

Lutheran Spokesman



Christ the Lord is ris'n today,"

Sons of men and angels say.
Raise your joys and
triumphs high; Sing, ye heav'ns,
and earth, reply.

2 Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won.
Lo, our Sun's eclipse is o'er;
Lo, He sets in blood no more.

4 Lives again our glorious King;
Where, O Death, is now thy sting?
Once He died our souls to save;
Where thy victory, O Grave?

6 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!
Praise to Thee by both be given!
Thee we greet triumphant now:
Hail, the Resurrection Thou!

193

T.L.H.

Verses 1, 2, 4 & 6

1 Cor. 15:57

CHARLES WESLEY

1739

A COMPLETE VICTORY

It was probably the most unlikely statement to be made during the entire Gulf War. Within hours after the cease-fire was declared, a badly beaten Saddam Hussein emerged from his bunker and announced his victory. Here was one of history's most convincing and lopsided battles; seldom has an enemy been so largely out-gunned and handily whipped. Yet, he has the audacity to declare that he had won. How odd of him to say that.

In one way there may have been some truth to his unusual claim. Due to the fact that his Republic Guard had retreated so quickly, it dodged the bullet of a direct confrontation with Allied forces. As long as this unit remained intact, Saddam could retain his ruthless power over the Iraqi people. In spite of heavy casualties and widespread destruction, evidently this is the victory of which he spoke.

What is the greatest blessing of Easter? Is it not the fact that our enemies were completely defeated? Not partially, not mostly, but absolutely.

The Easter victory is so final that none of them can rise up and claim a triumph after the fact. Jesus won convincingly and He won entirely. By faith in Him the victory is ours.

If you care to assess the damages inflicted upon your enemies, then open your Bible to the second chapter of Colossians. By divine inspiration the apostle leaves no questions unanswered.

One By One—Defeated!

"He has made us alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. 2:13).

ENEMY NUMBER ONE: Sin. Defeated. All trespasses forgiven. Every sin, every failure, every slip, every shortcoming, every act of disobedience, every impure thought, word, or deed—paid for in full. None escaped. None can return to haunt us. There are no exceptions. Jesus paid the price on Calvary. His empty tomb on Easter means: "Paid in full." He who was delivered for our offenses

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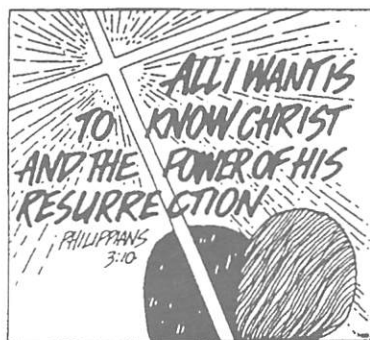
was also raised again for our justification.

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us" (Col. 2:14).

ENEMY NUMBER TWO: The demands of the Law. Fulfilled. Defeated. Jesus did not fulfill 99% of the Law with the hope that you would fulfill the remaining 1%. Contrary to the claims of ancient Pietists or modern Evangelicals, God did not start a process that you yourself would have to complete. The Gospel is not a new Law with a new set of rules that Christians must follow to attain righteousness before God. The Gospel means that every requirement, down to the smallest jot and tittle of the Law, was fulfilled by Christ for us. Jesus had said: "I have not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it." With a clear voice on Calvary He announced: "It is finished!" There are no exceptions. The victory is complete.

"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15).

ENEMY NUMBER THREE: The devil. Defeated. The devil's power is his ability to accuse us before God. But the Bible addresses this in Romans chapter 8: "Who shall bring a charge against one of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen." Need we say more? Satan is disarmed. Defeated. "One little word," Luther so eloquently stated, "can fell him." "If anyone sins," Scripture assures us, "we have an Advocate with the Father,



Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."

We are "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:12).

ENEMY NUMBER FOUR: Death. Defeated. Death did not conquer Jesus and therefore cannot overpower us. The grave may be where life's journey ends, but don't be fooled. Scripture explains that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" "Because of Easter," one writer puts it, "a Christian can drive past any cemetery, can shake his fist and laugh!" The victory could not be more complete.

Beware Of Counterfeits!

But there is one danger. Beware of people who attempt to minimize the full conquest of Easter morning. In Paul's case, they were Judaizers who wished to add conditions to the Gospel, like the observance of certain festivals and Old Testament rituals. So, the apostle warns: "*Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths. . .*" (Col. 2:16). He also

said: “Let no one defraud you of your reward, taking delight in false humility” (Col. 2:18). Watch out for those who proclaim a Gospel that looks like, but is actually a counterfeit of, the real thing. They may seem more pious, more sincere, more dedicated, but such are they who place sanctification ahead of justification; who confuse Law with Gospel; who make the above-mentioned victory somehow contingent upon you.

