

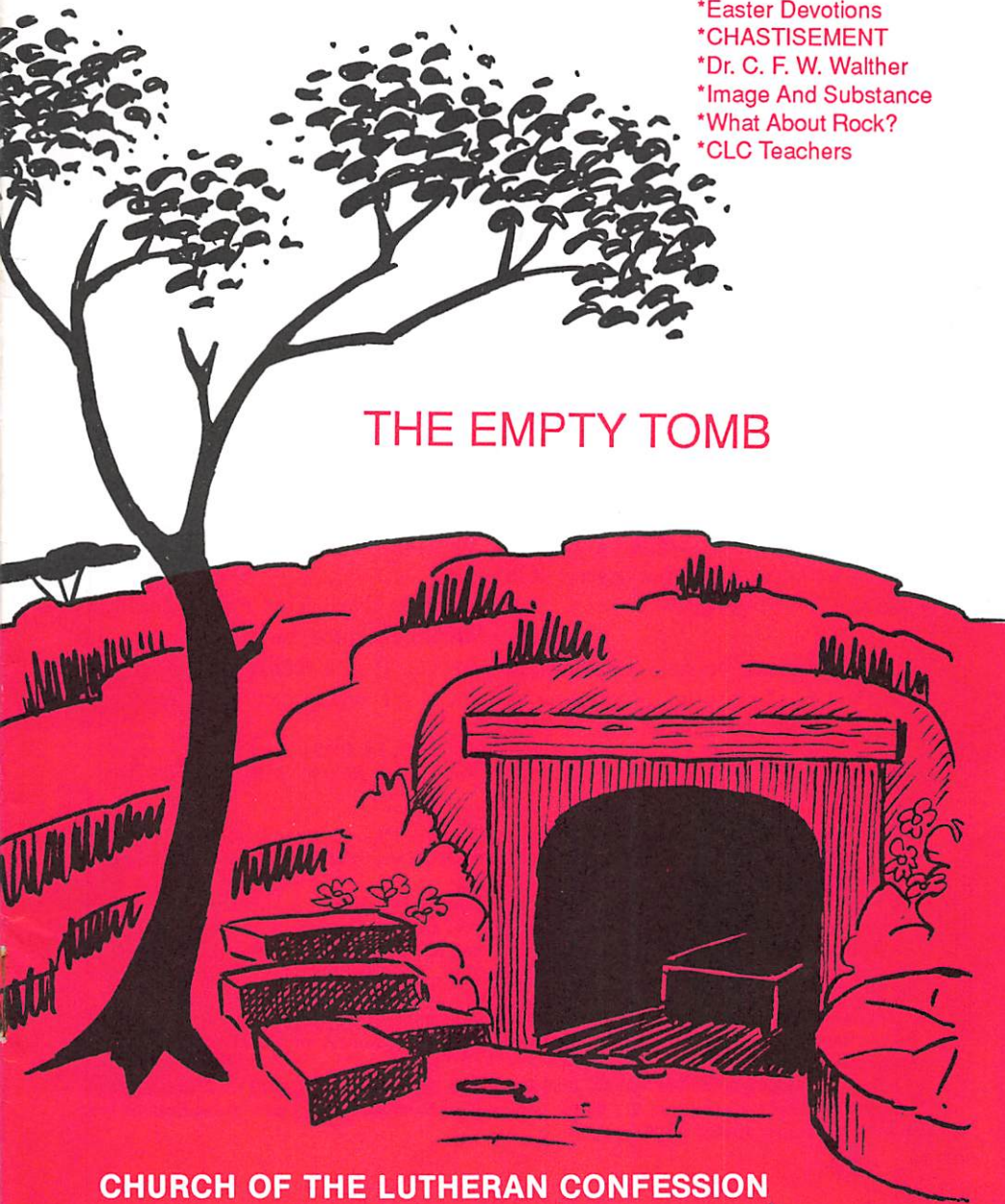
# lutheran spokesman

April 1988  
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## THE EMPTY TOMB



CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

# VIVIT!

Once when Martin Luther was battling a severe depression, he took pen and wrote on the walls of his room: VIVIT! VIVIT!—"He lives!" "He lives!"

Depression can be a dark and serious thing—something not easily shaken, not easily cured. Doctors will tell you depression can call for strong medicine. We shouldn't be surprised at that, for beyond the organic, physical causes of depression there are more than enough things that frustrate and depress—things like grief, pain, disease, injustice, inhumanity, death.

Luther was no stranger to the dark pull of depression. So he wrote the strongest prescription possible on the walls of his study. Jesus' resurrection is strong medicine for our ailing hearts and beleaguered souls.

How can we be sure of God's love when we know we do not deserve it in the least?

**HE LIVES!**

How can we be sure our own sins will not finally rise up to condemn us

forever?

**HE LIVES!**

How can we be sure we do not face life's grinding problems powerlessly and alone?

**HE LIVES!**

How can we be sure of love and light when all around us is indifference and darkness?

**HE LIVES!**

How can we be sure all is not over when the world around us fades and death's chill washes over us?

**HE LIVES!**

How can we know that the Word in which we've put our trust is truly reliable?

**HE LIVES!**

## An Historical Fact

Jesus lives! That is not wishful thinking. That is a fact, an historical fact.

