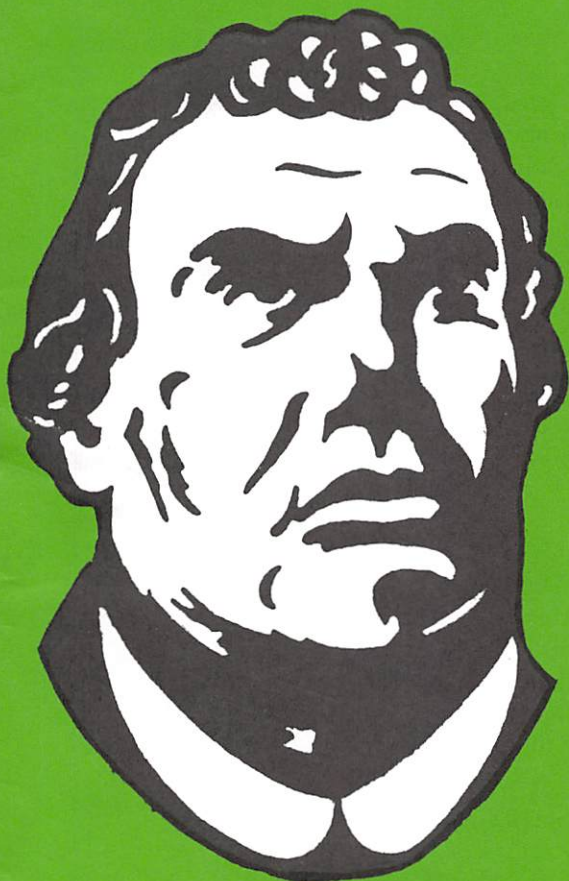


lutheran spokesman

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REFORMATION

1517

MARTIN LUTHER
USED THE BIBLE
AS HIS ONLY BASIS
FOR HIS TEACHINGS

REFORMATION

1989

LORD, WILL YOU NOT
REVIVE US AGAIN
THAT YOUR PEOPLE
MAY REJOICE IN YOU?

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- * Christ—Our Righteousness
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CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

“The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

CHRIST—OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Martin Luther's struggle to become right with God had ended by the time he posted his 95 theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany, October 31, 1517. We see this plainly from a letter written to his friend George Spalatin in 1516: "Have you learned to despise your own righteousness and to put your trust in the righteousness of Christ alone? . . . Learn to despair of thyself and say to Him, 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my Righteousness, but I am Thy sin. Thou hast assumed what was mine and given me what was Thine.'"

Christian Living

But after becoming right with God through faith in Jesus, Luther began a new struggle—one which all Christians experience. He began the life-long battle of rejecting the wicked impulses of his old nature and following the

godly promptings of his newly created Christian nature.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). The new person is holy and righteous like God Himself. It delights in the law of God and abhors that which is evil. Justification through Christ always produces sanctification in Christ. After the Lord has comforted our hearts, we gratefully run the way of His commandments. Christian faith results in Christian living.

Christian living is the daily (continual) drowning of one's old Adam by contrition and repentance, followed by a coming forth of the new person who lives before God in righteousness and purity forever. The opening words of Luther's 95 theses emphasize this truth: "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent' (Mt. 4:17), He willed that the *entire* life of believ-

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ers be one of repentance.”

Ability for godly living comes from faith in Christ. The life which all Christians live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God. The more certain a poor sinner is of God’s forgiveness, the more strength that rescued one has to conduct himself as one of God’s beloved children and an heir of heaven.

Strengthened by the Gospel

Christian faith is strengthened by Christ’s powerful gospel. Words such as “The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me” enable us Christians to fight the good fight with all our might because those words make Christ our Strength and Christ our Right.

This is why Scripture says to all followers of the Savior: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you *richly*” (Col. 3:16). One good way of receiving a wholesome supply of Christ’s gospel is to attend an orthodox congregation as regularly as possible. There the gospel of salvation is correctly taught in the classrooms, preached from the pulpit, and distributed in the sacraments of Baptism and Lord’s Supper.

A Christian should remember these seven points when struggling against his sinful nature:

1) Such a struggle is *not* an indication one has lost his true faith and is under God’s wrath. Just the opposite is true. The struggle is proof that one *is* in the state of God’s favor.

2) This struggle is painful because the Christian’s old flesh is not some outsider but part of himself. The Christian is continually crucifying *that* part. Here these words from the comic strip

Pogo apply: “We have met the enemy and they are us.”

3) In this warfare, never say that a temptation is too strong to overcome. Christ with all power in heaven and earth lives within every child of God. He is the Stronger One. The Lord never allows His children to be tempted more than they can handle.

4) In this battle *immediately* oppose any evil impulse with the corresponding good. For example, promptly oppose grumbling against God with praise to God. Do not wait until you feel like doing so but in the midst of your discontent sing words such as, “Now thank we all our God.”

5) Use God’s powerful Word to conquer sinful temptations just as Christ countered the devil’s temptations with “It is written.” God’s Word is the sword of the Spirit. Promptly combat each wicked desire with the appropriate Scripture passage.

6) Hold that sword of the Spirit *tightly!* The devil will tear it from your grasp if you are lazy and indifferent toward hearing the Word of God. Continually pray, “Lord, keep us *steadfast* in Thy Word.” Not only hear and read the Bible but use your catechism to memorize many Scripture passages so that the varied attacks by the flesh can be quickly countered with the applicable passage.

