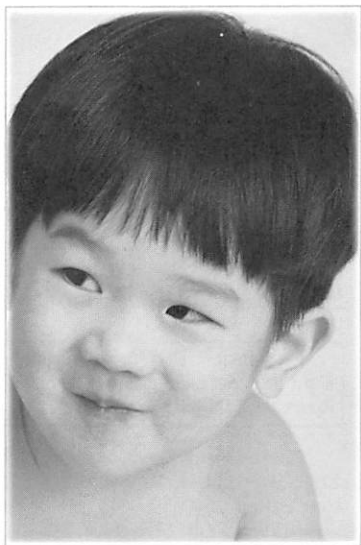
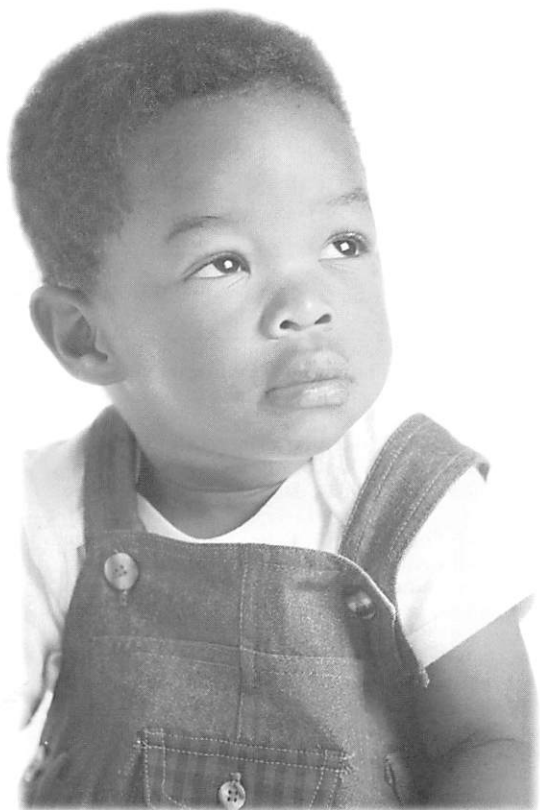
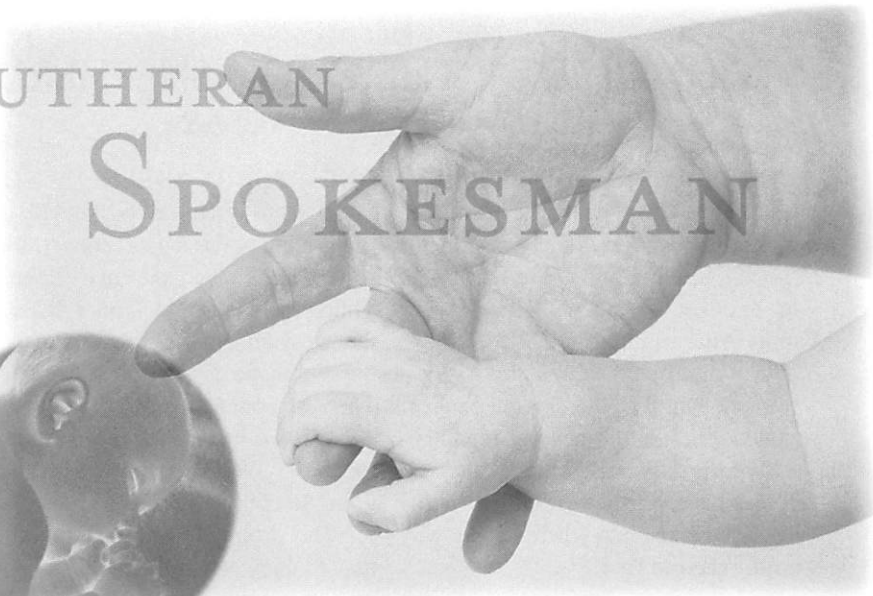


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd;
and I know *My sheep*,
and am known by *My own*."

John 10:14

THE VOICE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE FAMILY ALTAR

“How’s your car running?” That’s a question we often hear. We recognize the importance of keeping our vehicles in good operating order. But let me ask you another question: “How’s your Family Altar running?”

“My family what?” you ask.

“Your Family Altar! What kind of shape is it in? Is it in need of repair?”

“What’s a Family Altar?” you say.

“Does it have wheels? What does it do? Will it take me anywhere? And why would I need to fix it?”

One Thing Needful

A Family Altar isn’t a thing. It’s an action. It’s the act of a family coming together to learn of and to worship the Lord. Or perhaps more accurately it’s the Good Shepherd actively getting involved in the family as He speaks to it through His Word.

