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“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.

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“These
three are
One.”

— 1 John 5:7



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

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To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.."*

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

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“Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

—Philippians 3:20

When in 1611 the scholars of James I of England translated the New Testament from Greek into English, the word “conversation” connoted, in addition to its usual meaning of communication through speech, a person’s *whole manner of living* here in this world, his *behavior* as the mark of who he is. Thus, for example, we have the same word in Ephesians 2:2-3; 4:22, and Philippians 1:27 and still other passages contrasting the wicked behavior of natural man, who serves the flesh, with the sanctified behavior of the regenerate, who by the grace of God “*walk in the spirit*” as the fruit and evidence of their faith (cf. Galatians 5:16ff.). But the same word in our title-text, going back to the **root word** in the Greek, *Β@ΒΛ, Λ:* “, really means “citizenship.” From that same root we have in today’s English such words as “political,” “politics,” and “polity.” And the connection between one’s “*citizenship*” and one’s “*behavior*” is not an imaginary stretch, as some might think; for we have the common saying, based on that very connection, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” How people live, work, behave themselves, and even think is closely tied to their heritage, ethnicity and *citizenship*.

We know from the Word of God that we are not “**natural born**” citizens of heaven. In fact, “[we] were shapen in **iniquity** and in **sin** did [our] mother conceive [us]” (Psalm 51:5). “We were **by nature** the children of **wrath**, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3), “**flesh** born of the flesh” (John 3:6). “At that time [before our conversion to faith], [we] were without Christ, being **aliens** from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers** from the covenants of promise, **having no hope** and **without God** in the world” (v. 12).

We are not even “**naturalized**” citizens of heaven, that is, those aliens who, by the **process of law**, are granted “administrative” citizenship because they have **fulfilled the requirements** established by a government for “naturalization.” Among those requirements here in the United States are 1) a period of continuous residence in the country, 2) a knowledge and understanding of our country’s history and government, 3) good moral character, 4) attachment to the principles of the Constitution, and 5) favorable disposition toward our country (Source: “Naturalization,” U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, www.uscis.gov, 2008). 1) We have **not** been continuous residents of heaven; 2) we have by nature **no** knowledge or understanding of spiritual matters (I Corinthians 2:14); 3) we have **no** good moral character (Ecclesiastes 7:20); 4) we are **not** attached to the principles of God’s Word (John 8:47); 5) nor are we “of our own reason or strength” (Luther) favorably disposed toward God and desirous to spend eternity in heaven with Him (Romans 8:7). We have **not** “fulfilled the requirements” of the Law (Romans 8:7; Galatians 3:11).

No, “**our citizenship is in heaven**” because “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10). “By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (v. 18). “Our citizenship...in heaven” is “the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8) — “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but, according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5a), “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (II Corinthians 5:19). Now, “to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:5). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law” (Romans 3:28).

“Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” That citizenship, granted “freely by [God’s] grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24),

gives to all true believers the wonderful, unspeakable vantage point from which we “*look for*” Jesus’ second visible advent to fetch us home. We, together with Jesus’ disciples on the Mount of Olives, stand “*gazing up into heaven*” (Acts 1:11) with our eyes of faith riveted upon His promise: “*I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:3). Therefore, the **Ascension of Jesus** is a very important and comforting teaching which seals to us ***our citizenship in heaven***. For the angels told the disciples: “*This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11).

And because the Ascension of Jesus is a teaching of Holy Scripture, we joyfully testify of it in the confessions of our Lutheran Church. Every Sunday we confess in the *Apostles’ Creed* that Jesus “ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” We also confess in the *Nicene Creed*, which dates back to the year 325 after Christ, that Jesus “ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.” Moreover, in the 3rd Article of our *Augsburg Confession* (1530), we confess that the Son of God “truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin” (*Augsburg Confession, Triglot*, p. 45).

But the Ascension of Jesus is accepted and believed by every true Christian, not because it is taught in the confessions of the Church, but because it is the crystal-clear teaching of the Word of God. Very briefly the Evangelist Mark writes: “*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven*” (Mark 16:19). The complete account is given to us in the 1st chapter of the Book of Acts, which is usually read as the Epistle Lesson when the Ascension of Christ is observed in our churches. Luke writes: “*And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*” (vv. 9-11). That the promised Messiah and Savior would ascend up into heaven had already been foretold in the Old Testament. The Psalmist writes: “*God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet*” (47:5). And

again: *“Thou hast ascended on high. Thou hast led captivity captive. Thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them”* (68:18).

Jesus’ ascension and session on the right hand of God is also a source of great comfort to us Christians while we are awaiting His second visible advent; for, as our divine Prophet, He even now continues to send men into the Pastoral Office to proclaim the Gospel of salvation, to serve His people with the Means of Grace, and to edify or build up His mystical body, the Church of true believers (Ephesians 4:8-12). As our Divine Priest, He intercedes or pleads for us at the Throne of Grace, setting before His Father the evidence of His vicarious atonement as the purchase-price of our heavenly citizenship (I John 2:1-2). And, as our Divine King, He rules, governs, and protects His Church in the Kingdom of Grace, and controls all things in heaven and earth with divine power and majesty (Kingdom of Power) in the interest of His Church (Matthew 28:18ff.; Romans 8:28; etc.), comforting the hearts of true believers with the promise: *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:20).

Since we, as citizens of heaven, *“begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us] who are kept by the power of God [by the Gospel Romans 1:16] through faith unto salvation”* (I Peter 1:3-5), —since we *“look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* to receive us unto Himself (John 14:3), we must constantly impress upon our own hearts *“I’m but a stranger here, heav’n is my home”* (TLH 660), so that our hearts are not fixed here on earth with our treasure *“but a handful of sand that the heart distresses,”* as that *“song bird of the Reformation,”* Paul Gerhardt, sings (TLH 523). Our hearts must not be fastened to the things of this world, this vale of tears, this wilderness of sin, lest we perish with the world. The Apostle John warns us: *“Love not the world, neither the things in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 John 2:15). For our lives must give evidence of and conform to the faith which dwells in our hearts. If we sincerely believe in Jesus as our dear Savior, then we will seek to please Him not only in our thoughts and desires, but also in our words and deeds! The Apostle Paul exhorts us: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ...Mortify therefore your members which*

are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Colossians 3:1ff). For true believers in Christ, ascending to heaven with their hearts and lives in their everyday activities, should, as citizens of heaven, "*let [their] light so shine before men, that they may see [their] good works and glorify [their] Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

The Savior told His disciples: "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:2-3). In the meantime, however, God set Jesus "*at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:20-23). What a tremendous comfort for us Christians in these last evil days of the world to know that Jesus sits on the right hand of the heavenly Father, that is, that He rules and fills all things with His almighty power! The entire Person of Christ according to both His divine and human natures, is present with His Church to edify it, to protect it, and to preserve it until the end of time. And, by God's grace, "*Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20), yes, "*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:2). "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

—M. L. N.

So I must hasten forward—
Thank God, the end will come!
This land of passing shadows
is not my destined home.
The everlasting city,
Jerusalem above,
this evermore abideth
my home of light and love.

(TLH 586, 5)

Do We Truly LOVE the Savior?

“Lovest thou Me?” —John 21:15ff.



