persist in teaching their error or remain in membership with a body that teaches such error or remain in membership with a body that teaches such error and thus help to create and maintain the divisions and offenses caused by errorists, then the clear and plain injunction of the apostle, is, “Avoid them,” sever fraternal connection with them. Ἐκκλίνετε ἀπ’ αὐτῶν. The apostle does not say, “κατακλίνετε σὺν αὐτοῖς,” “lie down, associate with them,” but “avoid them, turn out of the way, away from them.” The apostle tells us verse 18: “For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” These seem harsh words, yet truer words were never spoken. And they refer to all that cause divisions and offenses.†

Does anyone who causes divisions contrary to Christ’s doctrine thereby serve the Lord Jesus? Certainly not. For Jesus has not told us, You may make divisions, but rather, “Continue in my Word.” If one does not serve Jesus, does he not serve the devil, does he not actually serve his own belly, his own interests (Note the emphatic position of ἐαυτῶν), and not even the higher but the lower, material, selfish interests? And are not all his good words and fair speeches placed in the service of leading man into error and falsehood? Whether they do this intentionally and consciously or not is not for us to determine. The point of the apostle’s admonition is to avoid those, all those, who cause those divisions. Neither should we wait until they have actually deceived, misled, people, until they have by their actions betrayed their true character; but as soon as they teach contrary to the doctrine laid down in the Bible, they are to be marked, admonished, and if they continue, avoided. If they will stand apart, do not follow them; let them severely alone. If this rule were followed by all Christians, if schismatics would gain no adherence, there either would be no schisms, or if they occurred, they would end with the death or the return to the church of the schismatics.

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† Mark: οἱ τοιοῦτοι, not οὗτοι. The apostle shows hereby that he is speaking in general, “those that are such” as cause divisions and offenses contrary to — i.e. all those who barter truth for error, whether much or little, then or now, whether many or few, whether openly and consciously or secretly and unconsciously. The expression aims more at the nature of the wrong that the persons of those who commit it, as if the apostle would say, “For in this that they cause divisions and offenses they serve not the Lord Jesus but their own belly” — The Committee.

Another very instructive passage is found, Titus 3:10. “A man that is a heretic,” one who is inclined to denominationalism, sectarianism, should not be permitted to follow his inclinations. His brethren should admonish him, and if he persists in teaching his own chosen opinion, (αἵρεσις) in contradiction to God’s Word, if he continues in this sin, which excludes from the kingdom of God, Galatians 5:20, then we should reject not only his doctrine, but him, the heretic, and thus sever fraternal relations with him.

John, the apostle of love, writes, just because he is the apostle of true love: “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2Jo 10-11). The doctrine of Christ, of which the apostle speaks, is not the doctrine concerning Christ, but the doctrine which Christ teaches and reveals in the Bible. Wherever in the New Testament the word διδαχή (doctrine) occurs with the genitive of the person, the genitive is invariably the subjective genitive. See Matthew 16:12, the doctrine of the scribes and Pharisees; Acts 13:12, the doctrine of the Lord; Revelation 2:14, the doctrine of Balaam; verse 15, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; Matthew 7:28; 22:23; Mark 1:22; 11:18; Luke 4:32; John 18:19; His doctrine, and Acts 5:28, your doctrine. In fact, the only passage in which διδαχή is used with an objective genitive is Hebrews 6:2, and even here quite a number commentaries do not accept this as the objective genitive.

In view of this general usage of the term διδαχὴν τινος (someone’s doctrine), we are practically forced to take the “doctrine of Christ” in this sense here also, especially since this interpretation is in full keeping with the context. In verse 7, the apostle warned against anyone who denies Christ’s person and redemptive work. In verse 8, he admonishes to faithfulness in retaining all those things which we have wrought in order that we receive a full reward. And in verses 9 - 11, he warns against every apostasy from the doctrine of Christ, against every deviation from the truth of God as laid down in the Bible.

Unionism is a lust of the flesh. All sins are first conceived in the heart. A thief is first tempted, then desires, then plans before he steals. Civil law punishes only the crime itself, but before God the initial steps are also transgression, as we learn, Matthew 5:28 “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” James 1:14, 15 records the

progressive steps from lust to he consummated sinful act and to the final punishment: “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away from his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.”

