



# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." — John 10:35

## TO RETIREMENT

### For many years, O God of grace...

Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch, reporting



It doesn't take long to get acquainted with Michael Buck, and decades aren't long enough to cover the territory.

Prof. Buck has fascinating stories to tell of his early years in Austin, Minnesota, followed by military service during the late '60s, graduate school at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and settling upon microbiology

as his chosen field of endeavor.

Along the way, he met Bebe Kadghin. They married (May 24, 1969) and were blessed with two children before Mike was called by our Lord to full-time service in a familiar corner of His vineyard, the CLC's Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire. He arrived in 1975, and thirty-six years have since passed into history.

During those years Prof. Buck has shared his talents and skills with an ever-changing student body. Besides teaching classes in biology, science, math, health, chemistry, etc., he served as ILC's Athletic Director (since 1976) and at various times has coached volleyball, cross-country, baseball, and softball teams. Due in large part to his imprint on ILC sports activities and athletics, ILC acquired recognition in local and West-Central Wisconsin sports communities.

We could mention his contributions to ILC Youth Camps, bus-driving, and athletic field and gym maintenance—but we're surely going to miss something that ranks up there with the ILC Audio-Visual program that was also his domain for decades.

Mike carries his years with gentlemanly warmth and unstinting dedication. He grows on you, you know!

For example, in answer to the question, "What would you want our *Spokesman* readership to know about your life?", he responded in his soft-spoken way, "This has been my calling, my way of life—not a job."

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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Those who share that philosophy know well enough how even extra-curriculars get taken care of at ILC when there are such willing hearts and strength to serve.

Prof. and Mrs. Buck will be living on State Street not far from professors' row at ILC and hope (Lord-willing) to enjoy traveling, exploring old and new far-away places, fishing, camping, and being grandparents to the children next-door.

As they do so, we join them in crediting God for all that He has done, is doing, and will yet do for the likes of us:

*God the Father, Son, and Spirit,  
Ever-blessed Trinity,*

*Humbly now our thanks we offer,  
All unworthy tho' we be.*

*Freely Thou hast showered blessings  
Countless as the ocean's sands,*

*Blessings rich and overflowing  
On the labors of our hands.*

*God of grace and love and blessing,  
Thine alone shall be the praise;*

*Give us hearts to trust Thee truly,  
Hands to serve Thee all our days.*

*Lord, bestow Thy future blessing  
Till we join the heav'nly host,*

*There to praise and serve Thee ever,  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

(TLH #640:1,4)

# “Let there be...”

Teacher David W. Bernthal • Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

## Is the pen mightier than the sword?

Throughout world history the written word has proved to be powerful. In Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, Yul Brynner as Pharaoh had an oft-repeated line—"So let it be written; so let it be done." When Pharaoh's words were written down, they became law.

The spoken words of men have great power. Over the years we have witnessed people spurred into action by motivational words spoken by the likes of a Martin Luther King, Jr. We have also seen masses whipped into evil frenzies by the likes of an Adolf Hitler.

Even though *man's* written and spoken words do have undeniable power, yet compared to *God's* written and spoken Word—well... there is no comparison.

God simply spoke His Word, and the world came into being!

Imagine! What was conceived in God's mind was merely put into spoken words in order to be brought into existence! The Word of God, Jesus Christ, brought forth out of nothing all that we would need to keep body and soul together in this life.

To merely speak and it is done—what awesome power our God has! To merely command—and angels speed to perfect completion of assigned tasks! Again, what awesome power!

Man's words have nowhere near this kind of power.

In our lives mere words often fail to produce any desired results. Our human wills, desires, and designs can easily be thwarted by others or by circumstances beyond our control. Unfortunately, often our words are false and hateful, cruel and unkind, not befitting the tongue of a child of God.

Think of this: correctly viewed, our criticisms of things in God's world are actually digs against God Himself! When we "hate" things God has created (fruits, vegetables, animals, people, and so on), aren't we in effect telling God He made a mistake in creating those blessings? Or when we complain about the weather—and who hasn't?—aren't we in effect telling

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**Imagine! What was conceived in God's mind was merely put into spoken words in order to be brought into existence!**

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God that His things aren't quite good enough, and perhaps He should improve on them a bit?

When tempted to criticize, belittle, or rundown our Lord's works, or when tempted to be dissatisfied or bored with our Lord's blessings, we need to join Job in saying, *"I am vile;... I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further"* (Job 40:4-5).

