

The
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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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“In the Name of
the Father, and of
the Son, and of
the Holy Ghost.”

Matthew 28:19



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The Concordia Lutheran Editor:

The Rev. Edward J. Worley
5350 South Fountain Street
Seattle, WA 98178

Book and Tract Editor:

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

Lay Member:

Mr. Paul L. Natterer
2920 Liberty St. SW
Albany, OR 97321

Address subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, 17151 S. Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913.** A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

Officers of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

PRESIDENT:

The Rev. Robert J. Lietz
233 North Cuyler Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

VICE PRESIDENT:

The Rev. Edward J. Worley
5350 South Fountain Street
Seattle, WA 98178

SECRETARY:

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

TREASURER:

Mr. Robert G. Bloedel
10017 - 61st Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98178

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.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

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.



“Why Did Jesus Just Up and Leave Us?”

*“It is expedient for you
that I go away.” —John 16:7*

If they had been left to their own fleshly, weak, and earthbound reason to “muse” about Jesus’ comings and goings and to answer to their own short-sighted satisfaction the questions that plagued their ignorance, Jesus’ disciples might well have expressed their frustration in the words of our title. For, although they trusted in Jesus as the promised Savior (John 1:29), as the one “*of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write*” (John 1:45), as “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16), they were still—even up to the very day of His ascension into heaven—laboring under the common delusion of the Jews then and now that the *Messiah* would be *more* than a Savior from **sin** (Isaiah 53), *more* than a deliverer from **death** (Job 19:25), and *more* than a victor over **the devil** (Genesis 3:15). They looked for Him to establish a **temporal** reign over the House of Israel and to restore its earlier prominence as *the people of God* (Exodus 6:7-8), secure from all their enemies in the “*kingdom*” of God, ruled over by the Son of God (Acts 1:6). It was in *that* sense in particular, based upon the premise that He would survive the plot of the Jews against Him, that certain of His disciples “*trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel*” (Luke 24:21). In fact, James and John (Mark 10:35ff.), with their mother as their spokesman and “agent” (Matthew 20:20ff.), started a real ruckus among the disciples when they endeavored to get in on the “ground floor” of Jesus’ temporal power base by trying to get a commitment from Him to make them what we might call today “chiefs of staff” in His government! What were they thinking?? In actuality, their “thinking” was not much different from that of the *Mil-lennialists* of our day and time who would direct *our* thinking and at-

tention away from the Savior's spiritual reign in the Kingdom of Grace and its culmination in the Kingdom of Glory *in heaven* to a temporal 1,000-year reign *here on earth* for the vindication of His Church in the eyes of the world *here* where political power is the power that counts!

How would Jesus be able to set up His *Messianic* kingdom here on earth if He were to “go away” (John 16:7)? The disciples were concerned; they were worried; they were disappointed at the prospect of Jesus' leaving them. Indeed, they were so perplexed by the very thought of it that, instead of asking Jesus to explain to them what *positive, yea, wonderful* benefits He had in store for them as the result of His temporary (v. 16ff.) absence, they hadn't even bothered to ask Him, “*Whither goest Thou?*” (v. 5). Why weren't they interested? Were they so preoccupied with the thought of His absence, were they so blinded by the “*sorrow [which had] filled [their] heart*” (v. 6), that they couldn't see any upside to His departure?? How would His kingdom ever be built up and established without His visible presence??

“*It is expedient for you that I go away,*” Jesus explained to them. “*It's to your advantage.*” Why? “*For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.*” Jesus' **visible presence** was of no real *advantage* to His disciples. Their confidence, their security, their happiness, and their hope were already too closely tied to the fact that He was **visibly** with them (v. 4b); and both the disciples' skepticism (Luke 24:21-24; Mark 16:13-14) and Thomas' challenge to the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection, namely, that he would have to “*see*” and *touch* and *feel* Jesus' body before he would believe it, were ample testimony to the importance (in their own minds) of His **visible presence**. It was to their advantage that He withdraw His *visible* presence so that their *spiritual* sight could be opened by “*the Comforter*” (v. 7), “*the Spirit of Truth*” (v. 13), to the knowledge and understanding of His person and work for their souls' salvation. The Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, true God with the Father and the Son, would be *sent* by Him (v. 7) “*from the Father*” (15:26) in order to do for the disciples what was to their *advantage*:

1) “*He will reprove [better: convict] the world of sin...because they believe not on Me*” (vv. 8-9). The Holy Spirit —specifically through the preaching of God's Law in its fierceness as the flawless mirror of the truth that cannot lie— will confront the world of unbelievers and convict it of its damnable sins. Its sins, though expiated by Jesus Christ because of His *vicarious atonement* (I John 2:2) and for His sake

not imputed to the world by God (II Corinthians 5:19), will remain unremitted and will bring the impenitent into everlasting condemnation. Why? “*Because they believe not on Me*” (v. 9); “*for if ye believe not that I am He,*” Jesus told the Jews, “*ye shall die in your sins*” (John 8:24). This reproof or conviction of the Holy Spirit will either crush hardened, unbelieving hearts like a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29) and bring them to true contrition (Psalm 51:17), or it will harden them still further in their obduracy because of their stubborn resistance to His earnest efforts to save them (Romans 9:31ff.).

2) “*He will reprove [i.e. convict] the world...of [concerning] righteousness*” (vv. 8 and 10). The hymnwriter correctly paraphrases and summarizes Romans 3:10-20 and 26-28 and Galatians 3:11, singing: “All righteousness by works is vain; the Law brings condemnation” (TLH 375, 4). What the world considers to be righteousness, namely, the perfunctory observance of the letter of the Law (imperfect though it be) apart from faith in Christ Jesus, is an abomination in the sight of God. The only righteousness that avails before God is the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which He earned for every man (Romans 5:19b), the righteousness that God, for Christ’s sake, declared to be His free gift to all the world when He unilaterally and judicially (forensically) reconciled it unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19). “*Because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more*” (v. 10), because Jesus accomplished His mission to this world of sin, namely, His work of redemption, and was exalted from the grave to the right hand of the Father as evidence that God accepted His sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world (Acts 2:36; Philippians 2:9), the only righteousness that saves is the righteousness of God, received by faith (Romans 3:23-28). The children of this world reject Christ’s righteousness in unbelief, cling to (and rejoice in) their own unrighteousness, and thus are convicted and ultimately lost by their own fault (II Thessalonians 2:12).