### *Conclusion*

Fellow Christians, we have again heard the instructions and warnings from God’s Word regarding unity, union, and unionism. These have been supported by the lessons of history and have been applied to conditions today. We have heard about the unity of the invisible Church, how this unity is brought about and preserved, namely by the life-giving Word, and how this unity has found expression among those who have adhered to the pure teachings of this Word. We have been warned against pernicious steps to bring about union when unity does not exist, fortified by the records of sad experiences which some of us have had. We have been clearly taught what the warnings of the Holy Spirit against those who teach contrary to the doctrines which we have learned really imply. Let us heed these warnings and lessons!

One baptism and one faith have we,  
 One Spirit set to win us,  
 One Lord, one Father, and one God,  
 Above, and through, and in us.

Never by schism, or by sin,  
 May we that union sever,  
 Till all, to perfect stature grown,  
 Are one with Thee forever.

### *Addendum*

The fears expressed by our fathers thirty years ago, that history would repeat itself, are being realized today. For many years the Lutheran Synodical Conference was a bulwark against all unionism and liberalism. But because the principles enunciated in this brochure, principles that have their origin in Scripture, were no longer being heeded by all member-synods of the Conference, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (formerly the Norwegian Synod) and

the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod withdrew from said Conference in 1963. This withdrawal left the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches to continue the Lutheran Synodical Conference.

In recent years the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod again entered into doctrinal discussions with the new American Lutheran Church, with a view to establishing pulpit and altar fellowship with each other. There are individual pastors and teachers in the two bodies just referred to, who by word and in print have indicated that they no longer regard the entire Scripture as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. Others repudiate the cherished Scriptural principles on fellowship which their synods contended for throughout their earlier history. Since 1965 the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches has been along in these discussions between these two Lutheran church bodies.

The latest development is that the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches have joined with the liberal Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church to form the Lutheran Council in the United States of America. This Council has been founded on the myth that since all subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions all therefore teach and practice according to them. Also, it is not clear to what extent the Council obligates the individual synods "to further the witness, the work, and the interests of the participating bodies," be they liberal or conservative (Const. Art. IV, a).

These developments are the result of ignoring the danger signs that were pointed out in this pamphlet in 1938. Not only have the two aforementioned synods, which make up the Lutheran Synodical Conference today, become more involved with liberal Lutheran groups, but all have become more liberal in the process. The fact is that in 1967 there are only three or four Lutheran bodies, comprising but a small percentage of all the Lutherans in this country, which are heeding the Scriptural injunctions expounded in this pamphlet. The observation of thirty years ago is even more to the point today: "*Vestigia terrent.*" †

## **Cosmology Challenges Theology: A Biblical Response**

By: Mr. William Overn

In the May 12, 1993, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, in their "Scholarship" feature, there is a provocative article by Kim A. McDonald concerning the interaction between theology and cosmology. The article makes the point that the two fields compete for territorial rights of ever-increasing turf, well illustrated by main quotes.

In the material which follows, the style will be to discuss quotations and principles in the framework of the article and the quotations, thus logical development will often unfold based on premises which I reject. It becomes too awkward to constantly qualify statements by "alleged," "so-called," "sic," and other thought-stoppers. As an alternative, permit me simply to declare at the outset that I firmly believe in the Triune God as revealed in the Bible. That I believe His word to be inerrant, complete, and historically accurate, and that I find compelling references in the Bible to an age for the cosmos well under ten thousand years.

The article under discussion is titled, "Science Confronts the Ultimate Question: Does the Universe Hold Clues to God?" A caption states, "One theory claims cosmos had no beginning or creator, but many researchers disagree." On an inner page the article is reintroduced by "Can Science Explain the Origin of the Universe or the Existence of God?"

The article features an announcement made last spring by astrophysicist George F. Smoots of the University of California at Berkeley, and highlights the following quote: "You're never going to get rid of the question of where the universe came from. You can always ask who made the laws or designed the universe."

Before describing the announcement, consider some background not found in the article. It is a well established observation that radiation emanates from any object or substance that is above absolute zero [approx.  $-459^{\circ}\text{F}$ ] in temperature. If the substance has

or approaches, certain ideal optical properties (technically called a “blackbody”), the wavelength of the radiation is a function of temperature. The discovery, several years ago, of the universal 2.9° Kelvin blackbody microwave radiation was hailed as proof of the Big Bang, the spectacular event proposed as the birth of the present universe. The gigantic explosion of some “primordial atom,” in which all the substance of the universe was condensed, would have generated temperatures of millions of degrees. After the succeeding several billion years, having traversed the curved space of the universe the flash of the explosion is thought to have cooled down to three degrees Kelvin.

