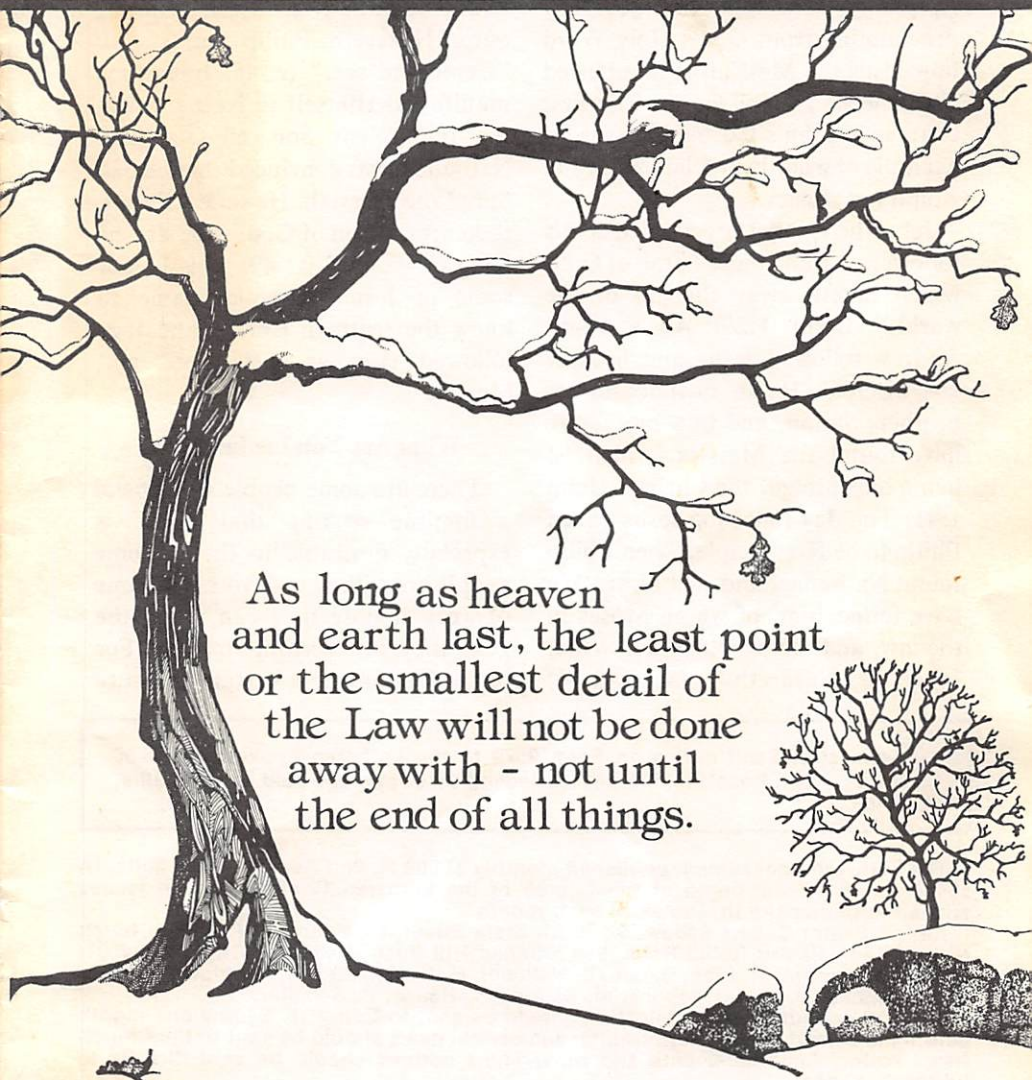


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As long as heaven
and earth last, the least point
or the smallest detail of
the Law will not be done
away with - not until
the end of all things.

Epiphany

Seeking Jesus and Finding Him

The Christian Church celebrates Epiphany (Jan. 6-30 this year) by proclaiming from God's Holy Word how Jesus the Messiah is manifested and how He may be found. The first chapter of John's Gospel gives us an example of what is proclaimed in the Epiphany season.