7) Remember that the wicked nature in a Christian will never improve. Do not coddle it in hope of having a struggle-free life on earth. Its affections and lusts must be crucified, not pampered. The closing words of Luther’s 95 theses declare this truth: “Christians should be exhorted to strive to be diligent in following

Christ, their Head, through penalties, death, and hell and thus be confident of entering heaven through many tribulations rather than the false security of peace.”

“We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

—Robert Mackensen



Tracing the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15)—

“We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved” (Acts 15:11).

THE JUDAIZERS—A CONSTANT DANGER

Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch in Syria after their mission journey to the island of Cyprus and the areas of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Galatia in Asia Minor. The Lord had blessed their Gospel preaching among these people who had never before heard the good news of forgiveness of sins through Jesus. The amazing thing was this: “God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). Yes, many non-Jewish people were now also believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, assured of forgiveness and eternal life by faith in Him.

Most of the Christians in Antioch and other places rejoiced in the report of Paul and Barnabas. When Paul and Barnabas “passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles, they caused great joy to all the brethren” (Acts 15:3). This is what we would expect, for Jesus said: “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:10). The report of the missionaries was that many sinners were repenting and finding salvation in Jesus Christ. What could be happier news than this?

Judaizers from Jerusalem

Sad to say, there were some influential Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who did not share this joy. They con-

tended that this conversion of the Gentiles was too superficial, that when Paul and Barnabas got through with their converts, they were still Gentiles and not Jews. In the opinion of these Jewish Christians, what these converts needed to hear was that as believers they would now have to become Jews and live like Jews. They would have to be circumcised and keep all the laws of Moses just like the Jewish Christians.

The arguments of these Judaizers, as we call them, sounded convincing. Perhaps Paul and Barnabas had gone too far in their enthusiasm for Gentile mission work. Perhaps they had lowered the membership standards. At any rate, they now had a big mess on their hands: all these Gentiles considering themselves to be children of God and yet they did not keep any of the old customs or eat the right kind of food. Many of them were not even circumcised.

The Judaizers insisted: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). They claimed: "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the laws of Moses" (15:5).

Paul and Barnabas disagreed with these Judaizers when they presented their case in Antioch. When they went even further and disturbed the new converts in Galatia, Paul wrote a letter to the Galatians in which he pointed out the basic error of the Judaizers. On one occasion in Antioch even Peter had caved in to Judaistic demands, and Paul had to rebuke Peter openly before the whole congregation.

It was a tense time for the young church. Because the dissension was so great and feeling was so strong, it was decided that the apostles and elders and other Christians should meet in Jerusalem to discuss and resolve this issue.

God's Answer

After the debate had gone on for some time, Peter pointed out that the Lord God had already resolved this controversy. When Peter by divine command had preached the Gospel in the home of the Gentile captain Cornelius, the Holy Spirit came over these Gentiles just as on the day of Pentecost. Peter explained: "God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as He did to us."

The Judaizers were therefore in the wrong. They needed to follow God's direction and admit their error. No one should test God by putting the yoke of Jewish law and custom on the neck of

Gentile believers. In conclusion Peter declared: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (15:11).

Salvation is through Christ alone, by grace alone, received alone by faith. We are saved by grace, not by works, whether we are Jews or Gentiles. If the

Salvation is through Christ alone, by grace alone, received alone by faith. We are saved by grace, not by works.

Jews want to follow the old customs, let them do so, but not as a condition for salvation or as a requirement for all of God's believers.

Because so many people had been disturbed by the demands of the Judaizers, the gathering of Christians in Jerusalem drew up a letter to be sent to the Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. This letter said: "We have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law'—to whom we gave no such commandment" (15:24).

The error of the Judaizers was very dangerous because it made the Gentile believers doubt their forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ. Any time works are added to faith in Christ as necessary for salvation, the foundation for assurance of eternal life is smashed, and we have lost Christ. Yes, we have lost Christ, for Paul wrote: "You have become estranged from Christ, you

who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

There is always a bit of a social problem when Christians who are agreed on their Christian confession differ in their backgrounds and customs. The key consideration here is love. James, the brother of our Lord, a leader of the Jerusalem congregation, suggested a way by which it would be easier for Jewish and Gentile Christians to work together: Let us, he said, "write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood" (15:20). The assembly agreed and the letter was sent. But on the matter of the way of salvation, there could be no yielding of any kind. James agreed: "We should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God" (15:19).

Judaizers Today

Thus the Judaistic controversy was settled in the early church by the Lord Himself, and His apostles were obedient. But the same issue comes back to threaten the church in every generation.

Many examples of modern-day Judaizing could be cited. Let me mention two. Some years ago I had opportunity to study a Roman Catholic manual of religion entitled *My Catholic Faith*, published in 1963. Although this particular manual may not be in use today, the contents are still fairly typical of what is taught far and wide by many Catholics and non-Catholics as well.

On page 180 we read these words: "Besides believing what God has revealed, what else must we do to be

saved? Besides believing what God has revealed, we must keep His law." Page 164 adds the commandments of the church also: "If on earth we have obeyed the commandments of God and of the Church, we shall be given an eternal reward in heaven." There are many more similar statements in this manual.

Do we think that Lutherans will never fall prey to Judaistic error? Think again. *The Lutheran* printed the following question and answer in its issue of August 11, 1976:

"Q. How do we inherit eternal life? Is belief in Christ enough, or must we be baptized and do good works?"

"A. In answer to that question, Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all he had, give it to the poor and 'come and follow me.' This meant that he must put Christ first in his life. To a lawyer who asked the question, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. 'Go and do as he did,' Jesus advised. Briefly stated, we inherit eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and through obedience to his commands. Among those commands were to baptize all nations and to love our neighbors. But the most important factor is faith. Baptism or good works alone are no guarantee of heaven."