Shortly after the discovery of the microwave background, Robert Jastrow asserted (*c.* 1979) that the Big Bang, contrary to other cosmological models, called for a beginning. Thus his famous quote that scientists had climbed their highest peak, and had found the theologians there before them. Ever since, Big Bang cosmology and creationist theology have been equated in the literature, much to the discomfort of both the cosmologists and the biblicists. The liberal theologians and theistic evolutionists (who call themselves “old-age creationists”) gleefully accept this association.

From the standpoint of empirical science, the idea that the microwaves can be associated with an ancient explosion is too speculative for serious consideration. First, there is no evidence for the cooling process. Second, there is no valid evidence for curved space, or any other mechanism, for the flash to still be around. (I am aware of evidence often proposed as valid.) Third, the total experience of experimental science demands that the three degree Kelvin radiation indicates the average temperature of the universe out there, nothing more.

These concerns keep a significant portion of the scientific community off the Big Bang bandwagon. But an additional major problem arose to plague the Big Bang. While the cosmologists fight the battle of the Bang, the astronomers have made new discoveries which show a fantastic structure and order in the universe. With each observation the known universe is getting lumpier. Theorists



cannot get from the extremely uniform background radiation to the known lumpy universe using the Big Bang. The Big Bang had reentered a scientific crisis.<sup>†</sup>

Dr. Smoots' announcement discussed in the article concerned the result of a year's effort on the part of a multi-megabuck satellite observatory collecting data on the microwave background which shows that the radiation contains very minute fluctuations. The fluctuations are disappointingly minuscule to the theorists, and would not have justified the statements made in the nationwide news that the Big Bang is now confirmed, even if they were orders of magnitude larger. However, that's what all the fuss is about. The radiation is barely perceptibly non-uniform, and therefore can now again be a "proof" of a Big Bang that gave birth to our highly structured universe. In addition Dr. Smoots also announced that he and his associates had reduce the data to a map of the universe "as it existed three hundred thousand years after the moment of creation." "It's like looking at God," the article quotes.

The theme of the article is to review the comments being made by people that assume that the Big Bang is now confirmed, and speculate on the resulting dialog between scientists and theologians. The stage is set by noting that scientists like to invade the theologian's realm. This is then justified on the basis that science can now "provide a picture" of how the universe began, as well as the origin of life and the eventual fate of the universe.

If the article were accurate in this, it would be a sorry day for theology. The main reason that much of theology is in such a sorry state is the acceptance of just that premise. Higher criticism and the wholesale abandonment of the authority of the Scriptures is a direct product of a belief that science has proven the Bible to be inaccurate in the area of origins.

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<sup>†</sup> Crisis is a term applied to a scientific paradigm when the data seem inconsistent with it. Crises often lead to a revolution that overthrows the paradigm. See Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1970).

An example of theological “new speak” appears in the article. William R. Stoeger, a Jesuit priest and astronomer for the Vatican Observatory, is quoted, “Most contemporary scriptures have emphasized for the last thirty or forty years that Biblical accounts of creation were never intended to answer the questions that modern science poses today.” His use of the term “contemporary scriptures” is intriguing, to say the least.

Father Stoeger is further quoted as a spokesman for those who allow for the existence of God by invoking “other ways of knowing,” the knowledge of being loved, and knowing that we enjoy something. Many go so far as to declare that there are differing types of truth that can exist side by side. (I react to the fact that Luther came close to such a statement with ‘shame on Luther.’ This great and gifted man was unsuccessful in sorting out certain mathematical concepts) (*LW - AE*, 38, 239).

Scientists are not concerned over what a theologian may say. Theological spokespersons (word deliberately used) often are found worshipping at the scientist’s feet. Those who don’t are labeled “fundamentalists,” a term which instantly discredits in most circles. The article contains a lengthy quote by Nancey Murphy, associate professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary. The essence is that fundamentalists live in another century, that science is important in shaping theology, and that they are ignorant of that fact because they do not pursue their education to an adequate level.

The article does a good job of summarizing the debate among cosmologists concerning the existence of God, and the scientific evidence for it. It explores a range of views.