In our rush-about world other things can easily take priority over the

ONE THING NEEDFUL—God’s Word. Bobby has a basketball game tonight. Suzy has a band concert tomorrow. We have parents’ meetings Thursday evening at school. There are the everyday demands that our jobs and our domestic chores put on our time. Then of course there’s that movie on TV that we just can’t miss. “We’re just too busy. We’ll just have to settle for going to church on Sunday.”

The problem with that thinking is that Sunday worship is only one hour out of a 168-hour-long week. What would happen if we just fed our bodies once a week? When we consider our sinfulness and how we daily need assurance of God’s forgiveness, when we look at the many threats that society poses to our faith, when we reflect upon how fragile we are in times of sickness and trouble—can we really say: “We can get by on a ‘one day, one hour’ dose of God’s Word every week”? Do we

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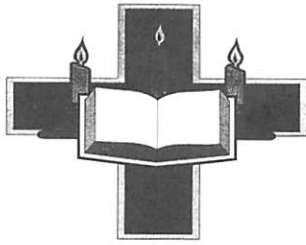
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really want to be “get-by” Christians?

In 1 Kings 18:30 we read: “He (Elijah) repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.” In Elijah’s time the Lord’s altar had fallen apart, apparently due to lack of use. There isn’t a single Christian family today that could honestly deny that their Family Altar couldn’t use a repair job. Well, now is the time to fix it up and tune it up! The way to tune it up is to start it up! The more you use it, the better it works. And, yes, it does have wheels. It will take you places!

Amazing Blessings

Jesus says: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life!” (Jn. 10:27-28) Think of it! We have a Shepherd whose voice is filled with Life—ETERNAL LIFE! When we daily gather around His Word, what amazing blessings He imparts!

* There is a tremendous peace that exists within the four walls of a home when the loving words of Jesus echo in the hearts of the family members. It’s a peace of mind that says: “Jesus died and forgave even me. My sin can’t destroy me. Heaven is mine!”

* This forgiving love, in turn, heals the hurts and bad feelings that result from family members mistreating one another, as they are so prone to do. The

day by day hearing of God’s Word instills within us an attitude that leads us to “forgive one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).

* In His Word we also find direction for making God-pleasing choices. In a society that is giving evidence of the corruption of sin more and more with each passing year, we certainly need such guidance. We could go on and on and on. The blessings that daily family worship bring are truly innumerable and immeasurable!

When he held the office of President, Calvin Coolidge said: “People criticize me for harping on the obvious. Yet if all the folks in the United States would do the few simple things they know they ought to do, most of our big problems would take care of themselves.”

What he said to citizens applies just as well to Christian families and their devotional lives. If we would keep the Family Altar in constant running order, our problems would take care of themselves. The Psalmist said it much better: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper.” (Ps. 1:1-3).

(If you need some pointers on how to get your Family Altar going again, talk to your pastor. He’d be happy to give you some suggestions. He’d also be glad to order helpful devotional materials for you.)

—Pastor Michael Wilke

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

You Can Run And You Can Hide!

When people visit England, there are a number of things they want to see. There are the many sights in London: Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral, Piccadilly Circus, the Houses of Parliament, and many others. Outside of London are also thousands of things to see and places to visit.

Out in what is called "the West Country" is a special place. Thousands of people flock to it every year. It's a rocky steep-sided gorge, made famous throughout the world by the name of a cheese, Cheddar.

This gorge is famous for another reason. It's a story that goes something like this:

One evening years ago a man was walking up through that deep gorge when a storm broke. The rain came down in torrents. He knew that he would never make it through the top end of the gorge and onto high ground. But he ran anyway. It was pitch dark.

The water began rising. The man was forced to climb up the rocky side of the gorge. His hands groped for something to hold. He was soaking wet. He slipped back several times. With all his strength he gradually inched his way upward. All of a sudden his hand felt a vertical opening in a huge rock. The opening became wider. There was room for his upper body, then for his entire body. He wedged himself into the split rock, and there

found shelter from the fierce storm, high enough above the raging water to be completely safe. There he waited out the storm.

The man was a Christian clergyman. He had been praying during this whole ordeal. Now resting in the security of the split rock, words began to come to him — words which, when he arrived home, he would put on paper for all the world to sing. The man's name was Augustus Toplady, the year was 1776. And the famous words were those of the hymn 'Rock Of Ages, Cleft For Me.'

They say, "You can run but you can't hide." It's not true. Not spiritually true, anyway. There are other hymns which testify to that. Like "*Jesus, Lover of my Soul, let me to Thy bosom fly . . . Hide me, O my Saviour; hide, till the storm of life is past . . .*"

There are many hymns famous around the world. 'Rock of Ages' is one of them. It is in the 'Justification' section of our hymnal. It points us to our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of the 46th Psalm, our Refuge and Strength, our Mighty Fortress. As the hymn says, we have no other refuge. We need no other. His side was split (riven) so that we might hide in the wounds made there on the cross, where He suffered for our sins.

