

Lutheran Spokesman



PRESERVE THY WORD AND PREACHING,
THE TRUTH THAT MAKES US WHOLE,
THE MIRROR OF THY GLORY,
THE POWER THAT SAVES THE SOUL.
OH, MAY THIS LIVING WATER,
THIS DEW OF HEAVENLY GRACE,
SUSTAIN US WHILE HERE LIVING
UNTIL WE SEE THY FACE!

*Hymn 264v.5 TLH – based on Jude 20,21
Erhalt uns deine Lehre – Andreas Gryphius, 1676, ab.
Tr., William J. Schaefer, 1938*

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Change?

After the Sunday morning service, a conservative Lutheran pastor was talking to some of his members in the entry way. He began, "I have a joke for you. How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb?" One of his members interrupted, "What do you mean CHANGE, pastor?"

Whether you find these lines humorous or not, they point out one quality which can be found among Lutherans: change is not always desired.

This might seem a bit out of place, however, especially when we consider the Reformation. Isn't it true that the Reformation was all about change? The word itself carries with it the idea of change. *Reform* means "to improve by correcting errors or removing defects." In order to correct or remove, something has to be changed.

If we take a look back to the year 1526, we see that Martin Luther—the man whom the Lord used in large part

to bring about the Reformation—was not especially interested in change. Luther certainly was interested in improving the situation, which meant errors had to be corrected and defects had to be removed. But this didn't mean changing everything.

Luther said this about the Order of Divine Service: "The first, in Latin, which we published lately, called the Formula Missae—this I do not want to have set aside or changed; but, as we have hitherto kept it, so should we be still free to use it where and when we please, or as occasion requires." He felt that this order of service, though in a language which was not of the common people, had much value and should not be set aside or changed. (There was much music and song in Latin that could be used with benefit.)

Reformation

More than 475 years have passed since Luther wrote those words. In our day—and within our church body, the

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Church of the Lutheran Confession— is there still a need for reformation? If there is, will anything be changed? When it comes to God's Holy Word, we certainly cannot and must not change anything. The Word of God cannot be improved upon. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

Since we are sinful human beings (and live in a world full of the same), there is plenty of opportunity for man to put his ideas and teachings above what God's Word says. Everyday in our communities and in the world around us, we see that people put their thoughts and ideals above what God teaches in the Bible.

When these human teachings are inserted into and above God's Word, then there is a need for reformation. By bringing on a reformation, we do not change God's Word, but we "improve by correcting errors or

removing defects." Man's faulty ideas must be corrected—by the Holy Word! Man's sinful defects must be removed —by the Holy Word! When human wisdom is inserted into teachings, these teachings need to be reformed— but never the Word!

The Lord preserved the true teaching of His Word by bringing about a reformation. His Word had not changed, but man's teaching of it had. Teachings were improved by correcting errors and removing defects.

In the years to come, we pray that errors and defects be kept out—and God's Word be preserved among us!

Preserve Thy Word and preaching,
The truth that makes us whole,
The mirror of Thy glory,
The power that saves the soul.
Oh, may this living water,
This dew of heavenly grace,
Sustain us while here living
Until we see Thy face. (TLH 264:5)

—Pastor Mark Gurath



Our Reformation Prayer



"Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers" (1 Kgs. 8:56-58).



Reformation is a time for thanksgiving for the blessings God has given to His church in the past, and a time for renewed dedication. Both of those thoughts are expressed in the above prayer by King Solomon.

Thanksgiving

Solomon knew that it was only by God's grace and blessing to their fathers that the Israelites were now a great and free nation with God in their

midst. So Solomon thanks God for His blessings.

At Reformation time we too look back with thanksgiving to the Lord. It is only by God's grace and blessings to our fathers that we are a people who have God in our midst to bless us through His Word.

Where would we be today, if God had not blessed Martin Luther with a heart dedicated to God and His Word? We might still be lost in the darkness and hopelessness of thinking that we have to earn God's favor and forgiveness by our works.

God had inclined Luther's heart to Himself and given him a desire to read and study the Bible. The rest is history. In the Bible, Luther rediscovered the blessed truth of the gospel that we are saved by God's grace alone through the forgiveness of sins. It was God's grace that drove Luther to be a spokesman for the truth of God's Word to the world.

We benefit from many other great fathers in the faith. We might think of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who was the founder of orthodox Lutheranism in North America. Or of the founders of our own CLC. It was by God's grace and blessing in their lives that their own hearts were inclined toward God so that they too could walk in God's ways and keep His Word at a time when that Word was being threatened again through error.

Each of you may remember the faithful pastors, parents and grandparents who taught you the Word of God and instilled in you a love for God's Word.