John the Baptist proclaimed to his followers: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) As a result Andrew followed Jesus and became His disciple. He in turn found his brother, Simon, and told him: "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." (John 1:41) The day following Jesus called Philip to be His disciple. Then Philip found Nathanael and told him: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth." (John 1:45)

When Nathanael expressed his doubts about any good thing coming out of Nazareth, Philip simply said: "Come and see." (v. 46) Jesus then manifested Himself to Nathanael as the omniscient Son of God and Nathanael was convinced that he had found the Messiah. He said: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." (v. 49) This is how some of Jesus' disciples came to know the truth in Christ, and they followed Him as their Lord and Master.

What Are You Looking For?

There are some people who spend a lifetime seeking that which is especially desirable to them. Some people are willing to devote a lifetime of work if only they can reach the goal they are seeking in life. For some this may be a certain measure

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of success in their occupation or profession. For others it may be a certain standard of living which they wish to attain. Then there are also some people who are seeking after the truth, but few know where to find it. Some seek the truth by means of scientific experiments. Some seek the truth by studying the philosophies of men. After much seeking and experimenting many people conclude that there is no absolute truth to be found. Others may believe that truth is to be found, but that it will come from many varied sources.

The One Source of Truth

There is, as believers in Christ know, absolute truth to be found. This truth is what our God has spoken, and He cannot lie. This truth centers about Jesus Christ the only Savior of mankind. There is only one source for this truth, the Holy Scriptures. There Jesus is to be sought, and there He is to be found, and in Him we have the only and complete truth for our salvation. Anyone who is seeking the Savior and salvation must be told that He is found in the Scriptures. Jesus said: "Search the Scriptures . . . they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

Note how Philip identified Jesus as the Messiah. It was through the Scriptures which Philip had studied. The Books of Moses and the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament which foretold of the coming Messiah made it clear to Philip that Jesus of Nazareth was that promised one. In Jesus all the prophecies were fulfilled. In other words, Philip was

convinced on the basis of Scripture. This is the only sound basis for our religious beliefs. We are not concerned about what human reason suggests, what practical experience tells us, or what important people think, is true. Only what Scripture says counts!

"Come And See."

Nathanael at first doubted what Philip had told him about Jesus of Nazareth. Philip had a very simple answer for Nathanael's dilemma, "Come and see." If you doubt what I say, "Come and see." Come to Jesus and be convinced. And that is what Nathanael did.

We have no power of ourselves to come to Jesus and follow Him. Man cannot of his own free will decide that he will be Jesus' follower. He cannot of his own free will decide to obey Jesus' call in the Gospel Word. Man is not capable of doing this because of his sinful condition as he is by nature. St. Paul says: We "were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1)

This is the glaring error of many well-known evangelists we hear over the radio or see on television. They most energetically proclaim their message about Jesus and then after the message passionately beg the people in the audience to make a decision for Christ. They are asking for the impossible! A spiritually "dead" person is not capable of making a decision to accept Christ.

Thank God, we know the precious truth that the Gospel Word itself is the means of grace the Holy Spirit uses to bring people to faith in Jesus!

The Word itself is powerful to convert those who know not the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Word of God is quick (living), and powerful." (Hebr. 4:12) "It (the Gospel of Christ) is the power of God unto salvation to every-one that believeth." (Rom. 1:16) "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10:17)

Be Convinced Of The Truth

Anyone who doubts what the Bible says about Jesus is under the influence of Satan. Satan even tempted Jesus Himself to doubt that He was the Son of God. He repeatedly said to Jesus: "If Thou be the Son of God . . ." (Matt. 4:3) To doubt what the Bible says about Jesus leads to everlasting damnation in hell. What a terrible tragedy that is!

Only one thing will overcome that doubt. It is not human wisdom, not human experience, not personal charm or persuasion. It is the Word of God itself. To be convinced of the truth you turn to the truth itself and let the Holy Spirit do the convincing.

Jesus said in His prayer to His heavenly Father: "Thy Word is truth." (John 17:17) The Holy Bible is God's truth because "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." (II Tim. 3:16) The Bible says: "God is not a man, that He should lie." (Numb. 23:19) He is that God "which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which

keepeth truth forever." (Ps. 146:6) So we say with David: "And now, O Lord God, Thou art that God, and Thy words be true." (II Sam. 7:28)

The only solution, then, for the problem of doubting the truth is to hear the Word of God. "Come and see" Jesus in the Scriptures. Hear His Word, and the Holy Spirit will work the faith that saves. St. John says of the purpose of the Scriptures: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name." (John 20:31)

Is it profitable to "come and see" Jesus in the Scriptures? O yes! Infinitely blessed are those who in this way seek and find Jesus. The Scriptures "are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 3:15) "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31)

"The Gospel shows the
Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race,
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That man might thus be justified.

