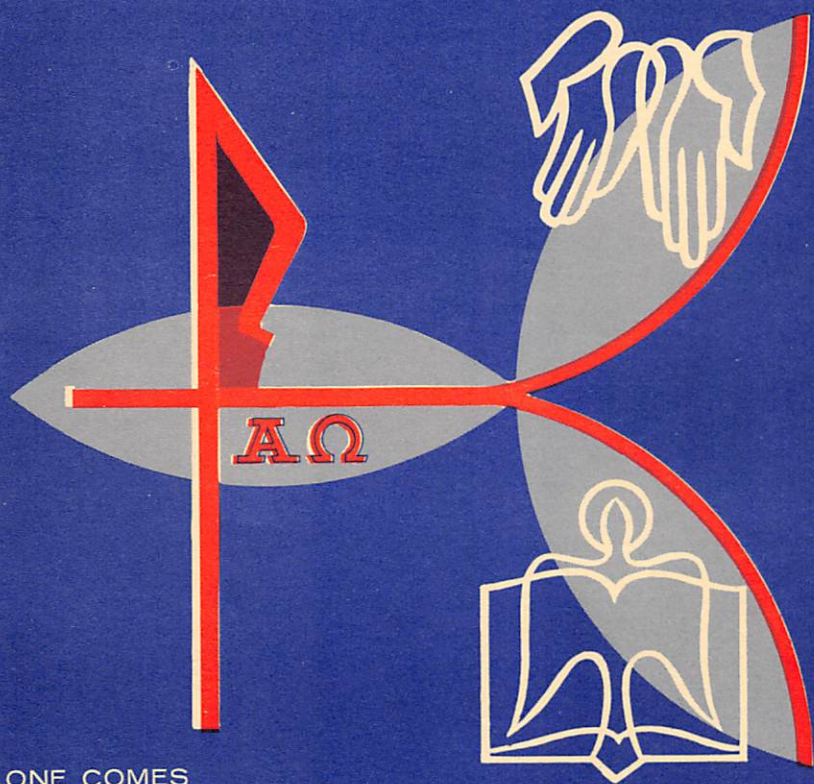


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

*J. J.
Paul W. Schaller
S. D. G.*



NO ONE COMES
TO THE FATHER
BUT BY ME

WE WOULD SEE JESUS ONLY

READ MATTHEW 17:1-8

I.

So at the end "they saw no one but Jesus only." That is the best part, the climax of this Transfiguration story. The brief vision of the lights of Paradise was gone; Moses and Elijah had returned to their lovely place. The hill lay drab and bare and desolate. But it was still so glorious: They saw Jesus only.

He had just been transfigured. There really was no human word for what had happened. It was something out of this world. His face shone as the sun—the three could not really look at it lest they become utterly blind. All His clothing shone radiantly, brilliantly white, as earth knows no white. How could earth have this: it is a piece of Paradise come to earth, and Paradise was lost. If they knew such splendor in that first garden, the memory of it was long since drowned in the darkness of that sin which blinded and made stupid and dull the very senses of wretched man. But there it was, for a brief moment given to mortal eyes to see and yet not to see. They fell on their faces in fear. How sad that was! Afraid of the beauty and loveliness of heaven!

Should we wonder they were so glad when at the end they saw Jesus only? We should understand that right well. For we should treasure the voice that broke into the light and splendor, a voice majestic and calm, clearer even than the light of heaven. It still shines bright and clear after the light is

gone: it still issues that amazing invitation: Hear ye Him! Listen to Him! Listen to the Beloved Son! There is the whole meaning of the transfiguration. You cannot see the splendid light, but you can hear about it. The Beloved Son is speaking to us and telling us. His voice is sure and loving and strong, calling into the darkness of our little lives, always painting with words the picture of His constant transfiguration.

For that is our Christ, always transfigured now. What human eyes could not bear to see, human ears are permitted to hear. Oh, hear Him, hear Him—it is the very mountain top of comfort and strength, the rock of defense in every storm of life. Hear Him, listen to Him—not to the vain babblings of modern man with his wisdom, his sordid philosophy, his blasphemous phantasies. They glitter and captivate the mind, but leave the heart cold and dreary and empty. Not all the great thoughts of man in his scientific greatness can wipe one single tear away from the face of a little child. Do not listen to them, listen to the Beloved Son.

And by no means listen to your own heart. It plays around with foolish doubts and fears, it paints pictures of doom and destruction. It fears the storms, it runs away from death and hides. It leans upon its own strength, and lo, there is no strength. It tries to solve the problems of life, but it can not even solve the littlest problems. It is selfish and greedy and loves itself.

Listen not to it.

Listen to the Beloved Son, the always transfigured One, who never changes. In radiant faith hear Him. It is so good to sit with Him. For all things are put under His feet He says. All things great and small, all our foes, all our dreads, all the woes of man, all our frustrations, all our anxieties — He tramples on them. All dictators, all powerful nations, all their weapons of destruction, all wicked plans and blood thirsty schemes and conspiracies, all, all under His feet. They are as impotent as infants in the first week of life: one breath of the Beloved Son in His fierce anger, and they are no more. Listen to Him!

Sore afraid? Oh no, never again. We are sitting with Him in heavenly places. In Baptism He took us to the top of the mountain where we see Him only. Listen to Him: He is speaking—I am for you, I am on your side, you are mine, I bought you with my blood, I own you. Can you really think that I would ever hurt you or harm you? Come, stay with me in heavenly places: it is so good to be there.

Always, always, the transfigured Lord: His voice is never still. In

the blessed Word He constantly speaks to you and me. Oh God, help us: we would see Jesus only. Give us eyes to behold Him *always transfigured in glory in His Word.*

II.

