

The Twentieth Century Crucifixion of Christ

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“Crucify him, crucify him!” the chief priests and officers of the Jews cried out when Pontius Pilate set Jesus before them wearing a crown of thorns and a cast-off purple robe (John 19:6). “Take ye him, and crucify him,” Pilate taunted them, “for I find no fault in him.” Pilate’s sarcasm cut deep. The Jews had admitted just a few moments before that it was not lawful for them to put any man to death without the consent of the Roman governor. They chafed under the hated Roman rule, and Pilate’s jest was a pointed reminder of the independence they had lost.

Ignoring the provocation, however, they retorted, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). Now the truth was out! This was the real reason for their insistent demand that Jesus be crucified. “He made himself the Son of God!” This was the basis on which the Jewish Sanhedrin had convicted Him of blasphemy and handed down the verdict, “He is guilty of death!” (Matt. 26:66).

To this day Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God is denied and denounced. In the front ranks of His accusers before Pilate’s tribunal were the religious leaders of the day, the chief priests and elders of the people. In our day, too, the most vehement and vicious attacks on our Savior, the Christ of the Scriptures, originate with those who profess to be religious authorities—professional theologians and ecclesiastical officials, professors of theology and doctors of divinity. In this twentieth century in which we live attacks on Christianity by those outside the pale of the visible Christian Church have been blatant and bold, but the subversion from within has been more treacherous and damaging. In the very forefront of those crying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” in our day are ecumenical dignitaries parading in splendid clerical vestments adorned with ponderous pectoral crosses and the learned occupants of chairs of theology at prestigious seminaries and universities.

In this essay we do not propose to discuss the Pope. This is not by oversight but by design. It is self-evident that according to the Bible the Pope is the archenemy of Christ among men. With Luther and the Lutheran Confessions we hold “that the Pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which, nevertheless, is nothing, and is neither ordained nor commanded by God.”¹

The twentieth century has seen some significant developments in the Church of Rome. But its antichristian character has not changed. It has not lifted its anathema on the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the very heart of the Gospel. It has not retracted its claim that the Pope is the vicar of Christ on earth. By its very nature the papacy stands condemned as guilty of crucifying Christ.

Our concern in this essay is primarily with tragic twentieth century developments in the Protestant Church. Professed Protestants who today deny the Christ presented to us in the Bible are as guilty of crucifying Him as is the Pope and as were the first century Jews who once cried, “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). In making this charge we by no means, of course, intend to set aside the confession we make in one of our beloved Lenten hymns:

Ah! I also and my sin
Wrought Thy deep affliction;
This indeed the cause hath been
Of Thy crucifixion.²

¹ *The Smalcald Articles*, Part II, Art. IV, 10; *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 475.

² *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 140:3.

Humbly we confess our guilt, and joyfully we embrace our Savior's forgiveness.

But there are those today, as there have always been, who deny the Lord that bought them (II Pet. 2:1); and the pretext under which they attack Him today is the very same as that offered by His first century opponents. He is ridiculed and rejected in the name of religion. He is condemned and crucified in the name of God. "It is expedient for us," crafty Caiaphas contended, "that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:50). It is expedient, clever twentieth century theologians reason, to sacrifice Christ in order to "save Christianity."

The professed aim of twentieth century theology—laudable in itself—is to persuade modern man to accept the Christian faith. But the method is sheer madness. Modern man lives in a secular, science-oriented society in which the supernatural supposedly has no place. Hence, modern theology has set about to remodel the Gospel of the crucified and risen Christ to make it more acceptable to modern man. As J. I. Packer, a Bible-believing scholar from Oxford, has observed, however, "The cure is far worse than the disease."³ It is a sell-out to Satan. It is wholesale surrender. Christ has been crucified, and worldliness has been welcomed into the Church.

Listen to these words of Rudolf Bultmann, professor emeritus of the New Testament at the University of Marburg, one of the revered prophets of twentieth century theology:

Man's knowledge and mastery of the world have advanced to such an extent through science and technology that it is no longer possible for anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world—in fact, there is no one who does. What meaning, for instance, can we attach to such phrases in the creed as "descended into hell" or "ascended into heaven"? We no longer believe in the three-storied universe which the creeds take for granted. The only honest way of reciting the creeds is to strip the mythological framework from the truth they enshrine—that is, assuming that they contain any truth at all, which is just the question theology has to ask. No one who is old enough to think for himself supposes that God lives in a local heaven. The same applies to hell in the sense of a mythical underworld beneath our feet. And if this is so, the story of Christ's descent into hell and of his ascension into heaven is done with. We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air.⁴

Bultmann's essay from which the above paragraph is taken created an immediate explosion in the theological world when it appeared in 1941. It was entitled "New Testament and Mythology." In it Bultmann caricatured orthodox Christianity and threw it overboard. He issued a manifesto calling for the demythologizing of the New Testament. By this he meant that everything supernatural and miraculous was to be stripped away. The New Testament was to be reinterpreted so as to make it plausible and acceptable to modern man.

Bultmann contended:

It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles. We may think we can manage it in our own lives, but to expect others to do so is to make the Christian faith unintelligible and unacceptable to the modern world.⁵

Directing his attack especially at Christ and historic, orthodox Christology, Bultmann asserted:

³ J. I. Packer, *Keep Yourselves From Idols* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 10.

⁴ *Kerygma and Myth*, Hans Werner Bartsch, ed. (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

And as for the pre-existence of Christ, with its corollary of man's translation into a celestial realm of light, and the clothing of the human personality in heavenly robes and a spiritual body—all this is not only irrational but utterly meaningless.⁶

And so, in effect, Bultmann cried, “Away with this man who claims to be the eternal Son of God! Let Him be crucified! Give us Barabbas! Give us a Christianity of our own making, a robber-religion fashioned to our own taste!”

Has it not always been that way? Unregenerate man in our science-governed, technological twentieth century is no different from the unbeliever in the clays of Adam or Noah or Christ. It is ever true, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14).

Bultmann's criticism that the resurrection of Jesus is “difficult for modern man”⁷ was voiced twenty centuries ago on Mars' Hill by the philosophers of Athens. When Paul testified that God had raised Jesus from the dead, “some mocked” (Acts 17:32). In the twentieth century, as in the apostolic age, the preaching of Christ crucified is “unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (I Cor. 1:24).

Modern theology rejects the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, and authority of the Scriptures. But ultimately its attack on the Scriptures is an attack on Christ. There is more than a grain of truth in the remark of Regin Prenter, professor of dogmatics at the University of Aarhus in Denmark, that “all theology is Christology.”⁸ President George M. Orvick of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod speaks similarly when he insists, “As soon as you begin to tamper with Scripture, you begin to tamper with Christ.”⁹

The devil knows this very well. If he can rob the Church of the Bible, he will have succeeded in robbing it of Christ. The real target at which his big guns are aimed in the battle over the Bible is our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

Twentieth century theology clothes its crucifixion of Christ in a hypocritical cloak of piety. In his book entitled *The Word That Can Never Die* Olav Valen-Sendstad observes:

Its objective is to win “modern man” for a synthesis of science and faith, philosophy and theology, natural knowledge and divine knowledge. Thus one wins “modern man” by abandoning everything in the Christian tradition which is incompatible with “scientific progress.”¹⁰

The basic question today is still, as it was two thousand years ago, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” (Matt. 22:42). The Pharisees, to whom Jesus directed this question, answered, “The son of David.” Their reply was correct, as far as it went. But it did not go far enough. “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?” was Jesus' further question (v. 43), pointedly calling their attention to the fact that David confessed that his promised Seed would be his God and Lord. The Pharisees recognized only the humanity of the Messiah. The Scriptures testified to His deity as well. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, is the Savior of the world.