3) “*He will reprove [i.e. convict] the world...of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*” (vv. 8 and 11). Because Christ by His vicarious atonement crushed the head of the Serpent in fulfillment of divine prophecy (Genesis 3:15), destroyed the works of the devil (I John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14), and “*deliver[ed] them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15), those who make common cause with the devil (John 8:44) in impenitence and unbelief, who serve the devil’s purposes by rejecting Christ as their Savior and leading others to do likewise, will share the devil’s judgment (Matthew 25:41) in the fires of hell. This unabashed reproof of wicked-

ness and unbelief the Spirit pronounces by means of His Word, while all true believers will be reprieved from that judgment by the Comforter, who assures us even now that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them (Matthew 16:18b).

4) “*He will guide you into all truth*” (v. 13). Already on the occasion of the first Christian Pentecost, “*the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:4 and 11b) to speak boldly, powerfully, authoritatively and convincingly both the Law in its fierceness and the Gospel in its sweetness as the mouthpieces of their Lord (Luke 10:16) and His ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20) to bring three thousand souls “*to the knowledge of the truth*” (II Timothy 2:4), to “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6) unto salvation. That blessed truth we have in the Holy Scriptures, “*in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (I Corinthians 2:13), “*which are able to make [also us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15). What an **advantage**, both to Jesus’ disciples, and to us and to all the world, to have His truth in its purity, to continue in it, to speak it, preach it, teach it, and apply it faithfully (John 8:31-32; Jeremiah 23:28; Ephesians 2:19-20; II Timothy 4:2ff.; etc.) for our own eternal welfare and for the salvation of many others for whom our Savior died and whom God justified for His sake!

5) “*He shall glorify Me*” (v. 14). Is this not, after all, the glory that excels all other glories (II Corinthians 3:10)? It is the glory of God’s grace in Christ Jesus to poor sinners before the world began, the glory of the eternal decree of redemption according to which His only-begotten Son was given to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, the glory of God’s unilateral reconciliation of the world unto Himself in Christ, that is, in view of Christ’s perfect atonement for sin and His satisfaction of divine justice on behalf of every sinner, the glory proclaimed to all eternity in the exaltation of our Savior to the right hand of His Father, the glory manifested to sinful men in the blazing light of the Gospel! You see, we don’t need Christ’s *visible* presence to confirm to us all of this marvelous glory. In fact, it was to our **advantage** that He took away that *visible* presence so that we could be “*blessed*” by *believing without seeing* (John 20:29b), by confiding in the truth of His Word manifested to us by the *Spirit of Truth*, the *Comforter*, our Savior’s precious Gift who establishes, edifies, nourishes, and preserves His Church through “*the Word of His grace*” (Acts 20:32).

“Why did Jesus just up and leave us??” That question suggests that our Savior deserted us when we needed Him most. He did just the opposite, as we have seen. It was *“expedient”* for us that He go away, that He remove from our sight His *visible* presence, and that He fill that seeming void with the omnipresence of the Comforter, who, through His Word of Truth would make and keep us His believing children unto life everlasting, and be the great cause for our perpetual joy and gladness as we patiently await His return in glory.

At the same time, let us never doubt our exalted Savior’s sure and certain promise: *“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20). Jesus did not **“up and leave us”** AT ALL, just because He removed from us His *visible* presence. When He ascended up into heaven *“and a cloud received Him out of their sight”* (Acts 1:9), the disciples craned their necks to keep Him *in view*. But He was from then on just that: *“Out of their sight.”* He was **not** out of their presence, He was **not** out of their reach, He was **not** out of this world —*locally enclosed*, that is, physically locked away, in heaven according to His human nature and thus only with us “in spirit,” as the **Reformed** would have us believe who deny the *personal union* of the divine and human natures in Christ and the communication of His divine attributes to His human nature. They hold that the next time Jesus will be with us *according to His human nature* is on the Last Day when He returns visibly in glory with His holy angels (Acts 1:11; Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:31). They, like Thomas, equate *reality* with that which can be *seen*.

St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, chapter 4, testifies that the exalted Christ, also according to His human nature, *“ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things”* (v. 10). The Reformed, whose rationalistic axiom states that “the finite is not capable of the infinite,” that a finite human body cannot be made capable of infinite omnipresence or of a repletive presence, seem to forget about whom they are speaking when they restrict our exalted Savior, very God of very God, the King of kings and Lord of all lords, to the laws of “nature.” Would they (of course they would!) dare to pencil in between the lines of Holy Writ extra words to limit the promises of God?? *“He ascended up far above all heavens [with His true human body, according to His human nature] that He might fill all things [but only according to His divine nature]??”* *“Lo, I am with you always [not with My human body, of course, since I’m not really able to pull that off, but just in spirit], even unto the end of the world??”* And yet they apparently have no problem

with Revelation 1:7 — “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and **every eye shall see Him**, and they also which pierced Him.” Then His true human body will be able to be seen by all men on all sides of the globe at the same time!! How will Jesus be able to pull that one off?? Their rationalism destroys their confidence in Jesus as “*the Christ, the Son of God*” (Matthew 26:63; 16:16), “*with [whom] nothing shall be impossible*” (Luke 1:37). “*Is anything too hard for the Lord??*” (Genesis 18:14); or are there exceptions?? For the Reformed, there are!