"It is the pow'r of God to save
From sin and Satan and the grave;
It works the faith,
which firmly clings
To all the treasures which it brings."
(Hymn 297)
M. H. Eibs

A Covering For Our Nakedness

After the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, they became ashamed of their nakedness and they tried to cover themselves with leaves. After God came down to them and gave them the promise of a Savior, He also covered their naked bodies with coats of animal skins. From that time to this mankind requires clothing. Any time an individual or a group wants to live on this earth without clothing, this is a sign of abnormal thinking contrary to God's will.

But even if we are clothed with clothing to cover our shame, we are still by nature naked before God in another sense. It is written in the letter to the Hebrews: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13)

In other words, even though we can cover our outward shame and nakedness with clothing, there is an inner shame that we cannot cover no matter what we do. God can look into our hearts, and He can see everything: our indecent thoughts, our moments of anger and greed, our lusts and passions, our selfish motives, whatever there is inside of us. We cannot escape from the all-seeing eye of God. Therefore, just as we need outer clothing to cover our outward nakedness, so we need a covering to cover our inmost shame and sin.

The Holy All-knowing God

Think of the woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well. (John 4) As Jesus

talked to her, He suddenly revealed to her that she had had five husbands, and the man with whom she was now living was not her husband. Jesus knew everything there was to know about this woman. Her whole life was an open book to Him, even though He had never met her before.

This is the God we are confronted with, an all-seeing and all-knowing God. Not only does He know all. He is a perfectly holy God who hates sin. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Rom. 1:18) Since we are ungodly sinners, God's holy righteous wrath stands against us. We are uncovered and worthy of being consumed in a moment by His holiness.

Oh, how we need a covering, not only outer clothing, but a covering for the shame within! Otherwise we are like that man who appeared at the wedding feast of the king's son without wedding clothes. When the king saw him without the proper covering, he said to him: "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" When the man could give no answer, the king commanded that he be cast into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Yes, we all need proper wedding clothes for Jesus' marriage supper in heaven. Without proper covering we shall never be able to face our all-knowing Judge on the last day. Without a covering we shall in terror make

the useless attempt to escape from Him, even as Adam and Eve without avail tried to hide from God in the trees of Eden.

The Covering that Covers

But what can we wear? There is only one covering that really covers. Isaiah calls this covering "the robe of righteousness." He speaks of this covering as "the garments of salvation." Every Christian can wear this covering with joy and confidence. Every Christian can say with the prophet Isaiah: "He (my God) hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Is. 61:10)

Every age has its own wedding customs. Apparently in those days every bridegroom wore a certain kind of headdress, or garland, and every bride wore certain special jewels. Only if they were wearing these items were they ready for their wedding.

In a similar way our God has supplied us with clothing worthy of His eternal wedding feast. He has covered us with the garments of salvation. He has wrapped us up in a robe of righteousness.

The Lord Our Righteousness

What is this robe of righteousness? Isaiah explains: "For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Is. 61:11) Isaiah was pre-

dicting that God would one day supply a righteousness to the world sufficient to cover the shame of all nations.

There can be only one fulfillment of this prophecy, and that is Jesus Christ. He is "The Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. 23:6) By His spotless life in our place, by His death for our sins, and by His resurrection on the third day He has atoned for the sin of the world. He now supplies in the Gospel a righteousness sufficient to cover all men. For even as the world's sin became His, so His righteousness becomes the world's righteousness. It is there for everyone, for the adulterous woman at the well, for the thief on the cross, for you and for me.

It is written: "Therein (in the Gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed." (Rom. 1:17) "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." (Rom. 3:22) God supplies Jesus Christ to us as our Robe of Righteousness. When we believe in Him, then we are wearing our robe of righteousness; we are clothed with the garments of salvation.

In the case of many of us God put our robe on us already when we were very young, when we were baptized as infants. For it is written: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27) Already in baptism God gave us a covering for our sin, a robe to cover our inward shame and nakedness. As long as we retain our faith in Christ, we are wearing that robe. On the other hand, by discarding Christ or rejecting Him and His Word we are

taking off our robe, and then we have to face God without it. Since our God is a consuming fire, there is not one of us that can face the holy Judge without this robe.

