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A MODERN VIEW OF THE BIBLE

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In our lectures thus far we have sought to present a view of the Bible which we believe the Bible claims for itself. This procedure is, of course, a tacit acknowledgment that we regard the Bible as our final and absolute authority in the field of doctrine. For a doctrine of Scripture, then, we have turned not to a consensus of modern opinion or to the "living theology of the church," whatever that may be, but to the Bible itself. In doing this we believe that we have been acting in accordance with the procedure of the historic Christian church. It can hardly be denied that throughout the years, when the church has wanted to define her doctrine, she has turned to the Bible.

Today, however, the procedure seems to be reversed. Today, it would appear that attempts are being made at writing creeds which are not designed to be expositions of the Scriptural teaching. As is well known a proposed Confession popularly referred to as the Confession of 1967 is being presented to the United Presbyterian Church, and, should it be adopted, would become the statement of belief of that church.

This fact should be of interest and even concern to all Christians and not merely to Presbyterians, for what is being proposed is typical of much that is engulfing the church of Christ today. This proposed Confession, however, brings us head-on with the emphases of modern theology, emphases which we believe are destructive of the Christian faith. This is strong language, but it is not too strong. It is our profound conviction, after careful study of this proposed Confession, that it proceeds upon the assumption that there is no final and absolute truth. Should this Confession be adopted, it would be tantamount to declaring to the world that the church has no message; there is no final truth.

Our concern, however, at this point is not with this fatal weakness of the Confession but rather with the attitude toward the Bible which is found therein. This proposed confession presents a view which is basically out of harmony with that found in the Bible itself and hence out of harmony with the traditional Christian conception of Scripture. It is not saying too much if we plainly assert that the view of the Bible found in this Confession is thoroughly unbiblical.

The Confession and the Bible

We are told, "The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness in many ways. The church has received the Old and New Testaments as the normative witness to this revelation and has recognized them as Holy Scriptures." This is the first paragraph under the heading: The Bible. It will perhaps

enable us the better to understand this position if we notice what had previously been asserted concerning confessions. "Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him."

With these words we reach the heart of the matter as far as the identification of the Bible is concerned. Nowhere in this proposed Confession is the Bible explicitly denominated the Word of God. What a contrast to the Westminster Confession which so plainly and honestly states: "Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these;" There then follows a list of all the books of the Old and New Testament. Again, the Westminster Confession speaks of the arguments ". . . whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God:" The proposed Confession of 1967, studiously it would seem, avoids speaking of the Bible as the Word of God.

This is a grave fault, for it does injustice to an important Scriptural doctrine. It is true that Jesus Christ our Lord is the Word of God incarnate. He who is the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity in the fullness of time did take unto Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being born of the Virgin Mary and so as the God-Man lived a life of sinlessness upon this earth in order that He might render satisfaction to His Father and redeem His people from their sins. And the Bible is the Word of God written. There is no contradiction in saying that Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God become man; the Word of God incarnate, and the Bible is the Word of God written, the inscripturated Word. In fact if we have any concern whatever for the teaching of Holy Scripture this is the only conclusion to which we can come, and this is the conclusion to which the church throughout the ages has come.

In no wise does it detract from the authority or the dignity of the Person of our Lord to assert that the Bible is the Word of God written. Nor does it make of us Bibliolators if we so declare. When such charges are levelled against those who hold to the full truthfulness and authority of the Scriptures, it is evidence either that those who make such charges have not carefully thought through what they are saying or that they are deliberately accepting the modern view of the Bible. Were it not for the Bible we would not know that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Word of God. It is really a rather foolish procedure to reject the Scriptures as absolutely authoritative and to depreciate the concept of propositional revelation and then to talk a great deal about Jesus Christ as the only Word of God. It is somewhat like entering a darkened room, switching on the electric light and then noticing that on a table in the center of the room there is a light bulb larger than the one that has just been switched on and then declaring that the only light bulb in the room is the one on the table. The hymn writer, in one of the grandest hymns of the Lutheran Church has put the matter in a true light:

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless,
 My soul, believe and doubt it not.
 Why stagger at this word of promise?
 Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?
 Nay, then this Word must true remain:
 By grace thou too shalt heaven obtain.

What is involved here is really something far more serious than inconsistency. The position espoused in the proposed Confession of 1967 is based upon a philosophical position that would exclude God from His universe, or better, would make Him but a part of that universe. It would obliterate the distinction between God as the Creator and the created world. Hence, in such a scheme there is no room for what is often depreciatingly called "propositional revelation." Such revelation, it is claimed, posits a mechanical view of the universe, and such a view is uncongenial to the modern mind.