Jesus lives! This is not an empty dream invented by His grieving followers. It is a reality that burst upon them all unexpectedly—a reality of

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which the risen Christ had to convince them with numerous proofs. Theories and legends don't invite the handling of Thomas, or eat broiled fish, or serve breakfast, or talk to 500 people at once.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is like His birth, His ministry, His death. It's not a "once upon a time" story. It's once-in-time salvation! Into this grubby, sin-sick, depressing world of ours He came. Here He lived and taught and dealt with our daily struggles. Here He prayed and died and dealt with our deepest woe.

And here where we live and struggle and die—He lives!

Right here.

Right now.

Still He deals with our daily struggles. Still He prays for us. Still His victory stands. "Because I live, you will live also" (Jn. 14:19).

**O stronger Thou than death and hell**

**Where is the foe Thou canst not quell?**

**What heavy stone Thou canst not roll**

**From off the prisoned, suff'ring soul!**

**ALLELUIA!**

—W. V. Schaller



*An Easter Message From Our CLC President—*

## **"IT IS FINISHED"— A NEW BEGINNING**

One of the grand words of Scripture is the "IT IS FINISHED" spoken by our Lord upon the cross. For your comfort believe that what is finished is finished—not in part, not almost, but completely!

"The atonement is finished; God's wrath has been endured; the punishment has been suffered; the judgment has been endured by the Son of God as a Brother of us sinful men. The Savior looked about Him; He looked back to the first sinner and ahead to the last sinner who will be born and, behold, He saw no one whose guilt He had not expiated and blotted out, no one for whom He had not obtained pardon and peace. By His one sacrifice He had

'perfected forever them that are sanctified' (Heb. 10:14)." (Besser, *The Passion Story*, p. 297).

No personal energy need be wasted to accomplish our salvation. Indeed it would be wasted energy, rooted in unbelief, were we to try to accomplish what Christ has already pronounced "FINISHED"—as if Christ really didn't, and it isn't.

There are two incontestable witnesses to the accomplished redemption—Christ Himself who rose from the dead, and the Father who "raised Him up from the dead" (1-Pet. 1:21).

### **Resurrection Living**

At the same time, Jesus' word is for

us a new beginning. Having accomplished our salvation and restored life and hope to such as were dead, our Lord has revived us unto "resurrection living."

Resurrection living is a life of fruitbearing. It is a Spirit-wrought desire to live for Him "who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works" (Tit. 2:14).

Resurrection living is not living to accomplish what Christ has already accomplished, namely, our eternal salvation. It is living what we are empowered to live, and what we could not live had Christ not died and rose again. Paul writes: "He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:15). Certainly it is our new desire that our personal life, and our collective church

life, be a fruitful living unto Christ.

Resurrection living will also manifest itself in confident and joyful living. People who are still living and working to earn their salvation cannot be confident or joyful of heart. They cannot ever be confident of having done enough to be sure of their salvation. They consequently are not freed up from slavish pursuit to be joyful. A runner in a race stresses and strains until the end of the race. Only at the end can he relax to enjoy and fruit of victory.

Relax. Your salvation is complete. "IT IS FINISHED." Each day of our life can henceforth be a new beginning to free and joyful service unto our God because Jesus has given us salvation.

If there is burden to our Christian life at all, it need only be the burden of recognizing the opportunities that our Lord prepares for us to serve Him.

—Daniel Fleischer



*As a symbol of Easter the Lily reminds us that, though the bulb is buried in the ground and eventually decays, out of it comes new life—as manifested by the stalk, leaves, and blossoms rising above the dark soil. So the Christian faith is that out of the experience of what we call death comes new and eternal life.*

## THE ESSENCE AND POWER OF BAPTISM

**B**aptism is a sacrament. Jesus commanded that people be baptized with water so that they may have forgiveness of sin and eternal life. He told His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

### Essential Elements

The essential elements of this sacrament are the water and the Word. The word *baptize* involves the use of water. Some would have us believe that immersion is the only acceptable way of applying the water. But a study of the use of the word in Scripture shows that washing (Mark 7:4), pouring (Acts 1:5, 2:16-18), and even sprinkling (Hebrews 9:10, 13) are methods which are just as acceptable as immersing.

The water is to be applied in connection with God's Word. We are not at liberty to choose whatever portion of Scripture that we please. Applying water as the 23rd Psalm or the Lord's Prayer is read would not be a true baptism. Jesus has given us the Word we are to use: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The command to baptize was given to the disciples who believed in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism by those Christian denominations which accept the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and baptize with water is valid baptism. But any religious group which rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and puts some other interpretation upon

the baptism formula does not have true baptism.

The command to baptize authorizes baptism for all people—"all nations." No one is to be excluded from baptism on the basis of social position, race, sex, or age. All who request baptism in accord with God's will, and their children, are to be baptized.

The essence of baptism is that water, used in connection with the appropriate Word of God, is to be applied to living people so that they may receive the promised blessings.

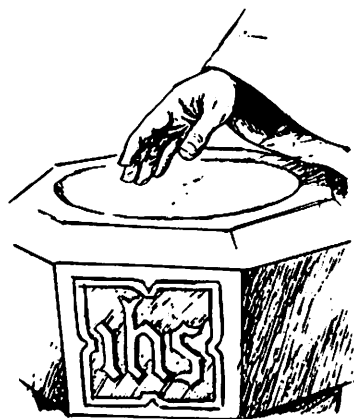
### The Power

The blessings of baptism are the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal salvation to all who believe the words and promises of God.