Let us rather thank and praise our Father for all the wonderful blessings of His created world!

Although God finished His creating of the universe and all it contains during the first six natural days of history, His creative power is still evidenced in this world whenever and wherever His Holy Word is taught and followed.

Enemies of God can be changed, that is, made into new creations of our Lord! *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This creation of faith in the heart is no less a miracle than the calling forth of the stars and planets. Hearts cold and dead can be brought to life by the Holy Spirit with the regenerative power of God's Word. A little child born dead in trespasses and sins can have new life created in it by the washing of water and the Word.

The creation of faith in our hearts is a marvel to rival the most majestic mountain peaks or spectacular sunsets. *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus..."* (Ephesians 2:10).

We thank and praise our Triune God for using His powerful Word to create this wonderful world. We also thank and praise Him for using that same powerful Word to bring us to faith in our Savior Jesus so that we can look forward to living forever with Him in the new heavens and new Earth.

*Thy strong word did cleave the darkness; At Thy speaking it was done.*

*For created light we thank Thee, While Thine ordered seasons run.*

*Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!*

*Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia without end!*

*Thy strong word bespeaks us righteous; Bright with Thine own holiness,  
Glorious now, we press toward glory, And our lives our hopes confess.*

*Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!*

*Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end! (WS2000 #775 vs.1,3)*



# Dual Citizenship

Prof. Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

## Citizens on Earth

**E**ver since Adam and Eve's fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, every human with the exception of Jesus has been conceived and born in sin.

Original sin is our ascribed status—in other words, one in which we have no choice. As the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (5:12).

Likewise, babies have no say as to where they are born. Just as they are born in sin because their parents are sinners, so too babies are citizens of the nation where their parents hold citizenship.

Most of those reading this article are citizens of the United States. Being born in the United States does endow us with a host of blessings and benefits as Christians. As we commemorate our nation's birth this July 4th, it is certainly appropriate to thank our Maker for the privileges of our U.S. citizenship.

First and foremost among our blessings is the right to worship our God without threat of governmental interference or punishment. We also have the right to choose leaders who will represent us and our views in government. And we have the right to educate our children—to *“bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4).

These privileges, however, may not always receive the blessing of our government!

The moral fiber of our nation is eroding.

Behavior that was once thought unconscionable is now openly accepted and even encouraged.

Secularism and materialism are the gods of many in our land.

In order to avoid being labeled narrow-minded or judgmental, many are willing to take the path of least resistance and compromise God's clear Word in the Bible.

The word *sin* is taboo. Even some Christian churches focus more on community and social programs and less on the message of sin and grace.

One only has to look at the churches of Europe today to see what our country's future may look like—beautiful buildings that are empty inside, both physically and spiritually.

Increased persecution against those who hold fast to God's Word seems likely in our future.

Take heart, dear reader, for God knows how to use even persecution for His holy purposes. God's faithful prophet Elijah was not alone in confessing the Lord, as he thought he was (see I Kings 19:18). The execution of Christians by Roman Emperor Nero did not diminish God's Church but rather caused it to grow. The atheism of communism did not stamp out Christianity. Throughout history, citizens of countries that repudiated Christianity still have Christians in their midst.

## Citizens of Heaven

If our hope for the future were based solely on our citizenship in the United States, what a precarious position we would have.

Our nation's position in the world may seem secure, but no doubt those in ancient cities like Nineveh and Tyre felt so too.

At the height of Britain's power, the British poet and author Rudyard Kipling was asked to compose a poem to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign. He rightly placed emphasis not on the strength of his nation but on the Lord God of Hosts who had given them their power. The refrain of each stanza warns, "Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

In the United States we too need to remember that the source of our nation's power is He who holds the whole world in His hands. We also need to remember that more important than any kind of earthly citizenship and power is our citizenship in heaven.

Unlike sin, which is inherited, salvation is not inherited! Blessings such as the parents we have, the country we live in, and even the church we hold membership in do not guarantee us the inheritance of eternal life in heaven. Rather, citizenship in heaven is a gift—free and undeserved—won by our Savior Jesus Christ when He redeemed us by dying on the cross for our sins.

It was at our conversion and rebirth that we became citizens of heaven. That's when Christ began His gracious rule in our hearts.

Now as citizens of heaven we enjoy the freedoms to follow our Savior, to say no to the devil and our sinful flesh, and to share the

gospel as the Holy Spirit provides strength and opportunity to do so.