The incident is familiar to many believers. After His resurrection the Savior appeared to His disciples as they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. They had fished all night and had caught nothing. Christ performed a miracle, and their nets were full of fish (a hundred and fifty-three large ones). When they had eaten breakfast, the Savior asked Peter the question three times, *“Lovest thou me?”* And when Peter answered, *“Thou knowest that I loved Thee,”* Christ told him to feed His lambs and His sheep. It is right and proper to consider this question

of the Lord Jesus, *“Lovest thou Me?”*, as if it were personally addressed directly to each one of us. After all, the Law of God speaks to every one of us when it says: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”* (Matthew 22:37). And as Christians who know, confide in, and truly appreciate the unmerited love of God in Christ Jesus for our forgiveness and salvation, we cannot but love Him in return. *“We love Him, because He first loved us”* (I John 4:19). Furthermore, if this love for the Lord is sincere, we will cherish His Word and earnestly strive to follow it in our lives. Jesus says: *“If a man love Me, he will keep My Words”* (John 14:23).

When considering what true Christian love is all about, Christ is our model and example. He showed His great love for us in suffering and dying on the cross for our sins. And because we believe what Christ did for us in saving us from the punishment that we deserved for our sins, we will, according to our New Man of faith, respond with acts of kindness and love toward our fellowmen. *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”* (I John 4:11). Our chief concern should always be the salvation of their souls. Therefore, we should go and make disciples of *“all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever [Christ has] commanded [us]”* (Matthew 28:19). Jesus did not commit to all Christians the Apostleship, nor the Office of

the Ministry, but He *does* expect us all to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses, and to follow Him as the evidence of our love for Him.

The Bible teaches us that as believers in Christ we are to love Him, and because we love Him we will want to take the sinless Christ for our example and follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21). We do this, He tells us, by keeping His Commandments (John 14:15), that is, by walking in the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) in our lives of Christian sanctification, motivated by His great love for us (I John 4:19). We focus in this meditation on cultivating innocence, patience, and humility.

Christ is an example or model for us in His innocence. The Apostle said, “*Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth*” (I Peter 2:22). This is a quotation from Isaiah 53, where the Prophet said concerning the suffering Messiah: “*He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.*” Christ had to suffer as no one else ever suffered. He was falsely accused, mocked, spit on, scourged, and crucified. But He was perfectly innocent. He had done nothing worthy of punishment. He “*knew no sin,*” St. Paul said (II Corinthians 5:21). He was innocent, and in this regard He has left us an example that we should “*follow His steps*” (I Peter 2:21).

In this sinful world we will also have to suffer. But, of course, we are not perfectly innocent as our Savior was. Our suffering, unlike the Savior’s, may at times be a result of *our own sins* and not always the sins of others. When the mirror of God’s Law reveals how we have transgressed His Commandments, we must not seek to justify or excuse our sinfulness by pointing to the sins of others, but humbly repent before the Lord our God, whose justice we have offended. And through the Gospel of God’s grace, let us be strengthened in our ability and desire to follow the example of Christ’s holiness in our lives out of love for Him.

Jesus is also an example for us to follow in His patience. Of Him we are told: “*Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*” (I Peter 2:23). How patient Christ was in His suffering! Most of the time He remained silent. As a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He did not open His mouth. When He poured out His life on the cross, His enemies insulted Him, abused Him with their vicious tongues, and provoked Him. “*They that passed by railed on Him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in*

three days, save Thyself” (Matthew 27:40)! But did Christ answer them back? He who had the power to crush His revilers to pieces with a single look—did He return *“evil for evil, or railing for railing”* (I Peter 3:9) or pronounce a curse upon them for their blasphemies? No, He *“reviled not again...He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously”* (I Peter 2:23). Patiently He bore all His sufferings and even prayed for His murderers when they crucified Him, saying: *“Father forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

We ought to take the patience of Christ for our example. When we have to suffer, we are often tempted to lose our patience, to murmur against God because He sends us such heavy burdens, to seek help in an unlawful way, to resent the evil that is done to us, to repay with evil those who have wronged us, to revile, to threaten, to take revenge. But instead of giving in to such wickedness, we should rather learn patience from Christ when we have to suffer, follow His great example, and walk in His steps out of love for Him.

Furthermore, Christ should be an example for us in His humility and love. We are told that on the night in which He was betrayed He washed His disciples’ feet and said, *“I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you”* (John 13:15). This washing of the feet was an act by which He taught His disciples that they must not exalt themselves above each other, but serve one another and not shrink away from the lowliest service in doing good.

And so we ought to take Christ for our example and humble ourselves, *“not minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate”* (Romans 12:16), as the Apostle said—not thinking all the time of ourselves, but considering ourselves to be servants having a duty to help others. Our Savior’s entire life on earth was spent saying and doing good things. As His followers, we should be doing the same in love and gratitude for all that He has done for us. *“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked”* (I John 2:6). If we have a true, living faith in Christ, we will want to emulate Christ’s holiness in our lives (James 2:17, 20, 26). *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”* (I John 1:6). Because good works are a necessary fruit of saving faith and give clear evidence of such faith, on the Last Day Christ will say to those on His right hand: *“Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me*

drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matthew 25:34-36, 40). If, in true faith, we do good to others in word and in deed, we take Christ for our example and walk in His steps.

What will be our motive for doing this? And from where does the ability to do so come? Not by our own natural power will we follow Christ’s example of love towards our fellow man; but by means of His precious Gospel, in which He offers to all men the fruits of His great redemptive work, He furnishes us with both the willingness and the power to follow His example. Many people think they can do this by their own power. They consider the heart of Christianity to consist merely in following Christ’s example; thus they seek to earn God’s favor by their works. And when they have done a charitable deed, or performed an act of kindness, or brought a sacrifice in some way, they think they have followed Christ’s example, even though their hearts remain unchanged, and they love sin as much as always. And it is only from selfishness, for the sake of gain and reward, that they do good to others.

But the power and willingness to follow Christ’s example we receive from Christ Himself. He alone can endow us with power and strength to follow His steps. When we try to imitate Christ by our own natural power, we fail, we deceive ourselves, we sink into self-righteousness. But we must, first of all, see our natural, sinful condition through the Law of God. Damnably sinners that we are, we must understand that *“all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6) when considered apart from Christ’s righteousness. And we must be filled with a longing for that Savior who has already redeemed us from sin, death, and hell without any meritorious contributions on our part (Luther, *Second Article*, “What Does This Mean?”). Thankfully, in Jesus we have a Savior who is mighty to save, who furnishes us by means of His Gospel and Holy Sacraments with the power and strength to be His true followers by faith in Him, and to walk in His steps as a fruit of this faith.

To have Christ as our model and to follow His example we must believe in Christ, *“who,”* as St. Peter says, *“His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed”* (I Peter 2:24). Imitating Christ will not save us, even if we should accomplish much in this world by His grace as far as following in His steps is concerned. Our

salvation was earned for us by the perfect life, suffering, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith in Him, without the deeds of the Law (Romans 3:28), we “*receive the promise of eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:15). So when considering the question of Christ, “*Lovest Thou Me?*”, let us always respond with a genuine “*Thou knowest that I love Thee*” and demonstrate the truth of this confession by gladly following Him according to His Word.

—D. G. R.