Every time we come to church we come to hide in the Gospel. Every time we have our home or personal devo-

tions, we run and hide in Christ. Every time we preach or teach or tell the Good News, we are telling people there is a place to hide. Every time we pray, basing our prayer on a Gospel

verse, we hide in the only safe place there is.

What a comfort, in life and in death. Thanks be to our saving God.

—Pastor Warren Fanning



(The following is an adaptation of the opening devotion at a Minnesota District delegate conference in preparation for the convention.)

A Model Conference

Although most CLC members will likely never attend a CLC Convention, we hope that interest in what happens there reaches deep into all of our CLC congregations. We all recognize the importance of these gatherings—to fellowship with and encourage one another, to discuss scriptural issues, and to plan the Lord’s work in our “extended” CLC family. Such gatherings have always been an important part of church life.

In Acts 15 an important early church convention was held in Jerusalem. Necessitated by the claims of a group called the Judaizers (Jewish Christians who maintained that parts of the Old Testament ceremonial law were still in effect) that circumcision was necessary, enough confusion reigned so that all agreed to meet at Jerusalem to reach a God-pleasing solution. Present were some of the Apostles, elders, and leaders from various congregations. After considerable discussion, the floor was given to Peter who recounted scriptural evidence that God indeed desired Gentiles in His Kingdom, and that the Apostles had been called to preach the Gospel to them as well. Their hearts were also purified by faith in Christ. Why then should anyone place this terrible burden upon them — as if more than faith were required for salvation? Missionary reports by Paul and

Barnabas and words of Pastor James convinced them of God’s will in this matter.

Loyalty To God’s Word

Unlike many church conventions today, spiritual issues were not ignored or swept under the rug by the Jerusalem conference. Together they searched Scripture for God’s answer and guidance and then bowed before His holy Word. Over the years our beloved CLC fellowship has also faced a number of scriptural questions—including the church fellowship issue that marked our beginning. In each case we have gone to the Father’s Word to seek His guidance and to refute anything which says more or less than His Word. And in this searching of Scripture we have been blessed, as it has sharpened and deepened our spiritual conviction and understanding as well as heightened our appreciation of the rare, precious, yet

fragile gift of Christian unity which the Spirit has preserved among us.

Christian Liberty In “Adiaphora”

“Adiaphora” is the theological term for things neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture. For the New Testament Christian, circumcision is an adiaphoron, as the Jerusalem conference wisely determined. Faced with many practical decisions regarding adiaphora (traditions, customs, worship order, building, budget, and policy decisions), both our congregations and church conventions have workable systems in place to reach a consensus. While in matters of Christian liberty there often are honest, strong, and wholesome differences of opinion, once a majority decision is reached, the church’s best interests are served by the prayers and loving support of all involved.

Christian Love In All Things

“Christian Love” pervaded the early church. They genuinely appreciated, cared about, and helped one another in countless ways (Acts 2:44f, 4:32-35). Such love, which always flows from God’s love for us in Christ, did not fade into the background at the

Jerusalem conference, even in the face of disagreement and tension. Love for God prompted the conference to resolve to abide by His eternal Word. Love for the Judaizers led to a clear identification of their misguided views. Love for the Gentiles helped remove a potential faith and conscience stumblingblock for these new believers. Love for the Jewish believers still observing Jewish customs led to encouragement of the Gentiles to show Christian sensitivity. Love for all led to letters and personal visits to “encourage and strengthen the brethren” (Acts 15:32).

May the Holy Spirit instill and continue such Christian love in our midst as well—not only at our conferences and conventions, not only in our churches and homes, but also in our hearts and lives. May each of us in our calling as God’s children and in our specific callings in the church ever heed the Spirit’s counsel: “I therefore . . . beseech you to walk worthy of the calling to which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

—*Pastor David Schierenbeck*



Zion Lutheran of Corpus Christi, Tex. installed its new pastor, Daniel Fleischer (second from right) on May 3. Also present were (l-r) Pastors John Klatt (Bethel, Houston), Thomas Schuetze (St. Matthew’s, Dallas), and Joel Fleischer (Calvary, Marquette, Mich.) who did the installing.

Studies In Galatians

Standing Fast In The Liberty By Which Christ Has Made Us Free (See 5:1)

MORE ABOUT NANNY

After reading what the undersigned wrote on Galatians 3:5-15 (*The 'Nanny Service' of the Law*), a thoughtful subscriber wondered if it might suggest that there is no place in the life of the Christian for divine law. The technical term for that view is antinomianism. It must be firmly rejected.

The article meant to draw a sharp line between divine law as it is found throughout the Bible on the one hand, and The Law which was given through Moses at Sinai for a temporary function and purpose ("The Nanny Service"). The Apostle would have that completely removed. "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of The Law" (3:25). The Law of Moses has served its temporary purpose. Divine law expressing the will of God for human conduct, however, remains.