The account of Jesus’ victory on Easter morning always arrives with an element of surprise, doesn’t it? After six weeks of Lent, Easter morning fills us with a delightful awe and won-

der. It is almost as though the victory were in question until His tomb is discovered empty. But this victory was never in question. It was God’s plan from eternity. It was His way of conquering completely the enemies His people face. Any surprise on Easter morning came because His promise of rising again on the third day sounded too good to be true in our world of sin.

But the victory was true, it is true, and will always be true. So final is this conquest that none of our enemies will ever be able to emerge and announce a late victory. Praise God.

—Pastor James Albrecht



ON BEING DIFFERENT—Part II

“You’re not like the other boys,” she said. “They’re only after one thing! You don’t act like that. Your language is decent. You’ve got good manners. You’re really different.”

This is often the stated reaction to Christian behavior in many other areas of life as well. It has to do with that “different” Book and “different” Savior we talked about last December.

Many of our pastors have heard it said, when people go through instruction: “Your church sure is different from what I expected it to be. And God and His Word are sure different from what I had imagined beforehand.”

We know why. God declares us to be different. Just like Moses said back in Exodus 11, on the occasion of the tenth plague: “The Lord does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.” Moses was just quoting what God had said on the occasion of the fourth plague, back in chapter 8.

This declaration puts us in mind of the doctrine of justification—the declaration of “not guilty!” We are different because of Christ. He was with His Church at the Exodus, and is with her now.

Two opposing concepts in Scripture, oddly enough, have something in common. One concept is “sinfulness.” The other is “holiness.” That they are opposites is obvious. What they have in common is that both denote “separateness” or “differentiation.” Stay with me.

For example, in Isaiah 59:2 God says: “Your iniquities have separated you from your God.” This means we are different from what God originally created and intended us to be. Made originally in the “likeness” of God,

man is now distinctively *unlike* God. Throughout Scripture “sin” marks this discrepancy. Sin is separation. Sinful man is “set apart” from his God. Quite a distinctive category.

Set Apart Indeed

The Bible clearly teaches this. The word “bible” means book. We call it “holy” because it is “different.” Here God provides us a written revelation that is separate from all other writings. You might want to paste a new label on the front of your Bible which says “Different Book” or “This Book is Different from all other books in the whole world!” That is exactly what the title “Holy Bible” means. This book is in a class by itself, set apart from all other so-called sacred writings. It is just plain different. And why? Because, for one thing, it depicts our sinfulness as no other book can. But more—it describes and bestows such a different solution. It removes sinfulness and confers its opposite!

With the Easter Season upon us, we think of the big difference ahead for us. Jesus shall change our lowly bodies to be fashioned like His glorious body. “We shall all be changed.”

Our lives and life itself in heaven will be vastly different from here.

At the conclusion of the great Resurrection Chapter (1 Corinthians 15) we have the injunction: “. . . be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” This is a call to exercise the difference bestowed upon us. We are called and named “holy.” We are given the power to show it. So we do it.

We are now different, through faith. We will be different in heaven. We are called to act differently in the here and now. This includes separating from things and sometimes people that are contrary to God. It means separating oneself from one’s fleshly attitudes—that spiritual surgery Jesus calls for in Matthew 5: “pluck it out . . . cut it off!” It will mean starting and continuing to live as Romans 12 says: “. . . by the mercies of God . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy (different) . . . not conformed to this world, but transformed. . . .”

Be different! Girlfriends should notice it. People who eventually become friends of Christ through the Word we bear will have noticed it too.

—Pastor Warren Fanning



An Easter Message From Our Synod President—

AFTER A WINTER OF DISCONTENT—PEACE AND JOY

For many of us in the Midwest the winter has been hard and long. In our moments of weakness we forget that the severity of it that makes us uncomfortable is a consequence of sin. We forget also that snow itself is a

blessing of God beneficial to the earth. The end result of forgetfulness is irritableness, and a consequent useless activity of lamentation.

But then spring approaches. Our heavenly Father has seen to that also.



The sun is higher in the sky; it is warmer, the air begins to smell fresher, the flowers begin to peek out, and the birds begin to sing; the trees turn from bud to leaf. Then we tend to forget that which was, for the joy of spring and finally summer. God, who has promised continuation of seasons (Genesis 8) keeps promise.

The message of Easter is like that, and has the same effect as the spring with the summer following. In these days we need say it clearly. We need to speak what according to Scripture is the obvious. Christ Jesus, our Savior, is risen from the dead—bodily.

Easter is also the message that God the Father keeps His promise. Even now we rejoice in the fact of the resurrection, and in the promises of which it is the foundation: "Because I live, you shall live also" (Jn. 14:19). Indeed, for those who believe stands this wonderful promise: "Whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn. 11:26).

