

Lutheran Spokesman



475th Anniversary of Luther's Catechisms

Dr. Martin Luther

"The Catechism is the Bible of the layman. In it the entire body of Christian doctrine, which every Christian must know in order to be saved, is contained. . . . Therefore we should by all means love and esteem the Catechism and diligently impress it upon youth; for in it the correct, true, ancient, pure, divine doctrine of the holy Christian Church is summarized."

NEW YEAR THOUGHTS WHILE LYING AWAKE IN THE NIGHT

Or

"A BLESSED NEW YEAR IN THE LORD"

"Our God, our Help in ages past" (TLH #123) is an acknowledgement of the Christian, because our Heavenly Father "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." As we begin a new year—the first of a number known only to the Lord—we may rely upon Him Who is "our Hope for years to come" for "how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32)

The blessings of our life heretofore, and the blessings in our remaining time and for all eternity are predicated upon the foundation of our Savior's death and resurrection, whereby God has reconciled us unto Himself.

Therefore "the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10).

We may enter the new year lifting

up our "eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my (our) help. My (our) help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1,2).

We are confident in this faith because in our past the unchangeable Lord has been and therefore will be "our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1), "who shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul" (Ps. 121:7).

He could not be anything else but our Refuge and Strength, for do we not read in the inspired and unerring Word of God, "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" (Isa. 43:1)!? Has our Lord not been faithful to us according to His Word, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be

continued, p.4

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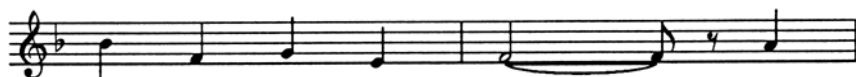
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Our Clock of Life

Arthur Templin



1. Our clock of life is run - ning down. It
2. If this fact stirs un - ea - si - ness, We
3. But how can we be sure that we At
4. We all are saved by grace through faith In
5. We who now turn our backs on Christ, God's
6. Our clock of life is run - ning down, May



can - not be re - wound. The
fail to com - pre - hend. This
death are tru - ly saved? So
Christ who is the Door In -
own be - got - ten Son, Will
we each day a - new Ac -



day it stops our time is up Our
earth - ly bod - y with its sin Must
man - y of our thoughts and deeds Are
to the hea - ven He pre - pared For
ne - ver know true peace and joy His
cept God and His ho - ly Word As



soul is hea - ven bound.
die for sin to end.
sin - ful - ly de - praved.
us for - e - ver - more.
blood for us has won.
trust - wor - thy and true.

Tune: St. Anne (Our God, Our Help in Ages Past)

Editor's Note: Mr. Arthur Templin (born Jan. 10th, 1915) was called to his eternal rest in Jesus last September. At the time of his death he was a member of Redemption Lutheran Church (CLC), Seattle (Lynnwood), Washington. His pastor, John Hein, shared some of Mr. Templin's poetry with us, including this hymn which can be sung to the familiar tune. Over the years many of Mr. Templin's poems were published in *Christian News*. We may share others of this gospel-centered poetry with you, our readers, in the future.

removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10)?

Therefore we may follow where'er the path of life known already to our Father may lead, for we have the promise of our Savior, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). The sheep who hear His voice are daily comforted by the voice of the Good Shepherd Who says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Jn. 10:27-28).

There is in each child of God the tension that the apostle had as he weighed his responsibilities over against his personal desires. Nevertheless, in this tension he committed himself to the gracious will of the Father, as he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Php. 1:21).

So may we as we enter the New Year, for "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32)

Now then, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:6-7), and "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).

Finally, ". . . Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman (farmer) waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. . . . Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draws nigh" (Jms. 5:7-8).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Rev. 22:20-21).

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*



An Epiphany Devotion—

"Savior of the Nations, Come"

Savior of the nations, come,
Virgin's Son, make here Thy home!
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.
(TLH #95:1)

As we gaze upon the splendor of the Light which shines in the darkness, many truths are revealed to us. With the miracle of the Christ-child's birth

still warming our hearts, we see in the face of Jesus a Savior Who came to earth for the sake of mankind.