Since we hold citizenship in heaven, we need not fear our earthly state of affairs. Whether living in a country rich in freedoms and material wealth or living somewhere in squalor and oppression, it matters not, because our future is secure in Jesus.

*O sweet and blessed country, The home of God's elect! O sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect! Jesus, in mercy bring us To that dear land of rest,  
Who art with God the Father And Spirit ever blest. Amen. (TLH #613:4)*



FROM THE PASTOR'S COLUMN OF A LOCAL NEWSPAPER

## “Practice Makes Perfect”

Pastor Bruce Naumann • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

**D**o you remember what it was like in grade school when it was time for a fire drill? “Line up, quickly and quietly,” the teacher would say. “No talking in line.”

Out you go with your classmates onto the playground, where you wait for what seems like a long time. Finally, after the principal gets a head count of all the classes, the “all clear” bell rings, and everyone files back inside.

The first couple of times you experience a fire drill, it's a very serious matter. But when it becomes routine, you sometimes wonder if it's really worth the bother.

I was visiting at a nursing home recently, and when the fire alarm drill went off, it seemed like a real inconvenience for all the residents to get wheeled into the hallway.

Firefighters will tell you that the fact that this becomes routine is exactly the point and the main reason why fire drills are so valuable. You see, when a genuine emergency happens, confusion and panic are deadly enemies. A mad rush for the wrong exit can mean certain death, but when people automatically know what to do and where to go, lives are saved instead of going up in flames.

Practice makes perfect! Having an escape plan for both the home

and public places, and practicing the plan until it becomes routine are really good ideas.

But there are other types of emergencies which call for a different kind of "drill." For instance:

- 1) When the doctor's diagnosis for you or a loved one is cancer, panic can set in. "If there is a God who is good, why would He let this happen to me? If God is love, then where is His love for me?"

These are thoughts that come when this kind of disaster strikes. Do you know the answer to these questions right now? Will you be ready to face them calmly when an emergency happens?

- 2) When a personal sin or failure that you thought was a secret is found out, despair often comes with it. "Can I ever make things right again with my family and friends? Can I ever be accepted by God with this kind of stain on my record?"

We need to know, right now, where to go with such questions before the crisis happens.

- 3) When the day of our death draws near—and it's getting closer for each one of us, every day—that is the time when the most pressing questions of all arise in our minds. "When I close my eyes in death, what happens then? Where will I be? Will the Lord receive me or reject me?"

It just won't do to ignore those questions now and hope the answers will be there when the emergency strikes. What we need to do is practice our faith. That means reading, hearing, and learning God's Word so that His wisdom, instruction, and saving promises become second nature to us.

Can you imagine someone saying, "Oh, I believe in fire safety, but I think fire drills are a waste of time"? Perhaps it is true that this person will never face a fire emergency, but if he does, this attitude may cost him his life.

The same is true with practicing one's Christian faith, with one important difference. We already know for a fact that the day of our death—as well as the Day of Judgment—will most certainly happen to each one of us! That's why God urges us to practice our faith, practice it regularly, and practice it together: *"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25).

So, find a Christian fellowship that is faithful to everything the Bible says, and do the drill! Be very familiar with the path to Jesus' cross,



which is the "escape route" to safety from your sins.

Then you will be ready not only for any crisis but you will also find comfort, purpose, hope, and every blessing for the life you live between here and eternity.

Yes, practice really does make perfect!

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**"Answer Key" for questions above:**

- 1) See I Peter 1:3-7; Hebrews 12:5-12; Jeremiah 29:11
  - 2) See Romans 7:17-25; John 5:24; Titus 3:4-7
  - 3) See Psalm 23; John 14:2-3; I Timothy 1:15
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## STUDIES IN SECOND TIMOTHY

*"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15*

# THE LORD IS FAITHFUL

Pastor Em. Warren Fanning • Sun City, Arizona

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### 2 TIMOTHY 4:17-22

*17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! 19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. 21 Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. 22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.*

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**I**n his earlier life he was a despiser of the crucified Christ. He hounded, imprisoned, and killed Christ's followers. It is safe to say that he didn't really know who he was; he had no peace; and he really didn't know what he was supposed to be doing with his life.

He thought he had taken care of those matters. He was, as we say, "on a roll."

But Jesus came and changed all that. Our Savior had specific things in mind for this man. He was to become His servant and apostle, and he was to herald and explain His gospel to unbelievers.