We must return, however, to a more careful consideration and examination of the declarations of the new Confession. We are told that "the one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, . . ." If this statement were true then it would clearly follow that God had given us no other revelations. If the one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, then God would have done something very superfluous if He had given us any other revelations beside Jesus Christ.

The writers have used the word "sufficient" very loosely. Do they mean that apart from Jesus Christ there are other revelations of God, but that these revelations are not sufficient? Or do they mean that inasmuch as the revelation in Jesus Christ is sufficient there is no need for any other revelations? The writers have not made this point clear. Nor have they made clear what they mean by the word "sufficient." In what sense is Jesus Christ the sufficient revelation of God? We are not told.

At this point there emerges one of the chief characteristics of the proposed Confession, namely, that from the point of clarity, it is not satisfactory. It stands in marked contrast with the precise and measured language of the Westminster Confession. The Westminster Confession did not proceed in a condition of "low visibility" but sought to make clear what it was declaring. The reason for this is obvious. Those who framed the Westminster Confession believed that they were setting forth the teaching of the Word of God. For this reason they sought to be as precise as possible. They were dealing with high and holy matters. Upon them fell the task of expounding what they believed the Word of God taught. The result was a preciseness of language which stands in marked contrast to the looseness and vagueness which characterize the proposed Confession of 1967.

What then is meant when the proposed confession speaks of Jesus Christ as the one sufficient revelation? Perhaps the word "one" is of help, but we are not sure. Does this word serve the purpose of excluding other revelations? It would seem that it does, but that point is not made clear. Even with the presence of this little word it is possible that the confession would have us understand that there are other revelations of God which are insufficient, but that the one sufficient revelation is Jesus Christ.

Not only is the language of the Confession imprecise, it is also false. Jesus Christ our Lord is not the one sufficient revelation of God. God has revealed Himself in the created universe, so that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." We may rightly speak of the light of nature. Nature is not dark but light and points to its Maker, so that we are without excuse. Proceeding upon Scriptural grounds, the Westminster Confession declares that ". . . the light of nature, and the words of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men

unexcusable . . ." General revelation, then, is sufficient for its own purposes. It is a sufficient revelation of God. It does declare the goodness, wisdom and power of God, and it furthermore declares His righteousness. Thus considered, it is a sufficient revelation, and it is wholly false and unbiblical to say, as the proposed Confession does, that the one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God. To speak this way is not to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, but is to cast reflection upon the wisdom of God, as that wisdom has been made known to us in His holy Word, the Bible.

Furthermore, in human history God has revealed Himself by means of saving events. In carrying out His plan of salvation He has performed mighty miracles and He has given to His chosen people the gift of prophecy. In the mighty exodus from Egypt for example we have a revelation of God which was sufficient for the purposes for which it was designed. In the performance of this miracle God did not somehow stumble and fail so that the exodus was an insufficient revelation. For its purpose it was thoroughly sufficient. It is necessary to note that if man were properly to understand the meaning of this sufficient revelation he needed its complement, or explanation, and so accompanying the exodus and all the miracles for that matter, there was the revelatory word. But the miracle in itself was a sufficient revelation of God. There was nothing lacking in it so that it would fail to accomplish the purpose that God intended. It was a sufficient revelation.

When the eternal Son of God came to this earth, His advent was on a wave of the supernatural. He performed mighty miracles in which the power of God was displayed. Supreme among these, of course, was His resurrection from the dead. Accompanying the preaching of the Gospel on the part of the apostles, God performed signs and wonders. Finally God gave to the world His written revelation, His own Word. This Word also is a sufficient revelation, and accomplishes all those purposes for which it was designed. All God's revelations are sufficient; none of God's work is faulty. It is simply not true to assert that the only sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ. At the outset we have a depreciation of the Bible.

We are told that the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ in many ways. Again, we must complain of imprecision in the language. What does this statement mean? How does the Holy Spirit bear witness to Jesus Christ? We are told that "The church has received the Old and New Testaments as the normative witness to this revelation and has recognized them as Holy Scriptures." Perhaps we are to understand, although the confession does not actually say so, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments constitute one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ. This may be what the Confession means, although it is really somewhat difficult to tell just what the relationship of the sentences in this particular paragraph to one another is.