The question suggests itself: How can baptism do such great things? The power certainly is not to be found in the water. That is the same substance we use daily for many purposes. It is the word of God with which the water is used in baptism that provides the power.

In Hebrews 1:3 we read of "the word of His power" by which all things are upheld. That power is the almighty power of God which accomplishes whatever God wills. And that is why baptism can deliver the blessings which are promised.

When Luther, in the Small Catechism, identifies the Word as the source of power in baptism, he adds: ". . . and faith which trusts this Word of God in



the water." Baptism is, in other words, not a mechanical process which automatically results in a person's salvation. It is not a good luck charm which will cause the gates of heaven to open

for a person when he dies.

Jesus said: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Through the Word which is connected to baptism, the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith in little children who are baptized. And through the Word the Holy Spirit strengthens and preserves the faith of believing adults who are baptized.

Although faith does not make baptism a sacrament, faith is necessary to receive the blessings offered in baptism.

If we have been baptized and the Holy Spirit has led us to believe in Jesus as our Savior, we are to be confident that all that is promised through baptism is ours.

—Keith Olmanson

*Great Words Of The Bible—*

## CHASTISEMENT

*Big meaning or small, chastisement seems an unpleasant word to many. ("Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous . . ." Heb. 12:11). Chastise is the word that Pontius Pilate used when trying to appease the envy of the Jews: "I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him" (Lk. 23:22 NIV).*

Affliction, tribulation, punishment, and blows are all ideas connected with this word *chastisement*. From little on, many have recited the words of Isaiah: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed" (53:5). Here, too, the NIV translates it "punishment." So we might easily think of *chastisement* as just another word for "punishment"—something that falls upon us when we have done wrong.

But the Greek word had a larger

meaning in the days of the apostles. It literally meant "to treat as a child" and carried with it the thought of "education." Luke used it this way when recording Stephen's defense in Acts 7: "Moses was *educated* in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (v. 22). Paul also used the word in this way in his letters to Timothy.

### Discipline

*Chastisement* was not merely ran-

dom or arbitrary blows. It was meant to *teach*. Modern Bible translations sometimes use the word "discipline" in passages that also carry this thought. As discipline is not merely punishment, but concentrated effort moving towards a goal, so also is *chastisement*.

Whether it is self-imposed discipline (as an adult might employ) or externally-imposed discipline (as is done with a child), it means saying "no" to whatever might block or lead away from the path to the goal. Thus an athlete training for the Olympic games might say "no" to many otherwise harmless pastimes, if the time could be better spent practicing or resting or otherwise preparing for the contest.

For Christians, moving toward the goal of our eternal prize in Christ, discipline means saying "no" to the flattering suggestions of the devil; "no" to the powerful ways of the world; "no" to the self-centered desires of our human nature. For example, in horseback riding, there are a number of aids which help a rider say "no" to a horse's desire to run wild. Some bits and bridles say it more forcefully than others, but they all are there to help control the animal. This is the negative side of discipline.

### Education

But there is also a positive side. The rider's aids not only say "no" to some of the horse's desires. They also transmit the rider's desires to his mount. The positive side of discipline could be called training or education.

What can we learn from an illness

that prevents us from taking a trip we wanted to? What education can be found in affliction, or tribulation, or persecution? Hebrews 12 suggests that all these hardships can remind us that we are God's children: "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons, For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, put painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (12:7-11).

When the apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey, he had some very definite ideas about where he wanted to go and preach the Gospel. The Spirit of God prevented him from going southward and northward, though Paul may not yet have known just why.

At last, in Troas, Paul received a vision of a man of Macedonia seeking help. Then he and his party got packed to make the first missionary journey to Macedonia, for the first time reaching the continent of Europe, "concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10).

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"WE DO NOT ALWAYS SEE GOD'S LARGER PLAN, OR WHERE WE ARE HEADING, BUT WE TRAVEL ON. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THE WAY. WE REST IN HIS HAND."

So also with us. At times we are hindered on this side or that, often by afflictions and troubles. We do not always see God's larger plan, or where we are heading, but we travel on. Our heavenly Father knows the way. We rest in His hand. If He disciplines us—says "no" to our doings or desires—it reminds us that He loves us. "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (Prov. 13:24).

### In His Hands

Many times it seems better for an adult to discipline himself. But when children try to discipline themselves, their efforts may often fall wide of the mark.

Three little girls once decided to

carry a pouch and put stones in it every time they did something wrong. Instead of becoming a burden, however, their method soon turned into a contest to see who had the most stones. You can imagine how they worked at finding ways to "earn" more stones!

In the spiritual realm even adults may be "children." How wonderful it is to be in the hands of a heavenly Father whose efforts do not miss the mark, but who loves us and can cause all things to work together for our good.

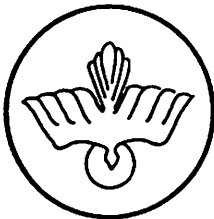
May every hindrance, affliction, restriction, chastisement, or discipline—whether through words or events—serve to draw us closer to Him that, as His dear children, we may grow in His grace.

—Paul Schaller



## Tracing The Acts Of The Apostles . . .

### "REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED . . ." (Acts 2:38)



#### Pentecost

**I**t was quite a day. The unique "mighty wind." Wisps of flame. Men speaking languages they had never learned. Pentecost had never been like this before. An explanation was in order.