We have so much to thank God for at Reformation. God has been faithful to our fathers in the faith. He kept their



hearts inclined to Him—and through them God has preserved His Word for us today. He has truly kept all His promises.

Renewed Dedication

We have looked to our fathers for strength, wisdom, and guidance. What will happen when they are gone?

We are the next links in the chain. We need to carry on the Reformation today, or the blessing of God's Word will be lost again. Today, the challenges to the Church are just as great or even greater as the End approaches. Will we be able to carry God's Word into the future and defend it and proclaim it as our fathers have done?

The future is not nearly so scary when we remember that it was only by God's grace and blessing that our fathers became great leaders in the church and thus an inspiration to us.

Therefore we also join in the prayer of king Solomon, "May the Lord be with us as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers."

If God controls our heart, then He has our whole life. Then we will walk in His ways and keep His Word. With

God inclining our hearts toward Him and His Word, we will be prepared to defend and proclaim the Word to the world just as our fathers did.

We thank and praise God that He was with our fathers of faith. Thanks to God, we have inherited a heritage rich in God's Word and grace. Let us

always pray fervently that God will be with us as He was with our fathers.

And by that grace may we pass on the rich heritage of grace to our children and grandchildren for generations to come.

—Pastor David Reim



A 'Hidden Treasure' Revealed

The words penned by the hymn-writer, "O God, our Lord, Thy holy Word was long a hidden treasure," were certainly true of Martin Luther's time. Slowly, bit by bit, over the course of the previous millennium, many teachings of the Bible had been covered over by the ideas and teachings of man.

It was through the work of various people—in particular Martin Luther—that God uncovered the truth of the Bible which says that it is "by grace you have been saved through faith."

Because we take the same stand that Luther did—on the Scriptures alone—and because we believe as he did, we are glad to bear his name as Lutherans. Unfortunately, however, for many the name Lutheran doesn't mean that anymore. Once again many of the truths of God's Word have been covered over by the ideas of man—also among those who call themselves Lutherans—rendering the name meaningless, at least for them.

Because of what little the name Lutheran means to so many today, I have often wondered if it might not be a good thing to have a different name. Perhaps we could call ourselves

"Josiah-ites."

Luther, you see, was not the only one that God used during world history to uncover His Word. King Josiah of Judah was another. His great-grandfather had been Hezekiah, a God-fearing king of Judah. But in the fifty-seven years after his reign, the worship of the true God had all but vanished. Manasseh was king for fifty-five years, and his son Amon for two years; under these two wicked men the worship of idols was re-introduced. The people were led to do things that even the Canaanites would have found abominable years before.

Josiah On The Scene

It was then that Josiah—at only eight years of age!—came on the scene as king. Knowing Josiah's father and grandfather as we do, it seems a miracle that he was raised as a worshiper of the true God. The only worship that seemed to be going on was heathen idol worship, even in the temple of God itself. Maybe there was still some formal worship of Jehovah going on, but it must have been in name only.

The size of the task before Josiah didn't stop him. We read how he

cleaned out the temple and that he had the heathen altars destroyed—as well as the idols themselves—all through the land of Judah, way up into Galilee. There in the temple, as the foundation was being repaired, the workers "found" the scroll of the Law of Moses—the scroll containing the first five books of the Bible!

Incredibly, the Bible itself had been lost! And when it was read, Josiah tore his clothes in repentance. He re-instituted proper worship and held the greatest Passover feast ever seen in Jerusalem.

The Lord used the king to uncover the Scripture so that it once again could be proclaimed, believed, and put into practice.

But what God uncovers, the devil wants to cover over again and again. It wasn't long after Josiah's death that his son, in turn, reverted to the worship of heathen idols. Then God carried out His threat, and the Jews were taken into the seventy-year Babylonian Captivity.

Similarly, it was not long after Luther died that man's ideas started to creep in one after the other.



"THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN" JOHN 10, 35

And the devil is just as active to this day, doing his best to see to it that the truth of God's love is hidden again.

Let us together pray the Lord that He would continue to reveal Himself to the world through His Word—in the future as He has in the past—through people patterned after King Josiah and Martin Luther!

—Pastor Paul Krause



A Reformation Article from our CLC President—

Reformation 2003

Will there be a reformation and return to God in the 21st century?

Every generation despairs of the wickedness of its own era and feels that the present is the worst of times. Like Elijah, we perhaps feel that things are hopeless and God's cause is lost. The days of Jesus were marked by a

wholesale rejection of the promised Messiah by the chosen people of God. Jesus referred to His generation as a "wicked and adulterous" generation (Mk. 8:38). The early Christians were sure that the world would end in their

" . . . The heart of the Reformation was Luther's search for a righteousness that would avail before a holy and just God. When Luther could not find this righteousness within himself and his works, the Holy Spirit brought him to the cross of Jesus Christ."

lifetime. Luther's day was a time in history when the gospel was almost totally veiled and lost. Even after the Reformation, Luther also was convinced that the world could not continue much longer because of its great wickedness. Surely, faithful Christians today are convinced that these are the last days of this world and that Jesus will return soon.