You see, then, that Judaizers are still highly influential and are still troubling us with their false teachings and striving to unsettle our souls. There is no better response to them than the response of Peter: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved" (15:11). For a more complete answer we can read Paul's letter to the Galatians.

—D. Lau

Need for Another Reformation?

If Martin Luther were alive today, would he see the need for another reformation of the church and lives of people? At first glance it might seem that spiritual conditions have improved since Luther's day.

Surely the world has moved out of the superstition and darkness of the Middle Ages. People today have access to the Bible in any number of translations. The educational and material prosperity of people has never been greater.

While the more things change, the more they stay the same, I am convinced that Luther would be struck by three factors of modern, spiritual life.

Lack of Sin-consciousness

Martin Luther would not be prepared for today's lack of consciousness of sin and its consequences.

In Luther's day, there was a general realization of the need to find a righteousness which would avail before God. The reality of sin and God's judgment were foregone conclusions. The law of God produced a knowledge of sin. Luther on a personal level struggled with his own sinfulness before God and found no comfort in the work-righteous solution of his church.

Today the demands of God's law are not taken seriously by society or the church. People do not consider the reality of sin, hell, and eternal damnation. The underlying premise of accountability to God is missing from the religious scene. Thus Luther's emphasis on the Gospel and the imputed righteousness of Christ is proclaimed in a spiritual vacuum.

Questioning Scripture

Martin Luther would be shocked by the number of churches and preachers who question the inspiration and authority of the Scripture in today's world.

In Luther's day it was accepted, in principle at least, that the Bible was in all of its parts the word of the living God and therefore the source and norm for all Christian doctrine.

Today the authority of the Scripture is under attack by those within the church. More and more theologians and church members view the Bible as a human book to be judged by human reason. The seeds of Erasmus's humanism have come full circle. Luther would be as shocked by people's attitude toward the Bible today as he was by the biblical ignorance of his day.

Misuse of the Gospel

One thing that has not changed is people's desire to make their salvation dependent upon what they have done. Jesus and His perfect work of atonement are constantly under attack by Satan.

One of the things that bothered Luther in his later life was how people used the Gospel as an excuse to sin. Luther remarked that the people would have been better off under the bondage of Catholicism than under the freedom of the Gospel

which they so horribly misused by their immoral lifestyles. Today, more than ever, the Gospel and freedom are used as an excuse to sin.

There is a constant need for reformation in our lives and thinking. As soon as we think we have something, we are in danger of losing it. We are in a process of becoming what God has made us. As soon as the miracle of forgiveness in Jesus becomes taken for granted, spiritual decay and deadness can set in.

We today in the CLC are in need of God working a continuing reformation within us. Let us celebrate reformation this year with a focused sense of personal repentance and simple faith in Jesus Christ.

—John Schierenbeck



MISSOURI'S CIVIL WAR

Those who keep up with things happening in the churches know that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) had its synodical convention in July in Wichita, Kansas. As usual *Christian News* magazine has kept its readers well-informed on the convention. It has not been fun reading *Christian News*, either on events before or after the convention. It has not been fun unless one enjoys reading war stories. There was, and is, a “civil war” going on within the second largest Lutheran church body, the 2.6 million member LC-MS.

Which Way the Leaders?

In a previous article on these pages (cf. July 1989 *Lutheran Spokesman*) we were critical of the 5.3 million member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Comment was made that it is largely the *leaders* of Synods who are responsible for the liberal direction taken by a church body. Such a view is hardly ours alone. Recognizing the importance of sound confessional leadership, but also claiming that the previous administration was not affording such leadership, the conservative element within the LC-MS has been speaking up boldly and forthrightly.

Before the convention both *Christian News* and *Affirm* (a second publication of concerned Missourians) claimed that the synod's President, Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, was soft on liberalism. *Christian News* charged that under Bohlmann's leadership the LC-MS had been “tolerating liberals, religious unionists, evolutionists, and pro-abortionists” and that the synod was moving in the direction of ordination of women into the ministry. The magazine contended that, unless there was new leadership elected at Wichita, these liberal trends would continue and become more entrenched.

Consequently *Christian News* said that conservatives concerned for Missouri's future as a confessional church body ought to vote for a conservative leader such as Dr. Robert Sauer or Dr. Robert Preus. On its part, *Affirm* said this in its

“As long as the conservative-liberal war has been going on in Missouri . . . there has been sufficient cause for either side to accuse the other of slander on the one hand or power politics on the other.”

pre-convention issue: “. . . We must elect officials in our Synod who will be bold to ‘speak the truth in love’ for us publicly . . . officials who are unbending not only in their own personal confession of the truth but untiring in their efforts to root out of our Synod all tolerance of false teaching and careless practice among our clergy and congregations which might suggest that truth is relative and that all churches are the same.” (June/July 1989 *Affirm*, p. 3)

The results of the power struggle are in. The convention delegates re-elected “liberal” Bohlmann by 52% of the vote. From our reading it comes across that the Bohlmann forces, led by former LC-MS President Jacob Preus (brother to Robert, the “conservative”), garnered considerable sympathy at the convention because of what was called the “dirty politics” of the conservatives. The liberals (or “moderates” as they prefer to be called) contended that the conservatives were guilty of sinning against the eighth commandment by spreading lies about the liberalism and lack of doctrinal discipline within the synod.