In his brief treatise *The Three Symbols* Luther clearly recognized the devil's strategy when he noted that he “attacks Christ in three lines of battle. One will not let him be God, another will not let him be man, and the third will not let him do what he has done. Each of the three wants to reduce Christ to nothing.”¹¹

Twentieth century theology is the devil's tool on all three fronts. Each prong of the attack aims in reality at crucifying Christ anew. Obviously, it is impossible in this one essay to expose all of the theologians who are

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸ Regin Prenter, *Creation and Redemption*, translated by Theodor I. Jensen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 296.

⁹ George M. Orvick, “Jesus Christ, The Humble Servant—Fact Not Fiction,” in *Jesus Christ—Fact Or Fiction?* Vernon H. Harley, ed., (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1969), p. 32.

¹⁰ Olav Valen Sendstad, *The Word That Can Never Die* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 18.

¹¹ *Luther's Works*, American Edition (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-), XXXIV, 210.

mercenaries in Satan's service or to enter in on all the fine points of logical argument that are the weapons in his vast arsenal or to describe all his maneuvers in every skirmish on each of these battlegrounds. All that we can hope to do is to sketch briefly what the issues are and to point up what is at stake.

Taking our cue from Luther, then, we shall discuss the twentieth century crucifixion of Christ under these points: 1. Modern theology denies Christ's deity; 2. Modern theology attacks Christ's humanity; and 3. Modern theology misrepresents Christ's work.

I. Modern Theology Denies Christ's Deity

The denial of Christ's deity is not a twentieth century invention of the devil. We have previously mentioned that it was Jesus' claim that He was the Son of God that led directly to His crucifixion. Caiaphas, the high priest, put Jesus under oath and demanded, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). Without a moment's hesitation Jesus testified, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). This forthright answer Caiaphas denounced as blasphemy, a most insolent insult to God.

The testimony of the Scriptures to the deity of Christ is plain and plentiful. The prophecies of the Old Testament assured men long before the Messiah came that He would be none other than God Himself. Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, in a prophecy which Matthew tells us was fulfilled when Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Ghost calls Him Immanuel, meaning "God with us" (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). It is Isaiah, too, who announces that this Child's name shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). According to Micah He would be one "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2). Jeremiah calls Him "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6).

The New Testament is equally clear. Our forefathers have traditionally demonstrated the deity of Christ by pointing out that the Scriptures ascribe to Him divine names, divine attributes, divine works, and divine honor.

Jesus accepted Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). He did not rebuke Thomas when, seeing the stigmata in the hands and side of the risen Christ, he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Paul speaks of Him as "the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). John testifies, "This is the true God and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

Jesus has all the attributes of God. For example, He is eternal. "Before Abraham was I am," He declares (John 8:58). According to John, who calls Him "the Word," He was "in the beginning" (John 1:1). According to Hebrews 13:8 He is immutable: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." His testimony, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18), tells us that He is omnipotent. From Peter's confession, "Lord, thou knowest all things" (John 21:17), we see that He is omniscient. From His assurance, "Lo, I am with you alway" (Matt. 28:20), we know that He is omnipresent.

His works, too, testify to His deity. The miracles which Jesus performed were signs signifying, as Nicodemus recognized, that He had come from God (John 3:2). They were His credentials. They demonstrated clearly and convincingly the truthfulness of His claim that He was the Son of God (Luke 22:69-70).

John concludes the account of Jesus' first miracle, the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana, with these words, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). The many miracles that followed—Peter's draught of fishes, the stilling of the storm, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead—all proved dramatically and conclusively: Here is the Christ, the Son of God.

"Though ye believe not me, believe the works," Jesus admonished the skeptics, "that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38). When the scribes and Pharisees were not satisfied with these proofs, Jesus promised them but one further sign, "the sign of the prophet Jonas," His resurrection from the dead after spending three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:38-40). This was the

capstone of all signs, the final seal affixed to His credentials. Hence Paul testifies that Jesus was “declared to be the Son of God...by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4).

That divine honor is to be accorded to Christ is explicitly stated when we are told that “all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). According to Paul, “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9–11).

Scripture does not record everything that Jesus said and did. John tells us, however, concerning the signs he has reported in his Gospel, “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). Paul sums up the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments concerning Christ in the words, “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

We are not standing on debatable Scriptural ground, therefore, when we confess with the ancient Church in the words of the Nicene Creed:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

In direct contradiction to the Scriptural doctrine of the deity of Christ twentieth century theology is unanimous in its denial that the Prophet from Nazareth was “Very God of Very God.” Modern theologians may disagree vehemently with one another on details of their doctrine, but, as “Pilate and Herod were made friends together” through their dealings with Jesus, though “before they were at enmity between themselves” (Luke 23:12), so the theologians of the modern school are united in making common cause against Christ. Focal points of their attack are the Biblical doctrines of the Virgin Birth and of the Resurrection. Let us take a closer look at these two issues.

For us the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is clearly set forth both in the familiar prophecy of Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Isa. 7:14), and in the fulfillment recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. After reporting Joseph’s distress at the discovery that Mary was with child and the angel’s appearance to Joseph explaining that that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost, Matthew makes a special point of adding, “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1:22,23).

The argument of contemporary theologians denying the Virgin Birth is no different from the contention of the citizens of Nazareth. “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” they argued (Matt. 13:55). Modern skeptics continue to recite the words of the Apostles’ Creed, “born of the Virgin Mary,” but they make it clear that as far as they are concerned Mary was not a virgin. They agree with the Ebionites of the second century, who, according to Justin Martyr, taught that Jesus “was born a man from men.”¹²

A recent book published by the Augsburg Publishing House has the title *A New Look at the Apostles’ Creed*. In it Gerhard Gloege, professor of systematic theology at Bonn, a man who calls himself a Lutheran, describes the Virgin Birth as a “pious legend.”¹³ According to Gloege, “Faith articulated its witness in legends.”¹⁴ He places “faith” in opposition to “facts.”

Gloege claims that Matthew “did not even check the original text of Isaiah 7, which says that the Saviour is to be born of a ‘young woman.’ He was satisfied with the Greek Bible of the Jewish diaspora, which had changed the text from ‘young woman’ to ‘virgin.’”¹⁵ Gloege is not only a poor theologian; he is an

¹² J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 15.

¹³ *A New Look at the Apostles’ Creed*, Gerhard Rein, ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p. 30.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

incompetent scholar. Knowledgeable students of the Hebrew language such as the late Edward J. Young of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia have conclusively demonstrated that the Jewish scholars who translated the Old Testament into Greek had a far better understanding of the Hebrew word *almah*; (*almah*) than do twentieth century disciples of the devil.