*Thee will I love, my Strength, my Tower;
Thee will I love, my Hope, my Joy.
Thee will I love with all my power,
with ardor time shall ne'er destroy.
Thee will I love, O Light Divine,
so long as life is mine.*

*Thee will I love, my Life, my Savior,
who art my best and truest Friend.
Thee will I love and praise forever,
for never shall Thy kindness end.
Thee will I love with all my heart;
Thou my Redeemer art.*

*Oh, keep me watchful, then, and humble
and suffer me no more to stray.
Uphold me when my feet would stumble,
nor let me loiter by the way.
Fill all my nature with Thy light,
O Radiance strong and bright!*

*Oh, teach me, Lord, to love Thee truly
with soul and body, head and heart;
and grant me grace that I may duly
practice fore'er love's sacred art.
Grant that my every thought may be
directed e'er to Thee.*

(TLH 399, 1, 2, 4, 5)



Jesus' Promise of the Comforter to His Disciples and to US

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” —John 14:26-27

Even long before the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Savior’s disciples, the **Day of Pentecost** was an important festival of the Jewish church-year, the “*Feast of Weeks*” ordained by God through Moses (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10) as a *harvest festival* in which the first-fruits of the barley and wheat crop were cut and laid before the Lord in thanksgiving for His bounty. It occurred seven full weeks or 50 days after the Passover; and the very word “Pentecost” reminds us of this timing, for it means “fiftieth,” the 50th day after Easter, as we reckon it on our Christian church calendar today. It was indeed a fitting time for the Savior’s promise of the Comforter to be fulfilled because, on that particular Pentecost, on that seventh Sunday after Jesus’ mighty resurrection from the dead, a virtual “bumper-crop” harvest of souls was realized as the result of this miracle-outpouring of the Comforter upon the Savior’s apostles. It is for this reason that Pentecost Sunday has been set aside or dedicated since that time as the *Feast of the Holy Spirit*.

It therefore behooves us, who celebrated the *Feast of the Holy Spirit* this year on May 11, to examine more closely the words of the standard Gospel lesson traditionally read on that festive day and to study carefully Jesus’ promise of “*the Comforter*” to His disciples and to US. For from our Savior’s words, we learn not only who this “*Comforter*” is and in what His special work consists, but also how His gracious operation affects the hearts and lives of those in whom it is accomplished.

Interestingly enough, this special promise of the Lord Jesus begins with the Word “*but.*” Even though Jesus had often manifested forth His glory to His disciples, showing Himself without doubt to be the very Son of God; even though He had suffered and died in fulfillment of so many direct prophecies of the Messiah to come; and even though these dear disciples of His confessed Him to be “*the Christ, the Son of the Living God*” — yes, in spite of all these clear and certain evidences of Jesus’ true mission to this sinful world— they were yet, oh, so weak in their understanding, having in some cases only the sketchiest idea of the “plan of salvation” (as **basic** as **THAT** is to our faith). And in spite of the fact that Jesus Himself had taught them personally, in His own words and by His own perfect example, He knew full well that they desperately needed a FULL and COMPLETE understanding of His person and work, and the ability then to impart this blessed message to others, as Jesus had commissioned them. And so, in this discourse or conversation before us, Jesus had been instructing them with great care, “*being yet present with [them]*” (v. 25), knowing that much of what He said was going, as we say, “in one ear and out the other,” and that much of it would soon be forgotten. And so he said: “***But the Comforter...***,” namely, even if they fail fully to grasp things now, this Comforter was coming soon to be their Source of wisdom and knowledge, of understanding and faith, of strength and perseverance. His instruction, yea, His sacred operation in their hearts, would make all the difference!

But just **who** was this “*Comforter*” to be? Yet another prophet perhaps like Moses or Elijah? No, for Jesus calls Him “*the Holy Ghost*” —the very Spirit of God Himself, the third person of the Holy Trinity, of whom the believers in the Old Testament knew from the Holy Scriptures. For already in the first words of Genesis, the Lord’s Word states so clearly: “*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*” And the Psalmist prays in Psalm 51: “*Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.*” Indeed, from the **divine names** He bears, from the **divine attributes** He possesses, and from the **divine honor and glory** ascribed to Him in the Scriptures, not only Jesus’ own disciples but we as well can easily recognize the “*Holy Ghost,*” “*the Comforter,*” to be true God, very God with the Father and the Son (cf. the *Nicene Creed*).

And Jesus continues His description of this Holy Spirit, saying, “*whom the Father will send*” —fully accredited as belonging to that eternal Godhead whose unity or oneness between the persons surpasses human understanding— “*in My name*” —because Jesus will have ascended to

the right hand of His Father by the time this “*Comforter*” is sent, Jesus, the one and only Mediator and Advocate, whose perfect sacrifice made possible God’s reconciliation of the world unto Himself — “*in My name*,” namely, “*for My sake*,” the Father in heaven will send this *Comforter*, this Holy Spirit, to Jesus’ disciples and eventually also to **us**, to be **our Comforter**, **our** assurance that, for Christ’s sake, there is now no more enmity between God and men, but that God Himself, in the person of the Holy Ghost, actually deigns to come to us (15:26), to dwell in us (Romans 8:11; I Corinthians 3:16), to comfort (Acts 9:31) and to help us (Romans 8:26).

But now we ask, as we consider Jesus’ words, “**What** specifically is the **work** of this blessed *Comforter*, and how does He accomplish this work in the hearts of men?” The Savior gives us the answer when He says: “*He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*” Now we Christians know from our study of God’s Word that the **chief work** of the Holy Spirit is the conversion of natural man from a child of Satan, given to sin and vice and devoid of the slightest righteousness pleasing to God — to change man from that deplorable and utterly hopeless state into a “*new creature*” (II Corinthians 5:17), trustingly reliant alone upon God’s free grace in Christ Jesus for salvation; and, although good works on his part would never help to save him, yet, a “*new creature*” who earnestly desires to *please* God and to *avoid* what **displeases** Him. Such conversion is alone the work of the Holy Spirit, to whom the prophet Jeremiah addresses his plea: “*Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord, my God*” (31:18). And without His work of conversion, no one can of his own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior; for Paul writes to the Corinthians and says: “**No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost**” (I,12:3b).

Moreover, contrary to the teaching of the so-called “enthusiasts,” who claim that the Holy Ghost operates *without* means, that is, simply “out of the blue,” Jesus shows in His words before us that the Holy Ghost indeed **does** operate **through** MEANS, in that He “*teaches*” and “*brings Christ’s Word to our remembrance.*” His MEANS of instruction is the **Word of God**, particularly the **GOSPEL**, which He taught directly to the disciples on the day of *Pentecost* (Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise, as well as subsequently (I Corinthians 2:13) as He enabled them to preach and to teach publicly with authority. And still today He continues to teach that precious Gospel “*through their Word*” (John 17) in the verbally-inspired Scriptures (II Timothy 3:16). It is that **Gos-**

pel which is, in fact, “*the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*” (Romans 1:16), the efficacious **means** through which the Holy Ghost calls men to salvation, offers them the blessings earned by Christ, and works in them the faith to accept them.