From our vantage point, it’s all like the pot calling the kettle black. As long as the conservative-liberal war has been going on in Missouri (at least since the early ’70’s when the liberal *Seminex* group left to form the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches—AELC, which subsequently became part of the newly formed ELCA), there has been sufficient cause for either side to accuse the other of slander on the one hand or power politics on the other. Yet, granting this, just too much evidence can be cited across the LC-MS synodical spectrum to lend credence to the charges of the liberals that *Christian News* is doing nothing but spreading lies. As we see it, Missouri under Bohlmann has indeed coddled liberals and shown lack of will or desire to exercise doctrinal discipline against religious unionists and errorists.

Nevertheless, Bohlmann is determined to seek peace and pursue it. The day after his re-election he is quoted in a *Christian News* article entitled *Bohlmann Declares War on Conservatives* as “denouncing vigorous electioneering that has marked the recent campaign and said he looked forward to a new era in the church. He said he would seek a shift in focus from politicking and bickering to ‘the gospel of love and peace, to evangelism and mission.’ ”

And yet Bohlmann has a strange way indeed of pursuing peace. In reference to the bitter internal divisions, he is quoted also as saying this: “I intend to let people know in some quarters that they are impediments to the church being all it could be.” What Bohlmann considers “impediments” or hindrances to his church’s mission is not difficult to determine. Only a couple of weeks after the convention a report came that one of the conservative candidates for the synodical presidency, Robert Preus, was forced from his position as President of Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. By a 5 to 3 vote the seminary’s Board of Regents “required the honorable retirement” of Dr. Preus.

The conservatives are incensed at this forced retirement of one of their leaders.

“The embattled conservatives are becoming their own worst enemies. They themselves are guilty of disobedience to the word of the Lord . . . Such disobedience is calculated by Satan to make the conservatives themselves victims of the ‘holy battles’ they are waging.”

They have, for example, been calling for a letter campaign asking the Regents to reverse their decision. In addition, they are encouraging conservatives synod-wide *not* to support the synodical mission and church extension programs.

Which Way the Conservatives?

In plain words, the civil war goes on, as ugly as ever. Yet, as strange as it may sound, therein may lie hope for the future of Missouri. There does remain a sizeable segment of that synod which sees the need to carry on the battle for purity of doctrine and therefore for doctrinal discipline. In other words, confessional Lutheranism is not yet dead or bankrupt within Missouri (as we contended it is in the ELCA—cf. July *Spokesman*).

It is not dead, but it is in grave danger of dying. Whether or not confessional Lutheranism lives on in Missouri will depend upon how much longer the embattled warriors on the conservative side have the will and determination to continue the fight. Conservative Missourians should have learned by now, from the synod’s own history if not from the word of God which teaches that the unchecked leaven of error *will* keep on growing (Gal. 5:9, I Cor. 5:6), that they are fighting a losing battle.

Which leads us to say that the embattled conservatives are becoming their own worst enemies. They themselves are guilty of disobedience to the word of the Lord. The Bible teaches that complete doctrinal agreement is the scriptural basis for fellowship (I Cor. 1:10). The Bible teaches that church fellowship is forbidden with all who deviate from the Word of God in their teachings (Rom. 16:17). When such and similar separation passages are ignored, a result may well be that the will and determination to put them into practice, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is lost. Such disobedience is calculated by Satan to make the conservatives themselves victims of the “holy battles” they are waging.

Of course, comments are heard from the conservative camp such as “we are staying in to fight the Lord’s battles” and “we want to save our synod.” But staying in is contradictory to “come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). Staying in, whether well-intentioned or not, still makes them “partakers of other men’s sins” (I Tim. 5:22). Furthermore, if outspoken conservatives are spiritually strong enough not to be deceived but to survive in the on-going war, they cannot casually dismiss what the consequences of “staying in” may well mean to those sheep for whom they are responsible. The word of the Lord teaches that “naive people” will be deceived by the “smooth talk and flattery” of religious errorists (cf. Rom. 16:18).

And one can hardly fault the liberals who are rankled at the civil war being waged from within by the conservative element. The July 31, 1989 *Christian News* quotes a letter from a liberal: “Now that the convention is over and the

What Luther Says

On Galatians 5:9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough" the Reformer said: "We should note this passage well and use it to refute the argument of those who malign us by saying that we are violating charity to the signal harm of the church. We are certainly ready to keep the peace with all and to show love to everybody if only they will let us have the doctrine of faith whole and well preserved. If we are denied this essential thing, they demand love from us in vain. Accursed be the love by which the doctrine of faith is sacrificed, to which everything must yield: love, apostle, angel from heaven, etc."



Commenting on Galatians 2:8 Luther said: "In matters concerning faith we must be invincible, unbending, and very stubborn; indeed, if possible, harder than adamant. But in matters concerning love we should be softer and more pliant than any reed and leaf and should gladly accommodate ourselves to everything."

In connection with Paul's opposing Peter when the Gospel was at stake, Luther writes: ". . . accursed be the humility that here shows itself compliant. Here everyone should be arrogant and stubborn if he would not deny Christ. Wherefore, God granting me grace, my head shall be harder than the head of all men. Here I am hard and want to be considered hard. Here my motto is: I yield to no one. And I am glad at heart that I am called rebellious and stubborn in this matter. I publicly confess that I am indeed hard and shall continue to be hard and not budge even a hairsbreadth. . . . A Christian should be very arrogant and stubborn in matters pertaining to his faith, should put up with nothing at all, and should not budge even a hairsbreadth; for by faith a man becomes God (2 Peter 1:4). But God does not put up with anything, He yields to no one, for He is unchangeable; therefore it should put up with nothing, should yield to no one. But when love is concerned, a Christian should yield and bear everything, for there he is a mere man."