Jesus is an equal opportunity Savior. He did not restrict the enjoyment of the blessings of salvation to one people or nation. His saving grace is showered upon people of every kind from all over the world.



Missionary David Koenig recently sent us pictures from the ELCC Congo, and the ECLC Kenya. This one shows the Congo Kalubwe choir.

In Luke chapter thirteen, we are privileged to have the words of our Savior written down for us, so that we can listen in as He answers questions about life and salvation. Outside of the kingdom of God there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Inside the kingdom of God there is a banquet feast laid out for those who have journeyed through the narrow way, having reached their

goal by faith in the Son of God.

As we the readers peek into that heavenly dining hall, Jesus describes what type of crowd is seated there. "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13:29).

Thou, the Father's only Son,
Hast o'er sin the victory won.
Boundless shall Thy kingdom be;
When shall we its glories see?
(TLH #95:5)



Congo Catechists

In this Epiphany season, we continue the celebration of the birth of the virgin's Son, who came in such humility. We marvel not only at His birth, but that in the carpenter's son from

Congo, So. Katanga, Pastors and other officers.



Nazareth we have revealed to us the Savior of the nations. He chose a humble form, lived in perfect obedience to His Father, and died to pay for sin. He won the victory over sin, giving the full benefits of prevailing over sin, death, and the devil, to those who believe in Him.

It is faith in Christ which saves, not residency in a particular nation, nor the color of your skin, nor whom you can find in your family tree, nor your church membership.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the Nations, having died for all people of all time. When our time on Earth comes to an end, by God's grace we will join that banquet in His heavenly kingdom and find ourselves sitting with individuals from every corner of the globe.

There will be Americans from the

West, Chinese from the East, Russians from the North, and Australians from down under. Our great God and Savior has opened up His banquet in paradise to all who believe in Him, from every nation throughout time. There is no discrimination, as it were. He is the equal opportunity Savior.

That's the kind of greatness that we see shining into the darkness of this world. There has been revealed to us a Savior who won the victory over sin, so that by faith we can look forward to dining in paradise with our fellow redeemed from every nation.

Brightly doth Thy manger shine,
Glorious is its light divine.
Let not sin o'ercloud this light;
Ever be our faith thus bright.
(TLH #95:6)

—Pastor Mark Gurath



A Report on the CLCI Bible Correspondence Course

By Rev. Jyothi Benjamin

Submitted to the Spokesman by Pastor Bruce Naumann, CLC Board of Missions, who remarks: "Thank God for His gracious will to reach the souls of men with His Word!"

A good study of God's Word is the most profitable study in a person's life. The more we study, the more we want to study.

Over the many years through the blessings of our Lord, our CLCI Bible Correspondence Course has been moving many hearts through God's Word. This year twenty-five individuals are taking this CLCI Bible Correspondence Course. As you know, there has been lot of opposition to the public gospel proclamation in India. We are not at all discouraged about

this situation. There is a ban on conversions in Tamilnadu State. Now the winds of opposition to the gospel are blowing all over India. We are not discouraged by the doors which have been getting closed for public baptism and preaching. In these situations the CLCI Bible Correspondence Course has been successfully winning many souls, including non-Christians, for Christ.

We are thrilled and excited to inform you that many have received Jesus by taking this course in God's

word, including many Hindu and Muslim friends. Through this Bible Correspondence Course, many of the non-Christians have been learning more about who they are, where they came from, why they are here, and where they are going, and finally knowing that Jesus is their only Savior. We send the lessons and questions and go through their replies to these lessons, finally giving them the certificate of completion and a free Bible.

