

The Assistant Pastor

September-October, 1944

The Doctrine of Verbal Inspiration

The stronghold and fortress of our Christian faith is the word of God, the Holy Scriptures. We believe that the Scriptures are the word of God because they are inspired by God. We believe that the Holy Spirit put into the hearts and minds of the inspired writers the very words which He wished them to speak and write.

But this fundamental teaching of Scripture which our church has accepted and believed during the entire course of our history as a church is denied today not only by the liberal churches of our time, but also by some bodies that bear the Lutheran name.

The popular view today seems to be this, that the Scriptures themselves are not inspired, but only the thoughts and concepts of the Bible were inspired. The thought is that the writers of the Scriptures were only inspired in a general way, and that the men who wrote used their best understanding in recording those thoughts, but that in the course of writing certain words and phrases were set down which may not necessarily be God's word. The thought is that since God employed human agents in writing the Bible it may contain errors of a minor nature.

These Bible critics therefore deny the verbal inspiration and state that the Scriptures merely **contain** God's word.

If we are content merely to say that the Bible contains God's word, but deny the verbal inspiration, that is that even the **words** written are God's word, then we weaken the very foundation upon which we stand. If we admit that the Bible may contain errors then we have weakened the very foundation upon which our religion and faith is built. If we say that there may be errors in the Bible, then we admit that the very things upon which we base our hope of salvation may be wrong. For if we say that the Bible contains both truth and error, then how can we know what is truth and what part of it is error?

But the strength of our faith lies in our acceptance of the whole Bible as not merely containing, but as being God's word from beginning to end, verbally inspired, that is, inspired even as to the words used.

When we declare our faith in the verbal inspiration of the Bible we do not thereby regard the Bible as having been inspired in a mechanical manner, as though God spoke, and the writers merely set down the words which they heard. If that had been the case all the books of the Bible would have sounded alike to us.

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Church Directory

N. S. Tjernagel, Pastor

SAUDE CONGREGATION

Trustees: Carl Swenumson, John Natvig, Martin Borlaug.
Treasurer: Milton Bolong.
Secretary: Fred Steensland.
Cemetery Committee: Oscar Natvig, Henry Borlaug, N. S. Tjernagel.
Ladies' Aid: Miss Johanna Ellingson, president; Mrs. Tom Swenumson, secretary; Mrs. Ned Borlaug, treasurer.

JERICO CONGREGATION

Trustees: J. N. Anderson, Tom Roberson, Carl G. Johnson.
Secretary: Alfred N. Anderson.
Treasurer: Ole J. Johnson.
Ladies' Aid: Mrs. Tom Roberson, president; Mrs. K. C. Johnson, secretary; Mrs. Edwin Johnson, treasurer.
Cemetery Committee: Mrs. Carl A. Knutson, Mrs. M. A. Robinson, Mrs. C. O. Vigdal.

But on the contrary God employed the Holy writers and used their talents. Luke, for instance, was a physician and his writings sound like the writings of a doctor. St. Paul was highly educated in philosophy and the sciences of the day, and he writes like a learned man. David was a shepherd, and his writings have the simple freshness of a shepherd poet. The prophet Jeremiah was uneducated, and his writings are not at all like those of the well educated prophet Isaiah.

Each of the writers of the Bible wrote in a style that would have been recognized by their contemporaries, but what they wrote was, even as to the words, what God wished them to write.

But how can we be sure that the Bible is, as we have stated, the true word of God? The first fact that forces itself upon our attention is the fact that the Bible, written by more than thirty persons who lived in different places, and who lived over a period covering fifteen centuries of time, and who possessed the greatest diversity of culture, environment, and talents, have produced a single volume that is so harmonious in all its teachings that the criticism of three thousand years has failed to show any inconsistency in the 66 books of the Bible, but has rather shown the unity of this Christ-centered volume which God has given us for the sake of the salvation of our souls.