After his conversion and to the end of his life this new man—the Apostle Paul—exemplified and claimed these things, as is evident in the introductions to his divinely inspired epistles.

Just as it is today, so in most of the world at Paul's time many individuals were searching for personal, private happiness. They used Greek and Roman philosophies and pagan god genealogies on which to base their views. Not a lot has changed!

Strange as it may sound, the good news is that such searching will not lead you to find real personal happiness. Instead, it finds you! And it is far more than you or I ever dreamt of. It is forgiveness of sins, faith, peace, joy, and hope—and it all has a name, Jesus Christ!

This faithful Savior and Friend of sinners has found each of us by means of His gracious Word. Our being found was probably not as dramatic as what happened to Paul on Damascus road. But it was and still is just as amazing and exciting.

These verses to Timothy in our text are probably the apostle's last written words. They are very good for us. You can use them. Here and now you learn to confess—as he did in verses 17 and 18—that the Lord stands by you, that He strengthens you, that He delivers you from every evil work, and that He will preserve you right into eternal life.

All of this is for repentant sinners like us, for our comfort and security.

With even a longer list of blessings than noted above, this same Christ belongs by faith to us and our fellow Christians.

That is why Paul sends greetings personally to Timothy, and to other members of the congregation as well, from believers in Rome!

And notice how Paul's concluding words focus on God's undeserved love, His *grace*.

What a beautiful ending to his writing and his life!



"...The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (John 10:25)

## Jesus Heals the Man with an Unclean Spirit

Pastor David Reim, Vernon, B.C. (Canada)

*23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God! 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." 28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. (Mark 1:23-28)*

**The accounts of demon possession are among the most frightening events recorded in the Bible.**

It is frightening to think that a demon can take possession of a person, speaking through the person's mouth or compelling the person to cause harm with great feats of strength, or even driving the person to throw himself into a fire.

While such accounts remind us of the fearful power of the devil, they should also cause us to heed the warning, *"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8).

However, the biblical accounts of demon possession are also some of the most comforting and encouraging. When the Bible shows the power of the devil, it often reveals the much greater power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus commands the demons, and they must obey—as we see in this text.

All of Jesus' miracles show that He does indeed have all power in heaven and on earth (as He says in Matthew 28:18). He has power over every disease, over the forces of nature, and even over the devils.

Isn't it interesting that this demon-possessed man was sitting in the synagogue on the Sabbath? Might not the fact that this demon apparently felt comfortable sitting in the midst of the congregation tell us something about the condition of the synagogues and the teaching of the scribes?

Perhaps this is a foreshadowing of what Jesus calls the "Synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9), where a message of good works and human merit is preached rather than a message of forgiveness of sins and salvation in Christ. A demon would feel comfortable in the former setting!

In our text we could say that Jesus shook a demon out of his comfort zone. The Savior's preaching, which caught the attention of the people, caused this "unclean spirit" to recoil violently so that he cried out, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Not only did Jesus speak with authority but at the same time He showed His authority over the demons. When Jesus spoke a simple command, the devil was forced to come out of the man and leave him unharmed.

Jesus defeated the devil for us once and for all when He died on the cross and rose again.

However, we sinners still need to be sober and vigilant. The devil still prowls around seeking whom he may devour. He comes through a wide variety of temptations and snares.

We need to beware especially when we realize that demons are comfortable in churches today also. What else would we call it when spiritual leaders in Christian denominations deny the authority of Holy Scripture and mock and/or reject such Bible teachings as the virgin birth of Christ and His bodily resurrection from the dead?!

Fear not, fellow believers! Jesus' power over the devil is transmitted through His Word. And as we continue in His Word, we will find safety and protection from all the attacks of the devil.

So long as we are in Jesus and His Word, we are safe. Through His Word He still drives the demons out of our lives.

*Tho' devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us, We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none, He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.*

(TLH #262:3)

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## **BEGINNING A NEW SERIES: THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST**

We begin a NEW series of devotional studies on the miracles of our Lord in this month's issue.

In the Gospel of John we read: "...The Jews surrounded [Jesus] and said to Him, How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (10:24f, compare 5:36, 10:38).

Jesus did not want to be known as a "miracle worker." Consider how often He directed first-hand witnesses to His marvelous works to "tell no man" who He was (Matthew 8:4, 16:20; Mark 7:36, 8:26; Luke 8:56). Yet to those who did not believe His words, Jesus pointed to His works as support for the fact that He was who He claimed to be, the very Son of God, the long promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

Simply put, He who created the world (see John 1:3!) had no difficulty performing supernatural deeds!