We have been using the "Learn from Me" study course, which has been prepared by respected brother, Rev. Bertram Naumann. We are happy to tell you that since the 1990's over three hundred fifty students were benefited by this course until now, including many Hindu and Muslim friends. We are praying that through them, someday their entire families could come to Christ. As you know, if one Hindu or Muslim accepts Christ as his Savior publicly by going to church, there will be tremendous pressure on him from his own community. With

this Bible Correspondence Course there won't be any such outside pressure on them while taking this course. If one person from a non-Christian family is converted, after his faith is strengthened by this course, he could guide the entire family in his own manner. In this way this Bible Correspondence Course is stirring up the souls to hold forth Christ. The Holy Spirit has been working in them through this "invisible way." We are happy to inform you that this Correspondence Course is another wonderful way of spreading the Word of God to build up the CLCI Church—without having any outside pressure from the Hindu and Muslim opponents, with these benefits:

This Bible course will make a person wise to think about the difference between the religion that is created by man and that of religion which is created by Jesus for their own salvation. (2 Timothy 3:15). "The Holy Scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation." They can come to



Aids Orphan Pre-school, Etago

know that there won't be another life or incarnation or rebirth, but that Jesus leads us from this one, earthly life into life eternal.

Spiritual life depends on the Bible. Matthew 4:4 says we live spiritually by the word of God. We don't have anyone else to go to for life when we turn from God (John 6:66-68). The soul that does not know the Bible is lost and headed for punishment.

A study of the Bible Course will reveal God's will for man. Christ became the author of salvation to everyone who believes in Him (Hebrews 5:8-9). It is by studying the Bible that one can learn what His will is for us (Ephesians 3:3,4).

Through the study of the Bible

course they will know how to pray. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. If our prayers are not according to the will of God, then our prayers are not right. John says, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:4).

Through the study of this course one can know what to do to be saved (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

We have been sending this CLCI correspondence course freely, for many years, even though it is little bit expensive. For this we have been placing advertisements in newspapers, Telephone directories. May the Lord bless this Bible Correspondence study of His Word. Thank you.



"It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth." — Isaiah 49:6

Savior of the Nations

God had been giving many promises through the prophet Isaiah that His Servant would redeem and save His people Israel. But God had much bigger plans than that. It was not enough that God's Servant, Jesus, should redeem only the people of Israel. He gave Him to redeem all the people of the Earth.

Jesus truly is the Savior of ALL Nations—just as the angels proclaimed to the shepherds of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to ALL PEOPLE."

We have just recently celebrated Christ's birth once again. What a joyful

time! What an amazing event that the Almighty Creator of heaven and Earth was born as a lowly baby so that He could take our place. He was made under the law so that He could keep the law for us. He suffered the penalty for our sins in our place.

Now, in Him, we are children of God and heirs of eternal life! No wonder we celebrate with such great joy!

This is much too great a thing for us to keep to ourselves. When the shepherds saw Jesus, they could not keep it to themselves. "They made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child."

Are we keeping it to ourselves,



Group of
Christian ladies
(site not identified)

however? Do we celebrate the joy just in our own homes, with our family, and in our church with our fellow believers? It would have been far too small a thing for God to send His Son just for you and me.

Jesus is the Savior of the Nations. God gave Him to be His salvation "to the ends of the earth." That means the news has to reach out to the ends of the Earth, so that people everywhere may rejoice with us in God's salvation.

Opportunities!

God sent His angels to tell the shepherds. God sent a special star to reveal this truth to the Wise Men. God sends you and me to tell the rest of the world. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

We have so many opportunities to share the Good News with the nations of the world.

We face opportunities on a daily basis, for people we know and people we meet are living in fear and uncertainty. They do not have the comfort and peace of knowing that they have been reconciled to God through Christ. Share the joy and peace that you have

with them in their need.

We also have many opportunities outside our immediate circle of acquaintances. There are more mission fields and opportunities in other countries today than ever before in the history of the CLC. We have the opportunity to reach literally thousands of people around the world who do not know that Jesus is also the Savior of their nation.

God has been blessing the work in these fields and giving salvation to new souls almost daily. It is too small a thing that we should think only of ourselves and the needs of our church. God's salvation is too big a thing for us to keep to ourselves. What a joyful opportunity we have been given.

Let us go forward with joyful zeal to proclaim the Savior of the Nations to these nations!

"Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; He is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chron. 16:23-25).

—*Pastor David Reim*

LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

The book of Esther

"For such a time as this . . . "

It has everything a Hollywood script could ask for: powerful people, greed, suspense, loyalty, courage, a beautiful heroine, court intrigue, an ironic plot twist, an evil villain defeated, and a happy ending.