Gloege makes a wretched attempt to invoke Luther in support of his heresy. He quotes the second stanza of Luther's hymn, "We All Believe in One True God," where Luther writes (in a literal translation of the German original), "Who was born true man of the Virgin through the Holy Spirit *in faith*." To set Luther's "in faith" in opposition to "in fact" is nothing less than a *tour de force*! Luther leaves no doubt as to where he stands when he writes that Mary "became a mother in a miraculous manner without violation of her virginity."¹⁶

The late Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike, on the other hand, had the effrontery to write, "The Biblical evidence and the theological implications seem to be in favor of assuming that Joseph was the human father of Jesus."¹⁷

Dr. Nels Ferré, a theologian of the United Church of Christ, cites the suggestion that Jesus was an illegitimate child fathered by a German mercenary in a Roman garrison stationed near Nazareth. "Who can deny that such a conjecture *could* be true?" he asks, not shrinking from such blasphemy.¹⁸

Another prominent spokesman for liberal theology, the late Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, states, "Of course, I do not believe in the Virgin Birth...I do not know any intelligent Christian minister who does."¹⁹

The father of twentieth century theology is generally acknowledged to be Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). In his book *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher declared, "The assumption of a Virgin Birth is superfluous."²⁰ In his *Systematic Theology* Paul Tillich, one of the idols of contemporary theologians, says bluntly, "The actual story is a myth."²¹

Some modern theologians speak in glowing terms about Jesus. They call Him a great man, a religious genius. They may even speak of Him as "the Son of God." But as Georgia Harkness, a modern Methodist explains, "This does not mean that Jesus *was* God. It means that his life was so filled with the character and power of God that when men have seen him, they have seen the Father."²²

In 1963 Bishop John A. T. Robinson of the Church of England published a best-seller entitled *Honest to God*. In his book he describes the views of liberal Christianity as follows:

This has even been ready to use the epithet 'divine' of Jesus—in the sense that he was the most God-like man that ever lived, that what he said and did was so beautiful and so true that he must have been a revelation, indeed, the supreme revelation, of God. According to this view, the divine is simply the human raised to the power of 'x.'²³

For himself Robinson disclaims this view. He holds, "Here was more than just a man: here was a window into God at work."²⁴ Yet, as he himself makes clear, he does not mean by this that Jesus actually was God. "Jesus," he says, "never claims to be God personally: yet he always claims to bring God, completely."²⁵

Robinson ridicules the orthodox teaching of the supernatural incarnation of Christ in the following caricature:

¹⁶ *Luther's Works*, XXI, 302.

¹⁷ "Three-pronged Synthesis," *The Christian Century*, December 21, 1960.

¹⁸ Nels Ferré, *The Christian Understanding of God* (London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 191.

¹⁹ *The Christian Beacon*, January 3, 1957.

²⁰ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, editors (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963), Vol. II, p. 405.

²¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), Vol. II, p. 160.

²² Georgia Harkness, *Understanding the Christian Faith* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1947), p. 59.

²³ John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 68.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Even if such a view would be indignantly repudiated by orthodox Churchmen, and however much they would insist that Jesus was ‘perfect man’ as well as ‘perfect God’, still the traditional supranaturalistic way of describing the Incarnation almost inevitably suggests that Jesus was really God almighty walking about on earth, dressed up as a man. Jesus was not a man born and bred—he was God for a limited period taking part in a charade. He looked like a man, he talked like a man, he felt like a man, but underneath he was God dressed up—like Father Christmas. However guardedly it may be stated, the traditional view leaves the impression that God took a space-trip and arrived on this planet in the form of a man. Jesus was not really one of us; but through the miracle of the Virgin Birth he contrived to be born so as to appear one of us. Really he came from the outside.²⁶

Robinson confesses, “I am aware that this is a parody, and probably an offensive one, but I think it is perilously near the truth of what most people—and I would include myself—have been brought up to believe at Christmas time.” According to him, the word “incarnation” “conjures up the idea of a divine substance being plunged in flesh and coated with it like chocolate or silver plating. And if this is a crude picture, substitute for it that of the Christmas collect, which speaks of the Son of God ‘taking our nature upon him’, or that of Wesley’s Christmas hymn, with its ‘veiled in flesh the Godhead see.’”²⁷

If Robinson’s view that Jesus was merely a man who surrendered himself to others in love and in that disclosed the Ground of man’s being as Love is correct, then, as J. I. Packer points out, “Thomas had no business to say, ‘My Lord and my God,’ nor had Jesus any business to let his words stand uncorrected, nor have we any business to echo Thomas’ false Christology.”²⁸

Those who deny the Virgin Birth of Christ often profess to believe in His Incarnation. J. Gresham Machen in his classic book on this subject reminds us, however, that

the word is apt to mean to them almost the exact opposite of what the New Testament means when it says that ‘the Word became flesh.’ To these modern men the incarnation means that God and man are one; to the New Testament it means rather that they are not one, but that the eternal Son of God became man, assumed our nature, by a stupendous miracle, to redeem us from sin. Seldom does any real belief in the incarnation go along with a rejection of the miracle of the virgin birth.²⁹

He concludes, “Only one Jesus is presented in the Word of God; and that Jesus did not come into the world by ordinary generation, but was conceived in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost.”³⁰

According to the Gospel of John, the Word that was in the beginning, that was with God, yes, that was God, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). The Second Person of the Godhead became incarnate. He took on human flesh and blood, but He did not lay aside His deity. The man Jesus was also the Son of God. This is a divine mystery, yet a wondrous truth. Gabriel told Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

In the fourth century a heretic named Arius explained this to mean that Jesus was the highest creature of God. “There was a time when He was not,” Arius taught, denying that Jesus was from eternity. Jesus was similar to God, but not true God. He was only a creature.

Twentieth century theologians sometimes say, “I believe that Jesus is God.” But then we must ask, “What do you mean by ‘God’?”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

²⁹ J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 391.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

Karl Barth, one of the most prominent of modern theologians, lectured for many years in Basel, Switzerland. He was Reformed by profession and a voluminous writer until his death in 1968. In his commentary on Romans he explains how he understands the term “Son of God.” He says, “In naming myself *son of God*, I mean precisely what is meant when Christ is so named.”³¹

Gerhard Gloege of Bonn, to whom we referred earlier, in a book published in 1963, endorses the adoptionist heresy despite the fact that it was condemned by the early Church and repudiated by the Lutheran Confessions. He writes, “God pronounces Jesus his son. He adopts him.”³² Gloege describes Jesus as “a man who is so possessed by God that he forgets himself because of God.”³³ Gloege’s views are essentially no different from those of Paul of Samosata of the third century, who taught that “the Lord Christ was nothing else than a mere man in whom God the Word dwelt, just as in every prophet.”³⁴

Machen observes that many leaders of the modern Church and hosts of modern ministers are either pantheists or positivists. To the pantheists “God” means “the mighty process of the world itself or else ... the spiritual purpose that pulsates through the world.” To them “Jesus is God in a sense not essentially different from that in which all men are God.... The presence of the divine life in Him is not essentially different from its presence in other men.”³⁵

Positivists, on the other hand, have given up the idea that there is a personal Creator and Ruler of the world. Yet they continue to use the word “God,” meaning by it merely the highest thing that we know in this world. The highest thing that we know, they say, is the moral life of Jesus of Nazareth. To that moral life of the man Jesus, therefore, they do honor by applying to Jesus the word “God.”³⁶

J. Schoneberg Setzer, a Lutheran theologian teaching at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, in his book called *What’s Left To Believe* endorses the views of modern theology. He writes:

The most basic sense, therefore, in which Christians can speak of the divine sonship of Jesus is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God because he, as well as every other human being, has been created with the potentiality to enter into fellowship with God. ... Too often we imagine that Jesus was to be the only Son of God on earth.³⁷

The Scriptural doctrine of the Virgin Birth is foolishness to the intellectuals of the world. They discredit it as a biological impossibility. Yet, strangely, some of those who refuse to believe the Bible when it tells us that Jesus was born without a human father still insist that it is authoritative in a religious sense. Machen pointed out long ago, however, that if the Virgin Birth is rejected, then “we can no longer depend on the Bible *as such*. We can no longer say, as many simple Christians say, ‘I believe this or that because God has told it to me in His book.’”³⁸ We must also agree with Machen that then “the Christian religion, as it has existed for some nineteen hundred years, must now at length be given up.”³⁹

If Jesus was merely “a man born from men,” then He was not God. Every attack on the Virgin Birth is an attack on the deity of Christ. All who deny the doctrine of the Virgin Birth are, wittingly or unwittingly, guilty of crucifying Christ.

Like the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of Jesus has ever been a stumbling block to man’s reason. It was incredible to His disciples when they first heard of it. When the women who had been at the tomb returned to Jerusalem and told the apostles the astonishing things which they had heard and seen, Luke tells us that “their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not” (Luke 24:11) In the heart of every human being

³¹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 296.