We look back in awe at the great things God accomplished through Dr. Martin Luther in the early 1500's. The power of the gospel unleashed a fire that within a few years spread not only through Germany but through all of Europe. People were freed from the bondage of a work-righteous religion and drank deeply from the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The heart of the Reformation was Luther's search for a righteousness that would avail before a holy and just God. When Luther could not find this righteousness within himself and his works, the Holy Spirit brought him to the cross of Jesus Christ. The power of the Reformation was the preaching of justification by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. What is needed today is a return to the clear proclamation of the ministry of reconciliation—that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing

their trespasses unto them.

However, there is an important difference between Luther's time and what some have called the "post-Christian" modern era. In Luther's day there was a world-view that recognized the existence of God and was painfully aware of the demands of a holy God in His holy law. The people of Luther's day were terrified by the demands of the law. The law had plowed the hearts of the people of Germany. Luther planted the seeds of the gospel, and God gave the increase.

The culture or world-view before the Renaissance was God-oriented. The existence of God and the concept of an accountability of man to God in a final judgment were accepted as givens.

Shift In Emphasis

The Renaissance shifted the emphasis from God to man. The problem today is that our world-view denies the existence of God, mocks the belief in a Creator-God, and rejects the concept of accountability to a higher authority. We need to give a clear testimony regarding God who reveals His eternal power and deity and proclaims that man is without excuse. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them" (Rom. 1:18-19).

The law with its demands and punishments needs to be proclaimed to a generation which has ignored "the work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). We should not assume that people—especially young people—are aware of the need for a right-

eousness which will avail before a holy God. The law needs to be clearly proclaimed in a culture which has undermined the realities of God's existence.

What needs to be understood is that the culture, politics, and music/art of today are the result of denying the existence of a Creator-God. Psalm 14 gives us insight into why man is so eager to deny the existence of God. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good" (Ps. 14:1). Man does not want to acknowledge the existence of God because doing so would mean that he is accountable to God.

The result of man's bringing God down to his level and approving those who do the things forbidden by God in

His natural law is that God gives them over to a debased mind (see Romans 1).

God alone knows if Jesus will return in judgment in our lifetime. We do know that now is the day of salvation and that every day Jesus' return is one day closer! We have Jesus' own promise that no one will be able to pluck us out of His hand (Jn. 10:28).

The Lord laughs at the feeble attempts of man to take counsel against the Lord and His Anointed. The Lamb that sits on the throne has overcome and rules even today. We have been entrusted with the glorious ministry of reconciliation (see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). God is still in control!

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



Studies In Colossians

"In (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2:3)

Chapter 1:1-8

Background To Colossians

With this article we kick off a new study—a study of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Let's begin with a little background.

Located in what is now Turkey, Colosse was once a great and prosperous city. There's not much left today of ancient Colosse, and even in Paul's day the fortunes of the city were in decline. As a result of mission work done by Paul's friend Epaphras, the Holy Spirit

planted a Christian church in the city.

Now Paul's epistles were written with a definite purpose in mind. For example, in the epistle to the Galatians, Paul's purpose was to defend the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In his Philippians letter Paul emphasized our joy in Christ—a joy the Christian possesses despite the outward circumstances of his life.

What is the purpose of the epistle to

the Colossians? As we study our way into this letter in upcoming issues, it will become clear that Paul is dealing with a congregation that has been exposed to false teachers. These false teachers were pointing the members of the congregation to human rules and regulations (cf. 2:20-23). Their claim was that one needed more than just Christ, that believers needed to submit to certain rules if they wanted to reach true Christianity and be sure of their salvation. The false teachers were also promoting the worship of angels (cf. 2:18).

The bottom line is that the false teachers were trying to lead the believers in Colosse away from simple faith in Jesus Christ.

The Apostle's Purpose

So what is Paul's purpose in writing the letter to the Colossians? Paul wishes to teach them and us that **IN JESUS CHRIST WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED!** Jesus is God, He is the Creator—one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He supplies our every need of body and soul. Jesus is the Pre-eminent One. We don't need any other Savior but Him! His work of redemption is finished and all-sufficient. In the latter chapters of the letter, Paul shows

that Jesus is also our all-sufficient power for holy living. Paul declares that in Christ we have fullness (cf. 2:10).

Satan's aim in all false teaching is to lead sinners away from Christ. Every false teaching leads away from Jesus and His gospel. The Spirit-empowered words of Colossians call us back to Jesus. Jesus meets all our needs for time and eternity!