If then the Holy Scriptures are one of the ways in which the Holy Spirit witnesses to Jesus Christ, what are the other ways? We are not told, and again we must accuse the proposed confession of vagueness. If we understand the Scriptures aright, we believe that they teach that in the work of regeneration, that mysterious supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God, the new born soul receives the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. ". . . our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof," asserts the Westminster Confession of Faith, "is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." Evidently, however, the professed Confession of 1967

rejects this doctrine of the Confession and of the Scripture, for it does not regard the Bible as the Word of God. We then are left with our original question. What are these many ways in which the Holy Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ? The confession does not explicate this statement, and therefore must be adjudged guilty of theological frivolity. How can an honest man accept a statement of faith when he does not know what that statement means?

The Church and the Bible

We look then at what is said about the reception of the Bible in the church. Again we find ourselves in the land of vagueness. We are told that the church has accepted the Scriptures as the normative witness to God's revelation. What does this mean? Several questions must be asked.

It is true that the church has accepted the Old and the New Testaments as the normative witness to God's revelation Jesus Christ, but why has the church done this? What has led it to accept such books as this witness? And why has the church regarded this witness as normative? What authority has she had for so doing? Is the church on good ground in her action? Are the Old and New Testaments actually a normative witness to Jesus Christ? And in what sense are they a normative witness? Are all their statements concerning Christ normative? To put it in very simple terms, can we believe all that the Bible says about Jesus Christ? To ask the question in such a pointed manner is really to answer it, for it is perfectly clear that this new proposed Confession of 1967 is based upon the modern negative critical approach to the Bible. Form criticism underlies what appears in this confession, even though that fact may not be apparent.

If we were to accept every statement of the Bible as a normative statement concerning Jesus Christ, then we would fall into the error of ". . . equating the Biblical canon directly with the Word of God. By contrast the preeminent and primary meaning of the Word of God in the Confession of 1967 is the Word of God incarnate. The function of the Bible is to be the instrument of the revelation of the Word in the living church. It is not a witness among others but the witness without parallel, the norm of all other witness. At the same time questions of antiquated cosmology, diverse cultural influences and the like, may be dealt with by careful scholarship uninhibited by the doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies." This statement is found in the section: Introductory Comment and Analysis to the Proposed Confession of 1967. Now we are getting somewhere. That impressive sounding statement about the Old and New Testament being regarded as the normative witness to Jesus Christ must be interpreted in the light of the Introductory Statement.

Let us make this matter as plain as we are able. According to this proposed confession we simply cannot appeal to any statement of the Bible for information about Jesus Christ. In what sense then are the Scriptures the normative witness to Jesus Christ? This is a difficult question to answer. We can perhaps approach an answer by pointing out again in what way the Testaments are NOT a normative witness. They are not a normative witness in the sense that they are inerrant, or that the canon of the Bible is to be equated with the Word of God. The confession pulls no punches on that matter. The Bible is not the Word of God written. On that

point the proposed confession leaves little room for doubt. In what sense then is the Bible a normative witness?

At this point the confession enshrouds itself with the vagueness that is so dear to the heart of the modern Biblical theologian. If the Bible is a normative witness we ought to be able to discover in what way it is normative. It is not normative in the way that it itself claims and that the historic church throughout the ages has claimed. How then is it normative? We are thrown back upon modern scholarship, and probably the residue that modern scholarship leaves to us is the normative witness. Certainly we should reject the rest, for the rest is all in error and not trustworthy. Or, does the whole Bible, filled with error, constitute a normative witness? Is error a normative witness to Jesus Christ? We would appreciate an answer on this point from the confession.

Scholarship, however, has a way of being strangely non-unanimous. It is true that there is a certain consensus of opinion, a certain wave of propaganda that keeps coming over us all the time. If we follow the Theologische Literaturzeitung we have a pretty good idea of what the "theologians" are saying. And by the time it has all been translated into English, the ecclesiastical politicians are parading it as exciting new insights and dimensions of Christianity. Nevertheless, among those who base their study upon the presupposition that the Bible is not a revelation from God, there is a surprising amount of lack of unity. The ecclesiastical politicians may proclaim as long and loudly as they desire about the living theology of the church and the will of God for this generation and the like, but the fact is, there is really no such thing as a unanimity of opinion among scholars of the negative critical school. What these men write often largely cancels out what others are affirming. Witness the instructive article of Soggin about recent pronouncements in the field of Old Testament as an example.¹ We cannot base our view of the Bible upon scholarship as such, for scholarship possesses the nature of a kaleidoscope.