³² Gerhard Gloege, *The Day of His Coming* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 122.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

³⁴ *The Formula of Concord*, Thor. Decl., Art. VIII, 16, *Concordia Triglotta*. p. 1021.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 388.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 388f.

³⁷ J. Schoneberg Setzer, *What’s Left To Believe?* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 82f.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 386.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

there is by nature a doubting Thomas who insists, “Unless I see it for myself, I will not believe.” That a dead body should return to life is contrary to all human experience. Consequently, man contends that death cannot be undone. He argues that a resurrection from the dead is altogether beyond the realm of possibility. It is “scientifically impossible.”

Nevertheless, the witness of the Scriptures to the Resurrection of Christ is explicit, and it is unmistakable. Copiously, on page after page, the Bible presents the Resurrection as the triumphant climax of Jesus’ earthly mission, as the sure guarantee and seal of its success.

Scripture speaks of Christ’s Resurrection in two ways. It tells us both that the Father raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; etc.) and that He raised Himself (John 2:19; 10:17,18). The empty tomb is an unimpeachable witness to the truth of Jesus’ words, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17,18). The testimony that the open sepulcher bears to the deity of Christ is loud and clear.

It is not surprising, therefore, that twentieth century theology should attack the deity of Christ by denying the historicity of the Resurrection. Karl Barth refuses to recognize it as “some abnormal event side by side with other events.”⁴⁰ His position is clear despite the fact that he often speaks in paradoxes, in contradictory terms. The following quotation may serve as an example:

The Resurrection is therefore an occurrence in history, which took place outside the gates of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 30, inasmuch as it there ‘came to pass,’ was discovered and recognized. But inasmuch as the occurrence was conditioned by the Resurrection, insofar, that is, as it was not the ‘coming to pass,’ or the discovery, or the recognition, which conditioned its necessity and appearance and revelation, the Resurrection is not an event in history at all.⁴¹

No wonder many people ask, “What in the world does the man mean?” One thing is certain, however, he does not mean that the man Jesus came back to life and left His grave in Joseph’s Garden.

Emil Brunner of Zürich, another of the so-called giants of modern theology, says in his book *The Mediator* that “to speak of the Resurrection itself as ‘one of the most sure historical facts in the history of the world’ is ... senseless.”⁴²

Bultmann, the third of the three big “B’s”—Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann—expresses himself clearly also. He says frankly, “An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable!”⁴³ Bultmann, like the Sadducees of old (Luke 20:27), is a rationalist. He permits reason to sit in judgment over Scripture.

To all those, however, who with Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann insist that the resuscitation of a dead person is utterly inconceivable we would address the question which Paul once asked of King Agrippa: “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). Is not God omnipotent? “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” God asked Abraham (Gen. 28:14).

The historicity of the Resurrection is assured by the fact that “this thing was not done in a corner,” as Paul reminded Agrippa and Festus, the Roman governor in Caesarea. The empty tomb was inspected by eyewitnesses who were anything but gullible. The risen Christ appeared to numerous individuals, such as Peter, Mary Magdalene, James, and finally Paul. He was seen and touched and heard by smaller and larger groups of His followers, to whom, as Luke says, “he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days” (Acts 1:3). Finally, we have the testimony of the Scriptures themselves. It was to the Scriptures that the risen Christ directed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as He, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself,” showing them that it was necessary for Christ “to have suffered all these things, and to enter into his glory” (Luke 24:26,27).

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴² Emil Brunner, *The Mediator*, translated by Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 578.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

The chief priests bribed Pilate's soldiers to deny that the Resurrection had occurred. Modern man is still denying it. In the words of Bultmann, "The resurrection is not an event of past history. All that historical criticism can establish is the fact that the first disciples came to believe in the resurrection."⁴⁴

What, one may ask, do modern theologians make of the Resurrection if it was not an actual event of past history? They answer: It has symbolical significance. Just what this symbolical significance is, is not very clear, however. Every modern theologian has his own conception of it. Machen is absolutely right when he says:

The assertion, "I believe in the resurrection of Christ," has in itself today almost as little meaning as the assertion, "I believe that Jesus is God," so abysmal is the intellectual morass into which we have been flung by the modern business of "interpreting" perfectly plain language in a sense utterly different from the sense in which it has always hitherto been used. The truth is that the expression, "the resurrection of Christ," is used in widely different senses today. Some men mean by it merely the continued influence of Jesus; others use it in a mystical sense to indicate the presence of "the living Christ" in human souls; others mean by it the continued personal existence of Jesus, or what might formerly have been called the immortality of His soul.⁴⁵

Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary in New York may serve as an example of the meaningless words with which modern theologians who have discarded the blessed truth of the Resurrection discuss its supposed symbolical significance. In his book *The Nature and Destiny of Man* Niebuhr writes, "The idea of the resurrection of the body is a Biblical symbol."⁴⁶ Then he attempts to explain:

In the symbol of the resurrection of the body, the "body" is indicative of the contribution which nature makes to human individuality and to all historical realizations. ...The doctrine of the resurrection of the body implies that eternal significance belongs to the whole unity of an historical realization in so far as it has brought all particularities into the harmony of the whole.⁴⁷

This is a good example of the wretched poverty of modern theology, which robs men of the clear and simple truths of salvation and offers them in their stead the dry, empty husks of human philosophy. It is not even straw, which, as every farmer knows, can at least be used for bedding. It is nothing but worthless chaff, good for nothing but to be burned with fire. In what Niebuhr writes we have a classic example of a superfluity of words with a dearth of ideas. Here the folly of man's wisdom is exposed. How true are the words which Paul writes to the Corinthians, "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (I Cor. 1:19,20)!

Twentieth century theology claims that the Early Church, the so-called "primitive Christian community," became so imbued with the ideals of Jesus that it conceived of Him as living again in its midst. It expressed this belief in mythological terms, in figurative language. This was Jesus' "resurrection." His influence on His admirers was so profound that, according to these self-appointed critics of the Bible, He became the hero of legends involving the supernatural and the miraculous.

With Charles Caldwell Ryrie we may well ask, however:

But what is a doctrine of resurrection without a fact of resurrection? What does resurrection mean if the Lord is still in the tomb? What difference does it make what the Early Church

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 389f.

⁴⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), II, p. 294.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

preached if it was all based on a lie? The whole idea is meaningless without a literal, bodily, factual, historical resurrection.⁴⁸

Regin Prenter is right when he insists, “Without faith in the reality of the resurrection there is no faith in Jesus Christ as true God and true man, no faith in God’s kingdom as a saving reality for condemned sinners.”⁴⁹ In the words of Paul, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (I Cor. 15:17).

It is the height of folly to set faith in opposition to facts, as neo-theologians with a great pretense of wisdom and piety attempt to do. Faith is founded on facts, not on a pious hoax. It is rooted in the fact of the Virgin Birth and in the fact of the bodily Resurrection of the crucified Christ.

H. D. McDonald of London Bible College, a Baptist, states, “The doctrine of the Virgin Birth is integral to gospel faith. It was not a hypothesis suggested by man, but a fact declared by God. Put quite specifically it was a fact first, and a doctrine afterwards.” It was not, therefore, as he aptly observes, “a discovery of faith but a disclosure to faith.”⁵⁰ The same thing could be said concerning the Resurrection.

The denial of Christ’s miraculous conception and of His supernatural Resurrection is a devilish attack on the deity of our Savior. We readily grant that these teachings of Holy Writ cannot be proved scientifically. They are and always will be articles of faith. It will never be possible to *prove* them to unbelievers. Though Jesus granted Thomas the opportunity to see and touch Him for himself, He pointedly rebuked His skeptical apostle’s unbelief, saying, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Our faith rests on the trustworthy Word of our God. That Word does not confront us with pious frauds or the fantastic figments of man’s fertile imagination. We firmly believe that God clearly says what He means and means what He says when He tells us, “But now *is* Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (I Cor. 15:20).