"No pestilence so infects the body as godless doctrine infects the mind. Well the apostle says of false teachers (2 Tim. 2:17): 'Their word will eat as does a canker.'"

From *What Luther Says*, Vol. I, p. 404ff.

voice of God's people for our Synod has been heard, why don't you do us all a favor and . . . take a hike . . . ! Who needs you? Certainly not our church body. If we're so bad: LEAVE . . ." (Letter writer's emphasis—and we left out the dirty words!)

As we see it, the letter writer—whether he knows it or not—is calling on the avowed conservatives to live *and practice* according to the very Word of God which they so loudly claim to be defending.

True Lutheranism

All of what is here being said is an attempt to remove some of the smoke

“ . . . Luther denied the Reformed leader, Ulrich Zwingli, the right hand of fellowship . . . true Lutherans would not extend the hand of fellowship to any who disagreed with them on the plain teachings of Scripture, or on the confessional writings based on those Scriptures.”

screen which stands as a cloud over the battles many of Missouri's outspoken conservatives are engaged in within their synod. Undoubtedly those conservatives are convinced they are fighting a Christian holy war. Undoubtedly they dearly love their synod, and its rich heritage of confessional Lutheranism going back to the days of Walther, the Piepers, *et al.* But, loving that Word, should they not heed its directive over against established errorists, regardless of the consequences? “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kgs. 18:21).

And only briefly we would again call attention to what we see as true Lutheranism on the basis of our Reformation heritage. Back in Luther's day (and admittedly before organized Lutheran synods) there was basically one question: Is what is being taught biblical or not? If not, there could be no fellowship. Recall how Luther denied the Reformed leader, Ulrich Zwingli, the right hand of fellowship. Luther did this over such a “minor” matter as whether or not the body and blood of Christ were truly present in the sacrament. When Zwingli rationalized that the bread and wine were only symbols of the body and blood of Christ and denied the *Real Presence*, Luther went his separate way. Too much was at stake to compromise the words of Christ: “This is my body . . . this is my blood.”

Eventually a wide range of disputed doctrinal matters were addressed and settled on the basis of Scripture—settled by the Lutheran confessional documents contained in the Book of Concord in 1580. On the basis of these Confessions either an individual or a group of individuals could be ascertained as truly Lutheran or not. From that point on true Lutherans would not extend the hand of fellowship to any who disagreed with them on the plain teachings of Scripture, or on the confessional writings based on those Scriptures.

In other words, there were, and are, no “levels of fellowship” such as LC-MS President Bohlmann has proposed (sometime prior to the July convention). That teaching is similar to the old doctrine of selective fellowship. The contention is that there are situations or circumstances when it may be okay to worship with Christians who are not of the same mind in all matters of Bible doctrine.

It is sad if Missouri's liberals see the conservatives as impediments to the church's mission. They are placing the “Go ye . . .” of the Savior's Great Commission ahead of “. . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” when these belong side by side. It is equally sad if Missouri's conservatives stay in the synod rather than heeding God's directive to “mark them which causes divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). By their disobedience they are imperiling their own faith and the faith of those that hear them.

And the war will go on.

—Paul Fleischer

Against Lethargy In Liturgy (Seventh in a Series)—

THE EPISTLE — THE GOSPEL — THE CREED —
HYMN — THE SERMON

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

For Martin Luther, the high point of the worship service, and of the day, and of life itself, was the Word of God. He knew that "all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever" (I Pet. 1:24-25). Even if the world were filled with devils, and if they were able to take our property, our possessions, our good name, our children, our spouse, our health, or our life, they would never be able to exterminate the Word of our God! And it is this Word which says to us: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12:32).

Choosing the Kernel

Throughout the service our expressions of worship may take many forms: congregational hymn singing (reintroduced in Luther's day); choir or soloists singing (expressing the thoughts and worship of the whole congregation); antiphonal reading, reciting, or singing of psalms, prayers, responses, hallelujahs and doxologies. We stand, we sit, and sometimes we kneel. We light candles, festoon the altar, fold hands, and bow heads.

But these are all outward activities, and the Lord looks upon the heart (I Samuel 16:7). It is that which affects the heart that is most important in our worship service. Luther once wrote concerning this failing which clings to us: "We always let ourselves be moved more by the person and outward person than by the Word. But God wants us to cling to, and look upon, His Word alone. He wants us to choose the kernel

and not the husk. We should look more at the Father of the house than at the house. It is not His desire that we should look to St. Peter and St. Paul because of the dignity of their office, but much rather because of Christ, who speaks through them, and because of God's Word, which goes forth from their mouth."

Thus when we come to the Epistle Lesson, the Gospel Lesson, and the Sermon, we have come to the high point of our worship service, where the Word of God is read and proclaimed, and we sit at Jesus' feet again, like Mary of Bethany.

At Jesus' Feet

From the earliest times lessons have been read from both the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and the Epistles (Letters). Usually the epistle readings are from the letters of Paul, Peter, John, etc., but occasionally they may be selected from Isaiah or the Book of Acts. From earliest times a regular schedule of readings was used, and these historic selections are still used today. In addition to this, other good plans have been worked out over the years by various individuals, conferences, or church bodies.

The purpose of having a carefully



The High Point

At this point in our services, even before the third reading, we respond to the Word of God with a word of our own, confessing our faith in the Triune God who made us, redeemed us, and sanctifies us. In so confessing, we join the ranks of those who have proclaimed the name of God from the beginning of the world.

planned schedule of readings is that in the course of each year all of the chief doctrines of the Bible may be reviewed. This would be more difficult if it were left to the week-by-week concerns of one individual in a congregation.