The range starts with Stephen Hawking of the University of Cambridge, who denies the idea that the Big Bang paradigm demands a beginning. His alternative is a “quantum fluctuation.” “Without a beginning, how can we invoke God,” he says.

At the other end of the range are the “fundamentalists,” who are dismissed by the article as discussed above.

In between are those who have an array of deistic reactions to the theories. The article shows some excellent insights into the world views of the natural philosophers. It quotes Father Stoeger accurately pointing out that science, as we know it sprang up under the dominant Judeo-Christian world-view of a Creator God, and that Galileo, Newton, and Kepler were not only believers, but wrote extensively on theology. What it omits is that science could not have flourished in a pagan atmosphere, and indeed did not develop in ancient China, in spite of its superior technology. Imagine developing the science of meteorology when you firmly believed that rain happened when the proper quota of babies had been thrown into the fire.

Even more to the point is the fact that the dominant methodology of cosmology and astrophysics is quantum mechanics. Completely alien to the philosophy of the article is that the understanding of reality imposed by quantum physics is again that of the pagan, and tends to violate the logical rules of cause and effects, as well as the absolutes of truth and falsehood associated with the Christian world-view. Modern science with all of its triumphs could not have developed in that atmosphere, and has made no tangible advances under its influence. This is not to say that there are no scientific advances, but I do claim that where the analysis has not been contaminated by quantum thinking, true advance has not occurred.

This statement is too severe, on the surface, to be left unexplained. Light is definitely absorbed by the individual molecules and atoms in its path in increments or quanta. This is caused by the discrete energy levels associated with the individual particles, electrons, for example, within the atoms. It is an unwarranted assumption that this should somehow extend to the light itself, and the theory that light energy should itself be everywhere quantized.<sup>†</sup> Theorists have surmised far beyond that, and treat all types of energy in quantum fashion.

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<sup>†</sup> This is equivalent to noting that we eat an apple in a series of discrete bites, then concluding that apples are composed of bites.

Statistical methods are used, and probabilities are invoked. Since anything, regardless of how remote, has some finite probability, the range of possibilities has been hypothetically extended beyond any reasonable bound, including existence itself. Thus the very existence of anything is considered a statistical quantum process. This is not compatible with the Judeo-Christian world-view that gave rise to science, nor is it consistent with the time-tested scientific method which the author of the article describes as “rigorous experimentation and independent verification.”

Two examples are found in the article. One is a broad consensus that “the particles in the subatomic realm appear spontaneously.” The second is “one popular idea” that the universe came into existence from nothing, using the same quantum mechanical reasoning. Cosmologists who accept this are attempting to discover the quantum “laws” that permit the universe to come into existence from nothing.

Those who faithfully and deliberately hold to the Christian world-view and are fully conscious of all it implies are probably skeptical at this point as to whether rational people, particularly educated scientists, could even remotely consider such seeming unreality. Even the non-scientists have heard of the conservation of energy and mass, a concept which states that ever since initial creation, no matter or energy can be either created or destroyed. To western man this is intuitively obvious. But the perception of reality and the principles of cause and effect that gives us modern science, including the laws of thermodynamics, the laws of motion, etc. is strictly within the western Judeo-Christian world-view. Traditional eastern world-views contain completely different concepts of reality.

A quick glance at eastern religions, with their doctrines of karma and reincarnation, divinity and cosmic unity, reveals a vast difference not only in the meaning of life, but also in concepts of material existence. For the last seventy-five years there have been a predominance of eastern people among theoretical scientists, who have lavished their world-view upon scientific theory. The humble

beginnings of relativity and quantum mechanics were dismissed by the scientists as mathematical flights of fancy. But as the majority of theorists, led by the adherents of eastern reality, became believers in these new concepts, they became firmly entrenched.

To understand these points more thoroughly one may try to imagine a debate between a doctrinaire Westerner and Easterner on the subject of rationality of curved space. The practical problem here is that the Westerner has been so conditioned to the absolute truthfulness of curved space that he is no longer equipped to call upon his western world-view to show the utter incompatibility of that concept with his concept of reality.

Back to the article. It promotes a theme that the dominant world-view among scientists is still theological, a faith that the universe is composed upon symmetry, is simple and understandable, having an ultimate intelligent first cause. So many will argue for a god.