Yet in this existence, wrapped in skin and imprisoned in this world, we tend to lose sight of the foundation and substance of our faith. Just as winter oppresses, if even for a short time, but passes away, so life itself with all its oppression and grief is also a short time. After the life of toil and tribulation comes the springtime and eternal summer of eternity—a new beginning, a new existence. One so grand for those whose resurrection

from the dead is translated into the glory of that heavenly city where is "no need for the sun, or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light" (Rev. 21:22).

Rejoice! Even though for the time we must pilgrim through this life before attaining the fullness of what the Father has laid up in heaven through our risen and reigning Lord.

For us as well as, no doubt, for most who are reading this, a good part of our pilgrimage through this life centers around our church and our fellowship. It strikes me both as a pastor of a congregation and as one chosen by the Lord through you to serve the fellowship, how we may be inclined to forget the joy of what awaits us by reason of the present day-to-day activities and necessities of a confessional church.

Our life involves the necessity of standing upon the wall and standing in the breach. The spirit of compromise all around us in the church world demands it. Sometimes it seems like a long winter, made even longer at times by our fear of shadows, as it were; by fear of that which is not there. The simple joy of proclaiming the Gospel, and the personal application of the Gospel comfort, can so easily be diminished or forgotten in the fight, real or imagined.

Sometimes it takes an illness by which one is confronted with a life and death situation, or even a funeral, to appreciate the value of balance between the necessary contending for the faith, and the simple appreciation of the fruit of our contending, which is found in the blessed Gospel of forgiveness, peace, and hope of heaven

through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thankfully, that tension too shall pass away as surely as winter passes.

It shall pass away in the Father's time because Christ is risen from the dead. He who is the breath and life of the Church shall take it and its individual members to the home above. It is only because of the reality of the Savior's resurrection that John could

confidently declare, with feeling: "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

That will be the ultimate restoration of joy. The ultimate breath of fresh air for all who believe and trust in Jesus, our risen Lord. The end to our winter, "For Christ, the Lord, hath risen—our joy that has no end" (TLH, 205).

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



WE STILL BELIEVE:



- In an age of doubt, Jesus' resurrection proves He is God, equal to the Father and the Spirit.
- In an age of confusion, Jesus' resurrection shows every Word of the Bible is true.
- In an age of guilt, Jesus' resurrection is heaven's decree that "Your sins are forgiven."
- In an age of fear, Jesus' resurrection assures us we will bodily arise and live with Him.
- In an age of self-reliance, Jesus' resurrection reveals that only He can hold us securely.
- In an age of anxiety, Jesus' resurrection blesses us with His perfect peace.
- In an age of politics, Jesus' resurrection establishes His Church under the rule of His Word alone.

From a flyer inserted in the 1996 Holy Week bulletin at Messiah Lutheran Church, Hales Corners, Wis. (John Ude, pastor). The times of services as well as address of the church were included.

I KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT MY REDEEMER IS ALIVE

(From an article in the Austin {Minn.} Daily Herald by Pastor Stephen Kurtzahn of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.)

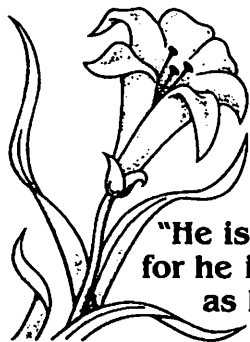
A group of biblical scholars that calls itself the "Jesus Seminar" met just before Lent started this year. The participants cast their ballots and decided that Jesus of Nazareth really didn't rise from the dead on the first Easter. Last year they voted on the Virgin Birth of our Lord. Ninety-six per cent of the Seminar participants do not believe it ever occurred. Before that the Jesus Seminar voted on the words of Christ attested to Him in the Gospels. They decided He never said most of them.

What we see in the Jesus Seminar is the height of human arrogance. How dare people sit in judgment of the God who made them! Lest these biblical "scholars" alienate the faith in their own denominations, they explain away the resurrection of Jesus like the make-believe TV preacher at a make-believe TV funeral. You've heard it before, I'm sure: "Our beloved Sam was a good man, and although we lay his body in the grave, he will live on in the memories." The resurrection of Jesus is described by such modern theologians in the same way: Jesus lives on in the hopes and dreams of His followers. What we have here, though, is nothing more than an outright attack on the very essence of the Christian faith.

"There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1:9). Even the apostle Paul had to contend with those in Corinth who denied that Jesus ever rose from

the grave on Easter. The Holy Spirit countered such heresy in I Corinthians chapter 15. Pay very close attention to the inspired and inerrant words of the Spirit through Paul: ". . . If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain . . . if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:14-19).

But now Christ is risen from the dead! The angel announced to the women at the empty tomb early that first Easter morning: "He is not here, for He is risen, as He said" (Mt. 28:6). The physical and bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus is vital to our Christian faith because: 1) It proves to us that Jesus is God and man in one person; 2) It proves that His sacrifice to pay for our sins was acceptable to the heavenly Father and we are now reconciled to God; 3) It proves that we,



**"He is not here;
for he is risen,
as he said."**

-Matthew 28:6

too, shall rise from our graves on the Last Day.