Not Law Righteousness

We think of Paul as an example. In his early life he was a Pharisee who lived according to the strictest interpretation of God's law. Most people of his time thought that if anyone could face God on the last day, it would be the Pharisees because of their holy, blameless, law-abiding lives. But listen to what Paul himself said later on: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8) The value of his own self-made righteousness according to the Law was as garbage in comparison with the righteousness of Christ. Therefore Paul's aim was to "be found in Him (Christ), not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. 3:9)

There is only one robe of righteousness, and that is Christ. There is only one way to wear this robe, and that is by faith. This is the robe God supplies for us, and we wear it simply by accepting His gift and saying: "O Lord God, I can never hope to stand before You in the nakedness of my own sin or in the filthy rags of my own righteousness. You have sent Christ to be my righteousness and to bear my sin. You offer Him to me as my robe and covering. O Lord, I accept Your offer. Give me my Robe, and put It on for me, and help me keep this Robe

on in every kind of weather, through thick and thin. For without this Robe of righteousness I am lost forever."

Perpetual Joy in Christ

Once God has given me this Robe and has put it on for me, every day is a day for rejoicing. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Is. 61:10) We do not have to go through life as though we have lost our best friend. We are wearing our Best Friend. We can be of good cheer at all times, for our sins are forgiven. Why should we be gloomy, pessimistic, sad, or troubled? We do not really believe that health is happiness, or that money is the greatest treasure, or that pleasure is the best that life can give us, do we? Why then should we be sad if our health is poor, or gloomy because we have little of this world's goods? These things should not have so much effect on us. If we have Christ, what do we lack? We have forgiveness and peace with God and the hope of heaven. We have the certain knowledge that we are God's children and that all things work together for our good.

We can say with the prophet Habakkuk: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:17-18) Yes, I will

rejoice, because He has clothed me with Christ, my robe of righteousness.

Dressed for Death and Judgment

Every night I can fall asleep with confidence and pray: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." The Lord will keep me, or He will take me. In either case, I am wearing my robe, Christ, and no harm can come to me. Even on Judgment Day I have nothing to fear. I

draw my robe more closely around myself and await the Lord's verdict without terror.

The old German hymn says it well: "Ja, Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit, Das ist mein Schmuck und Ehrenkleid, Damit will ich vor Gott bestehn, Wenn ich zum Himmel werd eingehn." "Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness My jewels are, my glorious dress. In these before my God I'll stand When I shall reach the heav'nly land. Amen." (LH 585:1)

David Lau

"A Review of Reviews"

The Battle for the Bible, by Harold Lindsell. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1976. Hardcover, \$6.95, 218 pp.

"Evangelicals" is a broad term for a large group of semi-conservative Protestants, Reformed in their theology, who have been making quite a bit of news lately. By no means united within themselves on all points of doctrine, their base of agreement has been very broad: they have stood in opposition to extreme modernists in the various denominations who blatantly deny cardinal doctrines of Scripture, such as the Virgin Birth, the Deity of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ, etc. Only relatively speaking, therefore, have they any claim to be classed as "conservatives," which is how they are categorized by many; even the term "semi-conservatives" may be too generous, and it certainly is not

meant to imply that the confession and theology of the evangelicals are on every point in accord with the Scriptures.

Billy Graham is a prominent evangelical; so also is Harold Lindsell, the author of *The Battle for the Bible*. Editor of one of the major voices of evangelicals, the widely circulated periodical *Christianity Today*, Lindsell notes with dismay that within the evangelical camp in recent decades, a split has developed between those who continue to maintain that the Bible is entirely free from error in all its parts, and those who no longer maintain that Scripture is "inerrant" (without error), but allow for errors in matters of science, geography, and other details.

"Inerrancy an Evangelical Problem" is the title of the first chapter of the book. It is Mr. Lindsell's conten-

tion that biblical inerrancy is "the most important theological topic of this age. A great battle rages about it among people called evangelicals." (Preface) His book is a solid defense of biblical inerrancy, a forthright statement of the extreme importance of this issue in our day, and an appeal to evangelicals not to leave the solid foundation of an inerrant Scripture, nor to set themselves up as judges over what is God's Word and what is not.