An Example

We hear Jesus speaking on matters of moral conduct to His disciples (who had grown up under the Law of Moses): "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' *But I tell you* that anyone who is *angry* with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Mt. 5:21-22a). Note how Jesus displaced Moses as the teacher of divine law. With Jesus divine standards or moral conduct reached depths and heights not imagined before. So He taught divine law. At the same time He kept Moses in his proper, respected place. In the following little study the importance of this should be manifest.

Chapter 4:21-31

The Two Covenant Mothers

Unless we are familiar with the account of Abraham's two sons (Genesis 21:8-20), the points Paul makes in 4:21-31 are hard to come by. Do read it again.

There is a powerful argument to keep the Lord's people from the temp-

tation to take refuge under The Law again after having been redeemed from it by God's Son (4:5). For Gentile Christians like us, it is more a matter of securing us from trusting in our own presumed righteousness for justification, rather than being justified by faith

in Christ.

Hagar, The Slave Mother

She was a slave, one of Sarah's maids, and the human "solution" to the problem of a childless, aged couple. She could bear a son to Abraham, but that son would be a slave like the mother. The best that their wisdom could produce was only a slave.

There it is. A perfect illustration for the Law Covenant of Sinai. And for Jerusalem, where the sons and daughters of that Law for the most part still labor under its heavy yoke (see them at the wailing wall!). *This do and thou shalt live!* Slave labor! None could ever fulfill the demands of that covenant and be free of servitude. Mother Sinai/Jerusalem can only give birth to slaves with no right of inheritance.

Sarah, Mother Of The Free

She was the privileged wife of great Abraham, to whom God had promised many descendants, including the One through whom the world would be blessed. She was very old, and barren. Hopeless.

But the Lord did what nature and

human scheming could not. According to His promise, she bore Abraham a free son with the right of full inheritance. She and Abraham *believed the promise*, and the miracle happened.

In Sarah Paul sees the likeness of *the Jerusalem that is above*, the City of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. *This mother gives birth to children who are free—*"children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God!" (Jn. 1:13).

How Could You!

Given a choice, would you ever wish yourself in the place of Ishmael, the slave son of Hagar, driven with his mother out of the household and into the wilderness?

There can be no sharing under the same roof with the freeborn son of the promise. Could any thoughtful person want to be under the Law covenant with its enslaving yoke?

Paul shows the alternative that God's grace has provided in Christ. The covenant of faith carries the power of the Spirit that gives birth to free children, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.



The installation of Seminary Grad George Dummann, June 7, 1998 at Grace of Valentine, Nebr. Back: Pastors Peter Reim (Loveland, Colo.), Delwyn Maas (Golden, Colo.), Michael Schierenbeck (Bowdle, S.Dak.), the new pastor, Timothy Wheaton (Lemmon, S.Dak.), Steven Sippert (Jamestown, N.Dak.); Front: Andrew Schaller (Watertown, S.Dak.), Michael Roehl (Bismarck, N.Dak.); Michael Wilke (Rapid City, S.Dak.), John Johannes (Hecla, S. Dak.)

The Scriptures urge us to be forthright and decisive. Out with the slave woman and her son!

Those of us who were never under the old covenant may not be much drawn to it. But we are constantly tempted by our sinful nature to factor some kind of human activity or wisdom into the equation of salvation. Human pride would love to have at

least a bit of the credit for our justification!

But that is a subtle kind of slavery, inappropriate for those who have been set free by the redemption in Christ Jesus. Out with it! Away with it! It is by *grace alone, through faith alone.*

May we always be found happily in the good company of Isaac!

—Pastor Rollin A. Reim



STUDIES ON “FELLOWSHIP” —

Part Two: To Celebrate Communion Involves a Clear Separation From Idolatry and a Special Intimacy With Him and His

Fellowship means activity. So far we have seen how the activity of pouring over His Word is directly related to our fellowship with Him.

‘Playing Both Ends’ Impossible!

Here we see that our fellowship involves the partaking at the Lord’s table. If we are to follow the Christ, a clear separation from idols of this world is called for. Jesus Himself said that we cannot serve God and mammon. And again: “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters” (Mt. 6:30). If we are in fellowship with Jesus, then we should not be worshipping idols. A clear demarcation is laid out by our Lord. It cannot be for the Christian a playing of both ends against the middle.

Paul masterfully and repeatedly sets this out. “Do not be mismated with

unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship (*koinonia*) has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty’” (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

We are in the light—Jesus, the Light of the world. Because we have that union with Him by faith and the grace of God, we are God’s children. What a blessed relationship with God we have that He calls us His sons and daughters!

This is that fellowship we treasure. And as in any family in which the relationship exists with the parent, so also with siblings. So it is in the church. As in the familial relationship there is devotion and loyalty to the family, so it is in the church.