At the beginning of this letter, Paul already hints at his purpose for writing. He tells the Colossians . . .

- * how he has heard of their faith in Christ Jesus.
- * how their faith in Christ is shown in their love for all the saints.
- * how they have a hope laid up for them in heaven.
- * how this gospel message of forgiveness and life eternal (which the false teachers thought too simple) was bearing fruit and growing all over the world.

What a powerful Savior! What a powerful Word! All we need is Christ! May the Spirit fix our hearts more firmly on Christ Jesus as we study together through the book of Colossians.

—Pastor Michael Wilke



For Reformation 2002, children from the Colorado Front Range churches (Redeemer, Cheyenne; Prince of Peace, Loveland; St. Paul's, Denver {Lakewood}) presented a Reformation Tableaux. Luther (2nd from right) and Prince Charles (seated) are surrounded by townspeople and soldiers.

A Devotional Study of Matthew 6:24-34

The last of three parts of an essay delivered to the June 13-15, 2003 West Central Delegate Conference held at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Jamestown, North Dakota. The writer is Mr. Michael Fuerstenau, a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown, S. Dak.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33).

What drives men to gain possessions for themselves? It seems that men want to own the whole world! Is this done so that a man can gain more self-confidence or be admired by his fellowman? I think we all want more self-confidence and want people to admire us. But can this be gained by more possessions?!

If we want strength and confidence, we must first seek out our heavenly Father's Kingdom and His righteousness.

The most important word here is "first"—because God does give us more than we want, if we seek His Kingdom first. We should seek His Kingdom first because it is well-pleasing to Him. It is written: "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10-11). "When

a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7).

It should be the first goal of every Christian to seek God's Kingdom and learn from His Word. Then the things of this world will be secondary. Let us pray the Holy Spirit's help to seek the love and grace of God. If we seek these things first, our earthly lives will have a whole new focus. In our thoughts we will submit to the will of God. We will want to do more for the Lord than for this world.

The Lord encourages us to cast our cares on Him, because He cares for us (cf. 1 Pet. 5:7). He does not want us to worry about our life or the cares of our lives. He knows what you need! He has your life planned for you now. It is often hard to follow God's direction in this sinful world. Because of our sinful natures, we often think we know better than God about how our lives should go.

This is a hard lesson to learn—that we don't know better than God! How can we learn? We must keep reminding ourselves that God is in control and is watching out for us. He will not let anything happen to us that we cannot, with His help, handle. May God grant that we let Him into our heart and thoughts by reading and studying the Bible, by attending church regularly, and by praying to Him for strength to battle our sinful natures. This too is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Think about it! When the desire for more possessions comes, then stop and consider where such thoughts lead. The devil wants us to have these self-destructive thoughts. He wants to turn us away from God and His righteousness. God is pleased when we first seek His Kingdom, promising to sufficiently supply our needs.

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Mt. 6:34).

Do we ever dream about what our lives might be like twenty or thirty years from now? When we were young, did we set goals for ourselves, thinking about what we wanted to accomplish in our life? We all probably did.

There is nothing wrong with thinking about future goals. However, we should not dwell excessively on them. As we grow older, our lives change and so will our goals. God has set our goals for us. We should let God guide our lives. If we worry about our lives, then we may not be trusting God to provide.

I myself have to learn this lesson every year. I am a farmer. I can only put the seed in the ground. I cannot make it sprout or grow. I cannot make it rain. I cannot make the sun shine. I can only trust God that He will send rain, provide sun, and make the seeds sprout, grow, and produce fruit.

As we go through life, we can get disgusted that our lives didn't go as planned, or that all our hopes and dreams seemed to go out the window. We may even get angry with God because our lives didn't go the way we wanted.

Remember that God is in charge



and is looking out for us when He tells us to look to Him instead of to the ways of the world. There are many temptations that we face in life. There is one temptation that every man faces—the desire for money. Man is seldom satisfied with some money; he always seems to want more. The more he gets, the more he wants.

Sure, we need to have money to buy food and clothing. We need money to sustain our lives. It is that desire to have more than we need that God warns about. Therefore we should ask God for the things we need, because He knows what is best for us.

We cannot serve both God and mammon. If earthly things are most important to us, then heavenly things will be less important. Jesus says: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt. 6:19-21).

We are sometimes tempted to go against what God tells us to do. May God grant that we drown all our cares and worries and turn to Him for all our wants and needs. He will sustain our lives. May God strengthen our faith to this end. •

"CLOSE COMMUNION"

Or: "Who is to be admitted to the Lord's Supper?"

