

November 1978
Vol. 21, No. 5

lutheran spokesman



UPON THINE ALTAR LORD WE
LAY, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THY
BLESSINGS

CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

HAPPY TWENTIETH!

While doing housekeeping chores filing old issues we were reminded that 1978 is an anniversary year for the *Lutheran Spokesman*. We are a little late in bringing it to remembrance. The beginning of publication was in June 1958. The editor at the time voiced the reason for the appearance of a new Lutheran publication. What was said there is still true. We repeat it now. It is well to remember our origins.

"The policy and purpose of this new periodical which greets you at this time is summarized on the front cover. The name, *Lutheran Spokesman*, indicates that it is our purpose to be a true daughter of the Reformation and to speak as Martin Luther did in his time. With dozens of periodicals in existence which bear the name Lutheran in their mastheads, the question would appear in order, 'Why another one? Are there not more than enough papers proclaiming the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation in America?' Our answer is the reason for this new journal.

"Lutheranism has fallen on evil days. One Lutheran body after another has lost its confessional character or is in the process of losing it. Under the relentless pressure of socialism with its universal influence on the churches as well as secular institutions, two factors are at work which are destroying the Lutheran churches.

"Socialistic thinking is directed against individualism, and the individual must subject his peculiar needs and beliefs to the 'group,' society, community, or state. It becomes increasingly difficult to retain individuality, also confessional individuality, that is, apartness.

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“The second factor is the this-worldliness of socialism which has permeated all parts of our culture. For 50 years the trend has moved steadily, turning the face of the churches from the other world to this world and its problems.

“Now these two factors work hand in hand. As the churches become more and more occupied with external endeavors, with the problems of this life such as relief, peace, large organizations, such goals can be far better accomplished if each group gives up its individuality for the sake of cooperation. Thus it becomes increasingly hard today to distinguish between Lutheran and Reformed; Lutherans are becoming Protestant. . . . No, there are not many voices left for the Lutheran heritage.”

The decision to start the publication of the *Lutheran Spokesman* was made at Cheyenne, Wyoming, May 1958, at a conference where a few pastors who had left their former affiliation had met together. Pastors Winfred Schaller, Jr. and N. Carlson were chosen as a staff. The first issues were mimeographed. Publication was every other month. By December of that year the *Spokesman* came out in its present format and was commercially printed. When the second volume came out in mid 1959, publication became monthly.

In report of the launching of the *Spokesman*, this also was said: “Hereby pastors and congregations will find opportunity to exhort one another in the Word.” Our modest publication, which has become an official journal of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, will remain something worthwhile if it continues to do just that, with the accent on speaking to one another “in the Word.”

—G. Sydow

ALL THINGS FOR GOOD

“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NIV)

The eighth chapter of Romans is a gold mine of comfort for the child of God especially in his present sufferings. One of the richest nuggets of this chapter is the affirmation that all things work together for good to those who love God. It is probably one of the most quoted parts of

Scripture, especially in the face of suffering.

It is strange, though, that our use of this passage sometimes lacks the ringing confidence of the Apostle Paul. Paul affirmed, “We know!” This knowing is not the product of intellectual study nor is it the result of personal experience. In fact, Paul’s personal experiences would have led him to the opposite conclusion. In response to all the things that are against us, we tend to

think, "I hope everything works out." Even when we comfort someone else with these words, the thought lingers, "Is it possible that this is for the best?" It is only the Spirit who gives us the confidence to say, "We know!" This is an affirmation of faith.

Even the Bad Serves for Good

Part of the problem is that we tend to limit Paul's sweeping claim that "all things" work together for good. We limit this by finding it hard to see as Joseph saw when he looked back over his life. "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. 50:20) Because we do not see the end of the journey, it is difficult to realize how God fits all the little pieces of our lives together into the total picture.

It is hard to comprehend that even the "bad" experiences of our lives serve a beneficial purpose. We do this because we tend to define "good" in terms of what we want here and now. It is only when we learn that "good" means our final salvation that we know that all things do work together for our good.