The Gospel lesson in many churches for the Sunday after Easter is from John chapter 20, the account of “doubting” Thomas. After Thomas witnessed the living Christ with his own eyes, after he saw the risen Jesus with the nail prints in His hands and the spear mark in His side, this disciple fell on his knees and confessed:

“My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28). As the living Christ comes to us through the Means of Grace—through His Gospel in Word and Sacraments—may we also fall on our knees and confess with our own lips, “My Lord and my God!”

He lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence give,
“I know that my Redeemer lives!”



From a funeral sermon delivered at Grace Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minn. Paul Fleischer is pastor. Please refer to Luke 2:25-32—

SIMEON TEACHES US HOW TO DIE

A few years ago a religious magazine had an editorial entitled “Playing With Death.” It told of a fifth grade teacher in Gainesville, Florida who was sure she had found the way to remove the mystery and dread of death from children’s minds. She took the children to a cemetery to let them play around the gravestones, read the epitaphs, and make tombstone rubbings. Back in the classroom the children would write humorous epitaphs and make out their wills. Thus, this teacher contended, the children were learning about death, but at the same time found amusement and entertainment in the process. A newspaper headline telling of this story read: “*Death, where is thy sting? Not in Gainesville, Florida.*”

Of course, we are in favor of teaching children (and adults for that matter) about death and how to face it. But making a game of death and ignoring its dreadful realities can only leave young and old alike tragically

unprepared for the hour when death strikes.

Death’s Inevitability

By contrast we have the example of faithful Simeon, who realized death was inevitable. That is not so unusual, you say, for everyone realizes that. In a sense perhaps, but for many the outlook is fatalistic. For many life is but a chance happening, and so is death. Whatever will be, will be, so let’s “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.” It’s all in the cards, or in the stars, or in the Fates. Do you know that in ancient mythology there were three “Fates” or goddesses? The first spun the thread of life; the second determined the length; and the third cut it off.

How does the attitude of Simeon and of all true believers differ from such fatalism? The clue is in the devout man’s words: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, *according to Your word.*”

Simeon knew God's Word. He knew that man had been made in God's image, and that death was never intended to be the lot of the foremost of God's creatures. He also knew that death entered as the result of the Fall into sin. He knew that "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:20). Simeon knew that not only temporal death, but eternal death is, by rights, the lot of sinful, rebellious mankind.

Therein lies the dreadful, fearful reality of the grim reaper—a reality that playing leapfrog over tombstones will not remove.

But Simeon went on: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart *in peace*. . . ." What stands behind his readiness to die "in peace"? Note the words: "For my eyes have seen Your salvation." Not only did he know God's Word about sin and its wages. Simeon also knew, and had long waited for, Him whom God would send as the sinner's Savior. He knew the many Old Testament prophecies which spoke of this coming Savior. For example, he knew how God had promised that the Seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) would come to crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). He knew the prophecy of Jacob: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes" (Gen. 49:10). Shiloh, literally the "Rest-Giver," the Author and Source of true rest, the Prince of Peace through whom all mankind would have peace with God—He it was for Whom this just and devout man had been waiting.

And now God granted Simeon to see with his own eyes, and hold in his own arms, this Savior! No wonder he was ready to die "in peace"!

Parents and grandparents, isn't this what we want to teach our children and how we want to prepare them for death? They and we all need to know that the sting of death and the apparent victory of the grave have been overcome by our Savior.

Death's Conqueror

A little later Simeon told Mary: "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Simeon reminded Mary how her virgin-born Son would die on the accursed tree of the cross, not for His own sins but for the sins of the world. This would bring sorrow to her heart. But only momentarily, for in the death of her Son and God's, sin, death, and hell, would be conquered! Yes, "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

That is why we say that—in Gainesville, Florida and anywhere else in this world—Jesus Christ is the answer to how the sting of death is removed.

I see some children here today for this funeral of your loved one. Children, it is all right to be sad at a funeral. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus. Yes, we miss our loved ones when they die. But we also know that if they believed in Jesus they go to be with

Him in heaven. And we also know that as Christians we need not fear our own death. Yes, we are sinners, and therefore we too must die. But God sent His Son Jesus to conquer sin and death for us. Jesus suffered and died for our sins, and then rose again from the dead! And He tells His believers: "Because I live, you too shall live" (Jn. 14:19). What a wonderful life waits for us and all believers in heaven with Jesus!

Parents and grandparents, isn't this what we want to teach our children and how we want to prepare them for death? They and we all need to learn that the sting of death and the apparent victory of the grave have been overcome by our Savior. As St. Paul says: "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:20-23). See how in the face of death St. Paul could and did have the child-like hope and confidence of faithful Simeon.