Our prayer is that these studies indeed reassure us that Jesus was and is whom He claimed to be! —Editor

# Religion As a Prop

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

Religion is often used as a prop by politicians during election times.

Recently we read in the public press, “President Obama and his family headed out to church this morning for the third time in a month, the latest sign that the president may be using religion to boost his image as the campaign heats up.”

Lest we be accused of discrimination, let us acknowledge that the current president is not the only one who finds the public show of religion convenient to his ends.

It is interesting that when public show or public religious testimony is made, it is almost exclusively done with the invocation of Christianity. Why is it so?

According to the article, “The Christian narrative is appealing to a key demographic that fled Democrats *en masse* during the 2010 midterm election—white working-class voters. Obama will need to bring members of this group back into the fold if he hopes to prevail in critical swing states like Indiana, Ohio, North Carolina, and other must-win states in the Midwest and the South.”

There is a reason why at election time we hear a pitch made to “Catholic” voters or to voters who are characterized as “Evangelical.” That they get away with it also says something about the gullibility of those who sit in the pew!

Would we prefer in the White House or State House someone who is a serious confessor of Christ, a faithful witness in word and deed of the Lord Jesus Christ rather than an atheist, a Muslim, or someone of another religious persuasion? Certainly!

In a purely political sense, however, on this side of eternity we would be pleased with someone who says what he means and means what he says or someone who tells the truth not only when it is convenient. Even a rogue who administers the laws of the land justly and equally and whose concern is the welfare of the state and the

country is preferable to a mealy-mouthed professor of Christianity who promotes his political agenda or uses Christianity to appeal to constituents who produce the most financial support, holler the loudest, and protest the most!

Most obnoxious to Christ-believers (we did not say “Christians,” for even that definition has largely lost its meaning today) is the use of the name of God and the invocation of the name of Jesus to attract votes. This is particularly so as the same “Christian” politicians slander one another with impunity and otherwise reject the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, it is a perversion of the house of God when preachers or politicians stand in pulpits—frequently with a cross behind them—to promote political agendas, a certain politician, or to appeal for votes.

As Jesus cast the moneychangers out of the Temple (John 2:14-15) and in that way manifested a zeal for the house of God and rejected that which defiled His house, it is not a stretch to believe that if Jesus should walk into a house of God today, He would cast out the politicians and all who defile His house in the pursuit of a political agenda or a vote.

As we observe and hear the name of Christ used in the political arena for political ends, we cannot help but believe that such abuse of the name of our Lord comes under the indictment of Exodus 20:7, *“The Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.”*

Somehow it seems apropos to apply Luke 14:46 to those—politician or not—who use the house of God for their own purposes and rob the hearer of the sweet comfort of the gospel of Christ: *“My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”*



Left: Graduate Christiana Schreyer Right: Pastor Mark and Mrs. Tiefel

# This We Believe

475TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE *SMALCALD ARTICLES*

“...The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.” (Luther, SA, Part II, Art. II)

## 4. Of Sin and the Law

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt • Mankato, Minnesota

As Dr. Martin Luther moves into the third part of his confession, he undertakes a discussion of articles “which we may discuss with learned and reasonable people, or among ourselves.”

This very basic and intensely practical discussion begins with sin and the Law of God.

### Why did Luther choose to begin the Third Part with sin and the Law?

It was necessary for Luther to begin with a discussion of sin because, if sin is not recognized and understood for what it is, there is no reason to even consider the need for a Savior.

Furthermore, a discussion of sin necessitates a discussion of the Law because it is God’s Law which reveals sin for what it is.

### What truths does Luther set forth?

Sin originated from one man, Adam. Ever since Adam that sinfulness has been passed from parent to child: “...*through one man*

#### Planned series on the *Smalcald Articles*:

- #1 Of The Divine Majesty/Redemption/Salvation by Grace
- #2 Of The Mass
- #3 Of Cloisters/Papacy
- #4 Of Sin and the Law (in this issue)**
- #5 Of Repentance
- #6 Of The Gospel and Sacraments
- #7 Of Keys and Confession
- #8 Of Ordination/Traditions/Conclusion

*sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12).