Thus the Holy Spirit, “*the Comforter,*” is our **teacher**, who does His teaching **through the Word**, for Paul writes in Romans 10:17, “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*” His teaching of God’s **Law**, what it requires, and how it condemns man for his manifold transgressions against it —**that** teaching, properly speaking, does not save but kills (II Corinthians 3:6); it kills man’s pride and haughty spirit and prepares his heart to receive the soothing balm of the Gospel. It is then the **Gospel alone** that saves us, as it is taught to us by the Holy Spirit and brought to our remembrance by the *hearing* of the Word (Romans 10:17; Luke 11:28; etc.) and by daily *searching* in the Holy Scriptures (John 5:39). It is **the Gospel** which says: “*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16); “*In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him*” (I John 4:9); “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19). And then, when we, by His grace, accept and cling to these wonderful promises of the Gospel and make them our own **by faith**, then “*the Comforter*” continues **still** to teach us, and to bring to our remembrance all things whatsoever the Lord Jesus said, be it the pure Gospel to strengthen us Christians still further in our faith, the Law to curb our sinful flesh, to remind us of our sins and our need for the Savior, and to order our lives as His dear children —matters “*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*” that, in our lives of sanctification as converted, regenerate Christians, we may be **complete**, “*thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (II Timothy 3:16-17).

What a blessing it is for us to know that the Holy Comforter is **still with us TODAY** as the unchanging and omnipresent Lord and Master Teacher, whose verbally-inspired Word is completely reliable, authoritative, clear, all-sufficient for our faith and life, and never-failing. For as He continues to teach us, to instruct us, and to bring to our remembrance the words of our dear Savior, we have the assurance that our faith is built on solid rock (Matthew 7:24), on the “*foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20), on the very “*Word of our*

God” which “*shall stand forever!*” (Is. 40:8). That fact, in and of itself, is of real comfort in these last days of sore distress.

But in His promise Jesus describes for us yet the ultimate comfort that all this teaching, reminding, calling, and converting of the Holy Spirit brings to us, namely, the **end result** of it all, when He says: “**Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.**”

Faith, that is, true confidence in the promises of the Gospel, faith worked in them by the Holy Comforter, brought to the disciples a most wonderful and lasting blessing, which the Lord Jesus promised them in this very verse (v. 27): “**Peace**” —not the kind of peace that the world gives (temporary peace, shaky peace, uncertain peace, the mere absence of outward warfare for a time), no, nothing as transitory as all that! For Jesus’ peace is **peace of heart**, He tells them: “*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*” It is a most wonderful **fruit** of justifying faith in the Savior to have true peace of heart, “*the answer of a good conscience toward God*” (I Peter 3:21) through the forgiveness of our sins, and the blessed knowledge that, as the redeemed and adopted children of God, we are now **His own**, can live under Him in **His** kingdom, and can serve **Him** in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness (Luther). For St. Paul writes to the Romans, chapter 5, versed 1: “*Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Moreover, concerning even the temporal trials which assail us, we have His ironclad promise that “*all things*” —even the most gruesome and seemingly impossible circumstances of life— will “*work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28).

No wonder the Savior called His Holy Spirit “*the Comforter;*” for what better **comfort** could there ever be than to know that this ever-present Lord continues to **strengthen us in the saving faith** by teaching us the precious Gospel of Jesus; that He **sanctifies our life**, bringing to our remembrance all those sayings which the Savior caused to be recorded in His Word for our “*instruction in righteousness,*” and enabling us with His grace to follow them as obedient and grateful children. Indeed, what **best comfort of all** that, as the result of our justification before God —because of His unilateral forgiveness of all our sins for Jesus’ sake— we have “**peace with God through [Him]**” when we cling in childlike faith to the promises of His Gospel.

May we never “grieve” this Holy Comforter (Ephesians 4:30) nor “resist” His work in our hearts (Acts 7:51) by despising the precious **means of grace** by which He accomplishes all these unspeakable blessings in us! But may we rather “let the Word of Christ,” by which the Holy Spirit **conveys** to us His gracious gifts, “dwell in [us] richly” (Colossians 3:16), gladly hear it, learn it, meditate upon it, and keep it, “that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4b) and ever keep for ourselves the **special peace** that is ours for Jesus’ sake. To that end we pray with the Psalmist:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit!” (Psalm 51:10-12).

—D. T. M.



The WORD of the Gospel – The Spirit’s MEANS unto Salvation

*“Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem,
be this known unto you, **and hearken to my words.**” –Acts 2:14*

The words for our Scriptural meditation are taken from the Book of Acts where the Apostle Peter stood up to address the gathering of those who had just witnessed the miraculous outpouring of God’s Holy Ghost in Jerusalem (vv. 1-4). On this day of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter and ten days after He had ascended into heaven, the exalted Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy in Joel 2:28, the prophecy of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11, as well as His own promise given both in John 15:26-27 and in Acts 1:4-8 that He would send the Holy Ghost from His Father to His disciples. Persons “*from every nation under heaven*” (Acts 2:5) heard “*the wonderful works of God*” (v. 11) not in new, unintelligible sounds but in common, everyday language, in **words** that ordinary people could understand (v. 8). There was no question nor any doubt regarding the “*words*” of the message that Peter, as God’s spokesman (cf. Luke 10:16; Acts 1:8; II Corinthians 5:20), was to preach, because the Holy Ghost wanted God’s words *to be known* by the “*men of Judea*” and all that dwelt at Jerusalem. And so the Holy Ghost, through the Apostle Peter as His mouthpiece, implored the people not merely to accept what they were witnessing with their eyes, but first and foremost to “*hearken,*” to listen, to “*give ear,*” to the very “*words*” which the Holy Ghost by divine inspiration was giving Peter to proclaim into the ears of the people. For it was the Holy Ghost who *in words* had first guided Peter himself into all truth (John 16:13) and had chosen him to be a witness of Jesus’ completed work of redemption and His mighty resurrection from the dead (Acts 10:39-41). It was then also the Holy Ghost who brought three thousand souls to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ through the very “*words*” which Peter boldly preached in Jerusalem (v. 41).

Since God “*dwel[eth] in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see*” (I Timothy 6:16), man is unable to inform himself about God (I Corinthians 1:21a; 2:14). That is, man can know God only from His revelation of Himself. The *natural* knowledge of God’s existence and of certain divine attributes is based on God’s revelation to mankind apart from any words or language com-

municated from God to man. “*God hath showed it unto them*” (Romans 1:19) *in nature* —to which both God’s creation (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-3) and man’s conscience (Romans 2:14-15) testify, “*so that they are without excuse*” (Romans 1:20). However, because of man’s suppression “*in unrighteousness*” of the very truth of God known by him (Romans 1:18-19), he refuses to acknowledge or to worship the Creator (vv. 21, 25), resulting in the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all his ungodliness and unrighteousness (v. 18). This natural knowledge of God, then, is altogether **insufficient** for man to rely upon for knowing either *who* the true God is (Acts 17:23; I Corinthians 1:21a; Romans 1:22–23) or *how* he may be eternally saved from the known judgment of God (Romans 1:32) and enter heaven (I Corinthians 2:9).