The key is to view this verse in its entirety. In seminary, Professor Gullerud pointed out that the winner of a beauty contest had quoted this verse. What made this unusual was not that it was a beauty contest, but rather that she had quoted the entire verse. How many times have you

heard this verse used in its entirety? "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, *who have been called according to his purpose.*"

God's Eternal Election

This is the thrust of Paul's affirmation. We should turn the verse around. God has called us; therefore, everything has to work together for our good. God is totally in charge of this world and our individual lives. There are no accidents of history. Paul's affirmation is a God-centered rather than a man-centered view of life. We are not in charge of our destiny. The Creator-God orders all things according to His purposes. Even our coming to faith is not a matter of our striving or our coming to God. God has called us according to His purpose. God predestined us. God called us. God justified us. And God glorifies us.

In adoration and praise of God, Paul speaks of the mystery of God's choosing us even before we were born. To speak of an eternal election as Paul does here is to know then that all things have to work together for our good. God loves you and God has chosen you as His own. From the glory of this that "God has called you," it is but a short step to the affirmation that "all things work together for good." In Jesus Christ we also affirm that we *know* that all things work together for good.

—J. Schierenbeck

“IN THE TRENCHES”

There is more to preachers than the preaching; there is the battle “in the trenches.” This warfare is the more difficult because we are not fighting against flesh and blood. May the reader come to appreciate all the more the battle which honorable Christian pastors wage against the “lords of this dark world” as they do more day by day than just “prepare to preach.”

“I would like to write my own marriage vows”

A recent phenomenon in the experience of the preaching ministry has been this request for the rewording of the marriage vows. “What’s wrong with the way we have always had it?” is one natural response on the part of the Christian pastor. And once more we have that encounter “in the trenches” as the pastor does more than preach.

The Pastor’s Concern

The Lutheran Church praises highly its heritage. In so far as our roots are based on Holy Scripture, this is praiseworthy. Our marriage service and the wording of our marriage vows have truly stood the test of time. We of the older generation have become familiar with those vows. Side by side, couple after couple has responded in the same way to the same words. Our emotions go deep in this regard. These twin roots of heritage and emotion are to be understood and hopefully appreciated by the Christian young of this day in our church, as they now think to ask their pastor for permission to write the wording of their own vows.

The pastor of course is concerned

about the motivation for such a request. It surely appears to have come from “the evil spirits.” For the seed is perhaps planted by television and movies: lovers overheard devising their own mutual vows. Oh, the wording is so beautiful, so sentimental, so profound, and so important as expressing feelings and emotions.

Yet how often do not such “personal” vows lack one important ingredient that surely is Biblical: the OBEDIENCE of the wife to the husband! Perhaps other God-oriented vows and obligations are often also lacking, according to the personal worldly preference. In the potential absence of the vows of obedience and in the overall danger of reworking Holy Scripture, the Christian pastor quickly sees the possible presence of “the evil one.”

Yes, the pastor is properly concerned. Let the young of our church appreciate the wholesome fear that is being aroused in him. If at the very beginnings of such a relationship, as marriage is, the conscientious pastor allows a tampering with the Word of God, where will the possible spiritual

departure end? It is not that the wording as we have it in our agenda is sacrosanct. It is not that what Scripture says about the marriage vow cannot be worded differently. The pastor is concerned that the intent of what is the will of God in marriage is not going to be allowed to prevail (especially if one partner of the marriage couple is NOT of our conviction). That retreat the Christian pastor cannot allow.

The Couple's Desire

The couple planning the wedding anticipate that the pastor will object to their desired changes. So they are afraid to ask for permission to change the wording of the vows. Because they are afraid, they also become angry. They are angry to think that they cannot speak freely with the pastor regarding their desire. Thus the two parties come together in the pastor's chambers not as mutual helpers on life's journey, but as immediate combatants.

There is something to be remembered and taken to heart by both sides. The young couple is to know that their called pastor is NOT going to be immediately against their request to write their own vows. Such an antagonism is not going to show on his face, nor in his voice, nor by way of the words he speaks or the questions he asks. He is going to listen with understanding, for he has an open mind over against what is an adiaphoron. God has not instructed him concerning the exact wording he must use in marriage ceremonies. So the pastor will speak gently and

kindly of heritage, tradition, and the will of God.