This inherited sinfulness is the fertile ground out of which grow all kinds of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds which reveal themselves in the sinner’s life. These “fruits” of original sin are what tear apart friendships and families. They are the sins that hurt others and reveal a lack of love to God and our neighbor by what is done and what is left undone.

In regard to the Law, Luther discusses two of its three uses: as a *curb* and as a *mirror* (the third use—the Law as a *guide*—is not discussed in this context).

By threatening punishment, the Law functions as a *curb* against the course outbreak of sin and wickedness. A certain amount of sin and wickedness is not pursued because of the fear of consequence.

However, the foremost purpose of the Law is as a *mirror* to reveal sin—all of it, inherited sin and its fruit. The Law does this by identifying what is pleasing and displeasing to God, thereby revealing what is contrary to God’s will in our lives and therefore under His condemnation.

The Law humbles the proud, self-reliant sinner and strikes despairing terror in his heart. Only when a sinner is brought to this realization of sin, God’s judgment upon it, and his own inability to escape it—only then will a sinner’s heart be prepared to hear and apprehend the blessed news of a Savior who rescues us from sin.

### **What doctrinal errors is Luther specifically addressing?**

The basic error which Dr. Luther addresses is the misconception that a sinner is somehow able to keep the Law by his own powers. If the natural inherited sinful nature, its full and deep corruption, is somehow lessened or ignored, any number of other specific errors follow.

Luther calls these errors “nothing but blindness” and lists examples, including:

- People by nature have a right reason and good will.
- A person has a free will to do good and not evil, and vice-versa.
- By natural human powers a person can observe and keep all of God’s commandments.
- If a person does as much as is in him, God certainly grants him His grace.

If such teachings are true, Luther concludes, then there is truly no need for a Savior, and Christ died in vain.

### **How does this apply to us today?**

It is hard to comprehend the damage to souls that Satan accomplishes when he is successful in weakening the presentation of God’s Law and the truth of sin in preaching, in Christian witnessing, in theological discussions, and in conversations—whether in the public-square, at work, or around kitchen table!

Our sinful human nature identified and described in Holy Scripture leaps at the opportunity to believe itself more grand and less corrupt than it really is. Our sinful human nature is ecstatic to believe that God is somehow less demanding or less holy than He once was.



Only Scripture can reveal the full corruption of the sinful nature! If that truth is ignored, denied, or lost, the flood-gates are opened for all sorts of errors which diminish God's will, excuse sin, and cater to whatever makes the flesh feel less-condemned, more in charge of its own destiny, and capable of doing great things in God's eyes.

All of this is a bitter deception! No matter what a sinner believes concerning supposed goodness in himself apart from Christ, no matter what any "spiritual" leader declares, no matter what supposed "loving conclusion" misguided human reason might reach, God's Law does not change—nor does His condemnation upon all that is contrary to His Law change!

How utterly sad that so many are

being misled to "feel good" and to "feel right with God" on the basis of such deception and shifting sand!

A proper understanding of our sinful corruption and the righteous condemnation of God's Law upon it rightly leaves every one of us sinners trembling... and running—running to Jesus, the eternal Son of God who alone has rescued us from sin and its fruits which include eternal punishment.

Make no mistake—anything less than these truths about sin and the condemning nature of God's Law renders the holy life and saving work of Jesus Christ irrelevant, no matter how much His name is invoked or how emotional the response!



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## The Book of Concord *The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [Tappert Edition]

Excerpts from *THE SMALCALD ARTICLES* Part III, Article I. Of Sin  
*Here we must confess what St. Paul says in Rom. 5:12, namely, that sin had its origin in one man, Adam, through whose disobedience all men were made sinners and became subject to death and the devil. This is called original sin, or the root sin. The fruits of this sin are all the subsequent evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments.... (#'s 1-2a)*

*This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures (Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12ff., Exod. 33:20, Gen. 3:6ff). What [certain false teachers] taught concerning this article is therefore nothing but error and stupidity, namely,*

1. *That after the fall of Adam the natural powers of man have remained whole and uncorrupted, and that man by nature possesses right understanding and a good will, as the philosophers teach.*
2. *Again, that man has a free will, either to do good and refrain from evil or to refrain from good and do evil.*



3. Again, that man is able by his natural powers to observe and keep all the commandments of God.

4. Again, that man is able by his natural powers to love God above all things and his neighbor as himself.... (#'s 3-7)

*If such teachings were true, Christ would have died in vain, for there would be no defect or sin in man for which he would have had to die..." (#11)*