Therefore, from the beginning of time, God chose to reveal Himself to men and to communicate to them *by means of words* what they otherwise could not know. In the Old Testament, God spoke to men directly in words which they readily understood, as shown, for example, by His *verbal* communication to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28; 2:16; 3:9ff.), to Cain (Genesis 4:6, 9), to Noah (Genesis 6:13; 7:1; 8:15-17), to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 7), to Moses (Exodus 3:4, 14; Numbers 2:1ff.), and to the Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:1, 22, etc.). God also spoke to men indirectly through visions *in words* which they readily understood, as shown, for example, by His *verbal* communication to Abraham (Genesis 15:1), to Samuel (I Samuel 3:3ff.), to David (II Samuel 23:2ff.), to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1), to Joseph (Matthew 1:20-24; 2:19-20), and to the wise men (Matthew 2:12). Additionally, He caused His prophets in the Old Testament to preach **His Word** as His mouthpieces, shown by the recurring **words**: “*Thus saith the Lord, ...*” (Exodus 5:1; Judges 6:8; Isaiah 28:16 — just three examples of hundreds available) in His *verbal* communication to His chosen people of Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus commissioned His apostles to preach **His Word** which the people were to hear as from His own mouth (Luke 10:16; cf. also II Timothy 4:2a). Finally, the Holy Spirit inspired or breathed into His holy penmen *the very words* which they spoke and wrote down (I Corinthians 2:13; II Peter 1:21), which constitute “*a more sure Word of prophecy*” than even *eyewitness* knowledge of God and His grace (II Peter 1:19).

The Holy Scriptures, then, are the *special* revelation of God set forth in human language, in human speech, “*in the words...which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (I Corinthians 2:13). We are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Scriptures are **inspired**, for “*All Scripture is given*

by inspiration of God” (II Timothy 3:16), and that God Himself *speaks* to mankind in language through His chosen writers, “for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the **Holy Ghost**” (II Peter 1:21). Since the Scriptures were precisely “written for *our learning*” (Romans 15:4), it is *in words* by which God makes Himself known also to **US** poor sinners and declares His will also **for US** and **for OUR eternal salvation**. For the things which God has prepared for us who love Him because He first loved us (I John 4:19), “God hath *revealed* them unto us by His **Spirit** ...that we might **know** the things that are freely given to us of God, ...which things also [the apostles] *spake* ...in the **words** ...which the Holy Ghost teacheth” (I Corinthians 2:10-13). For us sinners deserving of eternal damnation (Romans 6:23a; Galatians 3:10), it is **only** in the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost *in His words* reveals to us the good and gracious will of God in Christ Jesus, namely that “God will have **all men** to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4).

We are also told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Holy Scriptures are **IMPORTANT** since it is only God’s **words** that give witness to Jesus Christ as our only Savior from sin (Acts 4:12; 10:43) and “are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15). We are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Holy Scriptures are **CLEAR**, as we learn that “the entrance of Thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130), preeminently, though not exclusively, with respect to everything that is necessary to be known for our eternal salvation and to train us Christians in holy living. This clarity is such that the Holy Scriptures are of **no** “*private interpretation*” (II Peter 1:20) because there is no question what our Lord means by what He says to us *in the words* He uses, and when Scripture itself is allowed to interpret Scripture (*Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*). We are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Holy Scriptures are **AUTHORITATIVE** as the source and standard of Christian faith and life, that is, of Christian doctrine and practice, since as Christians we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20). This authority of God’s Word is also such that the **words themselves** have the divine power to secure their very acceptance (Romans 1:16; 10:17; I Peter 1:23, etc.) because, as God’s own words, they are self-validating (Numbers 23:19), and, as God, “He could swear by no greater” (Hebrews 6:13). We are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Holy Scriptures are **TRUE** and **WITHOUT ERROR**, as even our baptized little children, by God’s grace, know and can recite

the words of Holy Writ: “*Thy Word is truth*” (John 17:17). We are even guaranteed by our Savior Himself that the integrity of His Word not only includes single words but also extends to the smallest parts of words (Matthew 5:18-19). “*God is not a man, that He should lie*” (Numbers 23:19); and, since “*no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*” (II Peter 1:20), the Holy Ghost assures us that His truth is resident *in the words* and **not in the interpretation** of His Word. We are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Scriptures are **ALL-SUFFICIENT** for our faith unto salvation (John 6:63; Luke 16:29, 31), and are “*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished [equipped] unto all good works*” to His glory alone (II Timothy 3:16-17). The precious doctrines which are according to Godliness (I Timothy 6:3) are conveyed *in the words* of Scripture (I Timothy 4:6) and **not** in any extra-Biblical sources and standards of faith.

Furthermore, we are told *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that the Word of the Gospel is **EFFICACIOUS** as the means whereby He regenerates men (I Peter 1:23), sanctifies them (II Corinthians 5:14-15; Ephesians 2:10), and preserves them in saving faith unto salvation (I Peter 1:5; compare with Romans 1:16). There is divine, supernatural power both *in the words* of God’s holy **Law**, first to work in us true contrition over our damnable sins, and then also *in the words* of the precious **Gospel** of Christ, as the means whereby the Holy Ghost works in us saving faith by giving us “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6). Even Holy Baptism, as a means of bestowing upon us God’s gracious blessings of forgiveness, life, and eternal salvation earned by Jesus Christ, derives its regenerative and saving power from the promise of *the Word* of the Gospel, since it is “not simple water only” (Luther’s Small Catechism, *The Nature and Power of Baptism*) but “*the washing of water by the Word*” (Ephesians 5:26). Also the Lord’s Supper, as a means of grace in which we receive the true body and true blood of Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, derives its strengthening and preserving power from the **Word** of the Gospel, since it is “not the eating and drinking indeed that does them” (Luther’s Small Catechism, *How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?*) but the *words* written, “*given for you*” and “*shed for you ...for the remission of sins*” (Luke 22:19-20; compare with Matthew 26:28).

Given this wonderful blessing of having *the words* of our God as the

Spirit's MEANS unto salvation and unto godliness of living, the fruit of saving faith, how could we *not* hear, learn, study, confess, and proclaim the Word of God for the eternal welfare of ourselves and others? Our sinful flesh, which clings to us until death (Romans 7:14-24), "*lusteth against the Spirit*" and is contrary to the Spirit "*so that [we] cannot do the things that [we] would*" (Galatians 5:17). Therefore, it is *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that we are **warned against DESPISING** the words of Scripture; for "*whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels*" (Mark 8:38). We are warned **against DEVALUING** the words of Scripture when Jesus says: "*If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*" (John 15:7), and **against DISMISSING** the words of Scripture, as did many of His erstwhile followers, who said of what Jesus told them: "*This is an hard saying, who can hear it?*" (John 6:60). In contrast, His faithful disciples said: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68). We are warned **against MANIPULATING** the words of Scripture, for "*Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, 'He saith'*" (Jeremiah 23:31), and "*they that are unlearned and unstable wrest...the Scriptures unto their own destruction*" (II Peter 3:16). Finally, we are warned *in the words* of the Holy Ghost **against even DOUBTING** the words of Scripture which are able to save men's souls (James 1:21b), and **against REJECTING** God's Word, as "*if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing*" (I Timothy 6:3-4); and that lack of the saving knowledge of eternal life (John 17:3) is, of course, potentially disastrous (Mark 16:16; John 3:36)!