The apostle Peter is the one who

addressed the Jewish people of Jerusalem in the language "in which (they) were born." This was another special day of God—the one in which the Spirit gave to the Church a new impetus for world-wide missions.

Peter told the folks that what was happening on that day was already told by God's man Joel. The Spirit of God would be poured out to give to people a special spiritual perspective and energy.

As dazzling as the phenomena on this Pentecost were, the emphasis was not on those events but on the one name of history that could and did do mankind some good. Peter's sermon continues with a summary telling of



what happened to Christ—His death on the cross at the hands of the Jewish leaders.

But then, this was all part of God's plan for the forgiveness of sins. The resurrection of Christ told them and tells us that pardon is indeed an accomplished fact. Because Christ was the Beloved and His death was substitutionary—not for personal misdeeds—it was impossible for the grave to hold Him.

### "What Shall We Do?"

A ripple of bothered consciences and shame swelled across the gathered throng. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter's response was not entirely original. He told them to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

John the Baptist had come with the same message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:3). Jesus began His ministry with the same invitation: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17).

The attitude of their and our ap-

proach is one of godly sorrow. The Bible talks of sin as a turning away from God. Repentance is a turning back to God—a "converting" that can only take place when the Spirit makes us willing in the day the Gospel invitation comes to us. It involves sorrow for sin and faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

We should not think of this penitence as a renewed determination to clean up our acts so God will find us lovable. Christ is the only one the Father ever saw as such.

Nor will God be impressed by a whole new set of self-styled resolutions. Human beings have a dismal track record when it comes to doing what is right—"righteousness" as the Scriptures call it.

Real repentance is the ABANDONMENT of personal input, energy, and attempts to make ourselves acceptable to almighty God. It just won't work. Our sinful nature sees to that.

Real repentance is a recognition that we have already been accepted because of the atoning death of the Son of God.

The effect: 3,000 "turnings" that day. Billions since. The Spirit did it!

—M. Sydow

## ONE GREAT SINNER

One great sinner was born October 25th, 1811 in Langenchursdorf, Kingdom of Saxony.

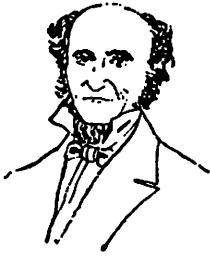
Can anything good come out of Langenchursdorf, Kingdom of Saxony? We expect, I dare say, at best someone rather mediocre, with this typical and not too endearing Saxon twang to his

German.

But God has His plans.

### A Child Of His Times

In the beginning our great sinner showed no remarkable traits at all. Rather, he was a child of his times, growing up in the turbulent aftermath



of the Napoleonic wars, in a Europe torn between fiery revolution and arch-conservative restoration, a society mauled and bled by too many wars and now seeking refuge from cruel reality in the sweet dreams of Romanticism.

One great sinner quite typically inherited some of the cool reasoning so characteristic of Rationalism, and he balanced it in his faith-life with a shot of the heart-warm softness of Pietism, perhaps inevitably with a streak of legalism. These strong impulses of his younger years would follow him throughout life, quite the way it is with you and me also.

As oft will happen when one's own time seems out of joint, he sought strength and wisdom and understanding in the past. Being a good Lutheran, he became an avid Luther-reader, and thus a better Lutheran. Step by step, volume by volume, tome by tome he immersed himself deeper and deeper into the theological writings of the Reformer and his followers.

### Heading West

Predictably, this led to complications. Reading Luther and practicing Luther was the odd thing to do; striving for harmony and union in church-life was the "in" thing. Our great sinner had become a *Herr Pastor* and promptly ran into conflict with his *Herr Ober-*

*pastor*. Being and remaining an honest-to-God Lutheran in the Germany of the 1830's seemed a dubious undertaking. Like so many other young men before him and after him, he decided to go West.

This is how Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther from Langenchursdorf in the Kingdom of Saxony—one great sinner but otherwise quite an unremarkable young man—ended up in St. Louis, Missouri. He left behind a shattered existence, and promptly ended up in a new mess. The emigration society of which he was a part crash-landed in the New World. Its leaders proved to be straw and chaff. All is lost!

It is for this catastrophe that God had saved, prepared, and groomed Walther. He is the one that suddenly grows way above average and turns into a spirited leader of sheep lost in a strange New World, a theologian of great depth and power. But above all: A Lutheran who manages to apply the best of faith and doctrine of the 16th and 17th centuries to 19th century America.

### A Centennial

This is his achievement: to forge old thoughts into bearing ideas for the present. Even today the weather-beaten ruins of the great Missouri Synod are an impressive monument to the man and his achievement.

It is now a little more than 100 years since Walther died, old and full of days and wisdom. On occasion of this centennial many true and beautiful words were spoken and written, praising the greatness of the man.

And yet you will misunderstand him and his mission entirely if you do not

hold fast onto this: above all Walther was One Great Sinner. He knew it. He confessed it. Therefore his entire life and work has but one center, one aim and purpose only: to point to Him who is the only Help for great sinners.

But one matter was *really* great and important in Walther's life: Jesus. The cross. The Savior. Whatever else the *Herr Professor* may be praised and remembered for, nothing is said at all unless it is said for Jesus. The Great Sin-

ner was a Great Christian. This, and only this, is why he is worth remembering with gratefulness. A man of the Gospel.