Moses and Elijah joined themselves to Jesus in glory that day. It had to be Moses and Elijah. Moses is the mighty base of the Old Testament, the base of the holy Law. Elijah is the shaft of prophecy in this monument. And now the crowning figure has come for which the base and shaft were so long waiting.

And so they come to Him, the Beloved Son. Moses, the great law-giver who led the people from captivity and established them on the law of God, and assured them that if they would keep these laws they would be God's people always. To Jerusalem would come all the nations of the world. But it is all shattered, for they have rebelled against the law and the God of the law. All hopes are ended, all must surely collapse. And Moses turns to the Beloved Son and speaks of His death and knows: It all has failed! O thou Beloved Son, see Thou to it.

Elijah comes too. The prophet

Second Class Postage paid at New Ulm, Minnesota

Published monthly at New Ulm, Minnesota as an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The issues appear about the 25th of each month.
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POSTMASTER: Send notice on Form 3579 to the Lutheran Spokesman, Box 145, New Ulm, Minnesota 56073

Material submitted for publication should be sent to the editor one month before the date of publication. Church and school news items should be sent to Pastor DeRose. Subscriptions and address changes and requests for sample copies must be sent to the Business Office, Box 145, New Ulm, Minnesota 56073. Subscriptions are \$2.00 per year, paid in advance. Blanket subscriptions are \$1.75 to congregations.

who had worked signs and wonders among His people to return them to the worship of Jehovah. In a last desperate battle He had invoked famine and drought that the people might return. On Carmel it almost seemed that victory was won when he defied the priests of Baal and brought fire from heaven. Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God. Surely the kingdom will again be established under Jehovah. But it also failed. The repentance was for a moment. Elijah must run and beg God to take him out of this life. There is no hope. And now He stands with the Beloved Son and the kingdom is completely removed from Israel. The people plan to kill the King of Kings! And He speaks of the King's approaching death: See to it, O Beloved Son, only Thy power and love can establish the kingdom we prophesied.

And the voice from heaven confirms it and writes it into the eternal record for us who live in the dark shadows of the end-time of grace and mercy. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. He will in His death accomplish it all. Hear him, listen to Him, all ye ends of the earth.

And lo, as we open the book, what a light shines forth: the light of the permanently transfigured one. The Beloved Son accomplished it all: He took the law of Moses, that dread symbol of death, and with a mighty hand He cancelled out the curse of it, for all men and all people through the ages. He became the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe, and all, all, may well believe it and trust in it. In place of the dread word:

the soul that sins shall die, it sings jubilantly: Christ the life of all the living, Christ the death of Death, our Foe.

And He accomplished the kingdom of David. David's Son rules forever and ever as promised. He in death vanquished every foe. Satan he crushed in the head and stripped him of his power. Death He made a powerless form. Sin He removed from man and placed upon Himself. And the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of the Beloved Son. He rules over His people, His blessed people in perfect peace and happiness. They live under Him. When their King wishes to speak to them, nothing can stop His Word from reaching His subjects. When He wishes to give them His very body and His very blood, not 2000 years of persecutions, false teachings, wars, and destruction can stop the King from defying nature itself and giving Himself to His people.

Hear ye Him! In solemn warning it rings out over this world grown old. From every side in the world and the churches we hear the voices of Satan calling to us to discard the sure Word of Him. We are asked to make a myth out of what the Son has told us. We are asked to trust in our powers to keep the law of Moses. We are asked to make the kingdom of the prophets come into being in a better world here on earth.

In solemn fear we pray to God: Dear God, help us to see Jesus only. His splendid glory will soon appear and once again blind all men with light and glory. And then all will hear Him and it shall be a

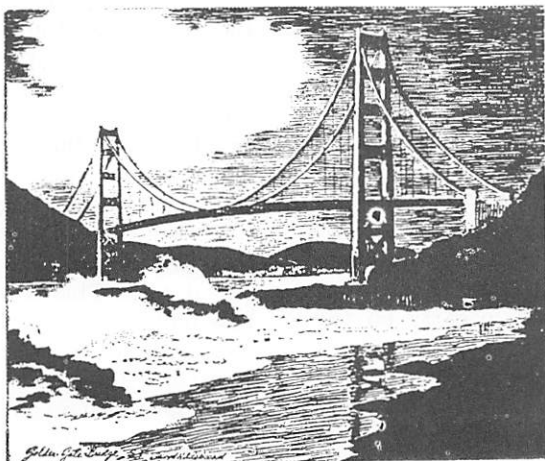
fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. He will not bear it that men despise His Beloved Son. Help us to hear him and to see Jesus only, *always transfigured*

in grace and truth.

For soon we shall see Him, and may we ever be able to say to all eternity: O Beloved Son, it is good to be here.

W.S.

CHURCH NEWS



SAN FRANCISCO

New Quarters

Pastor Rollin Reim writes, "Our patient prayers have been answered in a manner very much to our liking. St. Stephen congregation is en-

joying the use of new and very suitable quarters in the Redwood City Woman's Club building in Redwood City. The building provides a fine auditorium, stage with a Steinway Grand, adjacent meeting rooms, a kitchenette, a garden court, and a large covered porch

entrance." One drawback: Use is limited to Sunday morning, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. The rent is \$50.00 per month. Other meetings of the congregation are held in the lower level of the parsonage and in homes of members, wherever it is most convenient.

An Old Problem

The bare bone budget for St. Stephen's ministry on the Peninsula comes to \$675.00 per month. Since there are only nine people who are in earning capacities, this is no small amount. Of this, \$300.00 are subscribed on a sustaining basis by the contributing members. For the difference, the congregation looks hopefully to the ICLC mission treasury.