However, for the preservation of our New Man of faith, it is also *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that we are **exhorted to hold in highest regard** the preaching and teaching of the Word of God (Isaiah 66:2), and **to hear regularly** and **to listen attentively** to it (Isaiah 55:10-11; Luke 11:28), whereby faith is created and strengthened in the heart, as "*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). We are exhorted **to read** and **to study diligently** and **reverently** the Word of God (John 5:39) so as to nourish our souls on the "*milk of the Word*" for growth in grace and knowledge, that the strength of our faith may increase (I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18). It is *in the words* of the Holy Ghost that we are exhorted **to learn gladly** the Word of God, as "*I will*

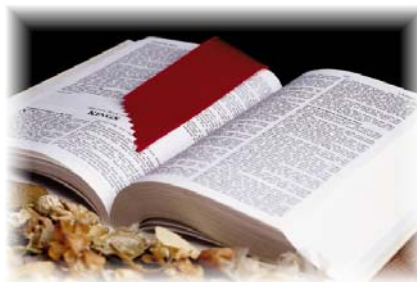
delight myself in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy Word” (Psalm 119:16), and **to meditate devoutly** upon it, for *“I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways”* (Psalm 119:15). We are exhorted **to believe** the Word of God, as *“these are written, that ye might believe..., and that believing ye might have life through His name”* (John 20:31). We are also **to follow** and **to continue gladly** in it, living according to His Word as the fruit of our faith, for Jesus tells us: *“If a man love Me, he will keep My words”* (John 14:23); and David asks: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word”* (Psalm 119:9).

May we therefore heed the Lord’s own exhortation *in the words* of the Holy Ghost **to love** the Word of God (Psalm 119:97) as the only true and reliable **source** and **standard** of Christian doctrine (John 8:31-32; Ephesians 2:20), as the **means** whereby saving faith is engendered, strengthened and preserved (I Peter 1:23; John 17:20; I Peter 1:5), and as the **rule** for our lives of sanctification, *“the fruit of the spirit”* and visible evidence of the grace of God in our Christian walk of life here in time and hereafter in eternity (Matthew 5:16)!

*Precious Jesus, I beseech Thee,
may Thy words take root in me;
may this gift from heav’n enrich me
so that I bear fruit for Thee!
Take them never from my heart
till I see Thee as Thou art,
when in heav’nly bliss and glory
I shall greet Thee and adore Thee.*

(TLH 296, 4)

— **Jason A. Mabe, Seminarian**
(Submitted through his Pastor)





“These Three Are One”

“There are three that bear record in heaven: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are One.”

—I John 5:7

The doctrine of the Trinity is a **fundamental doctrine** of the Christian faith, “which faith,” we confess in the Athanasian Creed, “except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic [i.e. universal] faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance” (*Triglot*, pp. 31, 33; *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 53). This doctrine is set forth in **clear** and **unmistakable** passages of Holy Writ in both the **Old** and **New** Testaments, although, admittedly, the New Testament passages are the “more clear” *sedes doctrinae*. [“The New Testament lies in the Old concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed” (Augustine)]. Because the Bible itself testifies that God’s Word is clear, enlightening, edifying, inerrant, infallible, authoritative and all-sufficient for our faith and life (Psalm 119:105, 130; II Peter 1:19; John 8:31-32; Ephesians 2:20; John 10:35; 17:17, 20; Luke 16:29, 31; etc., etc.), we do not speak of “unclear” passages; for there is no Word of God that confuses the hearer, leads him astray, misdirects his hope, contradicts or undermines another passage, or in any way weakens, injures or destroys a person’s faith. Any such allegation flies directly in the face of God Himself! Those who ascribe to Scripture their lack of understanding or the cause of their spiritual demise are themselves the stumblingblock to their own faith; for, as Peter writes concerning those who are “*unlearned*” — willingly ignorant of the Scriptures, their nature, and their purpose— and “*unstable*” —not grounded on the foundation of Holy Writ in both the Old and New Testaments (cf. Ephesians 2:20), they “*wrest*” [i.e. twist, pervert] the “*Scriptures unto their own destruction*” (II Peter 3:16).

We have, for example, in our *Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism* (St. Louis, C.P.H., 1943) selected **prooftexts** [*sedes doctrinae*] which clearly set forth the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and prove beyond any shadow of doubt that “the only true God is the *Triune God*: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct Persons in one divine Being, or Essence” (Q/A 26, p. 49). There are, of course, also many other clear and certain passages of Holy Writ which establish this doctrine in words so unmistakable that they neither require nor permit of any interpretation (the definition of a *sedes doctrinae*). Happily, therefore, we confess with Dr. Pieper, the preeminent dogmatician of the once-orthodox Missouri Synod: “It is a characteristic of the Lutheran Church that it does not base its doctrine on any exegesis [interpretation], not even on the exegesis of Luther, but on the bare words of Scripture” (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*. I, p. 323). This is particularly significant since there are those among so-called “confessional” Lutherans today who make the preposterous claim that the Lutheran Confessions (viz. the *Book of Concord* of 1580) “norm” the Scriptures (not the other way around) because without them no one would know how to interpret the passages of Holy Writ “properly.” We ask such misguided zealots: “Whatever did the Christians do *before 1580* to ascertain the true meaning of passages which had been written for *their* learning (Romans 15:4)?? Whatever happened to the principle set forth in Scripture itself and echoed, for example, in the Apology of the *Augsburg Confession* (*Triglot*, §60, p. 441) and in the *Brief Statement* of 1932 (§ 2) that Holy Scripture is the sole source and norm of Christian doctrine and practice??”

By deliberately choosing I John 5:7 as the title-text of this article, this writer did not intend to re-open the proverbial “can of worms” created by textual critics who allege that these words of the Apostle John, referred to by them as the “Johannine comma,” are an “interpolation” or later addition to a certain few Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and are therefore not to be regarded as Holy Writ. Nevertheless we shall comment on that controversy very briefly in passing. This allegation of textual critics is based upon their “scholarship” and their “investigation” of the early manuscripts known to be in existence still today and upon certain “canons” or assumptions which they have devised, accepted, and set forth as the *ground rules* for “establishing the text” of Scripture, that is, for **determining** to the best of *their ability* which words of the various manuscripts *most likely* represent the text of the original autographs (the texts written by the holy writers themselves by inspiration of God). When they thus **decide**, on the basis of their collective judgment, scholarship, research, and “scientific” investigation that certain words, verses

and sections of Scripture are of “doubtful” origin and that they do not belong to the original text because, in their opinion, **a)** they are not found in the *oldest* manuscripts, **b)** they are not found in the “*best*” manuscripts, **c)** they are found in only *a few* manuscripts, **d)** they do not appear in the early *lectionaries* of the church, and **e)** they are not *quoted* by any of the early church fathers, the “professional” critics make it their business to determine what the Word of God is. As to their judgments, they do not always agree among themselves because many of them are simply “educated guesses.”

Dr. Pieper, in his brief discussion about our passage, states the following, which is both interesting and instructive:

In our opinion the decision as to the authenticity or spuriousness of these words depends on the understanding of certain words of Cyprian [an early church father, bishop of Carthage, who died in 258 A. D. –Ed.], which are about two hundred years older than our oldest codices. ...Cyprian is quoting [in his *De Unitate Ecclesiae*] John 10:30 [*“I and the Father are one”*]. And he immediately adds: “And again it is written of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost: *‘And the three are One.’*” ...Cyprian states distinctly that he is quoting Bible passages, not only in the words: *“I and the Father are one,”* but also in the words: “And again it is written of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.” These are, in our opinion the objective facts. ...Now, since the words of Cyprian are about two hundred years older than the oldest preserved codices (B and a), it is not fair to say that those are out of date who consider the words referring to the three witnesses in heaven to be genuine (e.g., Besser, Stoeckhardt, Sander, Mayer, and others). (F. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I, pp. 340-341.)