Seventh In A Series

Church membership is not necessarily the same as membership in Christ's Kingdom. A person may hold "paper" membership in a congregation and not be a believer at all. What is needed—and is given by God—is a daily contrition and sorrow over our sinfulness, once in a while accompanied by a real sense of terror. Such terror is not all that bad when it is followed by the forgiveness and faith which the gospel freely gives. And so, "church membership" becomes a true exercise of our membership in the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

This membership is strengthened by the Sacrament of the Altar. There the true body and blood of Jesus are offered to all communicants. Believers know and trust this Real Presence. It is not our faith which makes Christ real and present in the Sacrament; Christ's institution has already done that—He is there because of what He says, not because of our attitude.

One of the growing weaknesses in Lutheranism is a lack of understanding of "justification by grace through faith alone." This was evident at a Lutheran World Federation meeting in Helsinki about forty years ago, when a great number of the delegates, when asked, could not define "justification."

Another weak area concerns the two Sacraments. There is often a lack of understanding and faith in the Real Presence, for example. About twenty-



five years ago in a Lutheran congregation up north, it was reported that over one-half of the members argued with their pastor that the bread and wine only "represent" the body and blood of Christ.

In our day the word "is" has been under attack, even in settings other than Holy Communion. Do you recall how a debate about the word "is" emanated even from the Oval Office?!

"Is" is "is" and always is "is"—is a statement usually used in our instruction classes with regard to Holy Communion.

Our catechism uses "in, with, and under", in case anyone wonders what our position is.

And we often show how the verb "to be" means just what it says, as when Jesus uses the "am" form of it in His many portrayals of Himself: "I am the Door" ... "I am the Way" ... "I am the Good Shepherd." He is what He says He is—or else our faith is vain, and we remain in our sins.

So it is also with the words of institution. God's words are true all by themselves. Not to believe that means deep trouble. Thank the Lord that He preserves us from that!

—Pastor Em. Warren Fanning

CHRIST – BELIEVERS

One of the definitions for Christianity in the dictionary is "conformity with the precepts of the Christian religion." For the definition of "precept," we find, "A commandment intended as an authoritative rule of action; a maxim or guide respecting moral conduct; an injunction." The definition of "Christian" is "one who believes, professes to believe, or who is assumed to believe, in the religion of Christ and whose behavior exemplifies His teachings."

Since the same definitions could cover any and every heathen religion, we see the shallowness of the world's understanding of Christianity! It is not surprising then that people of all religious stripes could get together after 9/11, praying and worshiping together without any compunction. What is surprising—then again, nothing surprises us anymore—is that Lutheran Christians could participate, and by their false witness lend comfort to "anti-Christ" religions.

What is Christianity in its real essence? In an essay "What is Christianity?" (delivered in 1902 by the respected and faithful Dr. Francis Pieper of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod), this is said: "We must actually face the situation that those who style themselves Christians do not agree as to what Christianity is" (*WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY? And Other Essays*, CPH, 1933, p. 1).

In the essay Pieper states, "Christianity consists in faith in Christ, not in man's own moral conduct" . . . Christianity, however, is not a religion of works, but of faith, of trust in Christ

. . . Christianity is not a religion of works, but a religion of faith; that is, faith in Christ is its essence. Luther used to say: 'A person is white because of his whiteness or black because of his blackness. Similarly a person is a Christian because of Christ or because he relies for salvation on Christ's work and suffering'" (pp. 4,5,6).

So then, what is a Christian? A Christian is one whose faith and hope is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. A Christian believes that he is a sinner and would be lost eternally except that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, assumed the human nature, took upon Himself the sins of the world, died upon the cross to pay man's debt and rose again to restore life. A Christian thanks the Heavenly Father for reconciling man unto Himself through the perfect atonement of Christ Jesus!

Certainly the evidence of Christian faith—of the faith rooted in and trusting in Christ Jesus—is a life in which fruit is present.

But as Dr. Pieper said, ". . . Real morality and works that are truly good in God's sight are possible only within the realm of Christian faith" (p. 6). In light of John 15: 1-5 and Hebrews 11:6 (among other passages), Dr. Pieper stands on absolutely solid ground!

Given the definition of Christianity as Dr. Pieper correctly defines it, and given the fact that a Christian is one whose faith rests upon Christ for salvation, we conclude that Christianity as it is commonly understood has lost its way. According to the popular notion, present day

Christianity is no different then heathenism. It has become—in most minds—a religion of works!

We call ourselves Christians. Is it time to define ourselves differently? If nothing else, at least people would ask us what we mean if we would call ourselves "Christ-believers." The burden

would then be upon us to prove that we know in Whom we believe!

The people around us would then at least know who we are in the otherwise nondescript world of "Christianity"!

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



From "The Pastor's column" of a local newspaper—

The Lutheran Reformation — Secular And Spiritual Blessings

To some of us October 31 means much more than Halloween. That date is observed by Lutheran Christians as the birthday of the Lutheran Church.