To be loyal and devoted to our Father and His Son means not to acknowledge any rival or usurper as the head of our family, the church. What does Christ have in common with the devil and his demons who are behind the dumb idols of this world? No commonality, no more than truth has anything in common with lies, nor righteousness with iniquity!

Whether at the communion table or in our fellowship in general, there is a clear separation from idolatry involved. And there is a special intimacy involved, as in a family, so in this case—in the family of God.

This is not the first warning to the Corinthians about idolatry. Paul had warned them: “Now these things are warnings for us . . .” (1 Cor. 10:6), and “Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols” (1 Cor. 10:14).

Israel of old was a prime example of playing both ends against the middle, of trying to have it both ways. At Sinai while God was giving the commandments to Moses, the people in the camp were going after an idol, the golden calf. Over and over again in the next forty years the see-saw struggle continued. Indeed it continued through Israel’s history.

And it has been recorded as a warning to us. There are still the common gods of the people all around us. They may not take the form of a statue covered with gold. Rather, gold itself is a

god. They may not be called by the old names like Baal, but the idols are still among us. Pleasure is an idol when it supplants the worship of God. Luxury is a god when it so occupies our efforts to have it that we neglect His Kingdom work. Pride is an idol when we get so wrapped up in our innate gifts that we forget who gave them to us.

And let us not think that we are so strong that it cannot happen to us. Remember how ‘strong’ Peter thought he was, even so strong as to say, “I’ll never deny you, Lord.” Yet but a few hours later he denied Him three times over and even with an oath. And this man was the leader of the apostolic band. He had walked with Jesus for those years. He had heard and seen. “Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). David, the man after God’s own heart, also fell.

Come, Confessing . . .

Let us come, then, being warned to put away our idols. Come, not grumbling like the children of Israel. Rather, come confessing and admitting sin.

True confession is not “I’m sorry I got caught,” but “I’m sorry I did it.” To be truly sorry means that you see it was wrong and want not to do it again. We should come to communion in the same frame of mind the tax collector had: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” His repentance was a sincere thing of the heart.

With this attitude we then come to our *koinonia* with God in communion. We do not come as if we are doing God a favor, like the Pharisee in the temple. We come to receive His undeserved love and His unmerited favor. In com-



munion we are united with our God.

What an intimacy is here! "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10:16). In a mysterious way we are united with our Lord and receive Him. What special comfort there is for those who are close to Him, who repent of all their sins and discern what is present in the sacrament of communion! What great intimacy and what great favor to partake of His own body and blood for the remission of our sins!

And as the intimacy is great and the favor is great, so the danger is great to hearts not united to Him by repentance and faith. After explaining the separation from idols necessary for proper communion observance, Paul then explains, after giving the words of institution, how serious is this business of examining ourselves before coming to communion. "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor. 11:28-30).

Those who repent of their sins and come with humble dependence on the

Lord for the assurance of their forgiveness in Him should by all means approach the communion table. Come in your weakness, knowing that then you will be strong in Him. Come to receive that very positive assurance that nothing stands between you and eternal life through Jesus.

And as you come and partake, recognize also in our communion that we stand and kneel together. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). We are united in Him and so in communion we see both the horizontal and the vertical fellowship. And notice here again—as we have seen before and as we will see again—that fellowship means activity. Repentance, confession, approaching the table.

How sad that over the years we do not see some at the communion table. How sad that among the younger we do not see the regularity that we see among the older. Can it be a case of thinking one is strong and not so in need? If that is the case, then idols of pride, self-assurance, and physical strength may be crowding into one's life. Cast those idols aside and see yourself in all your weakness and need. Repent and approach to renew that special mysterious intimacy with your Lord.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

—*Missionary David Koenig*



SMORGASBORD

● **NATIONAL GIRL SCOUT WEEK** (*The following comments are adapted from the weekly bulletin of Grace Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minn. Paul Fleischer is pastor*)

This last week (March 8-14, 1998) you perhaps noticed that there were ads in the paper promoting the Girl Scouts. One ad we saw says little which, on the face of it, one would consider objectionable. Yet as discerning Christians expected to be sensitive to ideas and philosophies in conflict with biblical Christianity, we read the Scout promotional literature with a critical eye.

Here's what the ad said: "Girl Scouts are good sports! Whether displaying their skill in track and field, or displaying goodwill towards others, Girl Scouts sport the confidence that comes from being the best they can be." It goes on to "salute this worthwhile organization for the role it has played in helping girls and young women throughout the world achieve



their full potential for over eighty-five years."

For us the red-flag words or phrases are "be the best they can be" and "achieve their full potential." Such phrases—similar to the scout oath where a scout promises to "keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight"—imply

that a Girl Scout can attain these goals in and of herself and her own inner resources. All she has to do is "put her mind to it," and she will succeed or excel in whatever she attempts or does. While such a philosophy or approach may work when it comes to civic, social, academic, or athletic pursuits, it will not work in the realm of the moral, religious, or spiritual. If it does "work," it can only lead to pharisaism.