The Normative Witness

The whole matter will become clear by means of an illustration. In what sense, for example, is the Bible a witness concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ? At first sight, it would seem that the confession is unequivocal upon this subject. "The central elements of the faith of Presbyterians," it tells us in the Introductory Statement, "are all shared as well by other Christians." In the confession itself there occurs the statement, "God raised him from the dead, vindicating him as Messiah and Lord." Furthermore, it is asserted that the ". . . risen Christ is the saviour of all men." "To receive life from the risen Lord is to have life eternal; to refuse life from him is to be separated from God in death." Certainly these statements are unobjectionable; do not conservatives believe these very things?

True it is that in themselves these words express the teaching of the Bible. But we cannot take these words in themselves. The confession will not permit us to do that. We must understand them, indeed, we can only understand them in the framework of the confession itself, and it is this very framework of reference which gives to these beautiful words a connotation which they have not usually borne in the historic Christian church.

Even though the Introductory Comment to the confession declares that the Bible is the "witness without parallel, the norm of all other witnesses," it also declares that ". . . questions of antiquated cosmology, diverse cultural influences, and the like, may be dealt with by careful scholarship uninhibited by the doctrine of inerrancy which placed the older Reformed theology at odds with advances in historical and scientific studies." What then shall we say about the resurrection of our Lord?

Let us make no mistake about this matter. If we think that we can simply turn to the Bible and accept at face value what the Bible says about Christ's resurrection, we are acting very naively. The proposed confession breathes deeply the atmosphere of a certain modern approach to the Bible. Its principal author is a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, which has distinguished itself in recent years by its rejection of the historic Presbyterian faith and its adherence to the modern emphases of dialectical theology.

When the confession speaks of the resurrection, we must notice that we can have the resurrection only after we have submitted ourselves to the dictates of certain emphases of modern scholarship. To put it more accurately, we can believe only what modern scholarship leaves to us of the resurrection. Now, it is probably not unjust to say that according to many modern scholars what we have in the four Gospels simply represents the faith of the early church. We must approach the study of the Gospels through the avenue of form criticism and literary genre. We must still seek to remove anything in the nature of later editorial accretion and seek to penetrate to the original Sitz im Leben of the individual oracles or utterances or pieces.

And then when we have faithfully performed the work that form criticism demands of us, we must still face the question of miracle. Did the Lord Jesus Christ rise from the dead by means of a mighty miracle? And when we use the term "the Lord Jesus Christ," we have reference to the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God who is one with the Father, indeed, the same in substance and equal with the Father and the Spirit in power and in glory. But is this what modern scholarship means? We fear not, and we fear also that the influence of modern scholarship has made itself felt in the framing of the confession. Despite the language which sounds Scriptural, we fear that the confession is really rejecting the old orthodox, Scriptural view of the resurrection of the Lord.

The reason why we think that this confession has not presented a Scriptural view of the resurrection of the Lord, nor for that matter of any other Scriptural doctrine, is found in the following statement, "God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a mystery which the Scriptures express in various ways. It is called the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life given for his sheep, atonement by a priest; again it is a ransom of a slave, payment of debt, vicarious satisfaction of a legal penalty, and victory over the powers of evil. These are images of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory in the depths of God's love for man."

This language requires careful analysis. At first sight it sounds quite Scriptural, and for that very reason one is likely to be deceived by it. But even though the language sounds Scriptural the thought is anything but Scriptural. The thought comes, not from the Bible, but from Immanuel Kant. If we consider the various Scriptural phrases which are employed to express God's reconciling act in Christ Jesus we may well ask what their purpose is. Take

for example the sacrifice of a lamb. Is that language simply an image of a truth which remains beyond all theory? If that is the case, then it follows that we simply cannot set forth that truth in human language, nor can we explain it. Instead of the sacrifice of a lamb actually being God's reconciling work, the sacrifice of a lamb is but an image. And if the sacrifice of a lamb is but an image then the real truth is not the sacrifice of a lamb but something else, something far removed from man, so far in fact that he cannot reach it. He cannot even express a theory about it. He can really say nothing about it. This to us sounds very much like that realm of the noumenal, propounded by Kant, where he said we had the thing in itself, but about which we can say nothing. Now if the sacrifice of a lamb is but an image, and the truth is hidden somewhere in the love of God or in some realm where one cannot theorize about it, we had better see exactly what this means.

This means that the sacrifice of a lamb is itself not God's reconciling work. Indeed, it is but an image, and it is the image of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory. Inasmuch as this truth remains beyond the reach of all theory we really cannot say anything about this truth. We can only be content with the image, and if we are to be consistent, which the proposed confession is not, we can say nothing about the truth of which the sacrifice of a lamb is but an image.