According to a congregational newsletter, costs are staggering by general standards. The few remaining lots for residential housing in San Carlos begin at \$12,000.00. Land values increase at a consistent rate of seven per cent per year. Houses increase in value at the rate of five per cent per year. Pastor Reim comments, "In view of that, it isn't good to carry on too long with renting a house, even though \$180.00 per month is a bargain for a house the size of ours. Second mortgage, anyone?"

New Joy

In remarking on his mission contacts, he tells of "continuing to be amazed at the joy of our people in what they have received and their capacity for opening doors," and of non-member families coming to study classes at St. Stephen, from established Lutheran churches in

the area, mostly out of disgust over the trends of theology they are witnessing. They are understandably nervous about joining a new congregation. But they are much interested and very hopeful. It seems where we have been sensitized to the fellowship question by recent controversy, these people are distressed by crass modernism as their churches attempt to accommodate to the culture and thought of the modern world.

Good News

In a letter to the pastors, which arrived Christmas week, President Paul Albrecht commented, among other things, on the progress of the building fund for the newly erected classroom building at ILC. Since the news is good and embodies encouragement to further effort it is worth repeating. He writes, "Thus far the response . . . has been very gratifying. If the response of the congregations that have not yet been heard from is good also, the total will go well beyond the ten thousand dollar mark that we had hoped for." This would mean the new building will be paid for without any part of the \$4,500.00 in budgetary funds that had been set aside for mechanical ventilation in the Northwest building. Hopefully, this might also mean that a portion of the \$4,500.00 unused budgetary funds will be available for mission fields now lying fallow . . . provided we also, in addition to the building fund, meet our budget. For the year-end totals see the treasurer's report in this issue.

Remember the Days of Old--V

“And all that generation were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel.” (Judges 2:10)

Imagine! This could be said of the people who under Joshua had crossed the Jordan, had seen the walls of Jericho fall, had conquered the entire land of Canaan and occupied it. Let it serve to destroy any false sense of security that we may have. A generation is long enough time to drift from the right understanding of the Lord and His mighty works.

In November we noted 1920 as the end of the golden age of Wisconsin. We are a generation removed. Our heritage has been transmitted to us during this period of depression and war and after-war. Would it not be great self-delusion to imagine that we are a strong and healthy people because we are descended from a people with great leaders? Alas, we are children of our socialistic age, and we must look critically now at what happened in the past 45 years.

1920 - 1935

The work at Wauwatosa in the first two decades of this century accomplished much but it failed to make Wisconsin a great synod, a great vessel of God. Many, and maybe most, of the students and the clergy of that day failed to grasp the full import of Koehler-Pieper-Schaller, or what has been called the Wauwatosa Gospel. The

human being is by nature selective; he chooses that which agrees with his previous notions. Many were conditioned to the dogmatical approach, which resents and fears the questions raised by the historical-exegetical approach.

The sound theology coming out of Wauwatosa did not cure Wisconsin of a deep-seated introversion. In fact, this turned-inwardness even infected August Pieper and J. P. Koehler. Though they were ecumenical in outlook, and though they fought the party-spirit energetically, yet they were not free of the desire to make Wisconsin's name great. Especially when relating Wisconsin to Missouri, they sometimes became victims of the very party-spirit they condemned.

Perhaps a greater factor which diminished the influence of Koehler and Pieper on the generation following was their use of the German language. They saw the transition to English taking place. They worked during the very period when Americans were hostile to everything German (World War I). Koehler could write in his *Church History* that it was the duty of zealous Lutheran scholars to provide healthy Lutheran literature in English. Pieper could lecture and write that the Lord had turned the synod to the open door of English-speaking America. Yet they both clung tenaciously to the German language and did all their major writing in German. This limited their influence within and without

the synod and contributed to Wisconsin's isolation.

For Wisconsin's greatest weakness was lack of interest in mission work. Its one foreign effort among the Apaches was poorly supported and even attacked by some. Home mission activity was in the main confined to rural areas; large cities were avoided in this period. In addition, Wisconsin was hindered by a lack of organizing ability. Though God made this lack serve good purposes at times, yet Wisconsin was wrong in making a virtue of not being well organized, and even of not being mission-active.

A strange type of thinking evolved. Missouri is well organized, and Missouri has become too organizational conscious; conclusion: good organization is bad. Missouri is mission-minded; Missouri's mission success has made them proud and statistic conscious; conclusion: it is not good to expand too much in mission work. Frequently this was simplified to answer every suggestion and plan with the words, "But that's the way Missouri does it." This automatically makes it something Wisconsin cannot do.

Wisconsin had individualism and this served a good purpose. But even as Missouri abused its gift of outstanding leadership by hero worship and follow-the-leaderism, so Wisconsin abused its freedom and individuality. For some it became a matter of pride never to cooperate with a synodical program. Freedom became license to practice any way at all and to obstruct unified action.

The lack of true unity in the

synod began to manifest itself in the twenties. The roots of it were always there. Though Wisconsin joined the Synodical Conference in 1872, though its official position paralleled that of Missouri, yet great inconsistencies in practice were never erased. Some leaders in Minnesota never really understood what confessionalism was. In Michigan there were still lodge-ridden congregations into the thirties and forties of this century.

The Wisconsin clergy could not practice sound discipline among themselves. There was a heavy atmosphere of distrust and suspicion. In place of mutual admonition, there was much gossiping; in place of pastor helping pastor, there was envy; in place of democratic joint activity there was too much political activity.