There is obvious design in the universe. If any of the important fundamental constants were to have been different from their measured values by minute amounts, the resulting universe would not be able to support life on earth. This is noted by many, who also cite the fact that science still holds to the idea that there are laws, even in quantum mechanics, that scientists can discover. Then the ultimate question remains as to who wrote the laws.

Although the article features the words “science” and “scientists,” and quotes astrophysicists, astronomers, and mathematicians the discussion sticks closely to one major area, cosmology. We must keep in mind that there are not many positions available in cosmology, making it a rather exclusive field. Its great influence vastly surpasses its number of participants, not only because their statements make the most sensational press, but also because the majority of scientists don’t make the effort to take issue with them. I am more comfortable identifying the subject as cosmology, rather than calling it science.

Perhaps some of my bias is associated with my career as an engineer. Scientists who practice engineering, with its needs for

designs that work, meet specifications, and pass inspection are less inclined to dabble with speculative science.

Cosmological quotations abound in the article. By framing them in their parochial setting they become more interesting. For example, “Not only are we not at the center of the universe, but we may not be made of the stuff most of the universe is made of.”

“Not at the center” is probably meant to be a dig against the Bible and the Christian world-view, but misses the mark. My world-view has no need that we occupy the center, nor is it in the Bible. It is simply a matter of the astronomical observations made over the last two centuries. A standard college text on cosmology will say that the astronomer’s observations have consistently shown the earth (or solar system) to be at the center. But this is philosophically untenable because of its theological implications! Over time the standard Cosmological Principle has been adopted, which states, “Wherever the observer is located within the universe, he will appear to be at the center.”

This principle solved the philosopher’s problems over a preferred location for man’s world, but understandably made the physicists uncomfortable. Couldn’t their observations be relied upon to determine their location? Einstein’s curved space solved the physicist’s problem. In the mathematics of curved space, which is not helpful in explaining any real observations, the observer at any point will indeed appear to be at the center. This little piece of unreality (in my world-view) was eagerly accepted by the physicists since it was confirmed by the cosmologists. So the Principle and Curved Space mutually confirm each other in a beautiful synergism.

The remark about the “stuff the universe is made of” has to do with missing mass in the universe required to fit the various models of stellar evolution. That stars form over millions to billions of years is indisputable in cosmology, so the matter must be there. Some of the speculative models of the universe require quantities that would dwarf the known observable matter. This “dark matter” could not be of the same nature as known matter or we should have been able to observe it.

Perhaps a word is in order about the methods of cosmology. Above all, a cosmologist must be inquisitive and imaginative. He asks the questions about the universe that others have overlooked, and then goes about answering them. In all respect to the cosmologists, they should be, and indeed are, excellent science-fiction writers. They creatively synthesize solutions to the problems, using any tools available, be they scientific, mathematical, religious, or purely speculative.

The next step is to subject the hypothesis to rigorous scientific scrutiny, testing whether any part fails the test of compatibility with known laws based upon experimental evidence and sound logic. Often the only test it passes is the ability to form rigorous mathematical expressions describing it.

Mathematics is often called the “language of science.” It is that and much more. It is a true discipline, which has the capability of ordering our otherwise scattered thoughts. Learning just a little mathematics can significantly increase one’s reasoning skills.

Mathematics is also an idea processor for a scientist. Once the physical principle is correctly paraphrased into mathematical terms, the manipulative power of the math will accurately derive the consequences.

A significant fact, often overlooked, is that mathematics shares with all other languages the ability to express fiction. You can lie in any language, and math is no exception. A cosmologist attempts to express some aspect of our universe and makes a mistake, or he is expressing the creative solution he has devised for a problem. He has in this case expressed a make-believe universe. When the mathematical crank is turned, out comes science fiction. Tom Barnes has presented the convincing arguments that have led a significant portion of the scientific community to believe that Einstein’s general relativity, with its conclusion of time dilation and curved space, is just that: bad physics plugged into good mathematics, resulting in science fiction.

For a cosmologist to come up with truly useful concepts, he must be an alert and careful scientist. The majority have strong

initial background in such disciplines as astronomy or physics. Their scores on scientific rigor vary widely, however.

I particularly admire Sir Fred Hoyle for his careful and competent scientific inquiry. He is no longer highly respected by his peers because of his inability to endorse the Big Bang and because of his speaking out against the popular idea of the terrestrial origin of life. I conclude that both of these problems come from a superior scientific insight, extraordinary attention to detail in his scientific analysis, and unswerving integrity in his scientific reporting.