Another evidence for the divinity of the Holy Scripture is its inexhaustible fulness. The Bible never becomes stale or out of date. Where other books are soon exhausted, the Bible is a living fountain from which we draw inexhaustible supplies of life and comfort. Though this holy book has been hated and maligned, though men have called it a glorious fable, it has continued to stand unassailable and impregnable, a rock of comfort to sinners everywhere and in all the ages.

But the most important proof for the truth of God's inspired word lies in the Word itself.

In the Old Testament we find the expression, "Thus saith the Lord" used two thousand times. In the New Testament we find such expressions as these, "the word of God," "the word of the Lord," "the word of faith," "the word of life," "the word

of truth." In the Old Testament when God sent Moses to lead his people out of Israel He said, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

The manner in which New Testament writers refer to the Old Testament gives clear evidence of their acceptance of the Old Testament as being the Word of God. Matthew, for instance, says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." Luke speaks thus, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets."

Speaking directly of the matter of inspiration Peter says, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." St. Paul also says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The words of our text are also a clear statement as to the divinity of God's word. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Those who deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible ought to remember how frequently the meaning of a whole passage is dependent upon a single word. Think, for example, of the importance of the word "is" in the words of institution where it says, "This is my body." Any disciple who was using his own judgment would surely not have said "is" at that point. But God inspired the word, and there it stands.

In addition also to the testimony of the Scriptures to its own verbal inspiration, we have the words of Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus even speaks of his own words as being inspired by God. He says, "I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."

Similarly, He says, "I have given unto them the words thou gavest me, and they have received them." In another place He says, "The words I have spoken unto you are spirit and life." Surely these words point definitely to verbal inspiration.

In many instances when he quoted from the Old Testament He said, "It is written." Thus He made clear his confidence not merely in the contents, but in the written words of the Old Testament.

The all-important question for all of us is this, "What shall I do to be saved?" If the Bible is the truth, then we know the answer, for it tells us, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But remember this, that our confidence in the answer to the question given can be no greater than our confidence in the truthfulness of the Scriptures.

But God be praised that we do have a full confidence in the truthfulness of every word of the entire Bible.

We may well thank God, even as St. Paul does in our text saying, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Yes thank God that we have this His word. May we ever accept it as it is in truth, "The word of God."

OUR HYMN BOOKS

The hymn book in use by our congregation was published in the year 1912. Up to that time most of the congregations of the Synod had used Norwegian in their services, but there was an English hymn book in use then which was called *Christian Hymns*. The new hymn book was prepared in 1912 because *Christian Hymns* was badly in need of revision and improving. It has been said that the average life of any hymn book is about a generation. That was the length of the life of our Hymn Book, because in 1942 a new Hymnary was published to replace the Hymnary we are now using.

The new Hymnary was published at the suggestion of our Synod which felt that the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and our Synod, and the other Synods which are united in faith in the Synodical Conference ought to give evidence of the unity of their faith by using the same Hymn Book, and the same order of service. All the Synods concerned were also aware of the fact that their Hymnaries were in need of improvement and revision.

The bodies of the Synodical Conference therefore agreed to publish a new Hymn Book, and a large committee was elected to undertake the work. Pastors Anderson and Madson were elected as the representatives of our Synod. The committee worked on the task before them for ten years. The texts of all hymns were carefully studied, and competent men studied the tunes of all hymns proposed. There was a careful sifting of hymns which had the purpose of selecting the 600 best and most characteristically Lutheran hymns available.

The work is finished now, and the new Hymn Book is available. One thing about it we will notice, and that is that there are some hymns missing in the new book which we are accustomed to. I had at first felt that that was a rather serious matter. But during the past summer I have attended quite a number of services in churches where the new Hymnary is in use and I couldn't help being impressed by the many fine hymns which we did not have before. We may have lost some well loved hymns, but I believe we gain more than we have lost by the new hymns that have been added.

Some of you who have purchased Hymnaries in years past may regret that fact that with a new Hymn Book in use you will no longer be able to use your own books. But they will by no means be a loss to you because there is no finer prayer book than our old hymn book. Besides the edifying hymns it contains, there are the Psalms, prayers, and texts for each Sunday of the church year. It will still be a valuable prayer book for you to keep for convenient use at your bedsides.