Fortunately, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity does not hang for its authority on this passage alone, as noted before; and, since this passage only states what other clear passages state about the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and their witness in heaven concerning the eternal decree of redemption and the Father’s gift of His Son to the world for its redemption and salvation, there is simply no demonstrable reason for anyone surreptitiously to have *added* these words to the words of John’s epistle as an “interpolation.”

Finally, **as a matter of principle**, we have *God’s own assurance* that **we have** His Word in its truth and purity — even in translation

(Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) — and that our confidence in that fact does not rest upon human scholarship, the judgment of professional linguists and historians, and the findings of archaeologists. Take, for example, the statement of God’s primary will that He “*will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4). Does this require that “*all men*” have in their possession the “best and oldest manuscripts” and the benefits of scholarship in a reconstructed text in order to have “*the knowledge of the truth*” ?? Hardly! When the Lord Jesus bids us continue in His Word (John 8:31-32), does that require every Christian over the past 2,000 years to have had the benefits of “scientific research” and archaeological finds in order to “*know the truth*” ?? Of course not! When the Savior tells us to “*search the Scriptures*” for “*eternal life*” (John 5:39), to which manuscripts does He refer? Or do we **already have** those Scriptures, in faithful translation, on the basis of completely reliable texts (like the *Textus Receptus* upon which our King James translation rests)? We do not have the Word of God merely in a *generic* sense, in a *general* sense, assured only that all the doctrines have been preserved against perversion in spite of the so-called “variant readings” that occur between the various extant manuscripts. For then the doctrine of *verbal inspiration* would be of little comfort to us in these latter days when no one can produce an “original autograph” for our examination. No, my dearly beloved brethren, **God Himself promises** that His Word will **stand forever** as the *incorruptible* Seed that regenerates the soul (Isaiah 40:8; I Peter 1:23, 25), that in its hearing it produces faith (Romans 10:17), that it is our Lamp and Light in the spiritual darkness of this world (Psalm 119:105), that it shows us the way to heaven (John 5:39), that it is our only source of spiritual truth (John 8:31-32); that the words of both “*the apostles and prophets*” comprise the foundation of our faith (Ephesians 2:20); that it is able to give understanding not only to scholars and theologians but to “*the simple*” (Psalm 119:130), and that it is able to keep us unto salvation (I Peter 1:5; Romans 1:16). Not merely the doctrines but also the very “*words*” of our Savior (Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33; Mark 13:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; John 6:63, 68; 8:47; 12:48; 14:23; etc., etc.) have been providentially preserved to us by our gracious God for our faith, for its edification, for our sanctification of life to His glory, and for our preservation even unto the end. Of that, every Christian can and should be certain despite every effort of scoffers and skeptics to cast doubt upon the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, clarity, all-sufficiency, and durability of the Word of God!

Now, as to the reassuring **content** of the so-called “Johannine comma”

for our faith in the Triune God and His eternal decree of redemption, let us yet examine the text itself. What is “*the record that God gave of His Son*” (v. 10) —the record that we are to believe in order to be saved? Verse 11, the last verse of the section, is really its summary: “*This is the record: That God hath **given** to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*” “*This is the record,*” namely, the precious **Gospel** (or “good news”) of our salvation in Jesus Christ, that everlasting life in heaven is “*the gift of God*” (Ephesians 2:8) to unworthy, wretched and miserable sinners; that salvation was purchased and won by Christ, when, as man’s Substitute, He perfectly kept God’s Law and paid the penalty of our guilt (Romans 5:19; Isaiah 53; Hebrews 10:14); and that this salvation is received by faith in this precious Gospel, by childlike confidence only in God’s mercy for Jesus’ sake, totally apart from the works of the Law (Romans 3:28).

This sure and certain testimony of the Gospel is **a matter of divine record in heaven**, John tells us, as the Triune God devised and decreed it in **eternity**. “*There are **three** that bear record in **heaven**: The Father, the Word [that is the eternal Son of God, John 1:1-2, 14], and the Holy Ghost. And these **three** are **one**.*” The Scriptures teach that, in eternity already, “*before the foundation of the world,*” Peter writes in his First Epistle (1:20), the only-begotten Son of God “*was foreordained*” to be a sacrificial “*lamb without blemish and without spot*” (v. 19), whose holy, precious blood would purchase salvation for sinful mankind. This “*decree of redemption*” was the eternal act of God, in which all three persons of the Trinity concurred —an act of divine **goodness**, **grace** and **mercy** toward the whole human race (which God had not yet created), whose **fall into sin** He had *foreseen* in His omniscience, but whose **disobedience** He had neither *desired* nor *willed*.

The Father “*gave His only-begotten Son,*” we read in John 3 verse 16, and “*sent Him forth... when the fullness of the time was come... to redeem them that were under the Law,*” Paul writes in Galatians 4. The Son “*humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8) and thus “*gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” (I Timothy 2:6). And the Holy Ghost is the “*Oil of Gladness*” with which Christ was “*anointed*” by God to be the bonafide Savior of mankind (Psalm 45:7) —not anointed “*by measure*” (John 3:34), in a *limited* way as we are, but **without** measure as the Spirit’s own testimony to the **surety** of this wonderful “*decree of redemption*”! “*And these three [...the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost...] are one,*” John says in our title-text. Their unanimous, divine

“*record in heaven*” is sure and certain **for our sakes**, as sure and certain as God is God; as sure and certain as “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not **three** Gods but **one** God,” as we confess in our Athanasian Creed.

John also points out in verse 9 that “*if we receive the witness of men*” (in such trivial earthly matters as what fallible men have to say about “unseen” things like atoms, radiation, electrical current, and lethal gases), “*the witness of God is greater! For this is the witness of God, which He hath testified of His Son.*” This “*record*” or “*witness of God*” is also a matter of testimony here “*in earth*” (v. 8). The **Gospel** in the Holy Scriptures (“*the Spirit*”), together with the **Holy Sacraments** (“*the water, and the blood*”), comprise the “*witness of God*” **Himself!** And who would dare to call God “*a liar*” by not believing Him?? Yet, that is exactly what a person does, John says in verse 10, who “*believeth not God because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son.*”

“*This is the record*” to which we must hold fast as the **sure and certain testimony of good news** to our quaking hearts when Satan assails us, when he holds our sin and guilt before our eyes, and when he threatens to devour us in everlasting damnation: “*This is the record: That God hath given to US eternal life; and this life is in His Son*” (v. 11). It is the **sure and certain testimony of the Gospel of salvation**—a matter of eternal record in heaven in the **Holy Trinity**, the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost having decreed it as **one** undivided **Unity**; a matter attested to here on earth in the Means of Grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit works, strengthens, and keeps saving faith in our hearts; and a matter confirmed to us by the **internal testimony** of the **Spirit** (v. 10), as we cling to that Holy Record in childlike confidence.

What a wonderful passage of God’s Holy Word is this message of the Apostle John from God Himself, “*given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16), confirming other sure and certain *sedes doctrinae* which establish the fundamental doctrines of the Holy Trinity, of the redemptive work of Christ, decreed already in eternity, and of eternal life as the free gift of God to the “*ungodly*” (Romans 4:5) for Christ’s sake! To our blessed Triune God be all honor and glory, world without end!

—D. T. M.