He attracted attention some years ago with his statement that it was more probable that a Boeing 747 would arise from a junk yard under the influence of a tornado, than that life should arise spontaneously on earth in four and a half billion years. Examination of that statement reveals that it was the culmination of ten years of studying the chemical and statistical processes required for life to appear.

Among the events leading to that study was a serious attempt to explain the nature of the nebula, faint clouds of matter observed in outer space. They are only known by their optical properties, but Hoyle made the most of that by studying comparable properties of every known type of substance. The first finding was that it could not be ice, the most popular explanation.

The only honest conclusion after all the studies was that the nebular were organic, a rather preposterous conclusion unless life were able to arise spontaneously with reasonable probability. But after all, is not that what the biologists and biochemists have discovered? Not so, he immediately found. After ten years of careful research, Hoyle reluctantly announced not only his but the failure of the entire biochemical enterprise to solve the mystery of the origin of life. In the meantime, a vast amount of data has been amassed as to why it cannot happen. Thus Hoyle's famous quote.

Additional insights can be learned from Sir Fred Hoyle. This very capable scientist suffers from a sad philosophical imperfection. Good science has steered him in the direction of truth. He has declared that the origin of life as well as the chemical properties of the elements that make life possible must have arisen by the conscious



act of a super-intelligence. But can a man with his excellent intellect and empirical knowledge steer himself to his Creator? Scripture says not, as is certainly borne out in Sir Hoyle's case. He has said he believes that the super-intelligence probably resides collectively in the insects! The evidence for that is that the combined intellect of the insects has consistently outwitted the combined human efforts to wipe out even one species.

Do not underestimate the appeal of the eastern world-view. Sir Hoyle undoubtedly calls his philosophy "New Age," as do most Westerners who have adopted it, but in this case it is classic Buddhist doctrine.

One final reference to Kim McDonald's article in the *Chronicle* that triggered this avalanche of thought. There are several little subtleties that elicit comments.

The author calls the ideas being expressed by the cosmologists "new findings." I beg you to translate that as "new speculations." Many cosmologists allow for other simultaneous universes. Black holes have been suggested as passages between these universes. Others think of an infinite procession of universes. Another view is that our observable universe is only the manifest part of the more complete universe. There is an interesting parallel between this viewpoint and the Christian world-view as revealed in Scripture. We acknowledge at least three parts to the entire reality. There is the visible universe, created in time, measured in time and space, being both created and temporal. Then there is the supernatural universe, created in eternity and eternal. Beyond that there is God Himself, the Supreme Supernatural, eternal and uncreate, having, forming, and occupying His own personal dominion.

The article touches on the "Anthropic Principle," whose bid for acceptance is more recent. This states that the range of coincident physical laws and constants that allow for living things to flourish is a result as well as a cause for living things to flourish is a result as well as a cause of living intelligence. This fits the same eastern philosophy of cosmic unity that influenced Fred Hoyle in his conclusions. In both cases there is required a timeless unity, or unity over

time, so that a result can also be the cause. Recall that quantum mechanics, since it replaces cause-and-effect physics, has already conditioned the scientific mind to this view of reality.

Although the article's main point is the increasing amount of theological discussion among cosmologists, it acknowledges a major dilemma. If science sticks to purely naturalistic processes, can it ever provide clues about the nature of God? Conservative Christian philosophers and scientists have always pointed out that by defining the supernatural out of science, the consideration of origins, or any other area where a supernatural process is a possibility, is ruled out of science. Or using a different emphasis, science regulates itself to a search for naturalistic explanations, rather than a search for truth.

Most of the time science is willing to live with these restrictions. But it has traditionally stepped out of line when individual scientists try to justify their atheistic or evolutionary world-view by the same type of synergism mentioned before, atheism and naturalistic explanations confirming each other.

There are two other places where the shoe pinches. One is in the schools. When a scientist is called upon to justify teaching naturalistic processes that violate some of the children's deistic religious beliefs, he often succumbs to the temptation to call these processes truth.

The second is cosmology as discussed above. Very definitely, honesty demands placing supernatural processes as equal candidates with natural processes in considering the origin of the universe. As noted above, many honest cosmologists say you can not rule it out.