The pastor is hoping that the young couple will indicate clearly that they have no intention of deviating from the ways of the Word and do not desire to follow the ways of the world. Rather, their request is motivated by their desire to give expression to their own mutual love and their deep feelings for each other in a very special way before God and the world on the day of their marriage.

The Old Ways

But even though we dare not adamantly refuse those couples who make this request, we still do not want to ENCOURAGE our dear young people to write the wording of their own vows. We would hope that these requests would be the exception, and that for the most part our joyous young persons would abide by the heritage of our church and the traditional expressions of our faith.

Why the old ways? Because our traditional marriage ceremony is literally filled with God's own Word on marriage as our Bible has planted the words into our souls. To repeat these on the day of marriage, and to vow faith, love, and devotion to the essence of these words: this we feel is the good and solid foundation on which to base the marriage. Of course, if someone says the right words and does not mean what they say, such hypocrisy rests under God's all-seeing judgment. To be sure, true faith is more important than how God's truth is worded! But at the same time the words we have

always used clearly express the truths God wants us to have.

A Victory for God

When pastor and sheep meet "in the trenches" in such fashion as we have described, what results is not antagonism, hurt feelings, or a spoiled ceremony, but a mutual understanding between the ways of the old and the desires of the young. Each side has a reason for feeling as it does. If there is understanding and love and kindness and Christian unity and affection as both sides

meet to discuss marriage vows, it will be but a thwarting once again of that "lord of this dark world." Another encounter "in the trenches" will result in a victory for the Lord God in the arena of Christian warfare.

On the other hand, if the intent in the request to reword the marriage vow is to *change* the clear meaning of God's Word, then the honorable pastor is going to fight hard, and he shall win! Even if the couple is never seen again, *God has WON* through the voice of His vicar.

—Jonathan Schaller

Chapel Talk, Immanuel Lutheran
College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

MEDITATIONS ON PSALM 19

Psalm 19:9a - The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever.

Listen again to this Psalm from verse 7: THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT, CONVERTING THE SOUL: THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD IS SURE, MAKING WISE THE SIMPLE. THE STATUTES OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, REJOICING THE HEART: THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD IS PURE, ENLIGHTENING THE EYES. Did you hear those words? Law, testimony, statutes, commandment—all of them synonyms for the Holy Scriptures.

But with this next phrase, THE FEAR OF THE LORD, we do not

have another description of the Word, but rather a description of the attitude of a willing and obedient hearer of the Word. Many people hear but do not listen. Consequently all the blessings that we have just reviewed are lost to them: conversion, wisdom, joy, enlightenment. Yes, without the sure hope that the Word of God gives, people know nothing for certain, but are constantly haunted by their own frustrations and envy and fears.

The Wrong Fear of God

C. S. Lewis, in his little booklet entitled *Christian Behavior*, tells of

the boy who, when he was asked what he thought God was like, said, "That sort of person who is always snooping round to see if anyone is enjoying himself and then trying to stop it." What is it that gives people this impression of God, that makes them think that God is trying to spoil their fun? Is it not fear, shame, a guilty conscience, dread for what God might think of them or do to them? Until men are justified with their God, until they can come to grips with Him, so to speak, they can only be afraid of His anger and never be sure of His good pleasure. They are the ones St. Paul speaks of as "without hope, the most miserable of all men."

Nothing is worse than to be afraid of God! This fear can lead to the rankest hypocrisy, when people try their best to keep all the commandments just so God will not be angry any more (though it does not work and they are still afraid). Or it can lead to the depths of suicide, when people defy His anger and live as if they had no conscience and God were not there. But that does not free them from fear either.

Dr. Luther felt this dreadful fear of a guilty conscience very keenly. He spoke freely of the times when he as a little boy would sit in the church, terrified by the picture of Christ in the stained glass window over the altar, a picture of a scowling and threatening Christ. He knew what it was like to be afraid, and at this time in his life he did not have the answer. The passage of this text before us, the fear of the Lord is clean, would

have made no sense to him. What is clean or bright or beautiful about being afraid of God?

The True Fear of God

It was not until Dr. Luther came to faith in Jesus Christ that this text really had meaning. Then he first realized what peace of heart the merits of Christ gave him, that where there is forgiveness there is no fear! When the text says the fear of the Lord is clean, it must mean something other than being afraid.