A quick reading of the book bears out the statement of Harold J. Ockenga in the Foreword, that the author "has written with accuracy, candor, an irenic spirit, and eminent fairness." He succeeded in a difficult task, calling a spade a spade and taking a clear stand, while at the same time maintaining a mild tone. Several very interesting and instructive chapters detail recent developments surrounding this issue of inerrancy in the Missouri Synod, the Southern Baptist Convention, Fuller Theological Seminary, the Evangelical Covenant Church, and other groups. Addressing himself primarily to lay readers, the author renders a splendid service in pointing out how such church bodies and institutions, formerly known for their strong stand on inerrancy, have in the course of years slipped away from this position. Perhaps it is this historical material, pregnant with lessons, which would be of greatest interest to our readers. There is also material showing how other false teachings quickly arise and spread when inerrancy is abandoned.

While one purpose of this presen-

tation is to call attention to a notable and significant book which, in general, is highly to be recommended both for its doctrinal and historical material (the exception of weakness in the fellowship doctrine, pp. 139-140 for example, should be noted), a second and equally prominent purpose is to review the reviews of the book. For what especially merits analysis in this case is the manner in which the book has been received by other theologians.

As an indication of the attention this book is receiving, even *Time Magazine* some months ago devoted space in its religion section to describing the contents of the book and the stir it has caused. In its cover story on evangelicals in the October 25, 1976 issue, *Newsweek* also had occasion to refer to the book, and took the opportunity to snub belief in inerrancy, comparing that doctrine to the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility. One can scarcely open a religious periodical without finding the book being reviewed or discussed. A total of eleven such reviews have routinely crossed the desk of this writer, not to mention numerous other discussions of or references to the book.

Predictably, generally favorable reviews appeared in such periodicals as the *Northwestern Lutheran* (Aug. 8, 1976) and *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (July, 1976 and October, 1976) of the Wisconsin Synod, also in *Christian News* (edited by Herman Otten, Missouri Synod member and scourge of the liberals; cf. the issue of June 14, 1976), as well as in *Lutherans Alert National* (June,

1976), the periodical of that small group within the American Lutheran Church which is fighting the liberalism in that body. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, published by the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary, also gave the book a favorable review, recommending it as "'must reading' for trustees, administrators, denominational leaders, and laymen . . ." (Oct.-Dec., 1976).

On the other hand, one is not surprised either to find a sharply critical review in the liberal magazine, *Christian Century* (Nov. 10, 1976). The reviewer there referred to the "superficiality of the book." No efforts were spared, it seems, to discredit the book by collecting statements of those opposed to its stance. "One faculty member of a school supposedly in Lindsell's camp described his book to me as the last irrational flailings of a discredited party about to be deposed." Another scathing review, written by Duke McCall of Southern Baptist Seminary, ended in this way: "Fighting over words used to describe the Bible will serve the devil. Studying the Bible will open hearts to the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit. Alas, some men would rather fight than become the children of God."

(*Christian News*, June 14, 1976)

What is really distressing, and clearly symptomatic of the great inroads of error so ably pointed out by Lindsell, is the response of certain key, influential, evangelical leaders themselves.

Since a chapter of Lindsell's book had been devoted to describing

developments at Fuller Theological Seminary in California, David Hubbard, president of that seminary, was quick to react. He addressed a letter to the faculty, then also set forth the seminary's stand in a chapel address. He referred to Lindsell's book as "basically an unworthy attack," expressed concern "that the unity of the body of Christ not be unduly disrupted by what I read as a highly divisive book," and also referred to the book's "inadequate and unbiblical view of Scripture" which he felt might "divide our evangelical fellowship worldwide."

Another prominent evangelical is Bernard Ramm, a professor at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. His very critical review of Lindsell's book was published in the *Reformed Journal* (July-August, 1976), a magazine associated with the Christian Reformed Church, still another denomination which has been weakening on the inerrancy issue. This review, really quite infuriating to any whom the Spirit has led to submit to the Word rather than submitting it to themselves, bristles with hostility toward Lindsell, obscures the chief issue, and displays considerable liberal and rationalistic bias. One argument worth citing, just to give a taste of the wiles of the enemy, is this: just as Christ came in weakness and humility as a man and a servant, and died on the cross, so also God's Word comes to us in the same form of humiliation and weakness. (The implication is that God's Word comes to us in an environment of errors.) "Hence we must also have a doctrine of the Scriptures which is

of the same heartbeat as the theology of the cross.”