Usually life does not resemble Hollywood. However, in the Old Testament account of Esther, we have all of these elements combined to give us quite a story—a story that assures us that God keeps His promises, and a story that gives us the sure hope of our own happy ending. May the Spirit bless our study of this precious book.

In the fifth century B.C., Xerxes I ruled the large Persian empire. Early in his reign he held a banquet for his nobles. After several days of drinking, he became furious with his favorite wife, Vashti, for refusing to show off her beauty to his guests, as he wanted. Fearing the influence Vashti's conduct could have on women throughout the empire, Xerxes' wise men recommended that Vashti never again be allowed to see the king and that she be replaced by someone better.

A search was made throughout the empire for some beautiful virgin to replace Vashti. Among the chosen to vie for this position was Esther, a Jewess. Her cousin, Mordecai, a government official in the Persian court, had raised Esther after her parents had

“Even though it could have cost her her life, Esther agreed to plead before the king. We too have been placed in positions to carry out God's will in our lives. May He guide us in knowing His will and in giving us the courage to carry it out, regardless of the consequences.”

died.

In the harem of potential queens, Esther won the favor of Hegai, the king's servant. After months of preparation, Esther was brought before the king. The king chose her over all of the others to replace Vashti.

Sometime later Mordecai became aware of a plot to assassinate Xerxes. He had Esther share this information with Xerxes, who promptly hanged those involved in the conspiracy. Esther made sure Mordecai was credited with uncovering the plot. The king's indebtedness to him would be important later.

Enter the villain. Haman was a noble whom Xerxes placed above all other nobles in his court. He even commanded that his people bow down before him. Mordecai refused to do this. When Haman found out about this, he was so enraged he wanted to

kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews throughout the empire. He advised the king to issue a decree that the Jews—this people who did not obey the king's laws!—be destroyed.

Mordecai and the Jews responded with mourning and fasting. Esther sought the reason for this, for she did not know about the king's decree. Mordecai sent a message asking her to plead their case before the king. He said if she hesitated now, God would see to it that the Jews would be delivered, but she and her family would perish. "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14)

Even though it could have cost her her life, Esther agreed to plead before the king. We too have been placed in positions to carry out God's will in our lives. May He guide us in knowing His will and in giving us the courage to carry it out, regardless of the consequences.

Esther approached the king's throne in her royal garments; the king welcomed her and offered her up to half his kingdom. She invited the king and Haman to a banquet the following day, when she promised to make her request known. Haman was delighted to be included in this invitation but was still furious with Mordecai, who showed him no respect. Haman's friends suggested he build a gallows on which to hang Mordecai. This he did.

Hand of God At Work

That night Xerxes could not sleep, so he asked the chronicles of his reign to be brought to him. He found recorded there how Mordecai had saved his life by uncovering the assassination

attempt. Upon inquiring, Xerxes found out that Mordecai had received no honor for this. Xerxes sought counsel as to how Mordecai should be rewarded.

It so happened that Haman had just arrived and wished to speak to the king about hanging Mordecai. So the king asked Haman, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" In his pride, Haman thought the king was referring to him, so he suggested a robe and horse be obtained and a parade of honor be given that man.

You can imagine Haman's shock when the king ordered that this honor be given to Mordecai the Jew. So Haman was forced to honor the man he wished to destroy.

That evening at the banquet Esther was asked what request she had of Xerxes. She said that she wished that she and her people be spared destruction. Xerxes demanded who it was who had called for such a thing. "Haman" was her reply. Haman begged for mercy, but the king ordered that he be hung on the very gallows Haman had built for Mordecai.

There remained yet some unfinished business. Esther pleaded with the king to issue an order overruling his previous order to destroy the Jews. Xerxes told Mordecai to write a decree to be circulated throughout the empire. The new edict granted the Jews the

"If anything has become apparent through our series "Lessons From the Old Testament," it is that God arranges things so that His promises are fulfilled."

right to gather and protect themselves against any enemy who might follow the persecution decree. Wherever the new decree went, there was great rejoicing among the Jews. When the appointed day came, the Jews struck down their enemies—75,000 of them, including Haman's ten sons. Happy ending.