That is our concern—that children who participate are misled spiritually. Recently in Catechism class we reviewed the spiritual "raw material" of each of us sinners. It's hardly flattering, but the fact of the matter is that each of us must confess with St. Paul: "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Rom. 7:18). And with David: "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). In other words, apart from Christ and with such raw material to work with, none of us can even begin to keep ourselves "morally straight," be "the best we can be," or "achieve our full potential."

It is in Holy Baptism that we are first brought to saving faith in Christ and given a new and clean heart by the Holy Spirit. It is none of our doing at all! "No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17f). Yes, "all this is from God" and, furthermore, not just any "god," but the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.



Speaking of tornadoes (see p. 15f), do you remember the 1980 Convention? That's Ingram Hall in the background. Delegates took a day off to clean up the campus.

The Girl Scout organization may imbue its participants with a certain self-confidence and esteem, but the direction is self-centered and pharisaic rather than Christ-centered and therefore Christian. Here is how Paul summarizes the latter: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

● RATE AND PAGE INCREASE

The recent CLC Convention approved the slight increase in subscription rates reflected in the listing in the masthead. The main reason the rate increase was sought was to allow the *Spokesman* to have a monthly standard 20 pages rather than 16.

Four pages may not seem like much per month, but over 12 months it amounts to a total of three more 16 page issues. Pray for us, that we might

continue to pass along to our readers solid spiritual food.

Besides the articles you've already become accustomed to finding on these pages, we can promise in the future some new series, including ones on Christian marriage and on prayer. We also encourage our readers to pass along Sunday bulletin and congregational Newsletter items they find especially helpful. Even shorter comments on happenings in the church scene or religious world in general would fit our SMORGASBORD column nicely. Thank you!

● **A VIEW FROM THE PEW** (*From the Fall 1997 Messiah Messenger, Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wis.; Pastor Paul Tiefel writes.*)

Messiah has received many blessings from having a second pastor. I also have received benefits from having a co-worker with whom the work can be shared. One of the benefits that I had

not counted on is the joy of being able to sit in the pew and to be able to worship God while sitting with my family. Being able to go to church as a hearer rather than as the preacher has allowed me to see things from a different perspective. For many years I have had to go to church prepared to preach; now every other week I have to be prepared to hear.

A while ago I came across some tips for profitable listening to a sermon. Since I have to practice that now myself, I thought I would share some of the suggestions.

- **Pray for the preacher.** As pastors we pray that God bless our preaching that Jesus may be glorified. It would surely be helpful if the hearers would add their prayers for God's blessings upon the sermon for their own faith-living.

- **Read the Scriptures.** It is a helpful learning technique to be able to read the Scripture selections and sermon text yourself. This is the reason we have printed out the readings in the bulletin. (Some pas-

tors put next week's sermon text in the bulletin for home reading - Ed.)

- **Stay alert.** This seems rather obvious, but it may require some advance planning. At which service am I better prepared to stay alert? (Messiah has two Sunday morning services - Ed.) Adjustments may need to be made to get adequate rest the night before; be prepared to stay attentive.

- **Listen attentively.** The pastor's voice and gestures will signal emphasis; sit where there are fewer distractions to your attentive hearing of the Word.

- **Judge content rather than preaching style.** We need to train ourselves to see past the obvious and to focus on the Word. As hearers, we need to attend to the message with ears rather than eyes.

- **Make mental notes or take written notes on the sermon.** Talking about the sermon serves a similar purpose. Thinking and pon-



The March 29th tornado in rural Hanska, Minn. took all the buildings on this farm site, leaving only a grove of stumps. No one was injured.

dering over God's message will help in remembering it. Share suitable thoughts with friends and the pastor.

As preachers of the Word we have a sacred responsibility to deliver God's Word. As hearers of the Word, we have a sacred responsibility to listen to God's Word. May He bless us both and thereby cause us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

● TORNADO DISASTER RELIEF

Most of our readers know that the editor's congregation is in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, which is but 15 miles from Comfrey, a small Minnesota city which suffered severe losses in the March 29th tornado. As the storm continued on, a number of farms in a half-mile wide swath took a direct hit, even as did most of the city of St. Peter. As one tours the ground-zero countryside, the view is numbing. Farm buildings and homes were either completely destroyed or severely damaged. If one doesn't experience it first hand, it's impossible to grasp the force of "nature's wrath" in the aftermath. Entire farm groves are now nothing but five-foot-sentry stumps. No matter, the

homes, barns, and sheds they guard no longer exist, "swept off the face of the earth."