Extending the above discussion of world-views, we note that many hypothetical processes that in human experience have no physical evidence are assumed by most cosmologists to be part of nature, and are candidates for a role in the creation of the universe. These processes are not considered supernatural. I will suggest that we agree that these are not supernatural, and for the same reason. They are not the acts of either a personal god, or of creatures endowed by that personal god with special powers. According to my

world-view the supernatural is very real, but these processes are not.

It is the ultimate hypothetical case to suppose that cosmology were to open its doors to all ideas, natural, unnatural, and supernatural, but let us attempt it. Defining legitimate testing grounds for the models would pose a severe problem. I would not foresee major difficulties in developing mathematical expressions to cover the models, but we could never produce a body of pertinent experimental data covering any supernatural process.

Documentation is the only alternative. The supernatural is well documented in the Bible, the Talmud, and the Koran. Cosmic unity is covered in the eastern religious classics and a wealth of western New Age sources. But were the cosmologists to seriously study these sources, and give papers on their relative merits, what field would they be, in science or theology? I rest my case that cosmology is not a legitimate science. If it were ultimately honest it would destroy itself.

I see no place in cosmology for one who holds the Judeo-Christian world-view. He already holds the answer that cosmology seeks. He is better off distinguishing himself in a related field, such as astronomy, celestial mechanics, optics, or geophysics. Furthermore, I hold the cosmologists responsible for legitimizing the practice of discounting all the written histories of the ancient world, of which the Bible is chief. Both geology and paleontology claim to be involved in history, whose chief authority is documentation, and cosmology encourages them to discard it.

### ***Responding***

Our biblical response must first be love — the body of Christ conveying Christ's love to fellow man. In order to reach out with the Gospel to those who accept these cosmological concepts, we first must overcome our Jonah problem, as well as the response of Moses, "I am slow of speech and tongue." People holding these views are not confined to ivy-covered buildings on remote campuses. They influence us all. Anyone who has attended school this

century has been exposed to these concepts and has picked up some of it. We catch it from the science programs on public television. We teach it to our children when we help them with the homework they are assigned in their Christian schools, because it's in the textbooks. The people who are overdosing on pagan philosophy disguised as science (or civics or humanities) are ourselves, our families, our church members and our neighbors. God gave Moses the solution and gives us the same. He tells us "what to say" through Paul and Luke:

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands (Act 17:24).

Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Act 17:31).

Paul was here speaking to the Greeks in their supreme philosophical forum, the Areopagus on Mars' Hill. He tells us several times in the epistles that there is a difference in approach to the Greek compared to the Jew.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness (1Co 1:22, 23).

Examples of preaching to the Jews convey the theme that the Christ must suffer rather than rally Israel into a worldly power, the stumbling block. The difference is the personal knowledge of a personal God among the Jews, and the pantheistic godhood of Greek philosophy. The Jew acknowledged a sovereign Creator and the Greek did not.

Paul's writing and preaching are completely consistent. In the synagogue he expounded the prophetic teachings concerning a suffering Christ, but here on Mar's Hill he preached Creation! What a wonderful example of what a Christian testimony must be. First the Law, then the Gospel. In this case, the emphasis is where it was most needed, the Creator of the universe is a personal God, calling all men to him, and demanding their allegiance to Him. He has

made Himself available to man as well, and has appointed a judge with impeccable credentials, He raised Him from the dead!

We miss the gospel here. Christ is introduced as the Judge. Paul was rudely interrupted, with the Greek's version of "Don't call us; we'll call you." Scripture says, however, that some believed. The specific Gospel message was simply not recorded.

Note the use of apologetics here, the emphasis on the historical resurrection of Christ. This event had several years of notoriety before the apostle hit the scene. It had undoubtedly been debated at length among this very audience.

Earlier in the Book of Acts, Luke presents the resurrection as having had the most rigorous documentary proof:

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Act 1:3).

Here was intellectual, logical proof that the man, Jesus, had been appointed to a special office by the supernatural God who holds the supreme power over mankind, the power of life and death. Here was the "wisdom" the Greeks sought.

Note what Paul did not do. He did not speak against naturalistic science. That the Greeks were hung up on that subject is well documented. The majority viewpoint had materialistic origins. The theory of evolution by natural selection was proposed and widely published by Lucretius over one hundred years before.

It was not that Paul was not well educated and capable in science. He showed the Greeks his science education by quoting a passage from memory from the definitive work for his generation in astronomy.<sup>†</sup> It was that he wanted to offer intellectual proof for the divinity of Christ, in other words an apologetic. And creationist science is not an apologetic.