But Jesus’ words stand for themselves, just as His words to the disciples on Easter evening: “Behold My hands and My feet that it is **I Myself**; handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not **flesh and bones**, as ye see **Me have**” (Luke 24:39). “Lo, **I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world**” (Matthew 28:20) — “*this same Jesus*,” the glorified and exalted, risen and ascended God-man, Jesus Christ, is “*with [us] alway*,” He assures us; and the Apostle Peter adds for our comfort and joy: “*Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (I Peter 1:8). Do we love Jesus only in spirit?? Do we believe in Him only spiritually?? Do we rejoice in Him, but not in His blessed body?? What utter nonsense! “*Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!*” (John 20:29). Jesus did NOT just up and leave us! He only removed Himself from our *physical* sight so that we could concentrate on the *spiritual* sight He has given us in His Word by the operation of His Holy Spirit!

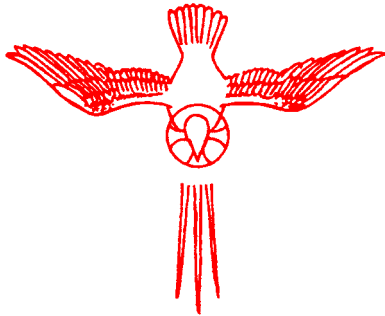
And, when our earthly race is run,
death’s bitter hour impending,
then may Thy work in us begun
continue till life’s ending;
until we gladly may commend
our souls into our Savior’s hand,
to rest in peace eternal! Amen.

(TLH 293, 3)

—D. T. M.



THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST:



SAVING FAITH IN CHRIST

*“No man can say that Jesus is the
Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”
—I Corinthians 12:3b*

How much of God’s Word is the absolute, complete, total truth? All of it! Can we be sure of this fact? Most certainly! Jesus Himself, who “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2) and who is identified as “*the Truth*” (John 14:6), declared to His heavenly Father: “***Thy Word is truth***” (John 17:17). This short declaration is more than enough to assure and reassure us that every word in the Holy Scriptures can be relied upon as the unchanging truth for what we teach and practice (“*doers of the Word*” —James 1:22) in our private, individual, and family life, as well as in our public, congregational, and Conference life. We should thank God more and more for His written revelation of truth to us and for us!

In contrast to God’s Word of truth, we are confronted with the devil, who “*is a liar*” (John 8:44) and demonstrated such so brazenly with Eve in Genesis 3, verses 4-5. Furthermore, another enemy of the truth is our own wicked, corrupt flesh, which is entirely devoted to sin and evil, which surely includes lies (Ephesians 4:22; Romans 8:7; 7:18). Finally, the ungodly world promotes and supports lies “left-and-right,” repeatedly calling “*evil good, and good evil*” (Isaiah 5:20).

Therefore, it is **such a blessing** that we can, on the basis of God’s Word of truth **alone**, focus on *The Gift of the Holy Ghost: Saving Faith in Christ*, confident that we are reviewing, going over, and setting forth not our own ideas, opinions, and conclusions, but the doctrine and instruction of God Himself.

Saving faith in Christ is **indeed a special, marvelous gift** from the Holy Ghost. This faith in Christ Jesus is **not** something which we have earned and deserved because of our many good deeds and our

hard work. It is **not** in any way something which God owes us, as wages owed to a worker for his labor. Rather, this saving faith in Christ and all of its fruits are a total, complete gift from the Holy Ghost. Let us listen to the testimony of the Apostle Paul: “**No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.**” There are no human beings anywhere **who can in any way bring themselves** to believe in and confess Jesus as their only Savior from the wrath of God over their sins and, furthermore, as their only triumphant Lord over sin, the devil and hell. This ego-deflating and pride-busting message is announced again and again in God’s Word of truth: **I Corinthians 2** - “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned*” (v. 14); **Romans 3** (further describing natural man) - “*They are all under sin, as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes*” (vv. 9-18); **I Corinthians 1** (shows the stark difference between the natural man and the converted man) - “*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ... We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (vv. 18, 23-24); **Matthew 7** - “*A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ...neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit*” (vv. 17-18).

Since the above Scriptures make known to us the absolute, unchanging truth, they teach us, in summary, that **no human beings**, none at all, when they are conceived and born, as they are “naturally,” have **any** good in them; they are **not in the least** interested in God; they have **no** respect or awe for God; what He reveals in His Word they look upon as foolishness and nonsense; they **do not ever** want to “make a decision” for Christ; they love only evil; they **cannot do** anything good before God. Dr. Luther was in complete accord with the Scriptures when he confessed: “I believe that I **cannot by my own reason or strength** believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him” (*Small Catechism*, 1943, page 11, Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed).

So, when anyone has been or is brought to faith in Christ Jesus and His perfect righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6) which covers up and cancels out all unrighteousness, all sins, all shortcomings and imperfections, it is **NOT** due to any **human** effort at all, but is due **entirely** and **only** to the effort and work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace (the Gospel of grace and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism). “*No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.*” This is most certainly true! The creation of the new man (Ephesians 4:24), the partial restoration of the image of God (Colossians 3:10), the second birth (John 3:5-6) – these are, without any doubt, the priceless gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle Paul addresses all who have been brought “*out of darkness into His marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy*” (I Peter 2:9-10), and brings to their remembrance (II Peter 1:12-15) those sparkling jewels of truth in Ephesians 2: “*You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. ...**By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them**” (vv. 1, 8-10).*

The Holy Ghost, through the Gospel of grace, “*the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people*” (Luke 2:10) on account of the one and only Savior for all sinners (there is none other – Acts 4:12; John 14:6), is the **active One** (I Corinthians 12:3); we are the **passive ones** in conversion and regeneration. The Apostle Paul confirms these truths in Titus 3: “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*” (3:5). And we have further confirmation in Philippians 2, where we are plainly told that it is “**God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure**” (v. 13).