As Simeon prophesied, many would be offended, for they do not want to admit their sin and need for a Savior. May we not be among them, but rather may we, like Simeon, take this little child into our arms by faith, and receive the wondrous eternal salvation that Jesus—and only Jesus—gives. Thus when our time comes we too shall depart in peace according to God's saving Word.



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

"That We Might Have Hope" (Rom. 15:4)

Exodus Chapters Three and Four

Are You Prepared to Lead?

Teachers are preparers. We prepare notes, lesson plans, units, field trips, and so on. But most importantly we prepare students. What do we prepare our students for? Hopefully it's not for our notes, lesson plans, units, and field trips! Nor should we just prepare them for a rewarding and fulfilling life here on earth. We should be leading the little ones entrusted into our care to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Are you prepared to lead? Please review with me the extraordinary life of Moses. This is a life so wonderful and moving, so full of God's power and grace that it could easily be your life or mine!

Moses was born into adversity. His very life was sought from the womb. Yet God's grace abounded. Not only was the baby's life spared by the faithfulness of his parents and the pity of



The Lord Calls

We move on. So did Moses. Being raised as a royal prince, Moses was also prepared like one. Scripture tells us Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” Most likely being educated at the famous university of Heliopolis would have included geometry, astronomy, music, painting, architecture, medicine, chemistry, history, poetry, law, and statecraft. Since Egyptian knowledge was far in advance to any other civilization of the time, it is hard to imagine what a comparable education would be today. The Lord was seeing to it that Moses was being prepared to lead.

Pharaoh’s daughter, but the Lord also arranged for his own mother to be allowed to raise the infant. How that mother must have prepared that boy knowing that she had only a few short years of grace until he would be whisked away into the halls of Pharaoh! During his formative years, Moses was able to sit at his parents’ feet and hear the mighty deeds of creation and preservation performed by his God. What a blessed preparation for Moses as a future leader of God’s people!

What about you? Weren’t you brought to your Savior-God by a loving family? Being raised in a Christian home is so basic to raising Christians that it is often an overlooked blessing. Most of us were probably brought to the Lord by the washing of Holy Baptism in our infancy. And then, how your family continued to prepare you! How fondly do you remember your Sunday school lessons and teachers, family devotions and Vacation Bible Schools? What cherished memories do you have of seemingly countless Christmas services and confirmation classes, church picnics, and clean-up days? The Lord was preparing you through those individuals for a time of His choosing.

So we also had to advance our “secular” education if we were to be well-rounded leaders of the churches’ youth. Some of us may have gone to public colleges or universities to glean what wisdom we could from their halls of learning. But even our ILC must teach more than just theological courses, not only to fulfill the law of the land, but also to provide the Lord with well-rounded teachers able to prepare our children to take their place in the subduing of the earth and the witnessing to its inhabitants.

Moses had his Christian upbringing and his university degree in hand so he must have been ready to lead now, right? He thought so. Moses did leave the comfort, prestige, power, and wealth of the palace in order to suffer with his fellow Jews. He felt now was the time for the Jews to be released from their bondage and he would be their leader. He was right and wrong. He was God’s choice; it was not God’s time. Moses had everything but the call. That didn’t come until after

another 40 years of waiting on the Lord.

We have the Christian upbringing. We have degrees from Immanuel Lutheran College and/or other institutions. But more than that, we also have the confidence that the Lord Himself has placed us in our calling. "And He (Jesus) Himself gave some

to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . . (Eph. 4:11).

—Teacher David Bernthal

(Teacher Bernthal tells us that this offering in our Exodus studies was from the first section of a three-part devotion he prepared for the CLC Teachers' Conference. We have invited him to send along also parts two and three.—Ed.)



What Language Do You Speak?

Our title question would seem to be an easy one to answer. And yet . . . ?

There is a "bureaucratese" which is spoken by government workers. There is a "legalese" which is spoken by lawyers. Not long ago I received a document with a lot of legal jargon in it. I began to read it, but then set it on my desk where it remains now. It was difficult to understand even though it was in English. There is one language spoken in the factory which is not the language spoken at home. One time while I was helping at a church one of the men walked in and began talking a language he doubtless would not have spoken if he had known I was there. Recently in the Oakland school district in California there has arisen the question about a kind of English called "ebonics."

"Secularese"

There is also a very interesting lingo spoken by both rich and poor, well educated and eighth graders. It could be vulgar or polished. It can be in different languages around the

world. It circumvents the globe. It is "secularese." Perhaps this is the language of post-Christian America. As any language does, it has grammatical rules. It has syntax. It can have a limited or expansive vocabulary. At first hearing it may sound fine.