After the Epistle Lesson, a "gradual" leads to the Gospel Lesson. This consists of one or more Scripture verses, which may reflect the season or the day. It usually concludes with a "Hallelujah" or "Triple Hallelujah" sung by the congregation. "Hallelujah" (Praise ye the Lord), which Luther called "the perpetual voice of the Church," is a fitting response to the favor of a God who comes to us in such a friendly way (human voices, human language) and speaks to us.

The Gospel Lesson is begun and ended with an outburst of glory and praise to God by the congregation. This is the reading that comes from the historical accounts of how our God kept all of His promises to us in Christ Jesus. Usually the theme for the day comes from the Gospel Lesson.

The hymn that follows the Creed usually reflects a thought from the Scripture readings just heard or the one to come. As a matter of fact, in all of our hymns and worship-forms it is the presence of the Scripture that lifts it from mere ceremony to serious celebration. The Word of God is the high point wherever we find it, whether in responses, introits, graduals, or hymns. Sometimes what passes for a hymn today is little more than a pious expression of the wisdom and spirit of our times. But when we find a hymn that well expresses what we learn from the Word, and praises Him for that, we have found a treasure.

We have included the sermon text as one of the readings because it was so considered as far back as the sixteenth century. To simply read the lessons without at least expounding, meditating, and applying one of them was likened by Luther to speaking in a tongue without an interpreter. We need not only to hear, but also to receive and to ponder in our hearts the glory and grace and mercy and majesty of our God, who has saved our fallen race.

Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word
We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here,
Receive us into glory there.

—Paul Schaller

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (Hebr. 11:20).

ISAAC—A SINNER JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

It is a temptation to place Bible characters too high on a pedestal and to forget that they were human beings just like us. When we only concentrate on the wonderful deeds of prominent people in the Bible, it is easy to fall into the thinking that God only used perfect people to accomplish His work here on earth. It is healthy sometimes to take a good hard look at the heroes of our faith, to notice the good as well as the bad. Then we see clearly that God uses forgiven sinners, empowered by His Spirit for His kingdom work.

I invite you to take a look at the life of Isaac this month in our *Pilgrim* series. We know him as a hero of our faith. God’s hand was upon him and it was through him and his seed that the Promise of the ages was fulfilled. Isaac was a human being like you and me. He had strengths, but he had many weaknesses. Maybe as we view him from this light it will free us to believe that God can use us in great ways also.

High Points

We cannot help but notice the extraordinary events which surrounded Isaac’s birth and early years. They are just too striking to ignore! You might say he was a *wonder child*.

His mother and father were old enough to be his great-grandparents at the time of his birth. Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Abraham was the actual biological father and Sarah was the actual

biological mother. With God nothing is impossible!

When God announced to Abraham and Sarah that a son would soon be born to them, they both laughed. They wanted children in their youth, but this blessing eluded them. Now when they were very old and incapable of having children, God said: “It is time. Your child will be born in a year.” They could not believe the news so they laughed skeptically.

God proved Himself faithful to Abraham and Sarah. Their son was born at the very time promised. His name was appropriate—Isaac, which means “he laughs.” His parents circumcised him when he was eight days old. Then they watched their wonder child grow.

When Isaac was about twenty-five years old, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son whom he loved. This was to take place on Mt. Moriah. Abraham obediently carried out God’s instructions. Isaac also became an obedient sacrifice. He serves as a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ as He went obediently to the cross to atone for the sins of the world. As Abraham was about to slay Isaac, the angel of the Lord intervened. A ram was provided as victim in place of Isaac. This whole story is an example of the strong faith the Holy Spirit created not only in Abraham but also in his son Isaac.

After this incident Isaac continued to grow in stature. According to Gene-

sis 26:13 he became a very wealthy man for his day and age. Isaac's wealth was not so much an indication of strength of faith on his part. Rather, this was a blessing God knew would not be detrimental to his spiritual life and salvation. God also revealed to Isaac that He would bless him and increase the number of his descendants for the sake of his father Abraham. This was an extension of the promise to Abraham that a mighty nation would rise up from him and his seed.

One of the most joyous events in Isaac's life was his marriage to Rebekah. Scripture shows us that this union was not something which occurred by chance but that the Lord ordained it. He blessed them with a love which kept them together through many difficulties.

Such were some of the high points in the life of our fellow pilgrim, Isaac. There were some low points also in which he displayed weakness and lack of faith.

Low Points

When Isaac had his own family, there was a less than ideal relationship between parents and children. Isaac and Rebekah were blessed with twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first born and the rightful heir to the covenant blessing. The problem was that Isaac seemed to favor Esau while Rebekah seemed to favor Jacob. We can understand how situations like this may arise in families, but the results can be devastating for the children. Such are the consequences of sin which even dwells in the hearts of God's saints. As godly parents, Isaac and Rebekah should have tried to show

equal love and respect for both of their children.

Possibly because of the favoritism shown by the parents in this family, a rivalry broke out between Esau and Jacob. Jacob stole the birthright from Esau for a bowl of pottage. Jacob, prompted by his mother, deceived the aged Isaac into giving him the covenant blessing instead of giving it to his brother Esau. It was God's will for Jacob to receive the blessing, but not through deception. After this unfortunate turn of events Isaac was forced to witness a bitter division between his sons which was never totally patched up, and which was perpetuated by their descendants.

God also chose to call to our attention another flaw in the character of Isaac. When Isaac was in Gerar, he lied to the leaders there, telling them Rebekah was his sister. His thinking was: "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful." This put him in a very embarrassing situation with Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Isaac didn't have the strength to tell the truth and pay the possible consequences.