The fear of God has two meanings in Scripture. Sometimes it does mean to be afraid, as the heathen fear God. But in other contexts it means just the opposite. It means that true fear of God that has no afraidness in it whatsoever.

What is the true fear of God? It is the attitude of a believer toward his heavenly Father. It is how you feel toward the God who forgives you, an attitude that the Apostle Paul summarizes for us when he says: "Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31) To fear God is to give Him all glory, and there is not a hint of being afraid in it. We do not fear or glorify God because we have to or because we are afraid of Him. We glorify Him because we love Him.

Love is the principal emotion in fear, and that is why Dr. Luther, once he had lost his being afraid and had come truly to fear God, cherished the concept of the true fear of God. He began each explanation of the commandments with it, ten

times saying, "We should fear God because we love Him in order that we might . . ."

Approaching God in Cleanness

What a glorious thing the fear of God is! It describes our everyday attitude toward Him, an attitude that our text calls clean. **THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS CLEAN.** It is clean because it is the only attitude with which we can approach God. Think if you will of the strong distinction in the Old Testament between clean and unclean. An Old Testament Jew could eat only clean animals and fowl. A person who was unclean could not eat show-bread or approach the Lord without first satisfying elaborate terms of purification.

When the Psalmist here tells us that we are clean, he means to tell us that we are purified; the leprosy of sin has been removed; there is nothing to prevent us who have the

true fear of God from approaching Him in prayer because we are clean, so clean through the blood of Jesus Christ that God, in turn, promises to shed every good thing and blessing upon us.

And this clean fear of the Lord **ENDURES FOREVER.** The true fear of God is one of those intangible things that no one can take from you. It is a function of your soul, your inner being. You cannot see it, you cannot scratch it, you cannot feel it, but it is yours. It is a part of you, that part of you that grows in communion with God as you grow in the Scriptures and in faith. It is that part of you that loves God and that gives all blessing, honor, and glory to Him as the Highest Good and Dearest Treasure. It is that part of you that will not perish with your mortal body when you die, but is translated into heaven to live with Him for all eternity.

—*Robert Dommer*

BIRTH PAINS

One night Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." Of course, we never thought, as did Nicodemus, that our Lord was speaking of a second physical birth, for that is impossible. We knew that the Lord Jesus was speaking of a spiritual birth, a birth from above, conversion, and we never doubted that we had received that spiritual rebirth, for we knew that we had been graciously received into God's

kingdom through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost in Christian baptism.

However, we also knew that the same Lord who said, "You must be born again," also said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31f.). And here is where the problem lay. Every child of God desires to continue in the

Word of his Master. Every Christian desires to be a true disciple of the Lord, for as Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. . ." (John 10:27). Everyone who honestly and sincerely bears the name of Christ desires to be set free from anything that would once again entangle him in sin. We knew that our Lord in His Word tells us to separate ourselves from false teachings and false teachers, so if we were to continue in the Word of our God, then it would be impossible for us to remain in our present congregation and synod, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

So, we learned that we would have to be reborn again, a third time, theologically and confessionally. And unlike the pains of birth that our mothers bore when they gave us physical birth, which soon subsided, we found that we felt the pain ourselves and that we also must bear it continuously.

The Bible

The birth into confessionalism still causes us pain in the area of God's Word. The devil, using both the world and our own flesh, constantly tries to make us believe what we had been taught falsely for so many years, namely, that only the Gospel is inspired and not the Bible itself.

How good this sounds! How much it sounds like a strong proclamation of the Gospel! How could anyone be wrong when he is for the Gospel, which tells us of the forgiveness of our sins in Christ Jesus?

But what does God say? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (2 Tim. 3:15). Yet how easy the temptation is for us still to respond when God speaks to us, with the "Yea, hath God said?" of the serpent to Eve.