The deity of Christ is fundamental to our faith. If Jesus is not true God, then He is not our Savior. Luther reminds us:

To conquer the sin of the world, death, the curse, and the wrath of God in Himself—this is the work, not of any creature but of the divine power. ... Since Scripture attributes all these to Christ, therefore He Himself is Life, Righteousness, and Blessing, that is, God by nature and in essence. Hence those who deny the divinity of Christ lose all Christianity.⁵¹

They are, in a sense, crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6:6).

II. Modern Theology Attacks Christ’s Humanity

As there were those in the Early Church who denied Christ’s deity, so there were also those who denied His true humanity. The latter were known as docetists. These heretics held that Jesus only seemed to be a human being. They taught that He was not a true man as we are but a kind of phantom—God pretending to be man.

Twentieth century theologians very often raise the charge of docetism today against those who teach that Jesus is true God. This is in reality a smokescreen designed to obscure the fact that they themselves are guilty of this heresy. Modern theology attacks Christ’s true humanity.

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus was a true human being, like us in every respect with the sole exception that He had no sin. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us,

⁴⁸ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Neo-Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), p. 41.

⁴⁹ Regin Prenter, *The Church’s Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 884.

⁵⁰ H. D. McDonald, *Jesus—Human and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968), p. 23.

⁵¹ *Luther’s Works*, XXVI, 282f.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:14–17).

As a true man Jesus experienced our infirmities, including the fact that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). The Apostle John relates the great miracle of the Incarnation in the simple words, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

To Jesus’ contemporaries there was no question about the fact that He was a true man. The Jews on one occasion sought to stone Him, not because they disputed His humanity, but, in their words, “because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33).

The Scriptures describe Jesus as having a true human body and a true human soul (Luke 24:39; Matt. 26:38). They tell us that He was born as we were (Luke 2:7), that He grew as other boys grow (Luke 2:40), that He became hungry (Matt. 21:8) and thirsty (John 19:28) and weary (John 4:6), that He experienced sorrow (John 11:33–36), was made to suffer, and was finally put to death (John 18 and 19).

The Gospels record all these events in His life. They report them as historical facts. Nowhere do the Scriptures suggest that these are myths or legends or stories with some kind of symbolical meaning. The Christian Church has always regarded the Gospels as historical accounts of the life of Jesus which are true in every detail, an accurate record of events that actually transpired at the beginning of the Christian era. Orthodox theology has consistently taught that the Evangelists wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost according to the promise of Jesus, “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). Because of this promise we on our part hold to the historicity of every word that is recorded by the four Evangelists. We regard them together with the Prophets as holy men of God who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Pet. 1:21).

Twentieth century theology attacks the humanity of Christ not by claiming as the docetists of old did that Jesus was God leading a phantom existence as a man, but by denying the historicity of the Biblical account of His life in the four Gospels. It assumes that the Gospels were written not by the four Evangelists whose names are associated with them, but by unknown later compilers or editors who set down in writing the myths and legends concerning Jesus of Nazareth which had become current in the Early Church.

With a great show of learning the theological world set out, therefore, on a quest for “the historical Jesus.” Since, according to modern theology, the Biblical account is not to be trusted, it embarked on what was to be a scientific investigation to determine whether there really was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth and, if so, what He was like. It did this on the premise that the historical Jesus was not to be identified with what was called “the kerygmatic Christ,” that is, the Christ the Church preached. Modern theology wanted to try to get behind what it considered to be merely the Church’s traditions concerning Jesus, traditions that were loaded with legends and pious myths. The quest for the historical Jesus was to be an attempt to sift fact from fiction.

One of the pioneers in this misconceived and misguided search, which began around the turn of the century, was Martin Kähler of Halle. In an essay entitled “The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ” Kähler declared:

We do not possess any sources for a “Life of Jesus” which a historian can accept as reliable and adequate. I repeat: we have no sources for a biography of Jesus of Nazareth which measure up to the standards of contemporary historical science. ...He could be taken for a product of the church’s fantasy around the year A.D. 100.⁵²

⁵² Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, translated by Carl E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 48.

Another of the leaders in this undertaking of unbelief was none other than the famed African humanitarian, Albert Schweitzer. In 1906 Schweitzer published his exhaustive study, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. It is not surprising that, having ruled out the evidence presented in the four Gospels, Schweitzer's search for the historical Jesus drew a cipher. In the tradition of German scholarship his work was thorough—a thorough hatchet job on the Scriptures. His conclusion is:

The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence.⁵³

Schweitzer did not mean to say that a man called Jesus never lived. He meant that the real Jesus, a first century Palestinian Jew, was far different from Christianity's conception of Him, a man who, in the words of Jacob Jervell, "cannot be the basis of religion today, although he can serve as an inspiration to ethical life and action."⁵⁴ "It is not Jesus as historically known," Schweitzer maintained, "but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time."⁵⁵

Since Schweitzer's day the search has continued. In his *Church Dogmatics* Barth declares:

Jesus Christ in fact is also the Rabbi of Nazareth, historically so difficult to get information about, and when it is got, one whose activity is so easily a little commonplace alongside more than one other founder of a religion and even alongside many later representatives of His own "religion."⁵⁶

Barth even goes so far as to claim that St. Francis "far surpassed Jesus in 'love.'"⁵⁷

Bultmann holds, "We can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus."⁵⁸ He is ready to concede only the "thatness" of the Man from Nazareth. "The historical person of Jesus," he believes, "was very soon turned into a myth in primitive Christianity."⁵⁹

More recent scholars, the so-called post-Bultmannians, have retreated somewhat from Bultmann's position. They believe that to say no more about the historical Jesus than "thatness" "runs the risk of dissolving Christianity into a Gnostic redeemer myth, and of falling into Docetism, that is, of diluting the historical reality of Jesus' humanity into mere appearance. ...Most of Bultmann's disciples now insist that some knowledge of the historical Jesus is indispensable."⁶⁰

Tillich considered the attempt to get the facts about the earthly Jesus hopeless. This, he said, was because of the nature of the sources. "The reports about Jesus of Nazareth are those of Jesus as the Christ, given by persons who had received him as the Christ."⁶¹

Wilfred S. Bunge of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, takes a similar position:

On the face of things the gospels appear to be straightforward records of the life and teachings of Jesus. This they are not. They are not objective chronicles of Jesus of Nazareth. They are filled

⁵³ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 398.

⁵⁴ Jacob Jervell, *The Continuing Search for the Historical Jesus*, translated by Harris E. Kaasa (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), p. 14.

⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 401.

⁵⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, translated by G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), I, 1:188.

⁵⁷ *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribner's, 1934), p. 8.

⁵⁹ Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 200.

⁶⁰ Carl F. Henry in *Jesus of Nazareth: Saviour and Lord*, Carl F. H. Henry, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 7.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, II, 102.

with theological claims and confessions or interpretations which go far beyond the objective events of the history of Jesus.⁶²

Bunge claims that when the Gospel of John tells us that Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35), or “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12), or “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), we are not to think that these words were actually spoken by Jesus. He maintains that “these are the words of the risen Lord speaking through the confession of the church and not the words of the Jesus of history. ...His presence was so real to them that their theological interpretations or confessions could be put in the form of sayings of Jesus.”⁶³

Even those who consider the quest for the historical Jesus hopeless do not consider this a serious situation, however. The historical Jesus, they say, is irrelevant. The Christ of faith is what matters, not the Jesus of history. The basis of faith is the Christ preached by the primitive Church, not the historical Jesus.