Our hero seems to have had feet of clay. His faith wasn't as strong sometimes as it was on Mt. Moriah. He didn't always display the best judgment or make the most God-pleasing choices in his life.

A Sinner Declared Righteous

When even the most prominent of Bible figures or Christian champions is truly analyzed by God's perfect standard, serious flaws will inevitably come to light. As St. Paul says: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there

is no one who understands, no one who seeks God" (Rom. 3:10-11). All mortals, even Bible heroes, stand on the same plane ultimately. All have failed to be perfectly righteous according to God's terms.

But all believers do possess a kind of righteousness. It's not their own, but an alien righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus Christ who through His life and death earned for us perfect righteousness from God. After Christ's glorious resurrection God declared all sinners not guilty, *justified*. This is what made Isaac one of God's great pilgrims. It wasn't Isaac's works. His works came about because he knew of his justification, and his heart and life were renewed. Isaac followed in the footsteps of his father Abraham, of whom it is said: "Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:16).

Sometimes when our sins particularly haunt us, we may think we will never be effective servants of God. We think we have failed Him miserably.

How could God possibly use us now? We may look at Bible heroes like Isaac and see what appears to be lives of perfection. Then we become very discouraged.

For our comfort and encouragement let us note that people like Isaac were not that much different than we are today. Even our greatest heroes were sinners who failed at many points. Their real claim to fame was the fact that God forgave them and made them His dear children for Jesus' sake. That's our claim to fame too.

When our faith in the doctrine of justification is strong and alive we can forget our past mistakes and sins and press on with holy fervor, serving God like Isaac and other pilgrims who have gone before.

Remember, we don't have to rival anyone else to be considered great in God's kingdom. As we humbly fulfill our calling in life, God is able to take everything into account and will deem our work wonderful through His Son.

—Kurt Luebke



The Good News in Nigeria—

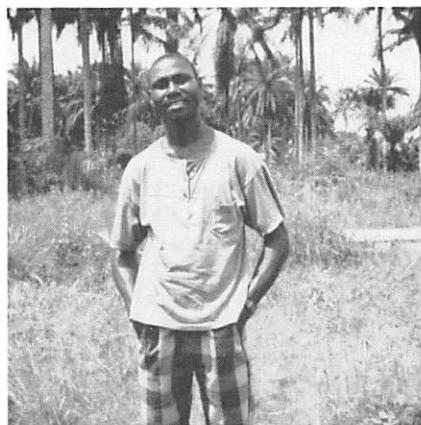
THE WASHING OF REGENERATION

The Nigerian Church of the Lutheran Confession has at this time ten preaching stations. These are places where we have our preachers conduct services on Sunday and hold catechism classes.

Just as in the US outreach program, preaching stations may or may not develop into full-fledged missions and congregations. Of the five or more promising stations one is at Mbukpo Ukokai. Bible Institute student Edwin

goes there each Sunday. Services are held in a small mudwattle building not very far from a larger Christian church.

The Bible Institute student is to go on Friday and/or Saturday to make home visits, conduct catechism classes and do general outreach with the Word. We were invited here by a teacher in the school. This teacher, George, joined our church in a neighboring village and subsequently invited us to



Edwin—the preacher at Ukokai
hold services in his house in Ukokai.

Freed from Crippling Sin

Our church is relatively new here and our group is small. But not long ago we had an event that will not likely be rivaled too soon. In one Sunday service Pastor Essien baptized 17 children ranging in age from about one to 24 years old. Of the 34 people in the service, fully one half were baptized.

We do not want to leave the impression that this is a frequent occurrence for us. Rather, we are reporting it for your further praise to God for His mercy in the sacrament.

As the people lined up to be baptized the line actually stretched from outside one side of the mudwaddle to outside the other side of the mudwaddle. The first baptized was Effiong. He is crippled and walks with the aid of a cane. His mother is a Methodist and goes to the large church nearby. She is not interested in our church, though young Effiong is. He and his sister attend our services.

Effiong is also crippled by sin. But through the sacrament of baptism he is assured that he is cleansed in the blood

of the Lamb of God. He has no earthly father. Through the sacrament he is now assured that he has a loving Father in heaven.

What a joyful day the resurrection will be for him: freed from crippling sin once and for all, and from the hindrance of his crippled leg that he might stand straight and tall before his Lord.

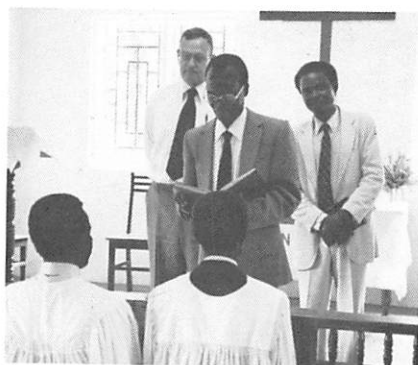
Victor was also baptized on that Sunday. He held his sister on his back throughout the ceremony. Through baptism a far heavier burden than his little sister was removed from him, the weight of sin and guilt. Christ has become sin for him that he might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Victor has poor eyes. Yet throughout the service he focused his eyes first on the preacher and then on the baptizer. Those were intent eyes, betraying a hungering for righteousness. This hunger is and always will be more than satisfied in Christ Jesus.

Chosen by Christ

The youngest child baptized did not make any "decision for Christ." Rather Christ chose that child and called her by the Gospel in baptism. There was no talk in the ceremony about an "age of accountability" somewhere from age seven or so until who knows when. The age of accountability for our sin is at conception. In Ukokai we teach and practice biblical baptism without the warping of it by human reason.