And what of Clark Pinnock, another prominent evangelical, author, formerly a staunch defender of inerrancy? He is having second thoughts, and is coming to be dissatisfied with the term “inerrancy.” In a review of Lindsell’s book which appeared in the June, 1976 issue of *Eternity* magazine (another evangelical publication), Pinnock writes: “It (the book) conveys a spirit of suspicion and hostility which ought not to characterize our intra-evangelical discussions about inspiration.” He also charges that the book is “intellectually superficial.”

Who then will come forward with a ringing defense of Lindsell’s effort? Will Carl Henry, former editor of *Christianity Today*, long in the very forefront of the evangelical movement? Alas, even his pronouncements on the matter have lacked character, strength, firmness. “I have mixed feelings about it, as do many readers,” stated Mr. Henry in an interview published in the October, 1976 issue of *Eternity* magazine. “My disagreements with the book are in the areas of context, balance and theological perspecuity” (sic). In fact he has even been quoted as saying: “Lindsell is relying on theological atom bombing. As many Evangelical friends as foes end up as casualties.” That is undoubtedly what tells us more than anything else about the sorry state of affairs among evangelicals—that men such as Henry and others, from whom one might have expected the most, have not only been weak-kneed and feeble

in their statements, at times damning the book, you might say, with faint praise, but have also attacked the author for disturbing the peace.

The sad truth is, then, that as the *Eternity* editors state on p. 38 of the October, 1976 issue: “. . . the reviews of Harold Lindsell’s “The Battle for the Bible” are less than enthusiastic *even in the staunchest evangelical circles.*” (emphasis mine)

Granted, men such as Billy Graham, W. A. Criswell, H. J. Ockenga, and John Walvoord, all prominent evangelicals, have come out with commendations of the book. But it is the preponderantly unenthusiastic and even unfavorable response from many “evangelicals” that has the most to say to anyone who loves the Word of Jesus, his Savior. Obviously, Lindsell has correctly pinpointed quite a problem; the reviews he has received forcefully bear out the truthfulness of his contentions. It is plain for all to see that even among what was left of semi-conservative theology in our country, there is a dreadful apostasy from the very foundation of our faith, and bold, barefaced blasphemy against God and His holy, saving Word. Such denials are adorned with deceptive and rationalistic appeals. Then, too, concern for a superficial peace overrides concern for the truth. Lindsell is condescendingly treated as a big troublemaker. What a shame that the evangelicals should be embarrassed by such a bull in their china shop!!

Francis Schaeffer hit the nail on the head when he said in an interview published in the Oct. 8, 1976 issue of *Christianity Today*: “I think Elijah

gave the right answer when Ahab accused him of being the troubler of Israel. The people who are taking a weak view of Scripture are the ones who are troubling evangelicalism today. I say this with gentleness and love toward these people. The people who are making the difficulty are the people who have demoted Scripture from what it has been understood to be in the evangelical world until the fairly recent past."

One may trust that the complete reliability and truthfulness of every word of the Bible is not questioned among us. But a careless heart is never in order, least of all when the tidal waves of rationalism, denial, and unbelief are sweeping closer and closer; when we and our children will be more and more exposed to jibes at inerrancy from the elements of the media; and when the influence exerted even from supposedly conservative sources may more and more be a potentially subversive one of undermining the authority and trustworthiness of God's Word, because of the thinking of men who have "another spirit," who are causers of divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, who therefore are not serving the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly

(Rom. 16:17-18). It is entirely in order to consider the directives of Scripture: "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3); "strengthen the things which remain" (Rev. 3:2); "holding fast the faithful word" (Titus 1:9).

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:30-31) At all times we rejoice in Him Who is the center of all Scripture, and the Savior of our souls. From the midst of our sins, we look up, laying hold on the Word of God: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Reassurance comes from the corresponding echo: "Thy Word is truth." (John 17:17) "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 3:15) "Thus saith the Lord."