A man of the Gospel—so often reduced today to an endless source for quotations and petrified theological formulas—live Gospel turned into Law.

The dead cannot defend themselves. Pity us!

—Carl Heinrich A. Schmutzler

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## ONE IS YOUR MASTER—CHRIST (Part II)

(Correction: A word was inadvertently omitted in the first paragraph of Part I in the March issue. Please note the correct reading of the sentence: "Lutheran preachers want the people whom they serve to be able to do more than *mouth* all the proper formulas."—The Editor)

**THE EVIL OF FALSE TEACHERS:** False teaching endangers faith and salvation, and even robs the Christian of his faith and ultimately his salvation. That is the reason why our Lord tells us to avoid false teachers (Romans 16:17-18). The Lord wants only His Word taught in the Church, and this faithfully (Jeremiah 23:28-32). Anything contrary to the Word of God is error.

**THE MANIFESTATION OF ERROR:** When we think of error, we think first of all of that which is denied or taken away from the Word. Thus the denial of inspiration, of creation, of the virgin birth, of original sin, of "Spirit—alone" conversion, of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone, and so on—all are readily recognizable by Bible Christians as errors, and certainly

should be seen as such by Lutheran Christians.

Scripture teaches: "... if any man shall TAKE AWAY from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 22:19). To subtract anything from the Word of God is therefore a matter of seriousness with eternal consequences.

But we need also to recognize another manifestation of error, one which can unwittingly afflict concerned Christians. It is an error not uncommon to what are known as **ORTHODOX** Lutherans (*orthodox*—"right teaching" as opposed to *heterodox*—"false teaching").

Revelation 22 also tells us that it is error to **ADD** anything to God's Word. We read in verse 18: "... if any man shall ADD unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

It happens, many times without malice but with great harm nevertheless, that—in intense concern for preserva-

tion of the Truth of God's Word—people will add to the Word, and thus deprive the Christian of his freedom in Christ. To add to the Word therefore often leads to subtracting from it, subtracting the freedom which the Christian has in the Lord Jesus.

**CHRISTIAN FREEDOM:** Dr. C. F. W. Walther, a most orthodox and faithful teacher, who might be called one of the fathers of Lutheranism in this country, said: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church makes a strict distinction between those things which God has commanded in His Word and those things which are free."

Commenting on this statement, another renowned and thoroughly Lutheran teacher, Dr. Franz Pieper, said: "An orthodox church-body must hold fast to the entire Word of God and to all the teachings revealed in it. To dispense from the acceptance of this or that Scriptural doctrine is an offense against the majesty of God. But the converse is also true. In order to claim the orthodox name, a church-body must permit all things to be free which are not commanded in God's Word. It must not prescribe to any of its members to believe or to do aught that God has not in His Word prescribed to men. When a religious body does not strictly draw the line of distinction between things commanded and things left to freedom, that church-body likewise sins against the majesty of God by placing itself in the stead of God. God has reserved to Himself the right to command to Christians anything that is to be binding on conscience. 'One is your Master, Christ.' A church-body which restricts evangelical liberty by laws of its own misleads its people into idolatry.

"For inasmuch as a Christian in ecclesiastical, spiritual, matters accepts

any command from men, he apostasizes from God. Such a Church commits grand larceny on her members, who have all received Christian liberty from their Lord, freedom from human commandments. Indeed, a church-body of that kind would subvert the entire order which was to be characteristic of the Church, by making a kingdom of this world out of the Christian Church. The kingdoms of this world have the right to issue laws which transcend God's Word (if not in contradiction to it). But the Church has no such right, has no power to legislate beyond the Word of God. It can command only where God has commanded in His Word."

The Augsburg Confession, one of the foremost—if not the foremost—confessions of the Lutheran Church, and thoroughly scriptural, says in the 7th article: "To the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by man, should be everywhere alike."

In exercise of his Christian freedom, the apostle Paul became all things to all people that he might save some (I Corinthians 9). Paul did not use his freedom in Christ to abuse people. When testimony to the truth was called for, Paul read the situation. He did not have Titus circumcised (since Christ had come, circumcision was not commanded) because the Jews were out to spy out and deny his freedom in Christ (Galatians 2:3). Yet, in order not to offend the weak, Paul had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). On the use of Christian freedom as practiced and taught by Paul, read also I Corinthians 8. (To be continued)

—Daniel Fleischer

# IMAGE AND SUBSTANCE

A magazine dedicated to the preservation of Christian family values recently contained an article entitled "Image and the 80's—A Subtle Force that's Seducing the Family." It was said that "if the 60's represented the 'revolutionary' decade, and the 70's the 'me' decade, then the 80's may well be the 'image over substance' decade."

The thrust of the article was that many people in our "yuppie" generation spend more time trying to keep up with and ahead of the Joneses than in nurturing home, family, and other sound (biblical) values. And to be sure, if what one buys and wears and how one looks is a person's (individually) or people's (collectively) first concern, it should not surprise that the fabric of society, its homes and families, is coming apart at the seams.

## Satanic Seduction

This led us to thinking. There was a time when image and substance were not in conflict. Man was originally created in God's image. In that blessed condition man was in perfect conformity to God's will and way. Enter Satan. He seduced Eve with the suggestion that she could improve her image ("you will be like God . . .") by disobeying God. From being a possessor of the image of God and eternal life, man became a creature of death, spiritually and physically.