In the twenties these weaknesses of Wisconsin were very much at work. This is just when the synod should have been reaping the fruits of the training received from its Wawatosa leadership. With the death of John Schaller in 1920, sharp tensions began to develop. Some were personal, between Pieper and Koehler; but more in their students who formed partisan groups.

This all reached a climax in the Protestant controversy which broke out in the late twenties. This was from beginning to end the shabbiest piece of history imaginable. Personalities and political activity dominated the situation. An essay which attempted to analyze the sicknesses of the synod and which called for repentance of synodical

sins was allowed to become a test stone of orthodoxy. A Diet-of-Worms Here-I-stand situation was created. Subsequent handling of the issue was made incapable of intelligent and Christian dealing because men on both sides operated too much out of loyalty to their chosen leaders whom they pitted against each other. Eventually the pastors who supported the essay were suspended from the Wisconsin Synod and Professor Koehler, who was then president of the seminary, was suspended from office.

The effects of this controversy have been very bad in so far as we are able to read them to this point in history. The Protestant Conference, dedicated to the historical-exegetical method, has produced some good material from time to time. But its work suffers from two things. One, having suffered much they have been over-absorbed in their persecution and tend to view things from their posture of martyrdom. Two, they idolize the late Professor Koehler to the point where they lose objectivity.

The controversy had long lasting and far reaching effects on Wisconsin. The aftermath brought a greater distrust and a fear of being different. Uniformity became an obsession. Many an idealist came out of school filled with courage, only to learn that he must always be careful and learn to say and do that which will meet with the approval of the leaders. The highest qualification of a man is that he is *safe*. There was great distrust of gifted and creative spirits. Emotional men were considered

especially dangerous.

Professors were chosen who were safe and sober. Creative work and self-criticism all but stopped at Thiensville, and the faculty reproduced what the previous generation developed. Once again the Gospel became formalized and doctrine was handled intellectually. Large creative spirits which could not live in this stifling atmosphere either quenched the spirit or found it within themselves to escape to Missouri.

May it always be understood that during these periods of upheaval and change it is not all black or all white. There is much of God's blessings still working and much good being accomplished at all levels of synodical and congregational life. If we stress the weaknesses it is in the interest of reminding ourselves that whatever man contributes is bad and leads to loss, and to remember that we have inherited not only the wealth, but also the debts.

1935 - 1955

The other large event which took place between 1920 and the present was the controversy with Missouri. Why did Wisconsin so completely fail to stem the tide in Missouri, when that synod set sail on her new course? Mostly, I think, because Wisconsin was not respected by Missouri. First, Missouri was conscious of the anti-Missouri spirit which pervaded Wisconsin. "Oh, they are always against everything Missouri does." Second, Wisconsin's lack of mission zeal weakened their testimony. Missouri entered into negotiations with the ALC and went into chaplaincies motivated by

a conscious mission zeal; they wanted to witness. They did not respect criticism from a synod which so isolated itself from the world that it could not effect a mission program. Third, the inconsistencies in Wisconsin's practice made criticism hard to take. The beams in Wisconsin's congregations were too big, and Missouri resented the attacks on her purity. It's hard to accept criticism on Scouting, when you see the critic tolerate lodgery in certain congregations.

Nor was the testimony from Wisconsin as strong as we sometimes think. It was not the product of strong faith operating out of the wells of Scripture. When Missouri began its deviations, Wisconsin enunciated the Franz Pieper-Bente position on unionism, instead of analyzing the problems anew and producing deep exegetical work. The errors of Missouri were listed and categorized and earmarked as unionistic. This was done mostly in an intellectual fashion. One of the happy exceptions was Professor John Meyer's work on the first chapters of Romans to demonstrate the pagan nature of scouting and its incompatibility with the Good News of Christ.

But intellect always gets it wrong, and only faith can grasp the content of the truth and get to the heart of the error. Intellect tied the matter of fellowship to the doctrine of the church. Unionism rules were drawn to answer the question, with whom you may fellowship. Missouri wished to witness to the unity that exists among Christians. The question always turned on whom one may recog-

nize as a Christian brother? The question is better placed when one thinks of dogma (doctrine) as that which must be preached, and not think of it in terms of that which is believed by this person or that. This ties the problem of fellowship to the Means of Grace rather than to the doctrine of the Church.

With stronger and stronger emphasis on a visible church as opposed to an invisible church, a set of procedures was developed. A person may be teaching false doctrine but this does not make him a false prophet. He is an erring brother, said Wisconsin. He remains an erring brother until the church declares him to be a persistent errorist.

Faith in the Lord Jesus knows only one thing: My Savior died for me, and I cannot be disloyal to Him and His saving Word. When someone changes His Gospel, I must plug my ears, I must abhor his teachings, I cannot have him preach for me, I cannot transfer a lamb to contrary teaching. It has to do with the means of grace which saves people, not with church relations and rules for church relations. The institutionalized church thinks in horizontal relationships and neglects the vertical relationship between each child of God and His Father in heaven.

Effects of the Controversy

The controversy failed to lead Wisconsin into deeper exegetical work in the Scriptures. It had the bad effect of increasing the belief that a sound church is the church which adheres to the doctrinal formulations of the past. As the controversy raged longer and longer

the emphasis in pastor training shifted back again to dogmatics and the purity of doctrinal formulations. Scripture texts were used to fit the demands of the controversy and the synod position. In times of laxity in doctrine there is a growing fear of independent theological work, and Scripture study becomes more and more a leaning on the commentaries of Lenski and others. Thus Wisconsin to a great degree swerved from the course of historical exegetical work and reverted to the attitude of Missouri at about 1920.