From Our Russian Brethren...

7 " 8 N@d@T @ 4 8" 8 BD4bH>@ O 4H \$D' Hb< &<, FH !
-A F" : H4D\ 133:1

*(Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!
-Psalm 133:1)*

The following letter from Pastor Schurganoff is directed to our readers, especially to the members of our Conference congregations, as an update concerning his work in Ekaterinburg, a metropolis in the Ural Mountains of Russia, and the status and welfare of his little congregation there. These are our brethren in the faith for whom our prayers are desired (II Thessalonians 3:1; 1:11-12) and to whom we have the great privilege of sending our tangible gifts of support (Galatians 6:10; II Corinthians 8:7-9) in order to bear with them their burdens as the evidence of our love (Galatians 6:2; I John 3:17-18). As we read his letter, let us all be mindful of the difficult conditions under which Pastor Schurganoff's flock not only shares in adversity, by the grace of God, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) but also holds forth the Word of life as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15-16).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am glad to welcome all of you in the name of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. For some years now all of you in Conference help our small church in our difficult work here in Russia, in Ekaterinburg. I and members of our church are grateful to all of you for your spiritual and financial help. Our sincere desire is to continue fellowship with you, and also on a regular basis to inform you on state of affairs in our church. Therefore I have prepared this small article for you.

At the moment in our church are 25 persons: 10 men, 7 women, 5 teenagers, and 3 children. It is necessary to notice that in Russia the rather low birth rate is connected to difficult living conditions, and consequently such small amount of teenagers and children not surprising for us.

We meet every Sunday for our worship in the rented place which your financial help from Conference helps to pay. Bible



Part of the Congregation

classes are held two times a month on Sunday after worship and two times a month on Wednesdays in my flat. We promote our church in various Internet and printed directories. For example, recently the information on our church has been published in city information computer system. Members

of church distribute booklets about our church to other people and tell about our work. Frequently to our worship services there come people which have found the information about our church in the telephone directory or in the Internet. They can always receive answers to their questions, and also they can receive books of Lutheran church free.

We also have contact with small group of Christians (about 8 persons) in the regional city Nizhni Tagil. I and two active members of our church come to them 2 times a month on Saturdays to lead small service and Bible studies. I very much hope that sometime this small group will become a Lutheran congregation here in Ural.

Members of our church very actively testify about Christ to friends, relatives and employees at work. As the result, many of our people come to worship with their families.

Now a little about my family. My son, Nickolai, who is 7 years old, now is practically healthy. After his birth he was really seriously sick; and, after long treatment for which all of you rendered financial and prayful help, now his condition very good. Certainly he continues to visit the doctor once a month; but all symptoms of disease have practically left. This year he attends school as all children of his age in Russia.



Nickolai

My wife, Elena, also is well. She had problems with heart after

Nickolai's birth, but after successful operation she was completely restored. Certainly she still requires some medical support, but the worst is behind now. She frequents our worships and helps me in missionary work. She has the big desire to create a children's shelter for homeless children (such children very much in our city), but the financial position of our church is such that we cannot accomplish it.

Nowadays the situation in Russia is very difficult for such small churches as ours. It is complicated by the fact that the [Russian] Orthodox Church has become practically the state church here. The state renders financial support only to this church (for example, in business of



Entrance to rented Chapel

construction of new churches, opening of missions, the teaching of basic Russian Orthodox beliefs at schools and higher educational institutions). Unfortunately, we are practically deprived access for mission work to schools or other educational institutions, to prisons, to children's homes if our request is not approved by a government official. But we receive refusal almost always. The answer is thus, that we can get into the educational institutions, shelters and so forth, but we cannot have official status like other bodies because our church is not traditional here in Russia. Activity of our church constantly is exposed to state control, and I am compelled to hand over every year the full report about activity of our church to justice authorities. Many people name us "sectarians" and people which "serve the West." It is very difficult to explain to people that the Lutheran church is not a sect and never was.

The financial situation in Russia is very difficult now. We have the big inflation, especially concerning food and payment for housing. The prices for those things doubles every year. Certainly it seriously affects people with small incomes, and in Russia such people are about 70% of the population.

In our church the majority is of such people. Their income is

about \$500-600 in a month, and this money suffices only for food, clothes and payment of housing. And because of this their donations for church very low. Basically, donations are made by people with income of about \$1200-1500. (That is the average income here, which allows to have only a little more in the way of adequate housing). Such people only three persons in our church. These donations suffice only for different minor church needs, as, for example, charges for postage, or charges for printing of booklets, or purchase of materials for the printer, and so forth.



Our little Altar

I should point out that I receive from Conference \$800 for salary, and it too is very modest sum now when the dollar continues falling with respect to the ruble. For example, within a year the dollar has depreciated 15%). So, the repairs started in my flat 4 years ago still cannot be completed as the prices for building materials increase more than the income of our family.

We live in a large housing complex (about 150 flats) in suburb of city. It is a rather difficult area concerning criminality here. Especially at night. Earlier I had a plan to buy a small separate house [single-family home] and a lot in a city vicinity where there is no city noise and where there is pure enough air. That very much would help my son and my wife. And further it would then be possible to construct a small chapel there. It would be remarkable actually to own a building for worships and assemblies of our church. However, all this would be very expensive for us now.

I understand that the financial situation in the U.S.A. is very difficult too, and consequently for me it is always difficult to ask you about help for our church and for me, because I sincerely want all of you to enjoy well-being and that you do not suffer from lack of what you need. But if you, even as an individual, have the kind desire and opportunity to help our church financially, please, address me on my e-mail: lutheran@r66.ru. [Brother Robert Bloedel, the Conference Treasurer, knows how to send funds securely if anyone would like to contact him. –Ed.]

I am grateful to God and our Savior Jesus Christ that our church and Conference continue to have loving brotherly relations, that we here have an opportunity to pay rent of our place for divine services due to your donations, and that I can devote my time completely to service in our church also due to your donations. I sincerely thank you for your prayers concerning our church, for me, and for my family. I gratefully appreciate your support, your warmth, and loving care.

Many thanks to all of you, dear brethren.

Pastor Roman Schurganoff
Orthodox Lutheran Church of Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA



Mere words often fail to convey the frustration of being so isolated from one's brethren at so great a distance that personal contact and assembling together for fellowship activities are impossible. How blessed we are in this our country with peace within our borders, with true religious freedom, and with still one of the highest standards of living in the world, that we do not have on a day-to-day basis the staggering obstacles that face our brethren both in Russia and in Nigeria! Let us remember them in our prayers, gladly share with them of our substance, and support them *spiritually* with brotherly exhortations from the Word of our gracious God in Christ Jesus and with loving words of encouragement in personal letters and e-mail messages. They are always grateful for even a short greeting and note of brotherly concern.

—The **Committee on Missions**

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57th Annual Convention
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday
June 27, 28 and 29th, 2008**

at
St. Luke's Lutheran Church,
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Motto:

*Be married to whom you will,
only in the Lord*

I Corinthians 7:39

The Essay on this topic will be delivered by
Pastor M. L. Natterer

The Friday sermon on Ephesians 6:4
will be preached by
President Edward J. Worley

The Sunday sermon on Proverbs 31:30
will be preached by
Pastor Robert J. Lietz

**The Pastoral Conference on
June 24th & 25th**
**Board of Directors meeting on
June 26th**