An unbeliever might view all of these events in Esther as extremely good fortune, fate, luck, coincidence. Believers know better, for they see the hand of God working through these events. If anything has become apparent through our series "Lessons From

the Old Testament," it is that God arranges things so that His promises are fulfilled. Sometimes He does this through miracles, while at other times He uses the rulers of heathen countries to carry out His will. In this case an unlikely Jewish girl played an instrumental role in saving her people.

Fast forward four hundred years to another Jewish girl whom God used to fulfill yet another promise. The girl—Mary; the promise—our Savior Jesus Christ, whose redemptive work guarantees our own happy ending.

—Prof. Joseph Lau



FROM THE EDITOR:

A Hope-Full Series Concludes

With the article on the book of Esther in this issue we conclude our "Lessons From the Old Testament" series.

Allow some reminiscing. Checking back, we find that the series began exactly ten years ago this month. As a matter of fact, the same writer of this concluding article, Prof. Joseph Lau (then a Christian Day School teacher), started us off in January 1994 with a hope-full treatment of Genesis chapters one and two.

When the series began, other writers—besides Prof. Lau—were then retired Prof. Gordon Radtke and Teacher David Bernthal. Like Prof. Lau, so Teacher Bernthal has been writing for ten years, not missing a beat. Spelling Prof. Radtke (who has since returned to the pastoral ministry) in 1996 was Pastor John Klatt. After a couple years of assignments, Pastor Klatt passed along his turns in the series to Pastor Paul Krause.

We heartily thank these men who have faithfully met up to sixty-three assigned deadlines, taking us chapter by chapter through the divinely-recorded times of the ancient patriarchs and prophets. Each article showed how the Creator-God has guided and directed His believing, hope-full people safely through this world to the heavenly fatherland. We pray that our readers have experienced anew the Christian hope mentioned by the apostle in Romans 1:4: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Looking back, we find that accompanying the first article in the series was an editorial in which we quoted some words setting forth the fact that "*the Old*

Testament Scriptures are . . . indispensable to the life of the church." We repeat some of those words here:

"Paul's use of the Old Testament in this letter (Romans—Ed.) illustrates how the ancient Word of God sustains and nurtures faith. . . . All that was written in former days was written for us 'upon whom the end of the ages has come' (1 Cor. 10:11). All Scripture looked and pointed toward the last great act of God in Christ; all Scripture therefore serves to instruct the church of Christ 'for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3:15). Through Christ Jesus the Old Testament, this dark perplexing book, becomes clear and luminous for the eyes of faith . . ." (Martin H. Franzmann, Concordia Commentary, Romans, p. 257).

Finally, highlighted in the first article in the series were these words of Prof. Lau: "In a world which desperately needs something solid on which to cling, evolution provides no comfort and no security. . . . We know that our God of order not only had a plan for creation, but a plan for our salvation as well" (January 1994 issue, p. 7). The same writer concludes the series with these hope-full words: "Fast forward four hundred years to another Jewish girl whom God used to fulfill yet another promise. That girl—Mary; the promise—our Savior Jesus Christ, whose redemptive work guarantees our own happy ending" (see p. 12).

Another Series Begins

Those in the know within Lutheranism will soon have it impressed upon them—and, we trust, be impressed with the fact!—that 2004 is the 475th anniversary year of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. Both were written by the Reformer in the year 1529. As this month's cover indicates, the intention is to mark this anniversary with special articles in the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

God-willing, for the next ten months (January, through the observance of the Reformation in October) articles have been scheduled on the six chief parts of Luther's *Small Catechism*. The plan is—as in this issue—to have one article each month on the Commandments accompanied by another article on others of the chief parts.

Besides these there may well appear on these pages—and in your pastor's 2004 sermons?—other references to the timeless teachings contained in this "Gem of the Reformation."

It is well for us to mark the anniversary of the Catechism in home, church, and school with more than passing notice. As Dr. Luther once said:

"I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scripture through various dangers. But I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting the Catechism, that is, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer and meditating on them with an attentive heart. I do not merely pass over the words hurriedly, but I carefully observe what the individual word means. . . ."