Thus man, in his fallen condition, continues to have an image problem. He needs to learn and relearn that the God who created him looks at the substance of a thing—the heart—rather than at the mere outward appearance. The Bible teaches this in many words and ways. For example: God chose the humble shepherd boy David as king of Israel rather than the more impressively appearing sons of Jesse. To His prophet Samuel the Lord said: "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (I Sam. 16:7).

When Jesus walked on earth the Pharisees were the outstanding example of those who placed image ahead of substance. Their hypocrisy was exposed by the Savior in words such as these: "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Mt. 23:27).

In plain words, "image over substance" is not a disease new to the A. D. decade of the 80's. It is an on-going testimony to, and a result of, mankind's estrangement from God. Apart from the new heart and life the Spirit engenders through Baptism and the Word, the substance of man remains self-centered, self-serving, and (eternally) deadly.

## Lifestyle Choices

Christians are not immune. When it comes to choices we all have the problem Samuel had. We must beware of the seductive "yuppie" influences asking us to bypass substance in favor of image.

When bombarded with lifestyle choices—with advertisements and come-ons

to buy (and wear) all sorts of "image boosters" remember: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15). "Godliness with contentment is great gain . . . People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (I Tim. 6:6f). When told that "fitness" and how one looks is all-important, remember: "Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (I Tim. 4:8).

### In The Churches

This can also be applied to the churches. When image prevails over substance in the churches, the result is similar to what happened in Eden. It is falling for the devil-inspired skepticism regarding the trustworthiness of God's Word. It is buying Satan's lie that doctrine is secondary to numerical growth and outward image.

Christ said: "If you (person, congregation, synod) hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31). Therein lies the substance of Christian discipleship!

But what do we find in the churches? Substance is more and more caving in to image. This is happening not only in the cults and sects, but in most denominations of visible Christian and Lutheran churches.

For example, in the name of evangelism (what we traditionally call "mission work"), the substance of the Savior's Great Commission ("teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you") is bypassed if not ignored. If the substance of faithfulness to His Word is shown to be lacking, God is unimpressed—regardless of the statistics that can be chalked up to our ecclesiastical ledgers (membership roles). "This is the one (person, congregation, synod) I esteem; he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Is. 66:2).

None of which is to say that image is unimportant. "Let your light shine . . ." says the Savior. In our midst we believe there is, for the most part, a holy trembling at the Lord's Word. Yet as far as image is concerned, lethargic orthodoxy is no more pleasing to God than inclusive heterodoxy. God's indictment of lukewarm Christianity has application for both the liberal and conservative elements in the churches.

God says: "Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich, and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Rev. 3:16ff).

Lest we succumb to the "image over substance" syndrome, do we tremble at *such* words?

They teach us what to "buy" and what to "wear" to cover our shame. They teach us true "fitness" for God's kingdom now and forever. In short, they give us God's own prescription for keeping (getting?) substance in *our* image—personally, congregationally, synodically!

—Paul Fleischer

# WHAT ABOUT ROCK?

*"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil. 4:8).*

*"The spiritual man makes judgments about all things . . . we have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:15-16).*

What do these words of the apostle have to do with "Rock" music? Paul knew nothing of such music in his day. But he did know a good deal about the importance of setting the Christian's thought on that which is "noble . . . right . . . pure . . . lovely . . . admirable . . . excellent . . . praiseworthy."

Conversion to Christ brings a spiritual renewal. This means that by divine grace the Christian strives to "put off" whatever is wrong, unclean, hideous, of bad reputation, *UN*praiseworthy so that he may glorify God in his body and spirit "which are God's" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

## As A Man Thinks . . .

All of our thinking and doing begins with our hearts and our thoughts. "The thought is the seed of the deed just as the forest lies in the acorn." Wise Solomon said: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Prov. 4:23). And again: "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

If a person is continually holding on to unholy, impure, and ungodly thoughts, he will eventually be entirely given over to them as Romans 1:18 suggests. On the other hand, the Christian who by daily repentance is continually putting off such thoughts will find that by God's grace he will become more like his Redeemer and Lord.

What the Holy Spirit would do within us by the power of His Gospel in Word and sacrament is daily hindered by the sinful flesh. In addition, what we think is certainly affected by what we hear, see, and read. That is the reason for the advice Paul gives to all Christians in the Philippians passage given above.

## Looking At Lyrics

Music is largely a matter of personal taste. One cannot say that all Rock music is evil. Yet there is much Rock that is *not* good in terms of the message communicated in the lyrics.

One group called "The Beastie Boys" adds a rhythmic beat to lyrics which encourage young people to "stand up for their rights" when they want to go out and are forbidden by their parents. "Fight for Your Rights" is the title of the song. There is surely nothing "true . . . right . . . excellent" about this message. What is truly "excellent" is the commandment of the Lord: "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord" (Col. 3:20).

I suppose there have always been "love songs." But there is a great difference between songs about love and songs about making love. What kind of thinking is encouraged by such lyrics as: "Checkin' out the girls . . . start playin' love with them human toys . . ." And: "U.S. prime, grade A stamped . . .

she's comin' . . ." (from lyrics of the Rock group Van Halen).

Is the woman whom God made a human "toy" or a "piece of meat" to be used to gratify human lust? Our Lord says we are to "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). And to the married He writes through Paul: "This is the will of God . . . that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel (his wife) in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust like the heathen who do not know God" (I Thess. 4:3-5). These words of our Lord are what we are to be thinking about—they are "right" and "excellent"!