Here again is that old distinction of Kant's between the phenomenal and the noumenal, a distinction which is so prominent in much of modern theology and which is utterly unChristian in nature. If then all the above phrases which speak of God's reconciling work in Christ are merely images and nothing more, just what was the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross? It was not God's reconciling act in Christ Jesus for that is a truth hidden deep in the love of God and beyond the reach of theorizing. At most the death of Jesus Christ could have been but an image, that and nothing more. Inasmuch as the truth of God's work of reconciliation is beyond the reach of all theory in the depths of God's love for man, then that work of reconciliation cannot possibly be the death of Christ upon the cross. The death of Christ upon the cross at Golgotha was something about which we can theorize, and about which men have theorized. Men may say that His death was simply a display of God's moral government; they may declare that it was a manifestation of God's hatred of sin and His love for sinners. Or they may say that it was a death designed to exercise a moral influence upon men. All of these interpretations are theories. The Bible itself gives us an explanation of the death of Christ. The Bible tells us that that death was a satisfaction to the justice of God. This is the view that Christian believers have maintained stoutly. They believe that this interpretation explains the meaning of what happened when the Lord of Glory died upon the cross. If we may use the language of one of the hymns:

And when I die, I die to Thee;
Thy precious death hath won for me
The life that never endeth.

That hymn could never have been written if the proposed Confession of 1967 is correct, for that hymn expounds a theory, a Scriptural theory, we believe, of the death of Christ. It expounds a theory of God's work of reconciliation in Christ, and according to the Confession of 1967 that is something that we cannot do, for that work of reconciliation is beyond the reach of theory. For that matter the Confession is rather inconsistent in speaking of God's reconciling

act in Jesus Christ, for just as soon as it uses those words it is itself expounding a theory. This it cannot do, however, if that about which it expresses a theory is something about which no theory can be expressed. This inconsistency, by the way, stands out in glaring contrast to the consistent Scriptural emphasis of the historic Westminster Confession.

It may not be out of place to note that if we can conceive of a subject and speak of that subject we can also theorize about it. We may not be in possession of sufficient information to theorize very accurately about the subject; but if we speak about it at all, indeed, if we can conceive of it, we can also theorize about it. It is foolish then to assert that we cannot theorize about God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ, for were that true, we would not even be able to utter the words "God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ."

With this preparation we may now look at the question of the resurrection. Inasmuch as the reconciling act of God is not to be equated with the historical death of Christ upon Calvary, for it is in the depths of God's love and beyond the reach of theorizing, what about the resurrection of Christ? Is this not a part of God's reconciling act? The Bible at least says so. The Bible declares that Christ ". . . was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25b). If then the confession should divorce the resurrection from the reconciling work of God in Christ it would be going contrary to the Scriptures. The resurrection, however, is dealt with under the heading "Jesus Christ" and is evidently regarded as comprising part of His redeeming work.

Does then the resurrection belong to that realm about which we cannot theorize? If it does we are face to face with a position that is quite contrary to that presented in the Scriptures. It is time now that we evaluate this position which is found in the proposed Confession of 1967. The Christian religion is an historical religion for it is founded squarely upon those things which God did for sinners upon this earth in history. If we remove the miracles of Christianity, and in particular those great saving works of our Lord which He performed in the days of His flesh, then we have abandoned Christianity and have substituted for it something altogether foreign. Without its historical basis there is no Christianity. The Christian religion is not merely a collection or body of ideas and thoughts that are eternally true. The Christian religion is an account of something that happened. It tells us of the love of God that was manifested in Jesus Christ upon this earth when Jesus Christ gave up His life upon the cross to save His people from their sins. Were Christianity nothing more than a body of eternal truths, it could only bring despair to man. But, thanks be to God, it is more than that. It tells us that God has done something to save us from our sins, and it points us to that one great act of redemption which was performed here upon this earth in history upon a particular calendar day, when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross and then on the third day rose again from the dead.

If we remove all the great saving events of Christianity from the realm of history and place them in the depths of God's love for man where they remain beyond the reach of all theory, what we are doing is destroying Christianity. The Christian is concerned about his salvation. He knows full well how great the enormity of his sin is and how desperately he needs God's forgiveness. If that salvation depends upon the death and resurrection of the Lord, that is one thing. The Christian can then say, "He loved me and gave himself for me." When he does speak that way, he is engaging in theorizing. He is giving an explanation of the meaning of

what Christ did in His death upon the tree. And when he looks at the resurrection he again engages in theorizing. He says that God performed a wondrous miracle and the dead body of the Lord Jesus came to newness of life and emerged from the tomb. He arose from the dead! This is the true explanation and the Christian heart loves to ponder the meaning of the great saving and redemptive acts of his faith.