On this date in 1517, Dr. Martin Luther pounded "the hammer blows heard round the world." His 95 theses posted for debate on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, challenged the Church of Rome to bring its teachings in line with Holy Scripture.

When his subsequent efforts, and those of his co-laborers, failed to stir the Roman Catholic Church to reform itself in line with Bible teaching, there was no recourse for consciences bound by God's Word but to stand firm. Four years later, in 1521, Luther was declared an outlaw and formally excommunicated. The Lutheran Church was born.

Civil And Religious Liberties

There are those who would remind us that Luther's reforming of the church had secular as well as spiritual ramifications. Says one historian: "Many of our modern civil as well as

religious liberties are part of the fruit of the tree Luther planted."

For example, Luther translated the Bible into German. This put the Bible in the hands of the people. Thus Luther stressed the right of the common people to study and be enlightened by Bible teaching. "A great principle of the Protestant Reformation, then, was the general enlightenment of the people." Consider how, from this vantage point, every public school as well as every Christian school is a gift of the Lutheran Reformation.

The secular world is also indebted to Luther for the fact that he "upheld the right of private judgment and private choice." It was Luther's considered view that no pope, bishop, or church council dare reserve the right to decide religious belief. Rather, such belief is the prerogative of the believer himself, *with God's own Word as the absolute rule.*

With regard to this latter point, Luther is not to be faulted for the abuse of individual choice, as it is often appealed to today. A person's private

judgment or personal choices will often be ungodly when conscience is not bound by the Word of God. In 1521 Luther appeared before the Emperor in the city of Worms and was asked to recant his writings. He refused, saying: "Unless I am shown by clear reason or by Scripture, I cannot or will not recant. My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen."

"Paradise Swung Open"

While, then, the sixteenth century Lutheran Reformation had (and has) secular ramifications, the greatest blessings it passed down are spiritual in nature.

The most pressing question each human being faces is: How are sinners justified before God? How can man, the sinner, become right with the holy God? On what basis will poor sinners be declared righteous by God?

The church of Rome left the answer to that question uncertain. In fact, with its emphasis on the pursuit of good works (prescribed pilgrimages, fastings, prayers, etc.), it left even the faithful in doubt as to salvation. No one could be sure of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness since sinners were left to *make themselves* right with God!

While studying the Bible, Luther made a discovery which, he said, was

"like the gates of paradise swung open." He discovered that the holy and righteous God did not want poor sinners to live in doubt and uncertainty. Instead, God earnestly desired poor sinners to know and believe—simply believe—that in and through the work of His Son who suffered and died on the cross, God has judicially declared poor sinners righteous!

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:21ff).

Again: "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ . . . that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

This precious gospel we teach and preach. This precious gospel we believe and live. This precious gospel we thank God for on October 31 this and every year.

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



Ladies Group of the congregation, Church of the Lutheran Confession, North Port, Florida.



CROSS PURPOSES

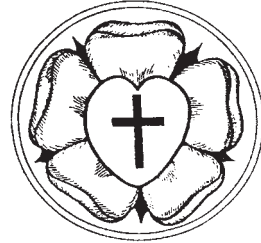


Luther on PBS

This past week (week of July 13, 2002—ed.) there was a two-hour feature on Martin Luther on Public Television. It was accurate as an historical presentation. The emphasis was on individual conscience and freedom, as opposed to being under the authority of the Pope.

It was correctly pointed out that Luther's stand against papal tyranny also had an impact on the social and political scene to this day. Passing reference was made to the Peasant Wars and to Luther's statement on the Jews. As to the Peasant War (Luther called the peasants "everybody's drudge, burdened and overloaded with tasks, taxes, tithes and tributes"), Luther called for punishment of the peasants when they rebelled with arms against authority. While he sympathized with their cause, he said, "Do not make your Christian name a cloak for your impatient, rebellious, and unchristian undertaking." He said, "Bad and unjust government excuses neither revolt nor sedition." The real instigator of this rebellion was a man, Thomas Muenzer, who sought to turn the cause into a religious war.

When the peasants would not work toward a peaceable compromise, Luther told the princes to put down the rebellion. At the same time Luther had harsh words about the tyranny of the princes. As to the Jews, Luther decried the persecution of the Jews, though he



indeed did have harsh things to say of them because of their rejection of Christ.

Roland Bainton (the author of *Here I Stand—A life of Martin Luther*) wrote of Luther's comments on the Jews, "One could wish that Luther had died before ever this tract was written. Yet one must be clear as to what he was recommending and why. His position was entirely religious and in no respect racial. The supreme sin for him was the persistent rejection of God's revelation of Himself in Christ" (p. 379). Mere passing reference to Luther's statement on the peasants and the Jews in the PBS presentation does an injustice to him.