Luther Teaching the Catechism.

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

+++++

Large Catechism Comment:

" . . . For these two, faith and God, belong together. To whatever you give your heart and entrust your being, that, I say, is really your God."

Introduction to the Catechism and the First Commandment—

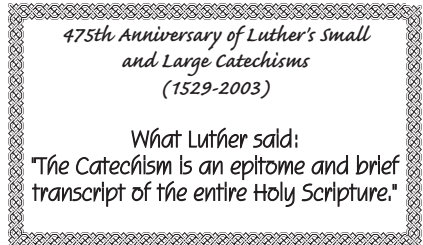
One For the Ages

I do not throw away old books very often. I collect them, save them, and keep them around like old friends. Therefore it didn't surprise me when some time ago I came across a book in my possession which was a little out of date. It was a book on rocketry with an introduction by Dr. Werner von Braun. In the introduction he declared that one day, with God's help, man shall go into outer space.

Even though this book was written fairly recently (1950's) the progress man has made in the field of space science has caused this book to become little more than an historical footnote or a quaint curiosity.

You and I have far older books in our collections. They too have often been relegated to the category of being footnotes to history or curiosities, good for advice and generalities but not much more. I am speaking, of course, of our Lord's Holy Scriptures and Luther's exposition of them in his Small and Large Catechisms.

People don't mind quoting passages from scripture that give practical or homey advice. Many will even retell a



tale or a parable of Biblical origin to give a moral example or support a point of discussion. But to believe that the Bible is true, and factual, every word of it? To believe that there truly is one—and only One—God who rules over all and speaks to us through this book? Can there really be such naive people around in this day and age?

Due to the power of the Holy Spirit we can gladly say, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief."

When Adam and Eve were enjoying the Paradise of Eden they had a very short Bible. One line of it was: ". . .but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat . . ." They had been created in God's image; they knew His will by heart. Every morning they could wake with the thought, "What can I do to please my Lord

today?" and then go out and do it, with a full and happy heart.

In their sinless state, God's will was not seen as a command but a pleasure. What God wanted was not a contradiction to their will but a seamless harmony.

Satan was set to change all of this. When he planted doubt and dissatisfaction in Eve's heart, he got her to focus on her own will rather than on God's. In short, Eve and Adam had a new god to follow—their own desire.

According to the sinful nature, we have the same god. Whenever our own will comes into conflict with that of our Heavenly Father's, we are in effect putting ourselves in God's place. After all, wasn't this the lure Satan used on Eve: "You will be like God, knowing good and evil . . ."? Our own will causes us to look for answers in the wrong places. Instead of going to God's Word, we tend to stray toward the advice of this world or look within our own sinful hearts. Instead of following the Lord we often slip into step behind the false gods that still plague mankind.

We may wake with the thought, "What can I do to please my Lord today?", but only because the Holy Spirit has placed it there. He has called

us by the gospel and shown us the one true God, our Lord and Savior. If it had been left for us to choose, we would still be kicking and screaming—fighting with every fiber—to be kept out from under the yoke of God's will.

If we could but follow that greatest of all commandments—to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind—all of the other commandments would fall in line.

Even with this saving knowledge in our hearts we constantly battle against the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. It's the same old fight. Satan's tricks still turn our heads. That's why we still need the Scriptures to show us Jesus who kept this law perfectly in our place. That's why we still value the Biblical explanations of Luther in the Catechism, so we can continue to apply God's Word to our daily lives.

Books will come and go in our lives. Some are filled with fascinating facts or helpful information. But only our Lord's Holy Word is able to show us our Savior—and only it will stand forever and beyond.

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mt. 24:35).

—Teacher David W. Bernthal



2003 Vacation Bible School, Berea Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

Catechism Class

Parents—it's 10:00 Saturday morning. Do you know where your children are?

"Hey, kids, let's settle down for class. I think you've noticed we have a newcomer among us—Donny Bradstreet just moved to our part of town a few weeks ago, and he'll be joining us in our 'New Directions' class. Let's give Donny a warm St. Gullible's welcome.

"And remember, Donny—we're all about love.