"Now unto him that is able to *keep you from falling*, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, by glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." Jude 24-25

R. Wehrwein

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Martin Luther once said, "I am so busy now that, if I did not spend two or three hours each day in prayer, I could not get through the day." Upon hearing this one of our first thoughts is probably "I could never pray that long; I wouldn't know what to say. I just couldn't think of that many things to pray for." How could the Reformer pray truly thoughtful, heartfelt prayers of such length? How did Martin Luther pray? One day Peter Beskendorf, Luther's barber, asked him just that question. Dr. Luther responded with a long letter which was published in 1535 under the title: *A Simple Way to Pray, for a Good Friend*.

Luther begins his letter to his barber by saying, "I will tell you how I myself pray. May our Lord God grant you and everyone to do it better." As Martin Luther describes how he prays, one of the

first things that becomes clear is that he didn't have to worry about having enough "things to pray for." Because, for the most part, the content of the good Doctor's prayers was not his personal needs and concerns. He did not begin by asking "What shall I pray for?" His prayers were not—as ours too often are—"gimme" prayers. Martin Luther did not pray off the top of his head, not even simply from his heart. Rather, he used his head as he prayed with all his heart *from God's Word*. For Doctor Luther 'Prayer time' was 'Bible Time.' He didn't simply begin and close his Daily Devotions with prayer—he filled them with conversations with God. For Luther prayer included a careful listening to the Word of the Lord—and listening to the Word included a heart-to-heart speaking with God.

Here's how Doctor Luther explained it:

"Out of each commandment (or Scripture verse, or Scripture truth) I make a garland of four twisted strands. That is, I take it first as a teaching and reflect upon what our Lord God so earnestly requires of me here. Secondly, I make out of it a reason for thanksgiving. Thirdly, a confession and fourthly, a prayer petition."

Let us use Luther's approach to prayer in our Daily Devotions this month. As we continue with our selections from the Life of Christ let us ask these four questions (changing Luther's order a bit):

1—What am I grateful for? What in this text makes me thankful?

2—What do I regret? What in this text convicts me, challenges me to change, and leads me to repentance?

3—What should I ask for? Which prayer concerns does this text bid me to take up?

4—What shall I do? What in this text causes me to take action?

Focus each of these questions on the main event or thought of each reading—or on those verses to which the Holy Spirit particularly draws your attention. Take only one point or thought at a time so that, as Luther says, ". . . the mind is as uncluttered as possible." Now, an answer will not be found every time to all these questions—and sometimes the answers will be interlocked. That Word which calls me to repentance may also shape my main petition for the day and even cause me to speak a special word of apology to someone.

One could, of course go verse by verse with all four of these questions, but note the length of the text before you do. As Doctor Luther told his barber, "Don't take too much upon yourself lest the spirit should get tired. It is enough to grasp one part of a Bible verse or even half a part from which you can strike a spark in your heart . . . for the soul, if it is directed towards one single thing, can think more in one moment than the tongue can speak in ten hours and the pen can write in ten days."

So it is not the number of Bible verses one considers in depth that is important—but rather the fruitfulness of your prayer-study. Better to get a good view of the whole tree (text) and then shake a few branches (verses) until some fruit falls, than to make the adventure into a drudgery by trying to shake everything in sight.

After prayerfully considering the Bible reading in connection with the above questions, it would be well to extend these same questions into your daily life—perhaps in a concluding prayer. Give thanks for daily blessings—great and small. Ask forgiveness for that unkind word or thought—or other particular sins. Remember those who especially need your prayers. And in connection with the fourth question, plan your schedule for the coming day. In this way you will become conscious of God's guidance in your daily life.

Here are some additional thoughts of Luther with regard to prayer—or as we would put it, Daily Devotions: ". . . Anything that is to be well done ought to occupy the whole man with all his faculties and members. As the saying goes: he who thinks of many things thinks of nothing and accomplishes no good. How much more must prayer possess the heart exclusively and completely if it is to be a good prayer! . . . It is a good thing to let prayer be the first business in the morning and the last in the evening. Guard yourself against such false and deceitful thoughts that keep whispering: Wait a while. In an hour or so I will pray. I must first finish this or that. Thinking such thoughts we get away from prayer into other things that will hold us and involve us till the prayer of the day comes to naught . . . We have to watch out so that we may not get weaned from prayer by telling ourselves that a certain job is more urgent, which it really isn't—and finally we get sluggish, lazy, cold, and weary. But the devil is neither sluggish nor lazy around us . . . We should learn the fine art of making the very thoughts which would disturb us and keep us from making prayer incite us the more to it, as we read of the blind man in the Gospel that, the more he was told to hold his peace, the louder he cried, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord.'"