The miracle(!) is that there was not more loss of life. One boy in St. Peter and an older gentleman in rural Hanska died. An editor's pictorial perhaps said it best. Shown in the picture are a family standing tall and safe while their property lies in ruins. The caption includes this stanza from William Cowper's well-known hymn:

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform:
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm."

Here is another spiritual perspective: *"Even the created world praises the Lord for his acts of salvation. Nature did not sin, nor is it capable of sinning. But when man sinned, the whole created world came under the curse of sin. Animals suffer and die. Plants suffer from disease and drought. Nature is wracked by storms and earthquakes. Our environment, which was created for our benefit often battles against us.*

" . . . The natural world does not need forgiveness of sin, but it does need redemption from the effects of sin. In Romans 8 Paul tells us, 'The creation



Outside of Hanska, farm buildings lie in pieces in a farmer's field. Amazingly, a month later the fields were ready for planting, thanks to thousands of volunteers.

waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage of decay, and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God' (vv. 19-21).

"This world will not simply be put out of its misery; it will be brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. When Christ returns, there will be new heavens and a new earth which will serve as our eternal home (Rev. 21 & 22)..." (People's Bible, Psalms, Vol. 2, p. 101ff)

Grace of Sleepy Eye served as collector of monies for disaster relief

given by CLC members nationwide. The \$3,820.00 received came from CLC individuals and churches in the states of Washington, Idaho, Virginia, North Dakota, Michigan, Colorado, Texas, and Arizona as well as Minnesota. As determined by the Grace Church Council, the above amount was divided between the Comfrey Disaster Fund and the Hanska Tornado Relief Fund.

● NOTED IN BRIEF

"Looking Back In The Lutheran Spokesman"—reprinting articles which appeared thirty years ago—has been an off-and-on feature of this magazine ever since this magazine observed its 30th anniversary. Of late fewer articles

THE ANVIL OF GOD'S WORD



**Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring the Vesper chime.
And, looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.**

**"How many anvils have you had?" said I,
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"
"Just one," he said, and then with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know!"**

**And so, I thought, the Anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon.
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The Anvil is unchanged! The hammers? Gone!**

(Anon)

have been reprinted, the reason being that when we “look back” we are searching for articles more doctrinal than devotional in nature. It stands to reason that, in the formative years as the church body struggled with birth pangs, there were more of the former. And as time went on, the *Spokesman* more and more evolved into being a devotional magazine.

Thirty years ago the now sainted Pastor Otto Eckert, at that time the CLC’s own Luther expert, noted an event on the 1967 church scene which

called for comment. His comments on “Marian Piety” which appear in this issue were prompted by a visit of the pope at the time to the Shrine of the Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of what Catholics believe was the first of a series of visions of the Virgin Mary there. Lutherans in the know realize that Roman Catholic Mariolatry continues apace. We feel Eckert’s comments, including his words of and from Luther on the subject, are as timely today as then. ●



**Looking Back
In The
*Lutheran
Spokesman***

From July 1968

*** ROME AND ECUMENISM . . .**

Marian Piety. Calling upon Mary and putting our trust in her ability to hear and help is part of Rome’s system of calling upon departed saints as helpers and intercessors. It reminds one very much of the mythology of the Roman world which had its patron gods and goddesses. So Rome has its patron Saints, and Mary is the queen of all of them and also of the angels. A queen reigning in heaven is a pagan thought. In a radio address entitled “The Madonna of the World” delivered by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen on February 4, 1951, it is said that Hindus, Buddhists, and pagans in gener-

al can say “Hail Mary” because they believe in an ideal woman and that “Mary is among them preparing them for grace”; also that in all lands where there is an ideal woman, or where virgins are venerated, or where one lady is set above all ladies, the ground is fertile for accepting the woman as the prelude to embracing Christ.—“She is the fertile soil from which in God’s appointed time, the faith will bloom and flourish in the East.” This raises many a thought as to how the cult of saints and of Mary got into Rome.

Was it an adaptation and modification of pagan mythology under the guise of Christian names? Luther says: “Under the papacy we too have made gods for ourselves. We have heaped up gross idolatry in connection with departed saints and filled everything up with it. One honors St. Erasmus, so that he may give him money and goods. Another honors St. Margaret, as the helper of women in travail, another St. Christopher as the helper of the dying, and the Virgin Mary is honored by everyone as mediatrix and a helper in every need. So faith, reliance,

confidence, and trust is given to another and not to the true God.”

One thing is certain and that is that the cult of patron saints and of Mary did not come from the Word of God. It does not say that the departed can hear us or help us. It nowhere advocates calling on them or even on angels. It teaches that Christ Jesus is the only Mediator and Advocate between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5 and John 2:1-2). It does not teach the Immaculate Conception of Mary, proclaimed by the Pope in 1854. It rather says that she rejoiced in God her Savior, Luke 1:47, and so placed herself among the host of sinners whom the Son of God, conceived in her of the Holy Ghost, had come into the world to save. Nor does it contain the dogma of the Assumption of Mary proclaimed by Pius XII, Nov. 1, 1950, which says: “That she received at last the supreme culmination of her privileges—to be carried aloft body and soul to the exalted glory of heaven, and there as Queen to be resplendent at the right hand of her very own Son, the immortal King of the ages (see 1 Timothy 1:17).”