Prenter says bluntly of the Christology of Bultmann that “it is docetic, because it attaches no fundamental importance to the human history of Jesus Christ, to his life, death, and resurrection, or to the *content* of his preaching.”⁶⁴ He describes twentieth century Christology as “a docetism in which there is only a Christ of proclamation, in which the teaching is the only really important thing, and from which the historical Jesus has disappeared.”⁶⁵

How, we may well wonder, is it possible for twentieth century theology to make such sweeping attacks on the humanity of Christ, on the historical Jesus? Does not the Bible present us with a clear and comprehensive picture of Jesus as the God-Man? Indeed it does! But modern theologians are not willing to listen to the Scriptures. They do not accept them as the infallible and inerrant Word of God. They consider the Bible to be a fallible human document written by fallible human beings. In their opinion, it is merely a *witness* to God’s revelation, not God’s revelation in and of itself. It is only a human record or history of the religious experiences of men who lived long ago. These experiences, according to modern theology, were God’s revelation. The record of them may, though not necessarily, become the medium of a religious experience, a revelation of God, for men today.

Thus Barth claims:

In the Bible we meet with human words written in human speech...therefore when we have to do with the Bible, we have to do primarily with this means, with these words, with the witness which as such is not itself revelation, but only—and this is the limitation—the witness to it.⁶⁶

Barth can, therefore, speak of “the vulnerability of the Bible, i.e., its capacity for error,” which, according to him, “also extends to its religious or theological content.”⁶⁷ He holds that the prophets and apostles “can be at fault in every word, and have been at fault in every word, and yet...they have still spoken the Word of God in their fallible and erring human word.”⁶⁸

Barth’s views are representative of what is called neo-orthodoxy. The name is misleading. Neo-orthodoxy is no orthodoxy at all. It ought to be called rather pseudo-orthodoxy. It is a monstrous fraud, a theological hoax. It is a hoax because it uses orthodox terminology but in a different, unorthodox sense. Barth issued a call, “Back to the Bible!” At the same time, however, he denied that the Bible *is* the Word of God. He admitted only that it may *become* the Word of God when it leads a person to have a certain experience of God in his own life. Thus Barth denied the objective authority of the Scriptures.

⁶² The Department of Religion, Luther College, *Theological Perspectives* (Decorah: Luther College Press, 1962), p. 52.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ *Creation and Redemption*, p. 365.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366f.

⁶⁶ *Church Dogmatics*, I, 2:463.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 2:509.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 2:530.

Neo-orthodoxy denies the verbal inspiration of the Bible. It sets up a straw man when it describes the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration as a dictation theory. It then ridicules this doctrine by charging that it views the human writers of Scripture as a kind of typewriter on which God typed out His message to mankind. “This view,” one neo-orthodox theologian declares, “issued in the notorious doctrine of verbal infallibility, which lay for so long like a blight upon the Protestant Church. It is the great and undisputed merit of modern criticism that it demolished this doctrine and rediscovered the human character of the Bible.”⁶⁹ As Charles Ryrie points out, however, “This is not intellectually fair or honest; orthodoxy does not hold to a dictation view of inspiration. Nevertheless, this is the straw man which neo-orthodoxy huffs and puffs against.”⁷⁰

Neo-orthodoxy has made deep inroads into the Lutheran Church. Dr. Fredrik A. Schiotez, for example, the former president of The American Lutheran Church, was speaking in neo-orthodox terms when he gave his interpretation of the statement in the ALC’s constitution that the books of the Old and New Testaments are the “inerrant word of God.” “The inerrancy referred to here,” he said, “does not apply to the text but to the truths revealed for our faith, doctrine and life.”⁷¹

Kent S. Knutson, to cite but one more example, in his book *His Only Son Our Lord* describes the Bible as “that human and weak instrument through which the witness of God comes to us.” Knutson, Schiotez’s successor as president of The American Lutheran Church, argues that “the Bible is not perfect and glorious in the way God is, but is a human witness by which he speaks to us.”⁷²

Neo-orthodoxy’s attack on the Scriptures is nothing less than an attack on Christ. For Christ, the living Word, reveals Himself to us only in and through His written Word. He Himself directs us to that Word when He says, “Search the scriptures: ...they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Satan’s objective in robbing men of the Scriptures is to rob them of their Savior.

It is a delusion to imagine that it is possible to have the Biblical Christ without the historical Jesus. Our salvation is at stake in the historicity of the events that according to the four Evangelists took place in Bethlehem and Capernaum and Jerusalem more than nineteen hundred years ago. If the man called Jesus did not live and die and rise again as the Scriptures say He did, then we have no Savior and no hope. Then we are yet in our sins and of all men most miserable. Our only hope of salvation lies in the vicarious, redemptive work of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

“By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom. 5:18). The Fall of Adam was an actual happening, an event in history. “Even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” That, too, was an actual happening, an event in history. Our justification is based on the righteousness of the One Man, Jesus Christ, who obeyed His heavenly Father perfectly through His entire life, fulfilling the demands of God’s Law in our stead, and who innocently suffered and died, paying the penalty for sin as our Substitute, and then rose again from the dead, assuring us thereby of the Father’s forgiveness.

The prophet Isaiah was foretelling actual historical events when He wrote: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (7:14); “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him” (11:2); “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped” (35:5); “He was wounded for our transgressions” (53:5); “He was cut off out of the land of the living” (53:8); “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (53:9); “He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (53:10).

If these events, if the Savior’s coming and living, if His dying and rising again did not occur, no phantom created by the primitive Church, no kerygmatic Christ without any foundation in historical reality, can save us. Woe to those curates of souls who handle the Word of God deceitfully (II Cor. 4:2)! Woe to those spiritual shepherds who make merchandise of their flocks by preaching the “profane and vain babblings” of pseudo-orthodoxy (II Pet. 2:3; I Tim. 6:20)!

⁶⁹ G. Hendry, “The Rediscovery of the Bible,” *Reformation Old and New*, p. 144; quoted in Ryrie, *Neo-Orthodoxy*, p. 46.

⁷⁰ *Neo-Orthodoxy*, p. 47.

⁷¹ “The Church’s Confessional Stand Relative to the Scriptures,” reproduced in *Christian News*, March 3, 1969; p. 27.

⁷² Kent S. Knutson, *His Only Son Our Lord* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p. 50.

Peter has warned, “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” He prophesied also, “Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the truth shall be evil spoken of” (II Pet. 2:12). The prophets of neo-orthodoxy are such false teachers. Their attacks on the humanity of Christ, on the historical Jesus, involve them inevitably in the twentieth century crucifixion of Christ. God forbid that we should follow their pernicious ways!

III. Modern Theology Misrepresents Christ’s Work

Melanchthon once wrote, “To know Christ is to know His benefits.”⁷³ It is unquestionably true that there is a close connection between Christ’s person and His work, between who He is and what He has done and still does for us.

What was Christ’s work? Here again the answer of Scripture is clear and simple.

Jesus Himself explained the purpose of His coming into the world when He said, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Again He expressed it in this way: “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). His work, then, as the world’s Redeemer and Savior was to lay down His life to atone for man’s sin. He who was without sin paid the full penalty for our sins that we might go free. As our God-appointed Substitute He suffered the punishment that we deserved to suffer, satisfying all the demands of God’s justice. He paid our debt in full.

Jesus is the only Mediator between God and men (I Tim. 2:5). He is true God and true man. It was necessary for our Savior to be true man since He had to die, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). It was necessary for Him to be true God in order that His death might have the infinite value needed to atone for the infinite guilt of mankind (Ps. 49:7,8).