You see, Satan never puts on a little red costume with horns and a pitchfork, constantly jumping out at us and trying to catch us. Rather, he appears to us as "an angel of light," seeking to lead us just a little to the right or to the left. He gives us a counterfeit of the real thing and shouts loudly to us, "The Gospel is inspired, the Gospel is inspired; not the Bible! Why, to say that the Bible is breathed by God and, therefore, infallible and inerrant is legalistic nonsense." So even when we seek to teach the Word of God and apply it concerning such scriptural doctrines as church fellowship, the evil one is ever present, whispering in our ears, "Only the Gospel is inspired."

Word and Experience

We have to stop and think of our own past experience, and we have to turn to the Word of the Lord. The two together tell us loud and clear: the ones who shout loudest and longest about the Gospel are the ones who have lost the Gospel, and we almost lost it with them. Do we want that to happen again? God forbid! Therefore, we must again and again read the inspired words of St. Paul: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . ." (2 Tim. 3:15); "When ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as

the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God.” (1 Thess. 2:13). We must believe these words with all our hearts.

All the while we will more than likely still feel our confessional birth pains in the flesh, for how often we find opposition in relatives and former friends, and how terribly painful this is. Nevertheless, our spirits are at peace, for we have had revealed to us the source of such peace, Jesus our Savior, who comes to us only through the Word of our God, our Holy Bible.

Not Alone

While we may be alone in the fact that we are able to celebrate a third kind of birthday, we are not alone in the bearing of confessional pain. For our CLC brethren who read this are able to weep when we weep and to rejoice when we rejoice, because they

too have faced and face daily the unholy trinity—Satan, the world, and their flesh. And many of them also must bear the pain that goes hand in hand with Biblical Christianity which is confessional Lutheranism—the pain of being different.

But are we to feel sorry for ourselves? Not at all! For we know from the facts of life that much pain is associated with birth. And we know from our God in His Word “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22).

So let us rejoice that our God has seen fit to give us one, two, and even three births and the pain that goes along with them, and let us make certain that we share with the whole world, the Giver of all three, our gracious Savior-God.

—F. M. Archer

Editor's note: Living Word congregation of Hendersonville, North Carolina came into existence in December of 1971 when Pastor Fred Archer and some 25 people separated themselves from the Lutheran Church in America (LCA).

Daily Devotions

“COME, YOUR HEARTS AND VOICES RAISING” (Hymn 90)

Let us raise our voices in songs of expectation and gladness as we journey through Advent on our way to Bethlehem's manger. Even if you have never made the singing of hymns a regular part of your devotions in the past, do it this month. Whether a Christian considers himself a good singer or not, at Christmas he sings. Each of us has favorite songs and carols—many of which we know by heart and love to sing again and again. There seems to be no end of beautiful Christmas hymns which proclaim the true glory of this joyous season. This is reflected in the fact that in the suggestions below there are few repeats. However, you will certainly want to add your favorites on more than one day.

Some Special Suggestions

Here is a suggested "Order of Worship" for this special time of the year.

- + Make an Advent calendar or an Advent wreath. Begin your devotions by lighting the candle or candles for the week, or open the calendar window for the day.
- + Read the Scripture selection. Discuss what you have read—especially with the shorter readings. Consider such questions as: What is the main point of the reading? What is the purpose for which this word was given to its original readers? To us? What is the meaning of the imagery (if any) used? What does this have to do with the coming Christ? How can this word of God help us prepare for, or celebrate, Christmas? etc.
- + Sing the hymn suggested—or read it if it is unfamiliar. Discuss how the hymn reflects the words and thoughts of the Bible reading. When certain verses do this more than others, this is indicated in parentheses.
- + Sing one or more other hymns or carols which are family favorites. We have only mentioned those in our Lutheran Hymnal, but surely you will want to sing *Away in a Manger; It Came Upon the Midnight Clear; As Each Happy Christmas; God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*; etc.
- + Conclude your devotions by using a hymn stanza as a closing prayer (spoken).

Family singing can help us get "the Christmas spirit" in the right way—by remembering that

**"Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray."**

Such tidings of comfort and joy put songs in our hearts as well as on our lips.