It has definite rules, though, which disclose its detrimental danger. One rule is that under no circumstances may the word "God" be mentioned in a favorable light unless one refers to Him in a vague or obscure way. It is fine to curse and swear by His name. It is a taboo to use the word in "God be praised" or "The Lord did (this or that)." If one does refer to God, make sure that He is a vague and undefinable deity. Do not credit God with any good. Mention Him in passing if you will, but be sure to speak of the divine as being somewhere—but you are not quite sure where. You can by all means say, "Why did God let this happen?" or make the highly commendable statement, "if there is God in heaven..." (You will also note that the capitalization of nouns or pronouns

referring to Him, as I have practiced here, is off limits.)

Secularese does permit the Bible to be quoted so long as one does not say where the quote is from in the Bible and does not really disclose that the quote is from the Bible. It can be a wise and pithy saying, and even one that is known by many, but just be sure the reference is obscure. It is a serious faux pas to quote book, chapter, and verse. This pegs one right off as a zealot, radical, extremist, fanatic, and a serious violator of secularrese.

It is also a breach of secularrese to, in your language, give any credit to faith. The secularrese speaker will want to be sure—when referring to “faith”—to define it as an act of man. In this way the credit goes to man and not to any object of faith. A favorite saying of secularrese is: “It doesn’t matter what you believe, as long as you believe it firmly enough.” It is an horrendous no-no to let “faith” be spoken of as something that derives its power from its object, Jesus.

The Shepherds

At Christmas time the shepherds’ fear turned to joy based upon the message. That contagious joy, in turn, moved them to communicate. They glorified and praised God and dashed that taboo of secularrese to the ground.

It is said that to really know a language you must think in that language. What language do we think in? We have Jesus Christ ruling our mind and heart. What language do we speak? Is it the real language of the everyday Christian?

Notice the smooth transition we make in our language, effortless really, when we leave the confines of

the church building to take up again our daily lives. Were we to be among a group of college-trained people and to utter the word “ain’t,” we’d feel embarrassed. After saying that word we’d probably like to just crawl under a table, realizing the mistake we made depending in particular upon the audience. Are we embarrassed to say “Jesus,” “God,” “Lord”? There was not a hint of embarrassment for the shepherds to glorify and praise God, and to speak the normal language of the Christian to people.

Were the shepherds just ignorant, coarse rubes and zealots, radicals, extremists, fanatics? In the musical “the Music Man” there is a musical score where the great bandmaster is warning the people about dreadful words creeping into their children’s vocabulary. We laugh at the River City people being so aghast at harmless words being used. But it is no laughing matter at the purposeful deletion and (easy path) just plain ignoring of those blessed words “God,” “Lord,” “Jesus,” and giving Him glory and praise. The no-longer-lame man went about walking and leaping and praising God.

Christian friends, in the power of the Spirit delete the leaping if you will, but not the walking about, praising God. We have been healed of the sin disease that crippled far more than just our limbs. The infant King is the Savior of all people. Jesus is the real God who entered the real world for real people. He lived a real life and died a real death to atone for real sins.

What is the real language of our everyday life?

—*Pastor David Koenig*

(From the August 1996 Immanuel Home Messenger, the monthly Newsletter of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minn. Pastor L. D. Redlin is the writer. In the original the Scripture passages were written out in full.—Ed.)

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Its Meaning



Church membership in our church is making a confession of faith. By joining a congregation, a family of believers in Christ, in the Church of the Lutheran Confession, one is confessing that the beliefs, teachings and practices of that congregation and that church body is in accord with Holy Scripture. Contrariwise, one will not join a congregation and a church body which teaches and/or practices in a way which opposes God's Word.

It is for that reason that a period of instruction, discussion, and study precedes church membership. (1) The individual will want to know what a church believes, teaches, and practices. Their spiritual life and their relationship with God here in time and forever in eternity is at stake. Nothing in this entire world is more important than that. (2) The congregation needs to have the assurance that an individual has been moved by the Spirit through the Word to freely and willingly confess complete agreement with the congregation in its confession of faith. When this has happened such a person is welcomed into our Christian family with thankfulness to our Lord.

It is fully recognized that none of us will have a perfect knowledge of everything in Holy Scripture. By God's grace we are learning and growing all of our lives. Therefore,

We gladly receive those who, though weak in understanding and as yet in part uninformed, profess faith in their Savior and gladly hear, learn, and receive the Truth, continuing therein and renouncing all error. (Statement of Faith and Purpose of the CLC); (1 John 1:17, Romans 16:17-18).

Its Purpose



As a member of a Christian congregation our purpose in membership, first of all, is related to our own spiritual needs. Secondly, we desire to do our share to provide for the spiritual needs of others.

We are body and spirit. We have physical needs and we have spiritual needs. Church membership places before us the Means of God's Grace for our spiritual well-being. God's grace is fully supplied in the Gospel, the Good News of God's forgiving love for all in Jesus Christ. It is this Good News which the Holy Spirit uses to convert hearts and draw souls into God's kingdom of mercy and love. It is also this Good News which continues to strengthen and preserve one in the faith unto life everlasting.