Therefore, who is given and who rightly deserves the honor and credit for bringing souls to faith in Christ, opening their eyes so that they see with the eyes of faith Christ Jesus, “*who gave Himself a ransom for all*” (I Timothy 2:6)? The answer is supplied in I Corinthians 2, where we find these familiar words: “*As it is written, Eye [the eye of the natural man] hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which **God hath prepared** for them that love Him, but **God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit**, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in*

him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (vv. 9-12).

Since, as we declared earlier in this article, the Scriptures are absolutely true and give us proper understanding (Psalm 119:104a), therefore we reject, abhor, condemn, and hate (Romans 12:9; Psalm 119:104b; Proverbs 8:13) all false teachings which oppose the truth of Scripture and “*deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18), such as **the LIE that natural man is not totally corrupt, depraved, and no good at conception and birth, but rather has some good in him so that he can, on his own, turn from sin to the Savior, or, to some degree, cooperate with the Holy Ghost in bringing about his own conversion.** Also, the rejection of infant baptism is tied to **the LIE that natural man is really not as wicked and evil as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and, though an infant is technically a “sinner,” he is not of responsible age and therefore not guilty before God.** How dare anyone question the truthfulness of God’s revelation in the Scriptures (Romans 3:4)? Let us remember what the Lord God Himself said in Isaiah 66: “*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at [has great awe for] My Word*” (v. 2)?

“*No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.*” And when the Holy Ghost, through the Word of truth and grace (Ephesians 6:17; John 1:17), moves the heart to speak of Jesus as the one and only Savior for lost and condemned sinners, then that believing heart also moves the mouth to say, as the fruit of its faith: “*I believe; therefore have I spoken*” (Psalm 116:10). And what else does the heart attached by faith to Jesus say? “*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (I Corinthians 15:57). “*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*” (Romans 8:37). “*The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*” (II Corinthians 5:14-15). “*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*” (Acts 4:20).

— R. J. L.

“He therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.”

*“In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost.” —Matthew 28:19*

The above statement is taken from the Athanasian Creed, named after Athanasius (A. D. 293-373), a bishop of Alexandria, who was a valiant defender of Scriptural orthodoxy against the Arian attacks on the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. The Athanasian Creed is found on page 53 of our *Lutheran Hymnal*. This Creed has been virtually erased from the majority of Protestant churches chiefly because they dislike the condemnatory statements in it which they consider to be unevangelical. They overlook the fact that the Word of God plainly declares, “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:36). That the Athanasian Creed continues to decline in popularity can readily be understood when we observe that modernism has not only infested outward Christendom but literally taken the control of many of the denominations.

The Athanasian Creed, together with the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, are indeed of ancient origin. But let it be understood that we do not accept these creeds simply because they go back to the early centuries of the Church. On the contrary, they are accepted because they set forth in brief and concise statements the teachings of God’s Word! Martin Luther expressed it so well, “I am not to be believed, nor is the Church to be believed, or the fathers, or the apostles, or an angel from heaven, if they teach anything contrary to the Word of God. Let the Word of God abide forever” (*Commentary on Galatians*). Our faith dare never rest upon the teachings of men but solely upon the inerrant Word of the almighty God.

And what does God’s Word teach concerning the Trinity? The Lord Jesus gives this commission to the Church: “*Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*” (Matthew 28:19). Note carefully the words of the Savior! He does not say “*in the names*” but rather “*in the Name*” of the one God, who is the Father and the Son and the Holy

Ghost. The three persons are distinct from one another, yet they are equal, each person true God; and yet, there is only ONE God. The Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century declare this Biblical truth in the very first article of the *Augsburg Confession*: “There is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term ‘person’ they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.” (*Augsburg Confession*, Article I, *Triglot*, p. 43). This holy and sublime mystery we believe and confess even though it appears to be foolishness to our sinful reason. “God says it; that settles it; I believe it.” “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor?*” (Romans 11:33ff).

The Triune God was present at the Baptism of Jesus: The Father speaking from heaven, the Son being baptized, and the Holy Ghost descending like a dove (Matthew 3:16-17). The Apostle Paul refers to the Trinity, “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all*” (II Corinthians 13:14). While, of course, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is taught with much greater clarity in the New Testament, it is also taught in the Old Testament. Read, for example, Genesis 1:2, 26; 11:7; Numbers 6:24-26; etc.

There is no doubt about it. Like the unbelieving Jews of that time, the vast majority of people still today simply do not want to accept the fact that Jesus is “*God manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:16). It is a very obvious fact that such anti-trinitarian organizations as the Witnesses of Jehovah, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Mohammedans, and the lodges (Masons, Elks, Odd Fellows, etc.) openly deny the Scriptural truth that Jesus is true God with the Father and the Holy Spirit! But even within external Christendom we find those who deny this truth of God’s Word. Already years ago, for example, *Time* magazine reported: “Catholic theologians are today publicly questioning established dogma in a way that might have earned them excommunication in the 19th century and execution in the 16th ...Even the conventional concepts of God, the Trinity, the divinity of Christ and the reality of His Resurrection are considered open for theological reconsideration” (May 23, 1969). And what shall we say about so-called Lutherans, who pay lip service to the

deity of the Lord Jesus in the Creeds, but who, at the same time, openly tolerate men within their ranks who hold with Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1951) that God merely *appeared* in Jesus. Therefore Jesus cannot really be *God* because He was only a *human being*. Now all such should be recognized for what they are – *antichrists* (I John 4:3).