"So, kids, now that we've finished our section on 'Judeo-Christian Mores and Values' (or as some of us affectionately call them, the 'Ten Suggestions'), I'd like to share with you all a few other paths of divine wisdom. Today we'll give our attention to the great Chinese philosopher, Confucius. Now, Confucius say, open workbooks!"

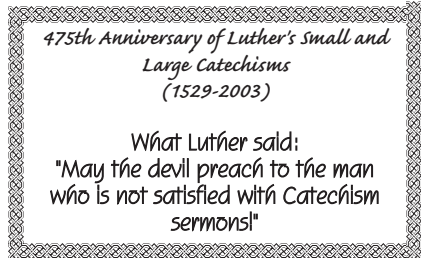
"Excuse me, Pastor Tim?"

"Oh yes, Donny, what is it? Didn't you get one of my 'Paths to Divinity' workbooks?"

"Oh, yes, Pastor Tim. I have it right here. But I guess I'm confused about why we're studying Confucius. If you're done with the Ten Commandments, shouldn't we be starting on the Creed?"

"I see, Donny. But that's just the point. There are so many creeds to learn about. I imagine you're thinking about the Christian creed that is credited to the followers of Jesus Christ—the Disciples' Creed."

"Umm—I think you meant



Apostles'."

"Yes, yes, I guess that's right. We'll get to that one soon. But Confucius lived hundreds of years before Jesus, and I thought we'd cover some of the older religions first."

"Okay, Pastor. But in my other church, Holy Trinity, we were studying the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, and it didn't start with Jesus. I think it talks about the very beginning of time, because it starts 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.'"

"Well, yes, Donny, of course God—well, some Prime Mover—made—well, guided—the formation of the universe. But that was long before any humans were around to write about it. After all, it took billions of years for this world to form and for life to begin and evolve. All we have to go on are what the scientists tell us. We really can't know how 'God the Father'—as you call It—was involved in the evolution of the universe."

"But the Bible starts right out telling us that, doesn't it? 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' I remember how Pastor Hanson, over at Holy Trinity, told us that the word used there in the Hebrew Bible

The First Article

(About Creation)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has created me and all creatures. He has given me my body and life, eyes, ears, and all my bodily members, my mind, and all my senses and still keeps them for me.

God also preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, animals, and all my property and all I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger. He guards and defends me from every evil.

God does all this because He is my good and gracious Father in heaven, not because of anything I have done to earn or deserve it.

For all of this it is my duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

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Large Catechism Comment:

" . . . *What I mean to say and what I believe is that I am a creation of God, that is, He gave me and continuously preserves for me my body, soul, and life . . .* "

for 'create' means to 'make something out of that which did not exist before.' So, doesn't what the Bible teaches go back to the very beginning of everything?"

"Donny, we all know that's what the Bible says. But that's only one creation tradition. You'll enjoy hearing about some others, when we get to our 'creation myths' section. They're all very interesting and instructive. For instance, the Chaldeans believed that the world began as darkness and water ruled by a woman. Then the god Bel divided the darkness, and cut the woman into two halves, of which he formed the heaven and earth. Then he cut off his own head, and from the drops of blood, men were formed . . . "

Several girls in the class flinched. "Yuck! Gross! Pastor Tim, why do you always tell that story?!"

Donny raised his hand again. Pastor

Tim tried not to notice, but finally had to call on him.

"Pastor Tim, aren't we here to learn about God—the Father of Jesus Christ? These stories are from people who didn't know the true God. Those are made up stories. And the scientists—my Sunday School teachers at Holy Trinity reminded me that real science can't answer the question about how the world got here or what God is like. They said that real science comes from testing and retesting hypotheses. How can you retest the beginning of the world? They told me how God came to Job and asked Job, 'Were you there when I laid the foundations of the earth?' Should that be our answer to people who want to ignore God's word about creation?"

One of the boys in the back of the room interrupted: "what's the big deal? Why does it matter how the world got

here, or what God is like?"