Why is there so much about drugs, sex, and "doing what one wants no matter what" in Rock today? It is a symptom of the sickness of our pleasure-seeking society. People want "heaven on earth," but they can only define "heaven" in terms of material and sensual pleasures.

This view of life is stated very clearly in Van Halen's "Best of Both Worlds." One line goes: "You don't have to die to go to heaven, or hang around to be born again, just tune in to what this place has got to offer . . .

heaven right here on earth." Can there be any question in the mind of the child of God that such thinking is opposed to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, even as the "prince of darkness" is opposed to the Lord of light?!

### The Mind Of Christ

Much more could be said about the dangers of Rock: the danger of regarding the attention to Rock music as nothing more than a "fad" (there are *bad* fads too!); the danger of legalistically forbidding all Rock music; the noise level (a proven physical danger); the support of Rock groups by buying their tapes, albums, and posters thus communicating a message which opposes the Word of Christ.

But let us close with this reminder. Christians have been "born again" by the power of the Gospel. As such they have the "mind of Christ," as the passage quoted from I Corinthians tells us, adding that Christians can make spiritual judgments about "all things." May our Lord grant us all grace to exercise our good judgment also in this matter, for we are among those who want to serve, glorify, and rejoice in Him Who gave Himself for us.

—Vance Fossum





## Daily Devotions For May 1988

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

The thought for the week of Cantate Sunday (May 1) comes from Jesus' words to His disciples: The Holy Spirit "will convict the world of sin" (John 16:8). This is not the Spirit's main task; yet it is a part of His work that should not be overlooked. The world is wicked, and we share in the world's wickedness. We need a Savior.

For the week of Prayer Sunday (May 8) and Ascension Day (May 12) we consider God's mercy in Jesus Christ that is ours through His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. He is our only Savior.

Although Jesus is now King in heaven, His servants on earth are still persecuted, even as Jesus was persecuted. On the week of the Sunday after Ascension (May 15) our readings honestly describe persecution, but also comfort God's servants with the sure hope of deliverance.

The festival of Pentecost (May 22) is the festival of the Holy Spirit. Oh, what great miracles the Holy Spirit works in men's hearts through His Word!

The traditional Gospel lesson for Trinity Sunday (May 29) is the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. How expertly Jesus prepared this man for the message of the Gospel of Christ Crucified, yes, "eternal life" through the Son of Man lifted up on the cross!

Day	Reading	Theme	Hymn
1	John 16:5-15	The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin.	323
2	Psalms 53	God sees that there is not one on earth who does good.	325
3	Psalms 58	The wicked go astray as soon as they are born.	317
4	Psalms 49	Man is unable to redeem himself.	318
5	Psalms 10	Man foolishly thinks that he can escape God's judgment.	278
6	Psalms 39	God makes us all understand our human frailties.	320
7	Psalms 143	Not even God's servants are righteous in their lives.	322
8	John 16:23-30	In Jesus' name we ask God for mercy.	456
9	Psalms 61	We are preserved alone by God's mercy.	457
10	Psalms 54	God saves us by His good name.	459
11	Psalms 55	God saves us from the fear of flattering traitors.	524
12	Mark 16:14-20	Jesus is our victorious Savior at God's right hand.	212
13	Psalms 47	The King of all the earth deserves our praises.	214
14	Psalms 45	Jesus is God forever and ever (see Hebrews 1:8-9).	657
15	John 15:26-16:4	On earth the servants of the King are still persecuted.	513
16	Psalms 44	Jesus' servants are as sheep for the slaughter.	261
17	Psalms 94	Jesus' servants are afflicted but not forsaken.	268
18	Psalms 140	Jesus' servants are delivered from the schemes of the wicked.	265
19	Psalms 141	Jesus' servants escape from the snares and traps of the wicked.	267
20	Psalms 142	Jesus' servants are delivered from persecution by the Lord.	269
21	Psalms 120	Jesus' peace-loving servants are slandered by wicked liars.	264
22	John 14:23-31	The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of truth, the Conveyor of peace.	232
23	Psalms 119:17-24	The Spirit opens our eyes to see the wonders of God's Word.	225
24	Psalms 119:25-32	The Spirit revives us, strengthens us, makes us understand.	224
25	Psalms 119:33-40	The Spirit is our Teacher who makes us walk in God's path	234
26	Psalms 119:97-104	The Spirit gives us wisdom and understanding through His Word.	236
27	Psalms 119:1-5-112	The Spirit makes our hearts rejoice in His Word.	231
28	Psalms 119:161-168	The Spirit through His Word grants us peace and hope.	228
29	John 3:1-15	Eternal life is ours by faith in God's crucified Son.	245
30	Psalms 133	The blessing is life forevermore.	248
31	Psalms 128	The blessing is peace upon the Israel of God.	237

—D. Lau

## "How Beautiful Are The Feet . . ."

*Three teachers are being featured in this article because each has been teaching their entire life, albeit in slightly different fields.*



**Sharon Schierenbeck**

Sharon Schierenbeck was born in Rhinelander, Wisconsin. She attended Dr. Martin Luther High School and College with a definite plan in mind: "to teach elementary grades for one year and then get married." Sharon was married to John Schierenbeck and they have six children. Presently the family is living in Columbia, South Carolina, where John is the pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

Sharon has indeed been a teacher for her entire life, as the upbringing of six children were entrusted to her care. During those 15 years when Sharon was raising her children, she also taught part-time and substituted at various day schools. During the 1986-87 school year, she returned to teaching on a regular basis at Holy Trinity Lutheran School. Presently she is teaching full-time in the upper grades.