Jesus’ work is called redemption or atonement. Because of His redemptive work God has forgiven the sins of all men. The Bible calls this justification or reconciliation. Paul says that Jesus “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). We are “now justified by his blood” (Rom. 5:9). In proof of His acceptance of Jesus’ atonement, God raised Him from the dead. The Resurrection of Jesus is God’s stamp of approval on all that Jesus did for us by His perfect life and by His innocent death. It is, so to speak, God’s receipt, marking our bill, “Paid in full!” Thus, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (II Cor. 5:19). God no longer charges our sins against us because His Son has satisfied all the demands of God’s holy Law for us.

By way of illustration, we may think of a courtroom in which we stand trembling before God, the righteous Judge. We know that we are guilty. We have broken God’s Law. We deserve to die. Yet, to our surprise, God hands down the verdict, “Not guilty!” No, He is not unjust. He does not condone sin. But our debt to the Law has been fully paid by Another who took our place, Jesus, our perfect Savior. Thus, just as one man’s transgression led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s righteousness led to a life-giving acquittal for all men (Rom. 5:18). As a result of Christ’s atonement our status before God has been changed from that of guilty criminals to not-guilty free men. In Christ God has fulfilled His promise given through the prophet Jeremiah, “I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me” (Jer. 33:8).

According to the Bible, Jesus holds a threefold office. He is our Prophet, our High Priest, and our King.

The work of a prophet is to bring God’s Word to man. This Jesus did. He testified to Pilate, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). In His function as a Prophet Jesus was unique. He was in His own Person the Truth which He proclaimed. “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” He declared; “no man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). He preached—and through His Church He still preaches—the Good

⁷³ Quoted in *Who Can This Be? ...Studies in Christology*, prepared by the Division of Theological Studies, Lutheran Council in the U. S. A., New York, p. 27. See *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, translated by Charles Leander Hill (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944), p. 68.

News of salvation for sinners as a gift of God's free grace through faith in Him. His message is summed up in the words so familiar and so dear to Christians of all ages, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). As God's Prophet He proclaimed the salvation which He procured for us in His office as our High Priest.

The work of a priest is to offer sacrifices to God. Jesus was a unique Priest. He was without sin (Heb. 7:26, 27). His sacrifice was also unique. "He offered up himself" (Heb. 7:27). Thus, in the words of the hymn writer, He was "Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest."⁷⁴ By His sacrifice He has "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). John writes, "He is the propitiation"—meaning, the full payment—"for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). As our High Priest Jesus now also serves as our Advocate with the Father (I John 2:1). He intercedes for us before the throne of God and pleads our case.

The third office which Jesus exercises is that of King. He is unique also as a King. He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). He is the King over all creation. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," He tells us (Matt. 28:18). We speak of this as His Kingdom of Power. In His Kingdom of Grace He establishes His rule in men's hearts by His Gospel. This is not an earthly but a spiritual Kingdom (John 18:36). It does not confer material blessings like meat and drink, but the heavenly treasures of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). In His Kingdom of Glory the exalted Christ shares His ineffable bliss and glory with His saints in heaven to all eternity (Matt. 25:34).

What a comforting and inspiring picture Scripture presents to us of the Savior's work! And, by way of contrast, how miserably—and how maliciously, we might add—modern theology has misrepresented it. In this respect also twentieth century theology is guilty of crucifying Christ. It is an underground movement in the devil's employ. It is working within the visible Church to overthrow the Church and to dethrone Christ. While preaching the sermons of Satan, it aims "by good words and fair speeches" to "deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18).

Neo-orthodoxy often speaks in glowing terms about Jesus as the Word of God. But it has little respect for His words. When Bultmann claims that nothing in the Gospels is historical except the "thatness" of Jesus, he is attacking Christ's prophetic office. In the Holy Scriptures, we hear the very words that Jesus spoke, the powerful sermons that He preached. According to twentieth century theology, however, the words that are recorded in the Gospels are not really His. They are a fabrication of the Early Church. They are words put into His mouth by devoted disciples. They may be beautiful, but they are not to be believed.

Tillich attacks Christ's prophetic office with his assertion, "Biblical research has shown...the impossibility of considering the Bible as containing the infallible truth of faith."⁷⁵ Jesus has given us His sure promise, "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" (John 8:31, 32). For Tillich, however, truth is a will-o'-the-wisp, always beyond man's reach. According to him, it is the genius of Protestantism—he calls it "the Protestant principle"—that "it does not accept any truth of faith as ultimate except the one that no one man possesses it."⁷⁶ In reality, Tillich echoes Pilate's skeptical sneer, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). For him Jesus' promise, "Ye shall know the truth," is nothing but empty talk. Jesus is our Prophet? Not in Tillich's book!

Most vicious, however, are the attacks which twentieth century theologians make on the atonement of Christ, on His high-priestly work. What a sad story this is! Man can not save himself, but he ridicules and rails against God's wondrous plan of salvation. He rejects it as foolishness.

Bultmann blasphemously debunks the doctrine of the atonement as a "primitive mythology": "What a primitive mythology it is that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his

⁷⁴ *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 307:1.

⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 98.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

own blood!”⁷⁷ He ridicules the redemption as a transaction “that would make sin a juridical matter,” that “would make nonsense of all our ethical standards.”⁷⁸

Nevertheless, Bultmann makes much of the cross. He speaks of it as “a cosmic happening” with “cosmic importance” but denies that Christ was crucified for us “in the sense of any theory of sacrifice or satisfaction.” The cross and the passion, he says, “are ever-present realities.”⁷⁹ According to Bultmann, the cross has significance when the believer makes it his own, that is, when he re-enacts it in his own existence, when he makes the radical decision to turn from the world to God, and so to be at one with his true self and with God. In other words, the cross does not represent what Christ has done for us, but what we must do for ourselves!

What a far cry Bultmann’s preachment is from that preaching of the cross which is the power of God unto salvation! He turns the Gospel into Law. He perverts the Gospel of Christ crucified into another gospel, which is not another (Gal. 1:6, 7). Hence he falls under Paul’s indictment, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8).

Barth, too, lays much emphasis on the cross, but Ryrie’s comment that “the trumpet of Barthianism still gives at best an uncertain sound about substitutionary atonement” is very much to the point. In his *Church Dogmatics* Barth has written many pages on the meaning of the words “for us.” Ryrie is right, however, when he observes that Barth’s “explanation of what ‘for us’ means is hardly that the sinless Saviour died in my place and for my sins.”⁸⁰ Barth’s preaching of the cross is of little comfort to troubled sinners when he insists, “I must keep my sure distance from...the Lutheran type of *assurance of salvation*.”⁸¹

Neither will the burdened conscience find relief in the preaching of Emil Brunner. In his book *The Mediator* Brunner drives sinners to despair when he declares: “The Atonement is not history. The Atonement, the expiation of human guilt, the covering of sin through His [i.e., Jesus’] sacrifice...is not a fact which has its place in world history. It would be absurd to say: in the year 30 the Atonement of the world took place.”⁸²

And what about John A. T. Robinson, the blaspheming Bishop of Woolwich? Where does he stand? Bishop Robinson rejects what he calls “the notion that the Father punishes the Son in our place as “a perversion of what the New Testament says.” He has the audacity to write:

The whole schema of a supernatural Being coming down from heaven to ‘save’ mankind from sin, in the way that a man might put his finger into a glass of water to rescue a struggling insect, is frankly incredible to man ‘come of age’, who no longer believes in such a *deus ex machina*.⁸³

According to Robinson, twentieth century man asks “with some impatience how anything done two thousand years ago on the Cross *could* ‘affect me now.’ ”⁸⁴

What does Robinson substitute for the clear and comforting Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement? He draws on Tillich, who suggests that it means accepting the fact that you are accepted.⁸⁵ Atonement is yours when somehow or other, making a blind “leap of faith,” you persuade yourself that life is not meaningless and empty. Then you will become the new man in Christ Jesus, of whom Paul spoke. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the most radical of modern theologians, described Jesus as “the man for others.”⁸⁶ Leaning on Bonhoeffer, Robinson describes the new creation as

⁷⁷ *Kerygma and Myth*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁸¹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by Douglas Horton (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 217.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 504.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁸⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 202.