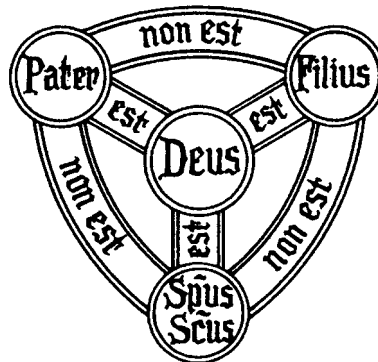
In spite of all such ranting and raving against the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, here stands the majestic word of our Lord: “*All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent Him*” (John 5:23). In Matthew chapter 28, we are told concerning the women and the disciples on Easter morning: “*And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshiped Him*” (v. 9) ... “*and when they saw Him, they worshiped Him*” (v. 17). “*Let all the angels of God worship Him*” (Hebrews 1:6). Read the context and see for yourself that the “*Him*” is none other than Christ Himself! “*But unto the Son He saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy Kingdom*” (1:8). “*This is the true God and eternal Life*” (I John 5:20), who declares: “*All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*” (Matthew 28:20). “*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing*” (Revelation 5:14). Even the Jews understood the words of Jesus in John 8 when He declared: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am*” (v. 58). They knew what God had spoken to Moses at the burning bush in answer to Moses’ question: “*Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, ‘The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you;’ and they shall say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM;’ and He said, ‘Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you’*” (Exodus 3:13-14). Look at the number of times the Savior testified to His deity, saying: “*I AM*” (John 6:35, 48, 51; 8:12, 24, 58; 10:14; 14:6; 18:5, 8, just as examples). But in rank unbelief of His Word, they charged Him with blasphemy and “*took up stones to cast at Him*” (John 10:33).

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is of great comfort to us. Scripture ascribes especially to God the Father the creation of the world and everything in the world (Malachi 2:10), yet testifies also to the participation of the Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16) and of the Holy Ghost (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6). God the Son redeemed all people from sin, death, and the power of the devil, “not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and

death” (Luther, Second Article; cf. I Peter 1:18-19). “*He died for all*” (II Corinthians 5:15). No one could redeem us from the dreadful fall into sin and from eternal death except Him who has the power to destroy sin and death and to give eternal righteousness and life instead (Hebrews 2:14-15). For this no angel nor any other creature was enough; only God Himself could accomplish this (Psalm 49:7-8)! God the Holy Ghost brings us to faith in Jesus, the almighty Son of God, and His work of redemption since Scripture teaches us that “*no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*” (I Corinthians 12:3) because we are by nature spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God; therefore “[we] cannot by [our] own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, [our] Lord, or come to Him” (Luther, Third Article). When we have come to faith, then the Holy Trinity takes up its abode within our hearts. Jesus says: “*If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*” (John 14:23; see also I Corinthians 3:16).

We must therefore cling to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. If we do NOT cling to this precious doctrine, if we indeed deny the doctrine of the Trinity and believe in a God who is not the Triune God, we cannot be saved. It is not a doctrine woven out of the imaginations of men, but rather a teaching which is plainly set forth in God’s Holy Word. Unashamedly we join our orthodox Lutheran fathers in declaring: “Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting” (*Augsburg Confession*, Article I, *Triglot*, p. 43).

—M. L. N.



The Athanasian Creed

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. As there are not three Uncreated nor three Incomprehensibles, but one Uncreated and one Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none: neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before or after other; none is greater or less than another; But the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal: so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. ...

The One Thing Needful for a Happy Christian Home

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”
—Joshua 24:15

In the above-quoted verse, Joshua is telling the children of Israel that even if all the rest of them would foolishly choose to turn away from the one true God and serve idols instead, yet he and his household would remain faithful in their service of the Lord. While the Scriptures do not tell us specifically that Joshua’s home-life was exceptionally happy, we can say without a doubt that every household that practices Joshua’s motto of serving the Lord, will, most definitely, be a happy one, because serving the Lord according to His Word always results in happiness. *“Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways. ... Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee”* (Psalm 128:1–2). This, of course, does not mean that a faithful Christian will never experience any sadness in his home (remember the example of Job); but the joyous message of the Gospel still brings great happiness to the Christian even when he is going through all kinds of other sorrows—*“as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing”* (II Corinthians 6:10). So then considering Joshua 24:15 in the light of Psalm 128:1–2, we can say that the one thing needful for a happy Christian home is the true service of the Lord.

But what about the words of Jesus describing the strife that can come into a home when certain members of the household are serving the Lord faithfully? *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household”* (Matthew 10:34–36). When such a sad situation arises in the home, it should not be thought that the fault lies with those who are serving God. On the contrary, this kind of conflict is kindled by those who despise and reject the true teachings of Scripture and oppose themselves against the Christian members of the home, who, by God’s grace, will not opt for outward peace at the expense of their faith. This is why it is so important for *every member* of a Christian household to serve the Lord according to the specific duties that God’s Law places upon him or her.

A Christian husband is serving the Lord and thus contributing to the happiness of the home when he patterns his love for his wife after Christ's love for His Church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). The love of Christ for His Church is such an amazing thing to ponder. For the sake of His Church, Jesus lived a life of poverty and pain in self-imposed weakness, even though all power in heaven and in earth belongs to Him. Christ, the Lord of all, served His Church in love (Mark 10:45; John 13:4–15); He never once put any of His own wants or needs above the wants and needs of His Church. This is the example of love that husbands are to follow in the treatment of their wives.

At this point, a husband might be tempted to think: "If my wife were not so difficult to get along with, then I would do a better job of serving her in love as Christ did His Church." But the example of Christ's love for the Church is not one that teaches a husband only to love his wife when she is being particularly loveable. Every member of Christ's Church was born into this world as the bitter enemy of the Lord Jesus; and yet He still loved His enemies so much that He willingly suffered the unimaginable pains of hell to save them (Romans 5:10). This perfect, self-sacrificing love is what God requires each husband to have for his wife; so this is the goal that husbands need to strive after out of love for the Savior if they are true Christians who desire to please the Lord and to have a happy Christian home.

A Christian wife is serving the Lord and thus contributing to the happiness of the home when she willingly submits herself to the God-given authority of her husband as the Holy Christian Church submits herself to the authority of Christ. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church. ...Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:22–24). In other words, just as a Christian wife gladly and willingly places herself under the authority of her Lord Jesus Christ, so she is also to place herself under the authority of her husband; for this is what the Lord has commanded. Though this teaching of Holy Scripture is mocked and criticized by worldly individuals who think that this is an outdated, sexist concept of the marital relationship, yet it stands as the clear command of God.