Quite a number of the congregations of our Synod have already adopted the new Hymnary, and the matter comes before us now because our Hymn Books have gotten into such a bad state that we must either get this new Hymnary or buy almost a complete new set of the old Hymn Books.

The principal reason why I feel we should adopt the new Hymnary is the fact that our people are more or less frequently moving to other places where they worship in Missouri and Wisconsin Synod churches. They will feel much more at home there if they find the same Hymn Books as they

are accustomed to at home. Moreover I feel that we should cooperate with the other churches of our Synod in anything that will serve to strengthen the bond of fellowship among us.

The matter will come before the congregations for their decision at the annual meetings in January.

OUR SCHOOLS

Our school work is in full progress again. Twenty-seven boys and girls are enrolled in the high school class in religious instruction in New Hampton. Meetings take place from 12:50 to 1:35 every Wednesday noon. Old Testament Bible History is the subject that is being taken up this year. The class is showing the same interest that pleased me so much last year, and it is doing the same excellent work. As I have so often said before the work I have with this class is among my real pleasures. I know that your children are benefiting greatly too.

The Saturday School has an enrollment of forty children. The attendance as well as the interest shown has been very good. Parents are very helpful in assisting their children. Some parents ask occasionally what they may do to help. In answer to that I would say that first of all you can help by assisting your child in the memory work for the week. Then, and especially if the child is too small to read well, you can help it by reading the Bible History lesson for the day with it. It often does happen that the child comes to school without much knowledge of what the Bible story for the day is about.

Saude Lutheran School has an enrollment of twenty-four children. This wonderful growth in our enrollment which was thirteen last year has been due partly to the fact that we were able to buy a School Bus this year and have been able to enroll a large number of our Jerico children in the school. Our teacher, Mr. Keibel, is one of the busiest persons in the community. A one hour drive every day before and after school in addition to teaching eight grades, plus the preparation of the sermons that he delivers every Sunday keeps him well occupied indeed. We are very grateful to him for the conscientious work he is doing. The children under his instruction are most fortunate. They are attending a school where the word of God is not ignored, but where the truths of Scripture have first place. Their characters are being molded on the basis of Scripture, and not on the basis of modern educational principles.

Add the figures given above and you will see that there are ninety-one children for whose Christian education your pastor is partly responsible. Yes, your pastor is partly responsible for these children's learning the way to salvation. But, dear parents, the main responsibility is yours. Are you supporting your pastor in his work, are you giving your children a Christian home, are you teaching your child the eternal truths, and giving it an example to pattern its life after? I hope you are.

Your child learns that we should deem God's word holy and gladly hear and learn it. But in many homes the word of God is never heard, and the parents seldom take their children with them to church.

Your child learns that it is sinful to take the name of God in vain. But many of our children hear profanity in their homes.

Are you a parent who follows the Scriptural command to "train up a child in the way he should go," or are you the parent of whom Scriptures say that "it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea"?

JERICO LADIES' AID

During the past year the following ladies were hostesses to the Jerico Aid: Mrs. O. N. Ferkenstad, Mrs. Severt Johnson, Mrs. Gilman Robinson, Mrs. Carl Roberson, Mrs. Louie Paulson, Mrs. Alfred Robinson, Mrs. Jeff A. Knutson, Mrs. L. S. Roberson, Mrs. J. C. Johnson, Mrs. Joe Johnson, Mrs. Andrew Johnson, Mrs. Alvie T. Johnson, Mrs. John N. Anderson, Mrs. Art Cutsforth, Mrs. N. S. Tjernagel, Mrs. Ole Ellingson, Mrs. K. C. Johnson, Mrs. Henry Munson, Mrs. Harvey Roberson, Mrs. Olaf Roberson, Mrs. Ole J. Anderson, Mrs. James and Mrs. Rosie Dahlen.

Devotional exercises during the year consisted mostly of Bible stories concerning the lives of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel, Saul, and David.