...the life of ‘the man for others’, the love whereby we are brought completely into one with the Ground of our being, manifesting itself in the unreconciled relationships of our existence. It was manifested supremely on the Cross, but it is met wherever the Christ is shown forth and recognized in ‘an entirely different mode of living-in-relationship from anything known in the world’. For there, in however ‘secular’ a form, is the atonement and the resurrection.⁸⁷

Pity the world if its salvation depended on Robinson’s atonement! His gospel in simple English is: Love your neighbor! In other words, it is the devil’s old delusion that man can and must save himself.

It was against this false and pernicious doctrine that Paul contended so sharply in his Epistle to the Galatians. “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain,” Paul argues (Gal. 2:21). The terrible truth is, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). There is no escape from the fact that “no man is justified by the law in the sight of God” (Gal. 3:11).

That we are not entirely off-base in our understanding of what these so-called theologians are saying in their often obscure, paradoxical, and tautological way is confirmed by the analysis of others. J. I. Packer, for example, paraphrases Robinson’s atonement in this way: “We...are reconciled...as we respond to the actual claims of love which we encounter in our fellow-men.”⁸⁸ He adds:

When the bishop speaks...of our being reconciled to God, he does so without referring either to the blood of Christ as the ground of it, or to faith in Christ as the means of it; it is no wonder that the Moslems of Woking welcomed his book! All that is distinctive of the *Christian* faith in God, as opposed to that of a Moslem or Hindu, seems to have gone from the bishop’s theology.⁸⁹

Though the furor created when *Honest to God* first appeared has subsided, the theology which Robinson espouses continues to be the popular fare of both Protestant and Roman Catholic seminaries. Tillich, Bultmann, and Bonhoeffer, together with Barth and Brunner and the rest of the neo-theologians, are being avidly read, discussed, and, tragically, all too often swallowed hook, line, and sinker. Twentieth century theologians are not willing to say with Paul, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Cor. 2:2). They have discarded Christ crucified and substituted for Him their own creation, “the man for others,” a name, incidentally, that could very appropriately be applied to our Savior but which modern theologians use in the sense that Jesus was merely a man whose outstanding example of love we ought to follow. Their Jesus is a social reformer, not a Savior; a revolutionary and a rebel, not a Redeemer.

According to the most recent of modern theologians, salvation is not to be found in the Cross of Christ but in the streets of the city, in social action, in the remaking of society—even, if necessary, by way of a violent revolution. For the Savior’s Gospel they have substituted their own man-made social gospel. Heaven, they hold, is not to be awaited in a world beyond. It is to be seized here and now on this earth. It is the abundant life for the living, not eternal bliss for the dead.

Increasingly, modern theologians are embracing Bonhoeffer’s thesis that for “man come of age” “‘God’ as a working hypothesis...has become superfluous.”⁹⁰ The “completely religionless time” of Bonhoeffer and the “secular city” of Harvard’s Harvey Cox are the prospect they hold out to the world. Jesus is our King? Not according to these authorities! With the chief priests modern theologians chant: “We have no king but Caesar!” (John 19:15).

Professing to make the Gospel relevant to modern man, twentieth century theology has—to adapt a remark by Packer—so mutilated the Christian message that it is not, as it thinks, rescuing the perishing; it has

⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7–8.

⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 201.

sunk the lifeboat. It has scrapped the Scriptures, written off the Creeds as mythological relics, depersonalized God, and ultimately deified man. Modern man has become so proud of his abilities and accomplishments that he has become infatuated with himself. And the prophets of modern theology have become the high priests of the new idolatry—the worship of man. “God is dead! Long live superman!” cry the so-called theothanatologists, echoing the atheism of Friedrich Nietzsche. Carried to its ultimate and logical conclusion, neo-orthodoxy has become neo-paganism.

Conclusion

As Luther reminded us, the devil is waging war against Christ. He wants to reduce Him to nothing. He is determined to crucify Him anew.

From the Scriptures we know, however, that Satan’s power is broken. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” Jesus assured His disciples (Luke 10:18). The strong man armed has been overcome by One Stronger, who has taken from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divided his spoils (Luke 11:21–22). Through death Jesus has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Through his triumphant resurrection the Prince of Life has gained a resounding victory over the Prince of hell. He has dealt the devil a mortal blow.

The war, to be sure, is not yet over. But the decisive battle has been won. Luther teaches us to view Satan’s desperate final skirmishes in the proper perspective in his incomparable battle hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” With Luther we can confidently sing:

This world’s prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He’s judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.⁹¹

Tragically, however, many have cast in their lot with Satan, despite the fact that his is a lost cause. He will carry them with him to eternal death and destruction.

In the sixth chapter of John we read that when Jesus declared that He was the only way to eternal life, “many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” Turning to the Twelve, Jesus then asked, “Will ye also go away?” As the spokesman for the apostles Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:66–69).

Jesus is addressing that same question to us today, “Will ye also go away?”

The new theology is a harlot. Many have succumbed to her seductive charms. Her name is ‘“Reason,” not “Revelation.” Luther calls reason “the devil’s prostitute.”⁹² Frequently he warned, “Beware of the harlot of human philosophy!” Solomon, the divinely inspired Preacher, likewise warns that the guests of Folly are in the depths of hell (Prov. 9:18). Sad to say, many churchmen and theologians have not heeded the warning.

Woe to us also if we as a church and as individual Christians are no longer content to continue in the Savior’s Word! Woe to us if in these last days before our Lord’s return in glory we weary of wielding the Sword of the Spirit! Woe to us if we no longer stand squarely on the solid rock of God’s Word and insist, “Thus saith the Lord!” Woe to us if we imagine that we can defeat the devil with any other weapon than a firm “It is written!”

We need to know the enemy. Forewarned is forearmed. We need to recognize the Tempter’s voice and then reject his subtle “Yea, hath God said?” with a resolute “Get thee behind me, Satan!” God expects us to test every teacher and every theology by the sure touchstone of the Scriptures. In his First Epistle the Apostle John

⁹¹ *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 262:3.

⁹² *Luther’s Works*, XL, 175.

admonishes us, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (I John 4:1–3).

If we would ward off the fiery darts of the wicked, we need to grasp the shield of faith firmly. If we would preserve the Gospel for ourselves and our posterity, we need to drink deeply of its saving truths. We need to hear the Word regularly when it is preached. We need to search the Scriptures daily and diligently in our family devotions and private study. We need to treasure the covenant of grace God made with us in our Baptism and to nourish our faith by frequent attendance at the Lord’s altar. We need to encourage and strengthen one another “through mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren.”⁹³ And we must not fail to exercise Christian discipline in our congregations and in our Synod. The tragic consequences of failure to do this are only too apparent in the doctrinal deterioration of church bodies that still bear the name Lutheran but which have lost Luther’s theology. And finally, we need to take seriously our responsibility to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, “shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done” (Ps. 78:4).

God has graciously given us His Gospel. If we do not treasure it and share it, inevitably we shall lose it. It is, in Luther’s words, “like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it once has been.”⁹⁴

The days in which we live are evil. Without question the world’s midnight hour is about to strike. “Surely I come quickly” is our Savior’s promise (Rev. 22:20). “Even so come, Lord Jesus!”

⁹³ *Smalcald Articles*, Part III, Art. IV, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 491.

⁹⁴ *Luther’s Works*, XLV, 352.