#### Part III, Article II. Of the Law

*Here we maintain that the law was given by God first of all to restrain sins by threats and fear of punishment and by the promise and offer of grace and favor. But this purpose failed because of the wickedness which sin has worked in man. Some, who hate the law because it forbids what they desire to do and commands what they are unwilling to do, are made worse thereby. Accordingly, in so far as they are not restrained by punishment, they act against the law even more than before.... (#'s 1-2a) The chief function or power of the law is to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become. So the law must tell him that he neither has nor cares for God or that he worships strange gods--something that he would not have believed before without a knowledge of the law. Thus he is terror-stricken and humbled, becomes despondent and despairing, anxiously desires help but does not know where to find it.... (#4)*

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 2012

## Closing Concert and Graduation

Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch, reporter

**A** seat in the back row was a good choice just to spare my hearing from overload, for the ILC Spring Concert on Friday evening (May 18) at Messiah Church was powerful! Time and again the choirs' majestic "Alleluias" took crescendo flight to fortissimo heights. Wonderful! Awesome.

Not that all pieces shook the rafters. *The Creation Hymn* moved moderately in jig tempo, *Shalom/Pacem/Peace* flowed in Jewish descending cadence, *Beautiful Savior* was sweetly gentle, *When You Woke that Thursday Morning* floated lyrically, and even *Crucified's* fortissimo faded away with piano refrain.

Perhaps the most heart-touching piece was *Before the Throne of God Above* with its gently melodic confession: "My life is hid with Christ on high; with Christ, My Savior, at my side."

Thank you, Director Prof. John Reim and singing students!

Then on Saturday morning (May 19) under bright sunshine Immanuel Lutheran College (all departments) closed the school year with our Commencement Service. As retiree Professor Michael Buck led the procession of faculty and graduates into the Fieldhouse, our hearts and voices joined to sing, "Let all things now living a song of

thanksgiving to God the Creator triumphantly raise” (WS2000 #792).

Perhaps you have noticed this hymn’s recurrent mention of light (“His light goes before us ... As forward we travel from light into light ... His Son is the bright Light within us to shine ...”). Bolstered with “...a Light to the nations...” from the antiphonal reading of Isaiah 51:1-6, *light* became the worthy sub-theme to ILC President John Pfeiffer’s address “Leaders or/and Followers” based on the tenth chapter of John’s Gospel.

Among the edifying remarks we heard were:

*“Some leaders are ready to lay down the lives of others, but Jesus laid down His life for others....”*

*“Keep your ears attuned to His Shepherd’s voice as you leave ILC....”*

*“The Light shining in you will shine through you...to lead others in a chain of hands, for we are both leaders and followers....”*

Seminary graduate Mark S. Tiefel received his diploma and will serve in the pastoral ministry at Bethel Lutheran Church of Morris, Minn. (replacing retiring Pastor Elton Hallauer). Nicholas Marzofka and David Greve closed out their four-year college program with B.A. degrees. Graduates with a B.S. in Education were Sherman Carstensen, who will serve at Trinity of Watertown, S.Dak., Joshua Ohlmann, who will serve at Messiah of Eau Claire, and Megan Rehm, who will serve at Immanuel of Winter Haven, Fla.

Thirty high school students filed across the stage to receive their diplomas from Principal Jeff Schierenbeck. We join faculty, parents, and friends in wishing (praying for) their



Conductor/Director Prof. John Reim and students at Spring Concert

continued growth in godliness and Christian service.

Following that, Board of Regents Chairman Pastor Ted Barthels took opportunity to thank the Lord Jesus for the thirty-six years He granted to Prof. Mike Buck in service to Him at Immanuel Lutheran College. Pastor Barthels also presented a retiree's plaque and Thank-You money gift to Prof. Buck. In his touching soft-voiced acceptance, retiree Buck delivered a short tribute to Jesus, crediting the Savior with the host of blessings that supported him during his career at ILC.

After a standing ovation in loving appreciation of Prof. Buck's work and words, the assembly joined hearts and voices in singing the traditional Alma Mater, always the poignant reminder that "God has set [established] our Alma Mater, guiding hearts and minds."

"Built on Jesus' words of promise, O Lord, bless her well!" Amen!



All photos by Scott Wuerch;  
Cover: High school graduates in front of  
Ingram Hall at Immanuel Lutheran College,  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

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## LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

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