A second effect of the controversy grew out of the reversal of positions. Once Missouri had led Wisconsin to a sound position. Now Wisconsin was admonishing the big brother which had become the weak sister. With this came a self-consciousness that we have the candlestick, we are the true visible church on earth and Missouri has lost the candlestick. This is bringing about a new loyalty and cohesiveness in Wisconsin, and under the prodding of Michigan men also an upsurge in mission spirit. Let us hope this activity will be Gospel activity and not a building of a great synod. The danger is one of repeating the Missouri error.

The worst effect of this controversy may well be the overemphasis on the doctrine of the Church. The central evil of the ecumenical movement (and the spirit of the socialistic era) is its looking to earthly organizations, structures, and togetherness for strength, rather than to the Word of the mighty Lord. But if we be found placing the emphasis on our group over

against the groups with which our group may or may not fellowship instead of on the Lord and His Gospel, are we not in danger of arriving at the same evil? Are we not also placing our trust in the strength of the group, in this case, in the power of the true visible church on earth? There is a great difference between fighting for true doctrine and fighting for the church of the true doctrine.

Both Missouri and Wisconsin suffer from synoditis or institutionalism. Wisconsin's course did not follow Missouri's into the ecumenical movement since on the one hand Wisconsin did not reach synodical self-consciousness as early, and on the other hand Wisconsin's provincialism, its lack of mission work, kept it isolated from the world. Missouri has for a century exposed herself to the world and its stresses. When the materializing and organizational forces bring about the distortion of the Gospel, the one turns inward and the other turns outward.

And the CLC?

We are for the most part children of Wisconsin, which was sown in discord, which by God's grace was powerfully helped by God's prophets in her middle years. This heritage was transmitted to us by a generation which failed to heed the prophets sufficiently, and the human factors have worked relentlessly toward self-destruction.

What we have acquired from the fathers determines what we are. How much of the good of the blessings is at work among us? How much of the bad is flowing in our

arteries to all congregations and returning to the heart with additional impurities assimilated from the body on the way ?

Let no one think that this brief survey of our heritage is written in the spirit of looking down upon inferior churches from a lofty height of perfection. The CLC is not Walther of 1870 or Wauwatosa of 1918. We cannot equate ourselves with Moses and Joshua and Caleb, but must see ourselves as the generation which lost much understanding of the Lord and His works. This is not spoken in a spirit of defeat or despair. Our future lies on the kneecaps and in the closets of each individual. To the degree that we can realize ourselves as products of a decadent church and seek in deep repentance strength from our God and His Word, only to that degree can we serve as useful vessels to the Lord.

We have had a transfusion from another source, the Norwegian Synod. This too has added to our blessings. For the little group which was willing to stand alone in 1918 had vigor and love. They brought a personal sincerity and piety sometimes lacking in the German synods. They showed greater love for Christian education establishing schools with the meagerest of resources. But in the area where we needed help, this synod was also deficient. From their controversy with the large Norwegian Synod (1910-1918) the small group sought security and guarantee in doctrinal formulations. Sound and deep work in Scriptures is lacking also here.

Small synods are in themselves no better than large synods. If

Gideon thinks he wins because his 300 are the best of the lot, his condition is worse than if he had won with 300,000.

Are we not a self-satisfied people filled with pride in the vigor of our 300 ? Are we not often repeating the very mistakes of the past—placing emphasis on our doctrinal purity as a symbol of our strength, priding ourselves in being the strong ones who had the courage to come out, stressing study of dogma at the expense of deep Bible work, concerned with building our synodical house more than with proclaiming the good news to those without ?

Where the Gospel is thought of in terms of a body of doctrinal truths it is easy to be content. For when we so restrict and narrow God. He is a God whom we can master and say we know perfectly. We have attained. We are better than others. But when we think of the Gospel in its own terms: the story of the Holy-Holy-Holy who destroys everything even tainted by sin, and whose love yet is so amazing and huge that in His holiness He still embraces me, a piece of filth and stenching sin, then this God remains a God of whom we have only glimpsed the backside. In awe and humility we daily cry: Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.

Such honest humility drives us to Scripture, and we have much Scripture to learn. And in this alone is strength.

Our synod is grass which withers. Our flesh will die and the CLC will wither. We cannot stand it if the breath of the Lord blows upon

us. The judgment of God rests on a world ripe for judgment, on a nation which has despised its blessings, and on churches which in pride have failed their Lord.

And judgment begins at the house of God.

"But the word of our God
will stand forever."

W. S.

IS IT NECESSARY TO ATTEND CHURCH?

Let's say you do not think of yourself as a Christian. Yet at some vulnerable moment you may have admitted to yourself that you are vaguely interested. It is necessary for you to attend church? It may surprise you, but the Bible makes it plain that you can become a Christian before ever attending church, in your own home or wherever you are.

The twelve disciples of Jesus did not become followers of Jesus while they were in church, neither did the robber on the cross to whom Jesus promised Paradise, nor the three thousand who came to believe in Jesus on the first Pentecost. The truth is that many of the early converts from the pagan world turned to the Christian faith through direct, day to day, contact with Christian believers, and not through the ritual of Christian worship.

Now, it is surely possible to learn about the Christian faith by observing Christians at worship (and many do) and by hearing sermons addressed to a Christian congregation, sermons which honor Jesus as Christ and Lord. You may feel more comfortable as a visitor knowing that the service is a dialog between Christians and their God, and that, therefore even the sermon is not particularly directed to making Christians out of people who are none.