The Christian religion is something about which one can theorize. The Bible itself gives an interpretation of the great acts which it records. If we read the Bible we learn that God was at work in the fulfillment of His promises of salvation. If we cannot theorize about Christianity, we simply have no Christianity. And, for that matter, the Confession of 1967 gives the lie to its own proposals when it itself engages in theorizing. If God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory, the confession has done a tremendous amount of theorizing upon the untheorizable.

Perhaps it is now time to return to our subject. In what sense is the Bible a normative witness? It would appear that the Bible is really not necessary at all as a witness, and this despite certain statements to the contrary in the proposed Confession of 1967. This confession, like much modern theology, both wants the Bible and it does not want it. Without the Bible it would have nothing to talk about. It could not use the terms, reconciliation, Jesus Christ, resurrection, etc., were it not for the Bible. It needs the Bible. Nevertheless, it does not want the Bible as an authority. It would rather derive its theology from the living church, which of course means that it prefers to derive its theology from the mind of man. The view of the Christian religion presented in the proposed Confession of 1967 comes not from the Scriptures but from man. It is essentially not a Christian theology, and any church which adopts such a confession will have ceased in the true sense of the term to be a Christian church.

The Bible Today

In these lectures I have tried to set forth a different view of the Bible. It would be a very popular thing to go along today with the current of the times. If we did that we should have the approbation of man. We should be labeled scholars, and in the eyes of many, that seems to be something greatly to be desired. The modern world is quite ready to speak of the scholarship of those evangelicals who have given in on the doctrine of Scripture. Yes, if we too give in there are certain rewards that can be ours.

There is one thing, however, that will not be ours if we compromise the doctrine of Scripture which the Bible teaches. We cannot have the favor of the Lord. We may indeed receive man's favor: we may be given compliment after compliment, but it will all be in vain. We can no longer have God's favor, for we will have then compromised the truth upon this all important doctrine.

The way upon which we are called to go is not an easy one. There are those who will not hesitate to label us Bibliolators, extreme conservatives, ultra-fundamentalists and the like. But, despite all this, despite the liturgy of vituperation which some delight to employ, if we remain true to the Lord upon this important doctrine, His favor will be upon us. We shall

know that we are not alone. We are standing in the tradition of the Christian church, and we are basing our stand upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. But more important than anything else, God will be with us. And what are all the plaudits of man, if we have not God? The Christian path is not necessarily an easy one, but it is a blessed one, for our Lord is ever with us.

Today the Bible is under constant attack. We have considered the proposed Confession of 1967, for it is only one of many modern attacks upon the Bible. There are many such attacks, but what makes this confession so tragic is that it is being proposed to a large church for adoption, and it would seem that there are those who do not realize the import of what its adoption would mean. But the attack upon the Scriptures is widespread, and what is particularly sad, some of those who should be raising their voices in defense of the Bible are beginning to adopt the position of the enemy.

This is not the time to shrink from taking a stand and declaring the whole counsel of God on this particular doctrine. The Bible has withstood many an attack. Men have stood up in self-confident vein to declare that there were errors in the Bible. They thought they had discovered those errors, and hence, they simply added their voices to a rejection of the orthodox or Biblical position. Nevertheless, truth has a way, after all, of coming to the fore, and often, it raised its head to point out that whereas there was error, that error was not upon the part of the Bible but rather upon the part of those who had declared that the Bible was in error.

And so it is today. There may be much in Scripture that we cannot understand. To deny that there are difficulties is to play the part of folly. But there are no errors. We look back to a history of triumph upon the part of the Bible as it has withstood the various attacks that have been leveled against it. We cannot be expected to give an explanation of every difficulty in the Bible. We are called upon to preach that Word, and it is that which we must do. But we must be sure that what we preach is the Word. And when we preach the Word we need not fear that it will somehow fail us. It has never failed man, for it is the Word of Him who is the Truth. It is that Word which we are called upon to preach. May God keep us from being weary in so doing.

DOCUMENTATION

1. J. Alberto Soggin: "Geschichte, Historie und Heilsgeschichte im Alten Testament" in Theologische Literaturzeitung, No. 10, Vol. 89.