Now in the relationship between Christ and His Church there is no question who has the authority and who is to be obedient to whom.

Every Christian understands that the Church would be completely out of place to tell Christ, her God and Savior, that she wants equal authority with Him. But the Church does not resent being under the authority of Christ, because she deeply loves the Lord Jesus, who has cleansed her from her sins and saved her from hell. This is why the commands of Christ are not grievous or burdensome to the Christian's New Man (I John 5:3). Of course, wives should not love and honor their husbands as much as they love and honor the Lord Jesus; but the comparison of the Church's subjection to Christ and the wives' subjection to their husbands, because this was inspired by the Holy Ghost, still stands. It is not to be a subjection that they resent; rather, wives are to obey their husbands gladly, out of love for them. The ultimate reason for them to serve their husbands in love is because they love the Lord Jesus, who sacrificed Himself for her; and it is He who has commanded such service. This is well-pleasing to God, who graciously crowns such loving service with the blessing of a happy home-life.

Christian parents are serving the Lord and thus contributing to the happiness of the home when they teach their children about sin and its consequences, show them their only Savior from sin, and guide them in the way that they should serve the Lord in love. “*Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). Parents need to be careful that they do not abuse their God-given power and authority over their children—treating them in an unloving way and thus provoking them to wrath. Now modern psychologists and child-rearing “experts” say that physical discipline, such as spanking, is what provokes children to wrath. But that kind of humanistic reasoning is exactly the opposite of what the Bible so clearly teaches. In the book of Proverbs we read: “*He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*” (13:24); “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying*” (19:18); “*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*” (22:15); and again: “*Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell*” (23:13–14). It should be understood that these verses do not teach that physical discipline is a Means of Grace; but they do teach that by such discipline a child can be effectively taught to avoid manifest sinful behavior, which is destructive to the soul. Accordingly, parents should discipline and punish their children *out of love*—out of concern for the welfare of their souls. If love is the ruling force in the discipline, then

such discipline cannot be legitimately faulted for provoking the children to wrath.

But the Scriptural requirement for parents to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord includes more than curbing their sinful outbursts with spankings. It is the responsibility of the parents to see to it that their children are taught the Word of God, that the precious souls which God has entrusted to their care may be brought to the Savior through His Word (Mark 10:13–16). The home is where the children should receive their foremost instruction in the Bible; the parents should be the first teachers of religion for the children—teaching them what sin is, that sin is displeasing to God and makes us worthy of damnation, what the Lord Jesus did to save them from their sins, how God for Jesus’ sake has already forgiven the sins of the whole world, that penitent sinners lay hold on God’s forgiveness by faith, and the way Jesus wants them to live their lives out of love for Him. To supplement the teaching of the parents, local congregations also provide religious training for young and older children in such forms as a Christian day-school, Sunday-school, Sunday morning Bible class, divine worship services, Catechism classes, and perhaps additional pre- and post-confirmation classes. In taking advantage of such valuable resources, the parents’ job of instructing their children in the Word of God is not transferred to others but is complemented. The parents should also review and reinforce with their children the things that they have learned from their pastor and other religious teachers, and certainly not undermine that instruction by teaching them the opposite or even by *showing* them the opposite by living contrary to their Christian profession. Parents can teach their children many things by their own example; so they need to be very careful that they do not offend them (Matthew 18:6) but, instead, show by their words and actions that the Lord and His Word are the most important things in their life—that their Christianity is not mere lip service. By bringing the influence of the powerful and living Word of the Lord into their homes, Christian parents carry out an important God-given duty and help to maintain a happy Christian home.

Christian children are serving the Lord and thus contributing to the happiness of the home when they give their parents honor and loving obedience. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1–3). They are to obey their parents “in the Lord”—their faith and love for the Lord Jesus should cause them to be obedient children. Children need to remember that God Himself has placed

them under the authority of their parents; therefore, if they despise their parents, they are also despising the Lord. Accordingly, if the children obey their parents in love, then they are also being obedient to the Lord and showing their love for Him. This, then, is the main reason why Christian parents need to insist that their children obey them —not for selfish reasons, and not only for the earthly good of the children, but because God commands children to obey their parents out of love to their Savior; and Christian parents need to insist that their children follow the commands of the Lord in all things as the fitting fruit of their faith.

It should, of course, be remembered that God is never pleased with only an outward, external obedience which does not proceed from faith and love. So if the children in their hearts do not really want to obey their parents (and thus also the Lord), and only obey them outwardly because they are afraid of being punished or are simply trying to make themselves look good, then such superficial obedience is not pleasing to God at all, and is nothing but sin in His holy sight. To obey only outwardly, while murmuring and complaining inwardly, is still a violation of the Fourth Commandment. *“Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.”* The command for children to *honor* their parents is directed right at the heart, because *honoring* includes both love and respect. A child is not honoring his parents if he only obeys them outwardly, while in his heart he is despising them. No, the true honor of parents comes from the child’s heart and shows itself in willing and joyful obedience —serving both God and the parents in love and redounding to the happiness of the Christian home.

Christian siblings are serving the Lord and thus contributing to the happiness of the home when they treat one another with unselfish love and kindness. *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Romans 12:10); *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Philippians 2:3). Sadly, Christian brothers and sisters, on account of their sinful flesh, often treat one another in very unloving ways —insulting one another, doing things to annoy one another, fighting and bickering with each other, one trying to make himself look good by making another look bad, being mean and hurtful in their words and actions, in short, talking and acting like unbelievers at enmity with each other. Such conduct blatantly violates the command of the Lord that summarizes all His commandments and prohibitions concerning a Christian’s duties toward his fellow human beings, namely: *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Matthew 22:39). Christian siblings need to work hard at showing this kind of love in all their dealings with one an-

other —guarding themselves against being drawn into a sinful exchange of unloving words and deeds when a brother or sister is acting contentiously. Additionally, a Christian sibling should not first demand that his brothers and sisters act lovingly toward him before he will act lovingly to them, but should, instead, take the lead in doing what God’s Law requires and continue to “*be kindly affectioned [to his siblings] with brotherly love*” (Romans 12:10), whether or not he receives any loving kindness from them in return. This is the example that Jesus set for all Christians to follow (I Peter 2:21–23). In striving to follow the Savior’s example out of love for Him, Christian siblings serve their Lord and help to maintain a happy Christian atmosphere in the home. “*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger*” (Proverbs 15:1).