What was missing in the presentation was the emphasis on the gospel. The Reformation was multi-faceted, but underlying it all was Luther's desire to find peace with God. He could not find this peace through the work-righteousness promoted unashamedly by the church.

Luther did not find this peace with the Father until he found it in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! To have and to proclaim this message was

Luther's purpose. For this reason, the cause of the Reformation of which he was only a tool in the hands of God was "a return to and an abiding by the Word of God" (Note, *What Luther*

Says, Vol. III, p.1178).

God knows that that is still the crying need today!

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



FROM A PASTOR'S DESK I—

EPISCOPALIAN & ELCA "MORAL INCLUSION"

Great media attention has been heaped on the recent decision of the Episcopal Church meeting in Minneapolis to confirm the election of an openly gay bishop. Within the Episcopal Church itself and within many American Protestant churches, both voices of praise and voices of consternation have been raised. Those hailing the vote see it as yet another victory for the "Gospel of Inclusion" — the church's arms opening ever wider in love to welcome and include people of any and all religious and moral persuasion.

For our part, we view this decision with sadness and distress, but not shock. Holy Scripture is clear that homosexuality is a sin and moral perversion (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) requiring repentance. As with all other sins, the greatest service we can render is to lovingly lead the sinner to both a sorrow over his sin and to forgiveness and strength at the foot of the cross. The Episcopal Church together with many other mainline Protestant denominations has long since abandoned this approach and with it their Scripture moorings. Homosexuality has been tolerated, even approved, among members for many years; gay and lesbian

priests and pastors are currently serving parishes in the Episcopalian and Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (which has same-sex marriage on its next Convention agenda). So the taking of the next step should not be surprising.

What is the lesson for us? Once Holy Scripture is abandoned as the divinely-inspired Word and the only authority for our faith-living, the horse of "anything-goes theology" is already out of the barn. Once the Bible is relegated to the role of just one of many subjective opinions on religious matters, there is no end to where it can lead. Evolution then becomes as acceptable as creation; abortion is justified as a mother's right; homosexuality and other sexual perversions are justified when in a "loving relationship." And the beat goes on . . . Sin becomes downplayed, excused, sani-



From the Editor:

More than one of our pastors passed along comments made in their respective church bulletins touching on the recent election of an openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church. From two of our pastors, we share perspectives on the matter at hand (See FROM A PASTOR'S DESK I & II).

Allow a personal comment.

We should not be surprised at what has recently taken place. Back in our September 1997 issue we copied an article from September 1967 called "The Death of Heresy," written by then editor Rev. Winfred Schaller Jr. He spoke of the tragedy that is the Episcopal Church because of its glaring failure to deal with then-famous Bishop James Pike of California who "wanted to junk the doctrine of the Trinity among others . . . "

In the same 1997 issue, we too editorialized on the matter in an article titled "Heresy Alive and Well." Interestingly, we noted six years ago that the Episcopal Church "is now broad enough to allow for churchmen who deny almost all the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. It has been ordaining practicing homosexuals to the ministry . . . "

In other words, whether talking six or thirty-six years ago, the leaven of doctrinal error has been abundant in the Episcopal Church.

And Scripture makes clear what becomes of such unpurged leaven—once tolerated, error seeks acceptance; once accepted, it demands and achieves dominance.*

—Pastor Paul Fleischer

* C. P. Krauth traces the "Course of Error in the Church" in his classic Title (*The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, Augsburg Publishing House, Mpls, Minn., 1871). Writes Krauth: "When error is admitted into the Church, it will be found that the stages of its progress are always three. It begins by asking **toleration**. Its friends say to the majority: You need not be afraid of us; we are few, and weak; only let us alone; we shall not disturb the faith of others. . . . Indulged in this for a time, error goes on to assert **equal rights**. Truth and error are two balancing forces. The Church shall do nothing which looks like deciding between them; that would be partiality. It is bigotry to assert any superior right for the truth. . . . From this point error soon goes on to its natural end, which is to assert **supremacy**. . . . Error claims a preference for its judgment on all disputed points. . . ." (p. 195f).

tized; eternal salvation from sin is replaced by a this-world concern for social justice; one god is no more real or better than another; and, ultimately, the very certainty of our redemption in Jesus Christ becomes a matter of subjective opinion. With such an approach, where can one find any real spiritual comfort, peace, joy, or hope?