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<sup>†</sup> Paul's quote in Acts 17:28 that "we are His offspring" he attributes to "some of your own poets." One of these was Aratus, a native of Tarsus, who had been commissioned around 250BC to translate Eudoxus (c. 350BC), into modern Greek. This he had done in verse. Eudoxus is considered one of the foremost authorities in astronomy of the ancient world.

Paul's approach was to promote belief in the Triune God as revealed in the Scriptures, and to start where the Scripture starts, with creation. All morality depends on creation, but more important to Paul's message is the dependence on creation of God's right to govern, His sovereignty, ownership, His right to demand obedience, and His right to judge. His power to enforce is fundamental if he is the Creator, but could only be seized and constantly defended by a lesser deity.

Creation is an important part of the message of evangelism to the Greek, not an apologetic. The message is Law and Gospel. Without law there is no need for the gospel, and without creation there can be no basis for law. Our friends, in this century, be they the corner grocer or the cosmologists, are Greeks, not Jews. Even our Jewish friends today are mostly Greeks. The Jews of Paul's time, believers in a sovereign, personal creator god, and to whom Christ Jesus is a stumbling block are represented in our generation mainly by the Muslims.

We must not be afraid to believe in what the Scriptures tell us about this subject, and base our behavior upon it.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Rom 1:20).

The quotations from the article discussed previously are but examples of this scenario from Paul's letter to the Romans, being repeated non-stop. Of course the power and divinity of the Creator are clearly seen. This natural knowledge of God is well demonstrated by the statements made by the cosmologists. But with those who have been placed on a high pedestal by the public, and told that as scientists their imaginations are pure divine revelation, the rest of Scripture's scenario is inevitably played out.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (Rom 1:21).

Modern sophisticated man is no different from Paul's audience on Mars' Hill, of whom Paul writes,

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1Co 1:21).

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17).

So we must faithfully preach the message, and, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:7: “*It is God that giveth the increase.*”

What is the role of creation science? To the disappointment of many, it is not a way to prove the validity of the Bible. Nor is it capable of swerving men’s mind into intellectual harmony with God’s word. All this can only be done by the Holy Spirit, and the means He has promised to use in His Word. Not that He can’t use our scientific reasoning when he desires, but He has not empowered it with His promise. Creation science is not an apologetic, because it is intellectual rather than forensic. In other words, the many eyewitnesses to Christ’s resurrection would stand up in court, whereas my insistence on interpreting scientific data in the light of human experience rather than in a more imaginative way, can always be passed off as an intellectual preference.

Creation science is first a way of life for a scientist holding the Christian world-view. Revealed truth is a set of data without a margin of error, and wherever it can be legitimately applied, it gives an initial leg up in any scientific investigation. Creationists are better scientists.

Secondly, creation science is essential in avoiding intellectual temptation. Supposing Eve had had a sister who had not fallen. Imagine Satan tempting the sister with the same enticement of knowledge and wisdom. She would probably succumb except for Eve’s warning that she had already tried it, and it didn’t work out.

Creation scientists provide the warnings and the resources for Christian students confronted with the “proofs” that Genesis is inaccurate. They provide the data and reasoning which show there are no such proofs.

How lamentable is that during the Thirties and Forties when major American church leaders flocked to the universities to get advanced degrees, the creation scientists were holed up licking their

wounds from the Scopes trial. The abandonment of reliance on Scriptures that has led to today's wholesale apostasy, would certainly have been diminished, had creation science been adequately represented.

Finally, creation science is a very important part of the creation message, divine law that must be preached along with the saving gospel. Without it much of preaching cannot be heard. It seems that Paul's inspired statement that "faith cometh by hearing" uses particularly well chosen words. Faith is not said to come by preaching, but by hearing. One could preach until he was hoarse, day after day, and if no one were listening, no one would hear. So creation science, applied at the particulars where skepticism appears, can greatly aid the hearing process.

For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited. I am the Lord, and *there is none else* (Isa 45:18).

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him (Col 1:16).

Our pious fathers have ever taught us to say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16). I am also not ashamed to be created by God, who saw fit to create me along with angels and the mighty men of history, and, as Luther says, has invited me to call upon Him as little children call upon their dear Father. *Soli Deo Gloria.* †