The various domestic interactions between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between brothers and sisters are things that can either bring a great deal of happiness or a great deal sadness into a home. The sadness comes as a result of individual family members disregarding the Commandments of the Lord in acts of fleshly selfishness; whereas the happiness comes as a result of the family members treating each other with self-sacrificing love and kindness in accordance with God’s Commandments. If they are true Christians, who love the Lord who first loved them (I John 4:19), the members of the household should be more concerned about serving God than creating and maintaining a happy home for themselves. But the blessed fact of the matter is that, if they are faithfully serving the Lord according to His Word, then they can expect, on the basis of His promise (Psalm 128:1–2), also to be blessed with a truly happy Christian home.

Oh, blest that house where faith ye find
and all within have set their mind
to trust their God and serve Him still
and do in all His holy will!

Blest such a house, it prospers well;
in peace and joy the parents dwell;
and in their children’s lot is shown
how richly God can bless His own.

Then here will I and mine today
a solemn covenant make and say:
Though all the world forsake Thy Word,
I and my house will serve the Lord.

(*TLH* 625; 2, 4, 5)

—P. E. B.

We Should Consider the Augsburg Confession a Great Treasure

*“I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings,
and will not be ashamed.” —Psalm 119:46*

Thirteen years after Luther nailed the ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, beginning what would come to be known as the Reformation, the Emperor, Charles V, decreed that there be a diet in the city of Augsburg, Germany, on April 8, 1530. This diet, or official convention of the nobility and leading politicians of the empire, was called to discuss matters that were of importance to the empire, both political and religious. One of the reasons for this diet was supposed to be what to do about the “Turks,” that is, adherents of Islam who were currently invading Eastern Europe from the south; but it was also called to discuss the religious differences and divisions that had plagued the Empire so that unity could be restored. Specifically regarding the latter purpose, the German princes had asked their Lutheran theologians to draft a statement regarding their doctrinal position, a statement that was thoroughly Scriptural (I Peter 3:15 and 4:11), to defend their position against abuses in the Roman church and thus to counteract the charges of heresy brought by the representatives of the Papal throne. Emperor Charles had been goaded into this diet by the papal nuncio, the Pope’s official representative, in order to deal with the upstart Germans and to put an end to their so-called heresies forever. In announcing the Diet, the Emperor wrote:

The diet is to consider furthermore what might and ought to be done and resolved upon regarding the division and separation in the holy faith and the Christian religion; and that this may proceed the better and more salubriously, [the Emperor urged] to allay divisions, to cease hostility, to surrender past errors to our Savior, and to display diligence in hearing, understanding, and considering with love and kindness the opinions and views of everybody, in order to reduce them to one single Christian truth and agreement, to put aside whatever has not been properly explained or done by either party, so that we all may adopt and hold one single and true religion; and may all live in one communion, church, and unity, even as we all live and do battle under one Christ. (F. Bente, Historical Introduction to the *Book of Concord*, *Triglot*, p. 15),

Elector John the Steadfast of Saxony, one of the chief German states, received his “invitation” at Torgau on March 11th and immediately summoned Luther, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon to draft a document concerning especially “those articles on account of which said division, both in faith and in other outward church customs and ceremonies continues” (*Ibid.*). Initially, the German position was written as an *apology* or defense of the truth regarding certain abuses in the Roman church, subjects such as Human Doctrines and Ordinances, Marriage of Priests, Both Kinds (that is, both bread and wine in communion), Power of Bishops, and other matters under controversy. But this seemed insufficient in the light of a slanderous book published by Luther’s arch-enemy, Dr. John Eck, in which Eck characterized the Lutherans as heretics who taught contrary even to the three ecumenical creeds of Christendom! It was therefore decided that a full confession of the Lutheran position on all fundamental doctrines of Scripture should be given. There were many who contributed to the wording of the *Augsburg Confession*, but its chief author was Philip Melanchthon, Luther’s co-worker at the University of Wittenberg. Its entire doctrinal content, however, was Scriptural, so that Luther was proud to declare, “*Confessio Augustana mea*,” that is, “the *Augsburg Confession* is mine” (*Ibid.* p. 17). When the Confession in its entirety was sent to Luther for his approval, even though this occurred the day *after* its public reading before the Emperor, he had only one criticism for Melanchthon. He wrote to Melanchthon on June 29th:

I have received your Apology and cannot understand what you may mean when you ask what and how much should be yielded to the Papists... As far as I am concerned, too much has already been yielded in this Apology; and if they reject it, I see nothing that might be yielded beyond what has been done, unless I see the proofs they proffer, and clearer Bible-passages than I have hitherto seen. (*Ibid.* p. 19).

At this point, the question might be asked as to why Luther himself did not write the *Augsburg Confession*. The answer is quite simple: Luther was still under a Papal and Imperial Ban. He had been excommunicated by the Pope in 1520, placed under the Ban of the Empire at the Diet of Worms in 1521, and could not travel in public without the risk of arrest and even of being killed on sight with the Emperor’s blessing. So the Elector of Saxony had Luther stay behind for his own safety in one of his castles in Coburg, while he and the others proceeded to Augsburg for the meeting. Nevertheless, communication between Coburg and Augsburg was kept open by means of a courier who traveled back and forth with messages.