It is truly sad to see those who claim to be representing and speaking for Christ so distort and cast aside His message. Small wonder that precious

souls are confused and misled. As a church and as individual Christians, may we ever stand on the secure and timeless foundation of God's eternal Word and Truth. In the eternal scheme of things, what you or I or any earthly church thinks or feels or decrees to be truth is of little significance—only what God in heaven says has meaning. Indeed, on the Last Day God will have the final Word on "inclusion" (which all people will then acknowledge and bow before), for His Word and judg-

ment will determine the eternal destiny of all. Those who delight in and follow their Lord and His Word are redeemed and richly blessed; those who choose their own path will perish (Psalm 1).

—From the Sunday worship bulletin of Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota; David Schierenbeck is pastor.



FROM A PASTOR'S DESK II—

CAFETERIA THEOLOGY

The recent decision by the Episcopal Church to approve a bishop who was openly homosexual is a graphic illustration of the attitude toward the Bible that is prevalent in the vast majority of the Christian churches of our day. Their teachings and beliefs can best be described as a cafeteria theology. In a cafeteria diners choose what they like from a wide range of foods. They can take what they like and leave what they don't like. If they don't like broccoli, they can leave the broccoli and take the pudding. With a cafeteria theology members of a church can take the teachings they agree with and leave the teachings they don't agree with—for example, "I'll have some love and forgiveness, but don't give me any of God's Law." Which would be fine if we weren't talking about the Bible, which is the inerrant Word of God, as Scripture states, "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:21).

The church has been charged by Christ to proclaim the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), as Christ says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:19f). It is not up to man to pick and choose the doctrines

of Scripture that he likes and to turn up his nose at the others.

Furthermore, it is not unloving to identify sin for what it is, rebellion against our God's will and Word. To approve of sin by calling it a demonstration of God's love is the most unloving thing you can do to someone. God convicts us all of sin with the intent that we would repent of our sins and turn from them. To approve and encourage the sin of another is to put that person in danger of eternal punishment in hell, for it is written, ". . . those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

The church is to proclaim the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus. If God didn't really mean everything that He wrote in the Bible, or if the holy writers injected their own thoughts into God's Word, how can we rely on anything that the Bible says? How then do we know for a fact that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7)? How do we know that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . ." (Jn. 3:16)? If the church claims that some of the Bible is not reliable, where then can the sinner turn to be assured of God's forgiveness and eternal life?

Certainly Christ loves the homosex-

ual sinner just as He loves the heterosexual sinner. He gave His life to pay for the sins of all people. But Christ did not die to excuse sin. He wants the sinner to turn from sin, to find forgiveness at the cross, and, moved by God's love, to lead a godly life.

No matter what the churches of the world say to the contrary, sin is sin, and Christ is the only Savior from sin. No matter how man tries to change God's Word, "the word of the LORD endures forever" (1 Pet. 1:25); therefore, the sinner may always turn to God's Word with confidence, for ". . . it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

—From the Sunday worship bulletin of Calvary Lutheran Church, Marquette, Michigan; Joel Fleischer is pastor.



Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, John M. Johannes, who was called by Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes, Minn. and St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ponsford, Minn. to be their pastor, was installed on May 11, 2003 in a joint service at Mt. Olive in Detroit Lakes, with the Rev. Elton Hallauer assisting and giving the installation address.

—Pastor Em. John H. Johannes

In accord with our usage and order, Lindsey Paul, who was called by Gethsemane Lutheran congregation of Spokane, Wash. to serve as upper grade teacher, was installed on Sunday, August 3, 2002.

—Pastor Robert List

In accord with our usage and order, Mrs. Janelle Hein, who was called by Redemption Lutheran congregation of Seattle, Wash. to serve as part-time teacher in its school, was installed on Sunday, September 7, 2003.

—Pastor John Hein

Change Of Address

Pastor John M. Johannes
17923 County Highway 29
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501-8916
Phone (218) 847-2080

Minnesota Delegate Conference

Date: September 8, 2003, 3:00 p.m.

Site: Berea Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

Agenda:

- * Opening Devotion — Pastor David Schierenbeck
- * An updated review of doctrinal differences (original and present) between the CLC and WELS — Pastor Bruce Naumann
- * Ministering to the young in helping them stand against the temptation of pre-marital cohabitation — Mr. David Aymond

For Discussion:

- * The benefits of a chapel facility for the ILC Campus
- * The purpose of Delegate conferences
- * Highlights from the Coordinating Council and Board Reports
- * Business meeting

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Secretary

Twenty-fifth Anniversary

Prince of Peace of Loveland, Colorado will hold a celebration of twenty-five years of the Lord's gracious support in a service and program November 9, 2003. The service will be held at 3:00 p.m. at church, with a fellowship meal to follow. We cordially invite all present and former members of the congregation, as well as other friends and CLC members, to join us for this special occasion. For more information please contact Pastor Peter Reim, 620 E. 50th St., Loveland CO 80538; Phone (970) 663-3594; E-mail: peterreim@CLCLutheran.com

COVER: Matt Schaser