Church membership, therefore, results in the privilege of participating with fellow believers in the spiritual blessings which God has given to His people in Christ. It is in regularly using His Means of Grace in Word and Sacrament that we remain firm in the faith and avoid all error (John 8:31-32).

Since God has made it clear that the spiritual needs of people cannot be supplied in any other way than through His Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, we as members of a Christian congregation wish to do everything we can to share these blessings of God with others.

Therefore we state in our *Statement of Faith and Purpose of the CLC*:

It is our single purpose to be a Christian church which strives to proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible, by which alone man can know the true God and the way to eternal life. This our purpose and commitment rests upon the following statements of the Bible: Matthew 28:18-20, John 17:3, Acts 4:12.

Its Responsibilities



Sometimes our responsibilities as members of a Christian congregation are referred to with the word stewardship. A steward is one who takes good care of his master's possessions and uses them honestly and faithfully. This honest and faithful service brings about blessed results.

Each, as a member of a Christian congregation, is a steward of our Lord's possessions given to us to use in thankful love. Firstly, we recognize our own spiritual needs and, therefore, take advantage of God's Means of Grace at every opportunity. To neglect the Means of Grace which God has provided through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord is very serious. Neglect is not far from reject. Secondly, we recognize that God's love is for everyone and it is free. Nevertheless, the dispersing of this love to people here and abroad may require providing for various facilities and servants to labor on our behalf. As one person put it, "The water of life is free, but the plumbing costs a little!"

As members of a Christian congregation we will want to do our share in supporting and dispensing the Means of Grace by giving not only our offerings but ourselves (Romans 12:1).

How can this be done? Well, it is done when the Spirit moves us to first give our heart to the Lord (Matthew 6:21).

When this has happened we will find ways to offer our time and talents to the service of our Lord and meet our financial responsibilities with worshipful and thankful hearts as the Lord has blessed us (1 Peter 1:24-25). ●

Can Evolution Produce An Eye? Not A Chance!

The human brain consists of approximately 12 billion cells, forming 120 trillion interconnections. The light sensitive retina of the eye (which is really part of the brain) contains over 10 million photoreceptor cells. These cells capture the light pattern formed by the lens and convert it into complex electrical signals, which are then sent to a special area of the brain where they are transformed into the sensation we call vision.

In an article in *Byte* magazine (April 1985), John Stevens compares the signal processing ability of the cells in the retina with that of the most sophisticated computer designed by man, the Cray supercomputer: "*While today's digital hardware is extremely impressive, it is clear that the human retina's real-time performance goes unchallenged. Actually, to simulate 10 milliseconds (one hundredth of a second) of the complete processing of even a single nerve cell from the retina would require the solution of about 500 simultaneous nonlinear differential equations 100 times and would take at least several minutes of processing time on a Cray supercomputer. Keeping in mind that there are 10 million or more such cells interacting with each other in complex ways, it would take a minimum of 100 years of Cray time to simulate what takes place in your eye many times every second.*"

If a supercomputer is obviously the product of intelligent design, how much more obviously is the eye a

product of intelligent design? And yet, evolutionists are dead certain that the human eye (and everything else in nature) came into being by pure chance and the intrinsic properties of nature! Evolutionists occasionally admit that it is difficult for even them to believe such a thing. Ernst Meyer, for example, has conceded that "*it is a considerable strain on one's credulity to assume that finely balanced systems such as certain sense organs (the eye of vertebrates) could be improved by random mutations*" (*Systematics and the Origin of Species*, p. 296).

Evolutionists rarely attempt to calculate the probability of chance occurrence in their imagined evolutionary scenarios. While there is no way to measure the probability of chance occurrence of something as complex as the eye, there are ways to calculate the probability of the chance occurrence of individual protein molecules that are essential to life. Over a thousand different kinds of proteins have been identified in the human body,

... If a supercomputer is obviously the product of intelligent design, how much more obviously is the eye a product of intelligent design? And yet, evolutionists are dead certain that the human eye (and everything else in nature) came into being by pure chance...

and each has a unique chemical composition necessary for its own particular function.

Proteins are polymers, whose chemical composition depends on the arrangements of many smaller subunits called amino acids. There are 20 different kinds of amino acids that are used to construct the proteins of all living organisms, including man. These amino acids are linked together end-to-end (like a string of beads) to form a single protein macromolecule. The average protein consists of a string of 500 amino acids. The total number of combinations of 20 different amino acids in such a string is, for all practical purposes, unlimited. Each protein in our body, however, must contain a specific sequence of amino acids if it is to function properly. It is the task of the genetic system in our cells to organize the assembly of the amino acids into precisely the right sequence for each protein.

Proteins have been called *informational* macromolecules because their amino acid sequence spells out information, in much the same way as the letters of the alphabet can be arranged to form a sentence or paragraph. We can appreciate the improbability of randomly assembling one of the essential proteins of life by considering the probability of randomly assembling the letters of the alphabet to form even a simple phrase in English.