But if you are a Christian, Jesus is not just another great man to you. You recognize Him as true God, the only Son of the Father from eternity. You see Him as your Redeemer, who saved you at great cost from sin and death . . . who suffered for you even the death of the Cross. Christmas has real meaning for you. You know who was in the manger and why He was born. You understand the Magi who came a great distance and worshiped the Child and presented Him with treasured gifts. Is it any wonder you help maintain a place of worship to which you return Sunday after Sunday glorifying and praising God for what you have learned? And then wonder upon wonder, you find Him coming to you and speaking to you and blessing you!

Is it necessary to attend church? You now probably find that it is. But it is an altogether different kind of necessity. It is an inner necessity, and a glad one, like the Psalmist's, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 122:1)

*From the bulletin of St. Peter's Lutheran
Church in Denver, Colorado*

Nurturing Tender Plants

In The Blessedness of a Christian Death

The Christian is called to be a soldier of Jesus Christ here on the earth. As soldiers are mustered out of the army one by one and sent home when their tour of duty is over, so we Christians are one by one mustered out of Christ's army here on earth and taken home to heaven. As there is sadness over being parted from one's companions in arms, so there is sadness over the death of a Christian; but as the soldier's joy over laying down his duties and going home overcome his sadness and as the joy of his buddies for him overcomes their sadness, so our Christian hope and joy overcomes our sadness at the time of death. Thus, St. Paul writes: "We sorrow not as others which have no hope."

If the soldier did not know where he was going, or if he knew he was being transferred to an even worse battle field, then he and his buddies would be sad indeed. Then he would much rather stay in the Viet Nam jungles, disagreeable as they are. If we did not have hope, if death were some dark unknown abyss, then death would have to be a fearful thing. Then our departure out of this life would be most sad, both for us and for our fellows.

That is what death would mean for us if our Lord Jesus Christ had

not come to this earth to redeem us. Because of our sins, death would mean departing this life to begin the far worse hardships and sufferings of hell. Then, the fear of death would fill us. We would certainly rather stay in this life.

But God did not leave us in that helpless state. He so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son to be born of a Virgin, to take our place under the Law; in our place He lived a holy God-pleasing life here on earth and in our place he suffered all the pains of hell.

Because He took our place we are now free from having to go to hell. Because He rose again from the dead we now have hope that we will also be raised up again. God, the righteous Judge, who can not lie, has declared that all who believe in Jesus for life and salvation shall have it. Thus, our future is bright and secure. Through death we go home to Paradise, as St. Paul says: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:8)

Where then is the fear of death? Where then is sadness over death? The Christ-Child, whose birth we

have just celebrated, takes away all our fear and sadness. By faith in Him we overcome our fear of death. By faith in Him we even overcome our sadness and learn to rejoice in death as the battle weary soldier rejoices in being mustered out of the army to go home. By faith we say with St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be

to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15:35-37) By faith in Him we learn to regard life and death as St. Paul did when he wrote: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." (Phil. 1:21-24)

RUBEN UDE

BOOKS AND IDEAS

This column really intends only to spread some new ideas from books, and doesn't demand that every one rush out and buy all the books mentioned. But if sometimes your appetite is whetted, please do not hesitate.

Perhaps quite a few have seen a paperback on the newsstand and avoided it because its title struck them as distasteful. Go back and buy *The Gospel According to PEANUTS*. By Robert L. Short. Richmond: John Knox Press. 127 pages. \$1.50.

This is a serious work by a man working on a Ph.D. program at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He is enthused that Charles Schulz in his popular comic strip is able to use this art medium to communicate Biblical truths to thousands who have long conditioned themselves to resist all direct preaching and witnessing.

The book is valuable for the introductory chapter, The Church and the Arts. This chapter is crammed with thought provoking ideas

on the value of symbols and art in communicating the *hidden* things, the invisible things in which faith is centered.

In the remaining chapters Short acts as interpreter of the Christian message in the cartoons. He uses many comic strips in the book for his examples, and so one must keep reading, for who can resist a comic on the next page. The chapter titles will give an idea of the content and scope of religious thought Short finds in *Peanuts*. Chapter 2: "The Whole Trouble": Original Sin; Chapter 3: The Wages of Sin Is "Aaaughh!"; Chapter 4: Good Grief!; Chapter 5: The Hound of Heaven; Chapter 6: Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

Since Mr. Short interprets the message according to his beliefs, the theology is colored accordingly. The author is extremely well read, quotes Luther frequently, and usually presents orthodox beliefs. His neo-orthodoxy and Calvinism show through at several places.

The editors of *The National Ob-*

server have been developing a new medium of journalism, which they call "Newsbook." According to the editors it "aims to fill a need . . . in the area of depth reporting somewhere between the spot news of today and the history books of tomorrow." Newsbooks are 8½ x 11 with a stiff paper cover. Their fourth effort, published in 1965, is of special interest: *A Report in Depth on RELIGION IN ACTION* — How America's faiths are meeting new challenges. Published by The National Observer, Silver Spring, Md. 212 pages. \$2.00.

This is a fairly complete report on what changes are taking place in the churches of our country, what new things are being tried, what is most outstanding in each denomination at the present time.

There is a chapter on Christian Unity which reports on the Vatican Council, Catholic-Protestant differences, and Protestant Mergers. There is a chapter on each of the larger faiths and on five small faiths with large impact. There are special background reports on the leading theologians of today, and a look at Martin Luther King as a minister.

There is a lengthy report on the new involvement with social issues and a chapter on the Evangelicals and the Pentecostals. The last chapter reports on new and unusual forms of the ministry as in Las Vegas and the factories.