While the Diet was officially convened in Augsburg on the 8th of April, 1530, the *Augsburg Confession* did not receive its public reading until June 25th. The Emperor had tried unsuccessfully to keep the public reading from taking place at all, first by loading the meeting's agenda with a host of relatively unimportant matters, and then by stating that it would be sufficient simply to deliver a *written copy* to the Emperor for his consideration. But the Lutherans reminded the Emperor that he had guaranteed everyone the right to *speak* and to be *heard*; and he finally relented. In order to keep the audience as small as possible, the location was changed from the town hall where meetings usually were held to a comparatively smaller room in the bishop's palace accommodating only about 200 people. The Emperor also tried to restrict the reading to the Latin version so that fewer would be able to follow and understand it, but the Elector pointed out that the meeting was being held on German soil and that it was only proper for the reading to be done in German (B. Teigen, *I Believe*, 1980). When the *Augustana* was finally read aloud by the Saxon chancellor, the Lutheran princes rose to their feet; and the presentation, in loud and clear tones, could be heard even by the standing-room crowd out in the courtyard. The overall reception of the German aristocracy and the German common people was mixed, as expected. The Lutherans rejoiced in the bold testimony of their princes, happy that their Scriptural defense had finally be heard, while the Papists generally condemned the Confession and eagerly awaited the *Confutation* or official rebuttal to be crafted by Dr. Eck, the famed Romanist professor of theology from the University of Ingolstadt. "Duke William of Bavaria declared: 'Never before has this matter and doctrine been presented to me in this manner.' And when Eck assured him that he would undertake to refute the Lutheran doctrine with the Fathers, but not with the Scriptures, the Duke responded, 'Then the Lutherans, I understand, sit in the Scriptures, and we of the pope's Church beside the Scriptures!'... [and] in private conversation, Bishop Stadion of Augsburg exclaimed, 'What has been read to us is the truth, the pure truth, and we cannot deny it.'" (Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 19).

The Lutherans had brought the Word of God through the *Augsburg Confession* to kings and emperors, and they did so without any shame (Psalm 119:46). They had nothing to be ashamed of, for all that they brought was nothing but the truth. The truth does not always find a home in the hearts of those who hear it, but that does not change the fact that it is the precious truth of God.

Brethren, the prize, the precious gift given us by our Lord Jesus Christ,

is **His truth**, which “*endureth forever*” (Psalm 117:2), the truth of **His Word**, which, God Himself promises us, will never pass away (Isaiah 40:8; I Peter 1:25). Though it had long been hidden by the darkness of the Papacy, Luther, by God’s grace, rediscovered it during the Reformation and brought it again into the light of day. Luther at Worms in 1521 and his colleagues at Augsburg in 1530 were enabled to testify to this truth “*before kings*,” before the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and his nobles, and were not “*ashamed*” to do so (Psalm 119:46); and we are specially blessed to have their testimony in printed form and to join them in spirit with our own *unqualified* [*quia*] *subscription* to their testimony in the Lutheran Confessions, as being a thoroughly correct exposition of God’s Word in the matters which they treat. The Papists, still today, stand accused *by the truth* of sitting **outside** the Scriptures; and we Lutherans are ever happily “accused” by our enemies of sitting **in** the Scriptures and standing **upon** the Scriptures alone (Ephesians 2:20).

The enduring value of the *Augsburg Confession* for our day remains its clear presentation of the truth over against error —certainly the errors of the Papacy, but also the errors of the Anabaptists, and the errors also of others whose teachings still today are the slippery slope upon which sectarian denominations have built their false, misleading, and soul-destroying man-made doctrines (Matthew 15:9).

But the *Augsburg Confession* does no good to anybody if its testimony of Scripture doctrine remains sealed within the dusty pages of a book that is never read. Even the precious and powerful light of God’s Word is hidden when the Scriptures are not preached, taught, read, and properly explained. The *Augsburg Confession* is in print for our benefit, so that we, too, can profit from its testimony, as did so many of those who first heard it almost five hundred years ago. Let us gladly become acquainted with it, rejoice in its thoroughly Scriptural content, and use it in our homes and in our instruction classes, not as the foundation of our faith, not as **the standard** according to which all doctrine and practice must be judged (the *norma normans* of **Scripture itself**), but as a *secondary* norm, a standard which we happily cite to show that what our fathers held against the enemies of the truth at the time of the Reformation *was the truth*, and that we still hold to it today, and to the entire Book of Concord, because *it is the truth*, normed by “*the foundation of the Apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20).

—M. W. D.

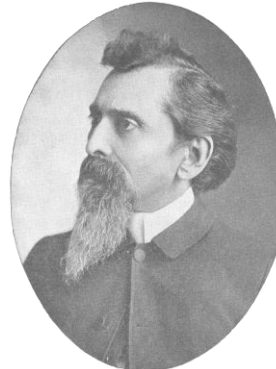
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2175 Pioneer Drive
Jackson, MI 49201 (517) 750-3946
E-mail: rmahan@acd.net

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E-mail: david.redlin@worldnet.att.net

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Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 (708) 532-9035
E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

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Lebanon, OR 97355
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Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
The Rev. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941
E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

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5350 South Fountain Street
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Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.
Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.
Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

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22012 S. Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411 Telephone: (708) 758-6222

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Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

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Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

E-mail: revbloedel@yahoo.com

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E-mail: dierking@tnics.com

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Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@yahoo.com

55th Annual Convention
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference
Friday, Saturday and Sunday
June 23, 24 and 25, 2006
at
Saint John's Lutheran Church,
Lebanon, Oregon

Motto:

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together/"

Hebrews 10:25

The **Essay** will be delivered by

Pastor David T. Mensing

*"The God-ordained Participation of Christians
in the Local Congregation"*

The Friday sermon will be preached by the President

Pastor Robert J. Lietz

Text: Acts 2:42

The Sunday sermon will be preached by

Pastor Edward J. Worley

Text: I Peter 5:2

Pastoral Conference on June 20-21
Board of Directors meeting on June 22