

FROM ONE EXTREME . . .

LC-MS: *THE LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE*

LC-MS: Stuck on inerrancy —

“Jesus attributed these books to Moses” (p.14).

“Luther titled them ‘the Books of Moses’” (p. 14).

“Conservative biblical scholars have always attributed these five books to Moses” (p. 14).

To be sure:

“The Bible itself clearly teaches that Moses used other sources – written and oral – for composing the first five books of Scripture. Moses’ most important source was God Himself; God dictated portions of the books to him” (cf Ex 24:3) (p. 14).

At the same time:

“A few passages possibly indicate later editing to provide clarity” (p. 15).

“Joshua, Moses’ assistant, or others may have helped Moses in organizing, writing, and compiling this broad variety of materials” (p. 15).

Nevertheless:

“The Holy Spirit blessed, guided, and directed the ‘research’ of Moses just as surely as He guided the writers of the New Testament” (p.15).

How this is shown in a specific case:

“The notes for Genesis are written from the perspective that Moses accurately described the events of creation based on God’s revelations to him. (p. 18).

“The first cycle of time, initiated by the distinction of light from darkness, first, “one.” Moses used the cardinal number here instead of the ordinal form “first”: his time-related words make it quite clear that we are to understand this day 1 as a normal 24-hour day, bounded by an evening and a morning (notes to 1:5) (pp. 19-20).

Spinning Luther. The LC-MS selectively quotes Luther to make it seem that he, too, was an inerrantist.

“We assert that Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively” (LW 1:5) (p. 16).

“These, then, are all historical facts. This is something to which I carefully call attention, lest the unwary reader be led astray by the authority of the fathers, who give up the idea that this is history and look for allegories” (LW 1:93) (p.22).

But Luther clearly was no inerrantist. For him the Bible’s authority is established by its power to convict of sin and convince of grace through the preaching of Christ, as Luther writes:

“All the genuine sacred books agree on this, that all of them preach Christ and deal with Him. That is the true test, by which to judge all books, when we see whether they deal with Christ or not, since all the Scriptures show us Christ (Rom 3) and St. Paul will know nothing but Christ (1 Cor 2). What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even though St. Peter or St. Paul taught it” (LW 35:396).

Inerrancy is the tie that blinds. In contrast, for the LC-MS the message of the Bible is authoritative first and foremost because “the book” is “supernatural.” Faith, though ultimately directed to Christ, is first directed to and dependent upon the Bible as the inerrant, written word of God.

In 1973 at its New Orleans convention the LC-MS adopted *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, which affirms:

- “that God is the true Author of every word of Scripture” (2).
- Further, “the soteriological purpose of Scripture in no sense permits us to call into question or deny the historicity or factuality of matters recorded in the Bible” (3).
- “The Holy Scriptures . . . contain no errors or contradictions but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth.” (5).

A quasi-confessional document. In 1971 at its Milwaukee convention the LC-MS had already determined that “such doctrinal formulations are subordinate to the Lutheran Confessions,” but “such statements, together with all other formulations of doctrine, derive their authority from the Word of God.”

Therefore in 1973 the LC-MS declared: “**A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles, in all its parts, to be Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, and therefore a formulation which derives its authority from the Word of God and which expresses the Synod’s position on current doctrinal issues**” (11).

Texts cited above:

The Lutheran Study Bible, Concordia, October 2009.

Portions available online at cph.org/lutheranbible.

A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles, available at: www.lcms.org/president/aboutlcms/astatement.asp.

... To The Other

ELCA: ___ *LUTHERAN STUDY BIBLE*

ELCA: Salvation without faith in Christ —

(Emphasis added in excerpts below.)

Matt 5:3-12

“The Beatitudes create what they declare. Jesus makes the new world of God’s rule actual now in this broken world. Yet it also remains a promised future. **Notice that they do not depend on faith or even on knowing Jesus. This is one way God creates salvation.**”

Matt: 25:31-46

“The parable speaks of a surprising way the unbelieving nations have a relationship to Jesus. Jesus’ word is a promise that creates what it declares. Jesus makes these little ones, who suffer and are broken, the place of his presence in our world, **even for those who do not believe in him or know about it. This is one way Jesus creates salvation for those who do not even know him.**”

Matt: 28:16-20

“The eleven disciples went to Galilee . . . Jesus now sends the disciples to make disciples of all nations. That does not mean make everyone disciples. Most people who are helped by Jesus and believe in him never become disciples. **Jesus includes in salvation people who do not believe in him or ever know about him (5:3-10; 25:31-45).**”

Dr. Duane Priebe (Wartburg Seminary) wrote the commentary on Matthew for the *Lutheran Study Bible*, a team project within the ELCA’s official *Opening the Book of Faith* (OBOF) study process, with oversight provided by a Board of Consultants (James Aageson, Norma Cook Everist, Diane Jacobson, Rolf Jacobson, Mark Allan Powell, Barbara Rossing, Nelson Strobert, Jane Strohl, and Timothy Wengert).

The idea that salvation does not require faith in Christ and/or that everyone is saved is becoming acceptable in the ELCA. In an interview before he died, Dr. Walter Bouman (Trinity Seminary) said: “Difficult as it is – because I always think of it as unfair – I’ve come to accept God’s **universal salvation** as the final consequence of Jesus’ resurrection” (*The Lutheran*, Nov 05, p. 24, emphasis added).

The Lutheran has never fielded a formal response to Bouman.

Different strokes for different folks. The major theme of the OBOF study process is that many, even contradictory, views of salvation are acceptable.

Dr. Stan Olson, a PhD in New Testament, former bishop of Southwestern Minnesota, now head of the ELCA’s Vocation and Education Unit, writes in OBOF (emphasis added):

[W]hen an interpreter or group implies that their particular understanding must be correct . . . [they show] **disrespect for the faithfulness of others’ efforts at hearing** (p. 14).

. . . [I]nsights are always tested by discernment within the larger Christian community, including **the community that stretches back across the centuries and around the globe** (p. 15).

The Bible is the fixed point given to us. It is the norm. Our commitment to this authority leads us to treat **any Christian disagreement as a conversation that remains open** . . . The Word interprets us, so we stand before it in hope, with our **varied interpretations** (p. 17).

Olson ought to know better. Every verse of the Bible has been in dispute over the centuries. It is a pious bait-and-switch game to claim that the Bible is “the norm” yet to warn not to “disrespect . . . the faithfulness of others’ efforts at hearing” and honor “varied interpretations.” If everyone is right, no one is right.

The OBOF Leader’s Guide even gives specific instructions that no one in a study group is to criticize anyone else. Finally what matters is whatever you think.

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A plague on both your houses. The LC-MS has fallen into the ditch of inerrancy. The ELCA has fallen into the ditch of anonymous Christianity and universal salvation.

Conservative evangelicalism is no solution, either. It’s the same old lost cause of semi-Pelagianism (We have a yen for God; God gives us a kick-start, but we have to get going from there).

The way of salvation is the narrow way of the cross alone, very different from the biblicism of Missouri and the relativism of the ELCA.

Lutheran Study Bible, available through Augsburg Fortress, \$34.99 pb. 1/800/328-4648.