Sharon brings the insight of being a mother into her teaching as she tries to "prepare our children for life in this world and, most importantly, for eternal life." Having been out of formal teaching for twenty years, Sharon says

she is impressed with the quality of educational materials available to teachers these days. An especially helpful addition is that of a plain paper copier which Sharon doesn't know how she got along without in the past. The subject areas most enjoyed by her are the language arts and religion.

Many times we in the CLC despair as our capable women teachers trained at ILC soon marry and leave the public teaching ministry. These women use their skills in bringing up their children and many times return to the public teaching ministry. Thanks be to the Lord.

### **Barbara A. Pfeiffer**

The second teacher featured in this article is also a mother-turned-teacher. Barbara Pfeiffer is the wife of Pastor John Pfeiffer of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Austin, Minnesota. She is the mother of four children, ages 6-14. Barb attended a Lutheran grade school, Immanuel Lutheran High School and College, and Austin State Junior College. She recorded some thoughts which all teachers everywhere could agree with and which are well worth sharing with all of you.

"My first priority is the spiritual welfare of my children. I want them to grow spiritually, and it is my fervent prayer that they will grow each day in faith. I want their faith and their God to be alive, to be present not only in devotions or in religion classes, but also in their other subjects, and especially in



their relationships with each other. If there is an area that needs work it is the area of kindness—to everyone.

"I also want the children to get the best possible education that I, by the grace of God, can give them. It must be well-rounded and certainly equal to, and hopefully above, any education they would receive in the public schools. Since I can include the teachings of God in all of my subjects, I believe it is a superior education. The smallness of the classes (at our school) increases the advantages."

When asked whether she received any surprises when she began teaching, Barb responded with the following thoughts: "I am surprised at how much teaching is like 'mothering.' There are so many situations involving the teacher and pupil that parallel situations between parent and child. In a one-room school like ours, there is a real tendency to form a 'family unit.' I guess I am surprised at how much these students have become MY children, how much I have come to care for them."

Whether the school is one-room or multiple rooms, each teacher in the CLC would agree with these thoughts.

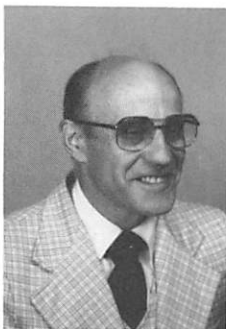
All teachers would also agree with the following thoughts expressed by Barb: "Any negative surprises would have to do with how much I want to accomplish and how little time there is to do it. I dare not dwell on what I *could* be doing. There just is not enough time in the day to do all that I want to, or even to prepare for all that I want to present. Time is my most frustrating problem."

In what areas does Barb feel especially capable? "I do not feel capable, period! When I think about what I hope to accomplish, I shudder. I entered (teaching) placing myself completely at the mercy of God. He has answered my prayers, and I am actually enjoying what at times seems an insurmountable task. There are areas which I *enjoy* more than others. Those, I think are often the areas a teacher seems more capable in." Religion and math are especially pleasing to Barb as can be seen from this observation.

"One of my biggest thrills was when my third grader learned how to divide. Wow! That's what teaching is all about—when a child struggles and struggles and finally the light goes on! And you're there to watch it!"

### Alvin P. Sieg

To Alvin Sieg education has been and continues to be a way of life. For over fifty years Alvin has been a student of education, beginning as a grade schooler in Buffalo, Minnesota. High school and college years were spent at DMLC where Alvin also acquired a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Alvin's education continued as he earned a Master's Degree in Education at South Dakota State University. He



keeps himself current in educational methods of the day by taking extension courses offered at Michigan State University.

Besides being a student Alvin has, for the past 33 years, been a Christian Day School teacher at schools in Red Wing, Minnesota; Golden and Broomfield, Colorado; Watertown, South Dakota; and his present school of Faith Lutheran in Coloma, Michigan, where he has served as teacher and principal since 1979. Alvin is married and has seven children and four grandchildren.

Besides his children and grandchildren, over 200 students have benefited from Mr. Sieg's guidance. Just what sort of guidance these children have received can be seen from some of the thoughts about education volunteered by him. Despite the years associated with public education, Alvin realizes that the Gospel of Jesus holds far more for us.

"Both students and teachers are worthless without letting God direct and rule. Education is shallow if not meaningless without the Word of God. The Gospel of Christ is number one! It works faith which far transcends gifted and slow learners and all changes from one-room to consolidated schools; from the 3 R's to multiple subjects; and

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from slate to computer."

To the teachers: "Our day schools must do a good job in all fields but not at the expense of the Gospel. We must challenge each and every student to potential. We can not feel sorry for ourselves concerning lower pay, lesser facilities, smaller enrollments, etc. What counts is the communication between student and teacher."

To the parents: "Parents and teachers must be one-minded in these goals (a Christ-centered, quality education). Students cannot be helped if the home lets unnecessary earthly goals replace or compete with the heavenly goal."

For this quiet, devout Christian teacher, Christian education has been and will continue to be not only a way of life, but a way to Life in our heavenly home.

—Ross Roehl