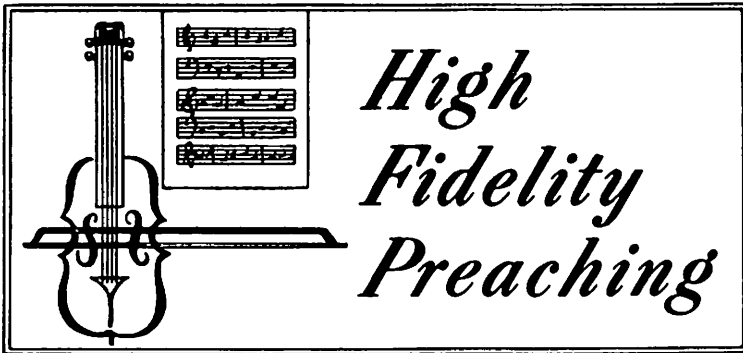
If you are a little bewildered by hundreds of religious news items floating around in the brain seeking a place to rest, this book will do much to straighten up the mental filing system. And it will add

a few new filing cards, and bring the reader up to date.

For spiritual nourishment and some excellent writing there is, *The World Upside Down or Right Side Up!* By Paul G. Bretscher; Concordia, Hard Cover, 130 pages, \$2.50. Professor Bretscher really communicates the great truths from the Beatitudes in an effective way. We view the world upside down, all our values are topsy turvy because of sin. Jesus sets the world right side up. He powerfully carries out the contract in each beatitude. We'll mention but the first and the last. Through our world eyes it looks like this: "Blessed are those whose spirits are high, for they sit on top of the world." Jesus says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Upside down the last one would read: "Blessed are you when men like you, accept you, want you for their leader, and consider themselves fortunate to know you. Rejoice and be flattered, for great is your prestige on earth; for so men have accepted the conformists who were before you." But Jesus sets it right side up: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you."

In his exposition of each contrast Professor Bretscher draws heavily on incidents from his family circle. This makes the message even more forceful and relevant to every reader.

W. S.



C. THUROW

FROM BETHLEHEM TO CALVARY

Why is our Christchild so precious? Because in thirty-three years this "woman's Seed" was to bruise the serpent's head, namely, destroy Satan's power by dying on the cross. Every believer looks upon this innocent Babe with such joy because in faith he also beholds that same Child, head bowed in death, a ransom for the world's sin. A Christmas that does not stress this Truth is no Christmas.

This Gospel of the Savior's birth and death, so dear to every Christian, is strikingly taught on a release by CAMBRIDGE RECORDS. Side one brings J. S. Bach's Christmas Cantata No. 61, *Savior of the Nations come*. Overside is Heinrich Schuetz's *The Seven Words on the Cross*.

Bach's several Christmas cantatas are rich in Christian joy, and this Number 61 is the most splendid and spirited. Where Bach uses the hymn (LH:95) his treatment is magnificent. The bass aria from Revelations 3:30, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . .," is breathtaking in its explanation of Jesus' words. And what could be more fitting than to close with the last four lines of Philipp Nicolai's *How Lovely Shines the Morning Star* (LH:343) — "Amen, Amen,

Come and meet me! Quickly greet me . . ." These words of yearning, set to Nicolai's grand tune, unfold God's Christmas gift to sinful man as well as our yearning for the day when she shall meet our Christchild in the heavens.

When Schuetz composed *The Seven Words on the Cross*, the Thirty Year's War was taking its dreadful toll on Germany and had thinned the ranks of church singers and instrumentalists to a bare minimum. The small number of available performers may in part be responsible for the exquisite simplicity of this work. His settings of the words "I thirst" and "It is finished" are bare and awe inspiring. This entire work makes for deep meditation and preaches a rich sermon.

Cantata 61 is also available in a fine performance on an MHS disc that includes Cantatas 26 and 130: MHS 516, mono or stereo, \$2.50. Order from *THE MUSICAL HERITAGE SOCIETY*; 1991 Broadway; New York 10023.

The SCHWANN CATALOG shows the Schuetz work to be found on two other records, but both are inferior to this newer one by Cambridge.

The unique coupling of Christmas and Calvary makes this Cambridge album outstanding. Order CR-417 for \$4.79 or the well done stereo CRS-1417 for \$5.79.

The Bread of Life

THE TIME OF THE PATRIARCHS

While all the world powers were trying to achieve greatness, God chose the nation of Israel to be His children and the bearers of His Gospel-promise of a Savior. He carefully trained the ancestors of this people in the faith which they should hand down to their children and preserved them from being contaminated with the idolatry of the heathen people around them.

G E N E S I S

Abraham is "the father of all who believe" (Rom. 4:11). His story is typical of faith, its beginning, development, weaknesses, trials, achievements, triumphs, blessings, and peaceful happiness.