**"Since first the world was made,
so many hearts have watched and prayed.
The Patriarchs' and Prophets' throng
for Him have hoped and waited long."**

	SCRIPTURE READING	CHRISTMAS HYMN	CLOSING PRAYER
December	1 Genesis 3:9-15	91:5-9 (7-8)	73:5
	2 Genesis 22:15-18	91:1-4	65:6
	3 Genesis 49:10	55	106:7
	4 Numbers 24:17	90 (5)	55:4
	5 II Samuel 7:12-17	59 (1, 5, 6)	82:3
	6 Isaiah 7:14	62 (1)	647:4
	7 Isaiah 9:1-7	106	645:5
	8 Isaiah 11:1-10	645	82:3
	9 Isaiah 61:1-3	66	65:6
	10 Jeremiah 23:5-6	77:1-2, 13-14	55:2
	11 Ezekiel 34:20-24	109	89:5
	12 Haggai 2:7	136 (3-4)	94:4
	13 Micah 5:2	647	69:6
	14 Malachi 4:1-6	94 (3)	88:4

**"Repent, the kingdom draweth nigh,
The herald of the Lord doth cry."**

December	15 Isaiah 40:1-8	61	75:4
	16 Luke 1:5-25	61 (2-4)	106:7
	17 Luke 1:57-66	71	94:4
	18 Luke 1:67-79	88	75:4
	19 John 1:6-8, 15-18	63	88:4
	20 Psalm 24	73 (1, 4, 5)	55:4

**“Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.”**

December 21	Luke 1:26-38	76	85:13
22	Luke 1:39-56	105	55:2
23	Matthew 1:18-25	95	86:5-6
24	Luke 2:1-14	85:1-5, 14, 15 & 646	85:13
25	Luke 2:15-20	102	89:5
26	John 1:1-5, 14	80 or 98	645:5
27	Psalms 98	87	90:8
28	Galatians 4:1-7	99	647:4
29	Philippians 2:6-7 2 Corinthians 8:9	85:8-13	69:6
30	Romans 5:1-11	94 (1, 4)	90:8
31	Titus 2:11-14	97	96:4

—W. V. Schaller

Treasurer's Report

July 1, 1978—October 1, 1978

RECEIPTS:	SEPTEMBER	TO DATE
Offerings	\$19,219.03	\$65,982.67
Memorials	—	6.00
Interest earned	5.63	5.63
TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>\$19,224.66</u>	<u>\$65,994.30</u>
DISBURSEMENTS:		
Retirement Benefits	2,271.00	5,990.00
Emergency Support	500.00	500.00
Capital Investments	1,672.79	5,676.27
General Administration	698.02	1,801.68
Missions & Administration	7,973.57	24,751.07
Immanuel Lutheran College	11,200.25	33,600.75
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	<u>\$24,315.63</u>	<u>\$72,319.77</u>
CASH DEFICIT FOR PERIOD	(- 5,090.97)	(- 6,325.47)
CASH BALANCE, JULY 1, 1978	—	6,020.10
CASH DEFICIT, OCTOBER 1, 1978	—	(- 305.37)

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OTHER RECEIPTS:

Mission Extension Fund	456.50	2,921.30
ILC Expansion Fund	3,293.64	5,101.99
Udo Education Fund	152.38	264.38
Nigerian Fund	189.46	204.46
Nigerian Visitation Fund	26.28	44.28

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

BUDGET OFFERINGS NEEDED	\$27,543.00	\$82,629.00
BUDGET OFFERINGS RECEIVED	19,224.66	65,994.30
BUDGET DEFICIT FOR 3 MONTHS	(- 8,318.34)	(- 16,634.70)

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BUDGET OFFERINGS, 1977-1978	\$23,446.76	\$49,647.93
BUDGET OFFERINGS, 1978-1979	19,224.66	65,994.30
DECREASE—INCREASE THIS YEAR	(- 4,222.10)	16,346.37

Respectfully Submitted,
L. R. Moen, Trustee Treasurer
B. J. Naumann, Chairman

Announcements

Change of Address

The Rev. Clarence Hanson
Rambush Estates Court
Box 3, Silver Street
Lake Crystal, Mn. 56055

Installation

As authorized by President Egbert Albrecht, I installed the Rev. Arvid Gullerud as pastor of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Corpus Christi, Texas on September 24, 1978.

—L. D. Redlin

Jesus As Example?