FEBRUARY

1 Mark 3:22-30	11 Matthew 9:18-26	21 John 6:60-65
2 Mark 3:31-35	12 Matthew 9:27-34	22 John 6:66-71
3 Mark 4:1-20	13 Luke 4:16-30	23 Matthew 15:1-20
4 Mark 4:21-32	14 Mark 6:6-13	24 Matthew 15:21-28
5 Matthew 13:24-30	15 Matthew 14:1-12	25 Mark 7:31-37
6 Matthew 13:34-43	16 John 6:1-15	26 Mark 8:1-10
7 Matthew 13:44-46	17 John 6:16-21	27 Mark 8:11-21
8 Matthew 13:47-52	18 John 6:22-40	28 Mark 8:22-26
9 Matthew 8:18-27	19 John 6:41-51	
10 Matthew 8:28-34	20 John 6:52-59	

W. V. Schaller

Announcements

Wisconsin Pastoral Conference

God-willing, the Winter Conference will meet on February 1 to 3 at the Sem House at ILC. Session will begin at 1:30 P.M. on Tuesday, February 1.

Agenda

1. Ministry of the Keys—
J. Johannes
2. Exegesis of Hebrews 9—
L. Schierenbeck
3. Psalm 119—G. Radtke
4. Does A False Prophet have a Call?—C. M. Gullerud
5. Historical Introduction to the Small and Large Catechisms—R. Dommer
6. Difference Between CLC and other Lutheran Bodies—TALC—D. Schierenbeck
7. Polygamy—Discussion—
L. Schierenbeck
8. Preacher—John Lau
Alternate—J. Schaller

Please Announce to Host Pastor—L. Schierenbeck

2015 N. Hastings Way
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J. Johannes, Sec.

Correction

An error in the 1976 CLC Proceedings has been brought to my attention. It occurs on page 26, the section entitled "Fraternal Life Insurance," the third paragraph, middle of the third line. The two words "seek to" that were in the floor committee report were stricken by the convention. The paragraph should read:

"Furthermore, be it resolved that we encourage the constituents of the CLC to study the matter of involvement in unionistic fraternal insurance companies on the basis of God's Word, and in an evangelical manner eliminate from our midst this unionistic leaven, so that by God's mercy and grace in Christ Jesus we all act in accordance with God's Word and speak the same thing."

Paul F. Nolting, Secretary

Treasurer's Report

July 1, 1976—December 1, 1976

RECEIPTS:	NOVEMBER	TO DATE
Offerings	\$33,080.73	\$ 91,377.52
Memorials	—	340.00
Mission Refund, Exploratory Funds	—	231.90
TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$33,080.73	\$ 91,949.42*
DISBURSEMENTS:		
Retirement Benefits	1,368.00	6,840.00
Emergency Fund	—	387.53
Capital Investments	1,672.79	8,895.43
General Administration	271.22	2,134.62
Missions and Administration	8,366.99	36,506.19
Immanuel Lutheran College	7,128.00	35,640.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$18,777.00	\$ 90,403.77
CASH BALANCE FOR PERIOD	14,303.73	1,545.65
CASH BALANCE, JULY 1, 1976		30,189.95
CASH BALANCE, DECEMBER 1, 1976		\$ 31,735.60

.....
 I.L.C. EXPANSION FUND RECEIPTS \$ 1,494.87 \$223,699.16

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

	NOVEMBER	FIVE MONTHS
BUDGET OFFERINGS NEEDED	\$20,994.00	\$104,970.00
BUDGET OFFERINGS RECEIVED	33,080.73	91,949.42*
SURPLUS FOR THE MONTH	\$12,086.73	
DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR, BUDGET OFFERINGS		\$ 13,020.58*
BUDGET OFFERINGS, 1975-1976	\$20,414.98	\$ 82,853.73
INCREASE, 1976-1977	12,665.75	9,095.68

Respectfully Submitted,
 Lowell R. Moen, Trustee's Treasurer
 Bertram J. Naumann, Chairman

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