Imagine if we were to try to spell out the 23 letters and spaces in the phrase "THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION" by using the evolutionary principle of *chance*. We might proceed by randomly drawing characters from a Scrabble set consisting of the 26 let-

ters of the alphabet plus a space (for a total of 27). The probability of getting any particular letter or space in our phrase using this method would be one chance out of 27 (expressed as $1/27$). The probability of getting all 23 letters and spaces in the order required for our phrase can be calculated by multiplying together the probability of getting each letter and space ($1/27 \times 1/27 \times 1/27$ —for a total of 23 times). This calculation reveals that we could expect to succeed in correctly spelling our phrase by chance, approximately *once* in eight hundred, million, trillion, trillion draws! If we were to hurry the process along and draw our letters at the rate of a billion per second, we could expect to spell our simple little phrase once in 26 thousand, trillion years! But even this is a "virtual certainty" compared to the probability of correctly assembling any one of the known biological proteins by chance!

The 500 amino acids that make up an average-sized protein can be arranged in over 1×10^{600} different ways (that's the number ONE followed by 600 zeros)! This number is vastly larger than the total number of atomic particles that could be packed into the known universe. If we had a computer that could rearrange the 500 amino acids of a particular protein at the rate of a billion combinations a second, we would stand essentially no chance of hitting the correct combination during the 14 billion years evolutionists claim for the age of the universe. Even if our high-speed computer were reduced to the size of an electron and we had enough of them to fill a room measuring 10 billion light years square (about 1×10^{150}

computers!) they would still be exceedingly unlikely to hit the right combination. Such a “room” full of computers could only rearrange about 1×10^{180} combinations in 300 billion years. In fact, even if all the proteins that ever existed on earth were *all different*, our “room” full of computers would be exceedingly unlikely to chance upon the combination of *any one of them* in a mere 300 billion years!

Evolutionists counter that the whole probability argument is irrelevant since evolution is utterly purposeless, and thus never tries to make anything in particular! They insist, moreover, that “natural selection” makes the impossible possible. But evolutionists were vigorously challenged on this claim by mathematicians in a symposium

held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (the proceedings were published in the book, *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*). Dr. Murray Eden, Professor of Engineering at M.I.T., said: “*The chance emergence of man is like the probability of typing at random a meaningful library of one thousand volumes using the following procedure: Begin with a meaningful phrase, retype it with a few mistakes, make it longer by adding letters; then examine the result to see if the new phrase is meaningful. Repeat this process until the library is complete.*” I will leave it to the reader to consider the probability that an intelligent Designer and Builder can intelligently design and build an eye.

—Dr. David N. Menton



**Vacation Bible School
Grace Lutheran Church
Live Oak, Florida
August 1996
Pastor Karl Stewart is
at far right.**



Announcements

ILC YOUTH CAMP

The ILC Youth Camp is scheduled this year for Sunday, June 22, to Saturday, June 28. Eligible campers are those who have completed the 4th grade through the 8th grade. The Camp fee of \$75.00 includes a camp T-shirt. Further information can be obtained from your pastor, or from Prof. Michael Buck, c/o ILC, or from Ethel Dorow, 740 Willow Road, Marquette, MI 49855; Phone (906) 249-1858. Registrations will only be accepted on camp registration forms sent through the mail.

Spokesman-On-Audio-Tape — \$10.00 per year. Order from Pastor W. V. Schaller, 100 4th St. W., Lemmon, SD 57638

On The Internet

You may access the CLC Home Page at this address:

<http://primenet.com/~mpkelly/clc/clc.html>

The *Spokesman* is also on the Internet. To access it you can either 1) Go to the CLC Home Page; in the section titled "CLC Literature and Information" are links to the current *Spokesman* and to the *Spokesman* Archives. Or 2) Go directly to the *Spokesman* link:

<http://www.primenet.com/~mpkelly/clc/spokesman.html> (NOTE: spokesman is not hyphenated)

Credit: The poem "Easter Gladness" was submitted by Teacher Alvin Sieg.

Easter Gladness

*Easter joy and gladness
Has come to earth again,
Ending all our sadness,
Bringing peace to men.*

*For our past transgression
Christ was crucified;
And by His perfection
We are justified.*

*Now that He's arisen,
Bringing life again,
We sing praise to heaven:
Hosanna and Amen!*



Grace Lutheran, Fridley, played host to the February 1997 Minnesota District teachers. Front Row: Elizabeth Sydow, Thomas Skinner, Amy Cavenaugh, Laila Fleischer, Carolyn Gerbitz, Jennifer Sydow; Back Row: James Sydow, Karen Strike, Karla Olmanson, Leif Olmanson, Pastor Daniel Fleischer, James Lau.