The oldest candidate for baptism that Sunday was 24-year-old Edeke. He was not embarrassed to line up with the rest of the "children." Nor was he ashamed to bend his knees and bow his head to receive the assurance of his sins forgiven through the comfort of baptism. It was a sure strengthening of



Ordination Service—July 9, 1989. Standing: Pastors Koenig, Essien, Udo. Kneeling: Benson and Obot.

A full account of the Ordination Service will appear in a future issue.

his faith by this means of grace.

On that day Edeke willingly confessed his Lord before men, not just because his earthly father wanted him to be baptized, but because his

heavenly Father beckoned him to receive this comfort.

Needless to say, it is by the means of your offerings that this service was held in Ukokai. Your offerings assist our brethren here in the area of transport.

The easier work is done now. Though the service was quite lengthy it is over. They have been baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They have been granted and guaranteed a place in God's family.

Now comes the harder part of the discipling command. It takes much longer to carry out. As a matter of fact it will go on for the rest of their lives: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you . . ." We praise God that through your assistance we are enabled to carry out the Great Commission in both manners.

—Missionary D. Koenig



Zip Code Change

The zip code for Berea Lutheran Church, Pastor David Schierenbeck, and Teacher Robert Snell in Inver Grove Heights, MN has been changed from 55075 to 55077.

Change of Address

Robert Mackensen
525 Hawthorne Street
Red Wing, Minnesota 55066

Ordination-Installation

As authorized by President Daniel Fleischer, the undersigned ordained Lawrence Bade into the holy ministry on August 20, 1989, installing him as pastor of Berea Ev. Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD.

—Vernon E. Greve

Minnesota Pastoral Conference

Place: Mt. Olive, Detroit Lakes, MN

Dates: November 1 & 2, beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Agenda:

- * Exegesis of Revelation 3:1-6—J. Pfeiffer
- * Homiletical Study of Psalm 127—D. Fleischer
- * Isagogical Study of Jeremiah—E. Hallauer
- * Demonology—Past & Present—L. D. Redlin
- * The Incursion of Fundamentalism into Politics—D. Libby
- * In Working Salvation Does God Limit Himself to the Means of Grace?—D. Schierenbeck
- * Mediate and Immediate Activity of the Holy Spirit—R. Grams

Chaplain: D. Naumann

—R. Grams, Secretary

Request for Colloquy

Rev. Warren H. Fanning of Bismarck, ND who has resigned from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has applied for colloquy leading to serving in the ministry of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Any information regarding this application should be in the hands of President Daniel Fleischer one week after the appearance of this notice.

—D. Fleischer, President

Minnesota Delegate Conference

Place: Faith Lutheran Church, Nicollet, MN

Date: October 22nd at 3:00 p.m.

Agenda:

- * Natural Expectations—Teacher & Parent—D. Fleischer
- * Report on Visitation Trip to Southeast Asia—Mark Bohde
- * CLC Board Reports

—R. Grams, Secretary

Daily Devotions For November 1989

Date	Scripture	Theme	Hymn
1	Romans 14:1-12	"In essential things, unity; in indifferent things, liberty; in all things, charity."	262:1
2	Luke 19:1-10	Zacchaeus, a true son of Abraham by faith.	262:2
3	Mark 10:46-52	Faith in Jesus heals physically and spiritually.	262:3
4	Daniel 3:19-30	The Lord delivers His children from all enemies.	262:4
5	Mark 10:13-16	Jesus would bless children through their elders.	261:1
6	Ephesians 6:1-9	Children, parents, servants, masters, fear the Lord!	261:2
7	Luke 12:15-21	Not earthly riches but heavenly treasures count!	261:3
8	2 Corinthians 8:1-12	God's gift of grace spurs gifts of grace.	470:1-2
9	Isaiah 30:15-19	Blessed are they who wait in faith on the Lord.	470:3-4
10	Luke 14:25-35	What is required of Christ's disciples?	321:1
11	Luke 8:27-39	Tell what great things God has done for you.	321:2
12	Romans 4:1-8	The ungodly have been justified; only believe.	321:3
13	Genesis 50:15-23	God turns all "evil" into good for His children.	321:4
14	Luke 9:57-62	First things first in following Jesus.	477:1
15	Hebrews 13:1-9	Trust in the Lord who never leaves or forsakes us.	477:2
16	Luke 10:17-22	Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.	477:3-4
17	Matthew 17:24-27	The King of all pays tribute to kings.	524:1
18	John 7:1-13	Jesus reproves His unbelieving brethren.	524:2
19	1 Samuel 20:17-42	Jonathan defends his friend David.	524:3
20	1 Timothy 4:4-11	Godliness is beneficial in all things.	524:4
21	Luke 13:23-30	There are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last.	524:5
22	Haggai 2:1-10	The Kingdom of Christ exceeds all others in glory.	524:6
23	Revelation 21:1-8	The new heaven and new earth, the goal of our faith.	524:7
24	Matthew 10:40-42	Jesus' disciples receive the reward of faith.	26:1
25	Matthew 6:19-23	Lay up treasures in heaven.	26:2
26	Colossians 3:1-10	Believers shall appear with Christ in glory.	26:3
27	Psalms 37:25-40	The Lord never forsakes the righteous, His believers.	26:4
28	James 5:13-20	Never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.	26:5
29	1 Kings 19:1-8	The Lord strengthens his weary servants.	26:6
30	Mark 12:38-44	Jesus commends the poor widow for her offering.	36