- Jan. 29 — 11:25-32 But they settled in Haran 421,1&4
 Jan. 30 — 12:1-9 "Lord, 'tis not that I did choose Thee" 37,1-2
 Jan. 31 — 12:10-20 Strategy is no substitute for trust 425,1&5
God had chosen a secluded territory for Israel, yet bordering on the Mediterranean and passed by the great trade routes which connected East and West, North and South. Israel was to keep itself undefiled, yet proclaim the Gospel promise to the world. Lot, living at Sodom, was finally carried away captive by invaders. Abraham rescues him and is acclaimed savior and lord of the country.
- Feb. 1 — 13:1-8 "Love does not insist on its own way" 228,6
 Feb. 2 — 14:1-12 The little things confound the powerful 366,1-2
 Feb. 3 — 14:13-24 Can Sodom make Jehovah rich? 438,1-2
Abraham, having no children, again resorts to strategy to try to help Jehovah keep His promise. And this after God made a formal contract with him! But Jehovah teaches him that Ishmael, the son of his second wife, is not the God-appointed heir to the Gospel promise. A miracle of God, Isaac, not Abraham's cunning, would make His promise come true.
- Feb. 4 — 15:1-11 Fear not, I am your shield 427,1-3
 Feb. 5 — 15:12-21 A one way treaty 427,4-5
 Feb. 6 — 16:1-6 Can man help Jehovah? 429,1
 Feb. 7 — 16:7-16 He loves unto the end 427,6-7
 Feb. 8 — 17:1-14 Jehovah confirms Abraham 412,1-2
 Feb. 9 — 17:15-27 Gentiles too shall come to your salvation 129,1-2
 Feb. 10 — 18:1-15 "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" 13,1-2
 Feb. 11 — 18:16-33 Prayer binds Jehovah to His Word 458,1&10
 Feb. 12 — 19:1-11 They have eyes but they do not see 430,4-6
 Feb. 13 — 19:12-23 "Flee (the world) for your life" 430,1-3
 Feb. 14 — 19:24-38 "Not a brief glance" 430,7-8
In His time, not Abraham's, Jehovah gave Abraham and Sarah the promised son. Abraham publicly proclaims Isaac the bearer of the promise and sole heir by dismissing Ishmael from his home. God tries Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham offers the obedience of faith, committing his way to the Lord Heb. (11:17-19).
- Feb. 15 — 21:1-14 Free slaves 375,4-5
 Feb. 16 — 21:15-21 What troubles you? . . . Fear not, for God 518,2&5
 Feb. 17 — 22:1-14 Obedience is all or nothing 521,1-3
 Feb. 18 — 22:15-19 "By myself I have sworn" 521,4-6
The last days of Abraham. Though not without temptations and falterings, Abraham calmly lives his last days in the fear and trust of Jehovah. He buys a burial place for Sarah, because as a "stranger" he will not bury her with the heathen. Also the wife of Isaac must be of the same faith with him. Abraham is confident that "the Lord will provide" again. In his last will he confirms Isaac as the universal heir of the promise.
- Feb. 19 — 23:1-16 "I am a stranger among you" 586,1&4
 Feb. 20 — 23:17-20 A possession for a burying place 586,5-7
 Feb. 21 — 24:1-9 A helper truly fit 625,1-3
 Feb. 22 — 24:10-21 Jehovah's steadfast love to Abraham 625,4-5
 Feb. 23 — 24:22-33 "Not until I have told my errand" 624,1-2
 Feb. 24 — 24:34-49 I have sworn to my master 624,3-4
 Feb. 25 — 24:50-61 "I will go" 626,1-2

Feb. 26 — 24:62-67	"So Isaac was comforted"	626,3-4	
Feb. 27 — 25:1-6	"Abraham gave all he had to Isaac"	429,3	
Feb. 28 — 25:7-11	"And Abraham was gathered to his people"	172,9-10	
			N. HARMS

CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

TREASURER'S REPORT

July 1, 1965 to January 1, 1966

BUDGETARY

RECEIPTS:	December, 1965	Total to Date
Offerings	\$ 5,630.21	\$45,623.68
Memorials	17.00	22.00
Revenues, Tuition	715.00	7,076.00
Revenues, Board & Room	1,292.00	12,053.00
Revenues, Other College	35.50	420.50
Interest Earned, 1964-65	— —	160.26
Total Receipts	\$ 7,689.71	\$65,355.44
DISBURSEMENTS:		
General Administration	\$ 123.11	\$ 946.63
Capital Investments	323.00	2,438.00
Home Missions & Administration	3,191.00	19,551.11
Japan Mission	550.00	3,300.00
I.L.C. Education Budget	3,783.15	22,525.21
I.L.C. Auxiliary Services Budget	3,500.21	14,769.99
Journal of Theology	149.45	214.00
Loan to The Spokesman	— —	500.00
Total Disbursements	\$11,619.92	\$64,244.94
Cash Deficit (-) and (+) Balance this Period	-\$ 3,930.21	+\$ 1,110.50
Cash Deficit July 1, 1965		— 5,386.46
Cash Deficit January 1, 1966		-\$ 4,275.96
I.L.C. Classroom Building Fund	\$ 2,022.85	\$ 9,411.41

* * * * *

Respectfully submitted,
Lowell R. Moen, *Treasurer*
1309 7th Avenue N.W.
Austin, Minnesota

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

	December	Six Months
Budgetary Offerings Needed	\$ 8,522.00	\$51,132.00
Budgetary Offerings Received	\$ 5,630.21	\$45,623.38
Deficit	\$ 2,891.79	\$ 5,508.62
Budgetary Offerings 1964-1965	\$ 7,523.83	\$39,242.31
Decrease, '64-'65	\$ 1,893.62	
Increase, '64-'65		\$ 6,381.07

Board of Trustees
L. W. Schierenbeck, *Chairman*

Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference

Date: February 8-9, 1966

Place: St. Stephen congregation
San Carlos, California, Rollin Reim,
pastor

Conference service: K. Hallauer,
speaker

Program: Exegesis of I Peter 1, W.
Schaller; Concept of the "only-be-
gotten" Son of God, M. Witt; May
We Claim to Have an Errorless
Doctrinal Position? N. Reim; A
Suggested Lenten Series, Rollin
Reim.

Robert Reim, *Secretary*

Installation

As authorized by President Paul
Albrecht, I installed Kenneth Hallauer
as pastor of St. John Lutheran
Church, Clarkston, Washington, and
as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church,
Orofino, Idaho, on the First Sunday
in Advent, November 28, 1965.

Robert A. Reim

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