The cult of the saints and of Mary that got into Rome in devious ways was well developed and established at the time of Luther. Luther was steeped in it,

especially in his attitude toward Mary, whom he considered his throne of grace, while looking upon Christ as an angry judge. But what he says later on this point strikes a different note. He writes: “That is the foremost damage and injury, that with the deep veneration of the Mother of God, Christ’s honor and our knowledge of Him has been weakened; since we are called Christians because of Christ and should cling to Him alone and should be God’s children and heirs through Him. That Mary has great grace came not through her merits but through God’s mercy. We cannot all be mother of God, but otherwise she is like unto us and was in need of grace through the blood of Christ no less than we. For the mother is not born to us and does not help us from sin and death. Though she has borne this Little Child and Savior of the world, she herself is not the Child and the Savior. Therefore we must wean ourselves away from the mother and cling fast to the Child alone.”

But in the ecumenical movement Rome will cling fast to the mother as well as to its position on the unity of the church in one outward body under one visible head. Concerning Marian piety it seems strange that anyone should speak or even write about “Luther’s lifelong



The cast of *Oklahoma* at ILC, Eau Claire in the middle of one of its rip-roaring choruses. The date was May 2, 1998.

devotion to the Virgin Mary.” He honored her to the end, as do we, as the handmaiden of God through whom God brought His only-begotten Son into the

world for our redemption, but not as an advocate, mediatrix, and helper and as an “associate of the Divine Redeemer.”

(*Otto J. Eckert*)



Graduation—Classes of 1998

Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary, Eau Claire, Wisconsin —



The High School Class

Sorry that a few of you missed the concert at Immanuel Lutheran College on Friday evening, May 22.

The willows and arborvitae in their containers on stage looked more alive this year. Like the choir concert on the eve of graduation, all was graceful and vigorous in spite of the humidity — which was enough, as they say, to steam your stamps off. The 90 minute concert was wonderful, not as entertainment but as worship for the 900+ participants.

Saturday’s graduation service was jam-packed too. Since my seat on the sidelines was close enough to gain some reverb from the smiling graduates stepping off stage as photo opportunities, I was almost distracted from President Pfeiffer’s memorable keynote address. With Colossians 3:1-4 as launching pad, and the theme “Keep your heads in the clouds” (where our Head has already ascended), he maneuvered us away from the secular into the sublime.

Four Seminary graduates left ILC ready to serve in public ministries; then came the two pre-theology college grads (Bachelor of Arts degree), who plan to attend the seminary next fall; (no teacher candidates graduating this year! Imagine!); next, a duo of young ladies received their Associate of Arts (two-year-program) degrees. The group of twenty-six high school graduates really rounded out the squadron.

Everybody came outside grinning—or crying—and as all milled about for pictures and congratulations, I took a last peek inside. On stage the willows were flexing and the arborvitae looked bushed, but I think they approved. You would have too if you had been there.

By the way, I’ll add a picture or two to help you visualize the May 23, 1998 graduation.

See you next year?

—*Paul R. Koch, reporter*

Immanuel Lutheran High School,
Mankato, Minnesota



"I look not back; God knows the fruitless efforts . . . I look not forward; God sees all the future . . . I look not inward; that would make me wretched . . . But I look up into the face of Jesus . . ."

With such spiritually thought-provoking strains from one of its musical numbers, the high school choir of Immanuel, Mankato gave expression to the solid Christian education they had benefited from the last four years. How refreshing the objectivity of the Savior's gospel in all their songs. So different from the thrust of secular schools, the emphasis here was more on what God has done, is doing, and will do than on man's accomplishments.

Nine high school graduates heard instructor/speaker Craig Owings declare one more time: "Prepare for a test!" Only this time the test referred to was more far-reaching than any other(s) yet taken—the tests which enemies such as the devil, world, and flesh have in store for God's believing children.

Ah, but the Lord does not leave His own to be on their own for the fray! Mr. Owings directed all to the effective "whole armor of God" described in detail in Ephesians 6:10-17. So prepared and armed, "God has equipped

Mr. & Mrs. Albert Gebhardt
311 S. Union Road
Spokane, WA 99206

you for the upcoming tests," the speaker assured the graduates.

Truly a word to the wise, also to all who in the future will—or in past years have—graduated!

—Pastor Paul Fleischer reporting



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Paul Larsen, who was called by the Church of the Lutheran Confession congregation at North Port, Florida to be its pastor, was installed on May 10, 1998.

—Pastor John Schierenbeck

Change Of Address

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