Pastor Tim was gathering his thoughts to answer when he saw Donny looking him in the eye, as if he were Doc Holliday at the OK Corral. Donny drew first: "I don't think the Bible leaves us any question about who God is or how we got here or why it matters. It says 'God created heaven and earth in six days'—that's how powerful He is. It says God 'made man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life.' It tells us that God warned Adam and Eve not to disobey His word, and if they would, they would 'surely die.' It says, 'death came through sin, because all sinned.' My pastor explained that we need to understand all that, if we're going to appreciate God's own solution for . . ."

Pastor Tim hurried to interrupt:

"That's all very interesting, Donny, but we don't want to limit our beliefs just to the Bible. I believe that we need to study the evolution of our planet so that we can gradually improve the world, and leave it a better place. I believe we need to study these different religions so that we can get in touch with our 'inner godness' and spirituality. Our religion evolves right along with our world. Who knows where it will lead? Some day, if we learn to respect all the world's ideas, we'll come up with the answer that can solve all our problems. Remember our motto here at St. Gullible's: 'Every laughable creed accepted.'"

"Every creed but one," Donny thought.

—Pastor Peter Reim



Immanuel Study Guild, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota.

Women of Immanuel, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, Florida.



"CLOSE COMMUNION"

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

Ninth In A Series

Church History shows that when serious aberrations develop within Christianity, the spiritual leadership—pastors!—are always the ones responsible. Trouble is, the parishioners let them get away with it! Check it out. So today we see that respect for the ministry of pastors and of parishioners is at a very low ebb.

Where an evangelical, conscientious pastor faithfully leads his flock, there we will find honor and respect for the preaching of the gospel and for the preacher. This cannot be legislated. God Himself does not do that. Rather—He gives these gifts through the very proclamation of law and gospel. In the gospel He portrays—and bestows—His tender love for sinners. Otherwise there is no future for us but condemnation, destruction, torment.

Regarding respect for the clergy, two passages which are quoted are 1 Thessalonians 5:12-23 and Hebrews 13:17: "... We beseech you brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves." "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for this would be of no advantage to you."

"If a Christian congregation is to prove itself conscientious in the administration of the Lord's Supper, it must have the custom of registration for Communion ... Only through such



registration can the pastor limit communion attendance to those eligible" (F. Pieper).

Many congregations use sign-up sheets. A more preferable system is personal announcement. There is no scriptural command for it, but the needs of people's souls so often require it.

True, some people are so well-versed in doctrine and their life is so exemplary that it might be a burden to them. But don't be easily fooled. The logistics are daunting, but prior to the distribution the pastor would then only have to say this, that "those who have personally announced to me may now come forward for the Sacrament" (of course, exceptions can be made for late-coming members or CLC visitors; and the Elders can be trained easily to handle this).

Announcements could be swift, perhaps in small groups. The pastor might quietly say to a member, "Can I

come see you Thursday?" if he is anxious about him, or he could ask the people that if they wish to have a visit with him about something, they could stay behind a moment to arrange for it. Announcements could be received anytime prior to communion, even the Sunday before or during the week. Done personally is the best. It could take years to re-introduce this marvelous old Lutheran custom—going at it gently and slowly, with Christ as motive and reason.

"Practicalities!" you say. "Tyrant!" say others. Say what you want. The pastor is not there to harm souls, but to assist them in their faith and understanding and in their loyalty to Christ. He must help them to examine themselves, doing so with all respect and humility, not frightening timid souls away but protecting them from spiritual harm and danger.

These days so many people have such a sense of despair—the kissing cousin of unbelief! Many think that the gospel applies to others, but "not to me!" In the face of peoples' low faith and confidence, the pastor will want to lead folks to the point where they do not *"make Christ a tyrant, but accept Him for what He in truth is, and let Him be unto you nothing but rich, abounding grace. For though some have been terribly punished for partaking of the Sacrament unworthily ... they are hardened, wicked hearts. Thou Thyself hast said: 'Come unto me ... and I will give you rest.' Thy Kingdom is not established to the end of furthering the self-righteous, but of helping sinners to become righteous. Hence he who is weak and feels it, should go to Communion, and let God help him there!"* (Martin Luther)

—Pastor Em. Warren Fanning



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COVER: John Fox