"The life of Jesus Christ affords abundant and sufficient evidence, even to those who do not recognize Christ as divine, that the world and all of history can be revolutionized and transformed merely by the good example of one individual. Christ never declared, 'They ought to be Christians.' But Christ's example has caused millions of persons through 20 centuries to want to be Christians. A quiet, good example is also enormously powerful."

The above public statement,

appearing as an opinion in a local daily newspaper, causes us to scream in anguish at how little Jesus and the Gospel are understood today.

Diabolical Poison

It takes no careful examination to see that this is nothing but the Devil's brew that Christ came as a good example according to which we are to model our lives. Christ is thereby made into another lawgiver, and His mission is robbed of any Gospel content.

For millions of people to believe in

Christ as a model and to guide their lives accordingly is no revolution at all, as the article implies. It is simply the ordinary course of things. It is the natural human heart reasserting that in one way or another its own good living is the road to heaven. For that matter, it is really the essence of the whole outlook and tone of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The thought is simply this: "Christ inspires me to live well; therefore I can be saved."

Away with such diabolical, religious poison! Such doctrine is a foul smoke emitted from hell itself. Millions are breathing such polluted theological air and are choking without even knowing it.

Either . . . Or

True, Jesus never said: "You ought to be a Christian." The question of whether one *ought* to be a Christian is mildly absurd. The case is much stronger. The categories of ought and ought not are too feeble. The matter is one of stark, eternal, unchangeable fact: if not a Christian, eternal hellfire; if a Christian, everlasting life. Jesus makes that plain: "He that believeth (the Gospel of Christ) and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mk. 16:16)

A Christian is one who repents of his sins and believes in Jesus as the Son of God who died to remove our sins and who provided us a perfect, factual righteousness, a righteousness which enables us to spit right in the eye of the Devil himself.

Perfect Righteousness in Christ

The above article, however, apparently operates with the prevalent, modern-day conception of a "Christian" as one who is "a good boy." It is because Christ recognized that there never were and never will be any such "good boys" in the world as far as meeting God's standard of holiness is concerned, that He came and died on the cross. He came, not to provide another good example, but to provide an actual, finished, perfect righteousness. That is in the realm of *fact*, not of oughts or ought nots. Christ's righteousness is there to supplant, stamp out, destroy, and forever eradicate any other supposed righteousness emanating from the hearts and deeds of men, no matter whom they may be imitating or following as a model.

The Work of the Spirit

No doubt it is true that many people have wanted to be "Christians" in the sense that they looked at Christ as an inspiring model and tried to be more "Christlike." But if we put the true Biblical content into the word "Christian," we recognize another monstrous misconception in the above article.

The Bible teaches that the human being is dead in trespasses and sins and resists the truths of the Spirit of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. 8:7) That means no human being ever *wanted* to be a Christian. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to overcome our natural resistance, take our thoughts and

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wills captive, and recreate us as Christians. The desire to believe in Jesus as our Savior is grafted into our hearts from above. Does the Spirit use the *example* of Jesus in this? No, He uses the *Word* of Jesus, law and Gospel, in bringing us to the true saving faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10:17)

Replacement, Not Example

Ah blessed Gospel, that Jesus lifts all sin and law from us. He says: "I will give you *rest*." (Mt. 11:28) When we are on our deathbed, we don't want to be looking at Jesus and saying, "He showed me how to live a good life," but we want to be saying: "*He lived and died in my place!*"

The ultimate revolution is conversion. We are turned from our own thoughts and righteousness (including the thought that Christ came as a model for us to follow) to the thoughts of God and the imputed righteousness of Christ in the Gospel. We throw away also our *best works* and simply plead to be

washed in the blood of the Lamb. We look upon Christ first of all, not as model, but as replacement.

To those who know Jesus first as Savior, the Spirit does indeed present Him also as example. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." (Eph. 5:2; see also Phil. 2: 5ff.; 1 Pet. 2:4) But this following of Jesus as an example is never to be injected into the doctrine of justification.

Give yourself a critical spiritual test. Can you detect the totally false conception of Christ and Christianity, as exemplified in the above-mentioned newspaper editorial? If so, thank the Holy Spirit. If not, wake up, and beware the inroads of the Devil.

—Robert Wehrwein