The total income for the year was \$279.56. Local expenses for the year were \$123.68, of which the largest single item was \$80.00 for the laying of the new floor in the kitchen.

The contributions for charities were as follows: Red Cross, \$21.80; Army Navy Fund, \$26.30; Deaf Mute Institute, \$22.56; Bethesda Home Building Fund, \$83.56. The total was \$154.22.

The congregation acknowledges with grateful thanks what the Ladies' Aid has done and is doing toward the maintenance of our church property and the furthering of our church work. The attendance and interest during the past year were splendid. The contribution of the Aid toward our various missionary endeavors was also most commendable.

Assistant Pastor contribution envelopes are enclosed with this, the first issue to appear this fall. If you have already paid please ignore the enclosed envelope. In order to get the special mailing permit under which the Assistant Pastor goes out for one cent postage the sender must agree to send out 200 copies each mailing, each one containing the same enclosure. The following contributions have been received since the books of the Assistant Pastor were closed for last year's issue: O. A. Knutson, \$5.00; Lena Iverson, \$2.00; Louis Paulson, \$1.00; Mrs. Rob Knutson, \$1.00; Orvin Knutson, \$1.00; Mrs. Thorson, 50c.

The service men of the congregations are receiving Christmas boxes from the Ladies' Aids. We hope that these boxes will arrive in good condition, and that they will give a bit of cheer to them wherever they may be. If you have a son or brother in the service have you sent me his latest change of address? Our Synod is sending religious literature to them regularly, but these welcome reminders of their faith and their church will not reach them unless you keep my file of addresses complete and up to date.

Mrs. Frieda Thode gave a most interesting talk to the ladies of the Saude congregation on her

experiences in China. Members of the Jerico Aid were present as guests. Your pastor was very sorry to have been absent that day, especially after hearing the enthusiastic accounts of her address. She wore Chinese costumes and showed a number of interesting items which she brought back from the Orient. The children of Saude Lutheran School were also in attendance and listened eagerly to the strange things Mrs. Thode told about the Chinese.

The Calmar Congregation served by Rev. Preus is now holding its services in the dining room of Calmar Hotel. When a majority of the congregation decided to join the Norwegian Merger a minority of about one hundred souls were obliged to withdraw from the congregation because their conscience forbade them to hold membership in a body that teaches false doctrine in so many points. A plea was presented to the majority group for a proportionate share of the property, but the plea was denied. Therefore, as has so often been the case before, the minority group, strong in faith, and strong in confidence in the Lord's promise to uphold those who remain faithful to the truth, are making plans to secure a new church property. May God bless them!

In increasing numbers our boys are facing injury and death on the active battle front. Since the invasion of Normandy the tempo of the war seems to have been accelerated on all fronts and a far greater number of men are involved than before. The perils of battle should not be sought out in a mere spirit of adventure, in search of thrills. The thing is too serious and too much is involved for that. For the Christian soldier breasting the enemy's fire, and for the loved ones who are anxious about his safety, it will be a source of comfort that he is walking in the paths of duty and not just taking part in a thrilling adventure. He is where God has placed him, and as a Christian he will commit his way unto the Lord. When speaking to our soldiers, sailors and marines who are going out on dangerous assignments, one often hears them say: "What is going to happen will happen anyway. The time of my death is already fixed." Though it is wrong to be fatalistic and to take the position that some unreasoning power has already fixed everything in advance so that nothing can be done about it, the Christian will bear in mind that there is an almighty God who is in full control, a God who loves him with an everlasting love, bought him with a price and who has, as it were, engraven his name upon the palms of His hands where it is always before His eyes. Without the will of that loving Heavenly Father who sent His Son to redeem the world not even a hair can fall from the head even in battle. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The Christian has no promise that he shall not be killed or maimed in battle but he does have the promise that Jesus has robbed death of its sting for the believer and that the matter of life and death will not be left to blind chance but will be determined by a loving Heavenly Father. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

—From Northwestern Lutheran.

I. P. F.