

The
Concordia  *Lutheran*


“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.

Vol. LX

September—October 2015

Nos. 9-10



“Be ready
always
to give an
answer.”

— 1 Peter 3:15



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Vol. LX Sept.—Oct. 2015 Nos. 9-10

Official Organ of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of \$5.00 per year.

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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.

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.

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If Luther Were Alive Today...



One often hears the claim that, if Martin Luther were alive today, yea, if he were able to come back from the grave, if only for a short time, to see how far the world has come in almost five-hundred years, he would indeed be pleased — particularly with the growth of the Lutheran Church, the survival of Protestantism, and even many “reforms” that have been adopted by the Church of Rome. Nothing could be further from the truth, however; and anyone even remotely acquainted with Luther’s work, his uncompromising stand on the Word of God, and his disdain for selling out the truth for the sake of temporal peace and tranquility should know better than to suggest such a thing. On the contrary, Dr. Luther would be filled with disgust and revulsion at the “Babylonian” conditions in our world today!

If Luther were alive today, what indeed would he see? In spite of technological advances (most of which would no doubt stagger the Reformer’s imagination); in spite of vast improvement in the overall standard of living, particularly in the so-called “western” societies, with better nutrition, health care, and housing for most people; and in spite of the fact that people in general are better educated today and therefore better able to read, study, and understand the Holy Scriptures, “*which are able to make (them) wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15). In spite of all these strides forward, there has in reality been NO PROGRESS made at all! “*The wickedness of man (is) great in the earth,*” (Genesis 6:5); it is still “*corrupt before God*” and “*filled with violence*” (vv. 11 and 13) as it was in the days of Noah, in the days of Sodom, in the days of Rome’s legendary decadence, and in the days of Medieval Europe, so that, on balance, human civilization is steadily on the decline, heading down the broad and easy “*road that leadeth to destruction*” (Matthew 7:13). Indeed, by all objective indications, according to the description Jesus Himself makes of conditions to be expected just before the end of the world (Luke 17:26-30), we are today living in the last times; and the Day of Judgment cannot be far off. With this assessment, Luther would surely agree were he alive today!

In outward Christendom, conditions are not much different from those in the world at large. For so-called “improvements” are nothing but a skin-deep mask beneath which there are festering sores, putrefaction and the rigor of death to see and to smell at the mere touch of a spiritual surgeon’s scalpel as he tries the spirits, marks errorists, and incisively probes with the Word of God. It wouldn’t take Luther long at all to cut through the fair-sounding speeches, platforms and programs of today’s church-bodies and to distinguish between fact and fancy, truth and error, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. And it would be painful for him to hear the vaunted claim in Protestantism today that “Luther’s work of reformation” made all those sects, their varying positions and their freedom to interpret Scripture subjectively a “viable alternative” to Roman catholicism! He, of course, did nothing of the kind! Luther had to deal primarily with the Papists and Anabaptists in his time, as well as with those who fomented controversy after controversy in the fledgling “Lutheran” movement. But *today*, he would have a much broader proliferation of error to battle, over a field of almost countless sects, denominations and church-bodies, *in addition to* the soul-destroying errors of Rome (which have not diminished in the slightest but have only increased in number since the Council of Trent). Would Luther call that “progress”? Would he indeed be pleased with what he saw today? Decidedly not!

But surely Luther would be gratified at the success enjoyed by “Lutheranism” today, wouldn’t he? The latest figures indicate that there are 104 million Lutherans worldwide (www.numberof.net)! Think of those *numbers*! And yet, as Luther himself would be quick to point out, they are just numbers! They actually say nothing at all about genuine Lutheranism based on Scripture alone, the “formal principle” of the Reformation. In fact, it’s no secret nowadays that many so-called “Lutheran” pastors deny the most basic, fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: The inerrancy, immutability and infallibility of the verbally-inspired Holy Scriptures; the deity of Christ; His vicarious atonement; His bodily resurrection from the dead and the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day; and objective justification. “Lutheran” theological professors are permitted to attack with impunity such doctrines as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Creation of the world by God in six normal twenty-four-hour days, and the Real Presence of the Savior’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper. To many “Lutherans,” the killing of unborn children should be a mother’s prerogative; homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle which should not be condemned — even in pastors; women should be eligible for the public ministry; and pre-marital and

extra-marital sexual relations are perfectly acceptable as the personal expression of “love,” provided that couples are encouraged to practice “safe sex.” Would Luther join the ranks of those “enlightened” modernists who dare to bear his name and hold all these (and many other aberrations) to be “progress” in the church? The reader can intelligently answer that question in the negative without any help from this writer!

And what would the dear Dr. Luther see in the so called “conservative” Lutheran bodies today? Certainly much of the above in pockets or enclaves of liberalism, benignly ignored by many, tolerated by most, dealt with according to sound doctrinal discipline by practically no one! Some of the staunch “conservatives” protest, write articles and letters to editors, and even speak out at free conferences and conventions; but their words, “full of sound and fury” signify “nothing” (Shakespeare) but so much hot air and harmless paperwork generated by smoking computers. When push comes to shove and the Lord through the Apostle Paul says “*Avoid them*” (Romans 16:17), they choose to avoid Him instead, to “keep protesting,” and thus to serve not His cause but their own belly, deceiving the hearts of simple fellow-Christians into believing that they are really orthodox (v. 18)! Would Luther see through the sham of conservatism today? By God’s grace, Luther was not the fool that so many so-called “conservatives” try to take US for! Luther took to task not just the priests of his day who taught their people nothing (cf. his preface to the *Small Catechism*) but also the poor ignorant laymen who were led about by the nose by those whom they trusted to be stalwart soldiers of the cross, laymen who themselves, still today, are without excuse for tolerating limp washrags in their pulpits, but who can be pitied for not having the Christian fortitude to depose them!

If Luther were alive today, what would he see in the theological training programs maintained by so-called “Lutheran” colleges and seminaries? Surely the miserable preparation of candidates for the Ministry nowadays accounts for much of the problem described thus far; for younger pastors in particular are, for want of a better word, ignorant of Christian doctrine. They are unable succinctly and clearly to state “*the first principles of the oracles of God*” (Hebrews 5:12), even the rudimentary doctrines of Holy Scripture, quote proof-texts upon which they have been established, and apply them consistently in their practice. Many are so “*unskillful in the Word of Righteousness*” by reason of non-use that they are incapable of discerning good and evil (vv. 13-14). Is it any wonder that they are “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine*” (Ephesians 4:14) when the winds of contro-

versy begin to blow? Theological students nowadays “major” in scholarly branches of study — history, languages, sociology, psychology, counseling, textual criticism, and philosophy — but can’t recite the *Enchiridion* (Small Catechism) word-for-word, nor give simple definitions or brief explanations of such basic concepts as Justification, the State of Humiliation, the Vicarious Atonement, the Church, the Doctrine of Election, and Christian Church Discipline. Religious unionism, selective fellowship, and separatism are such foggy notions that many frankly admit their inadequacy to deal with them. “Dogmatics” is “out;” “exegesis” is “in.” Preaching the Law is to be avoided as “unloving;” and yet the Gospel is to be appreciated and cherished without the Law and the knowledge of sin that it imparts! Would Luther find such a state of affairs an “improvement” or “progress” in the making of theologians? Need we even ask?

Luther is credited with translating the Holy Scriptures into the language of his people, so that they could read them, understand them, learn them, discuss them, quote them and meditate in them. Today we have so many translations in English alone that we are compelled to ask: “Which translation are you using?” Just about every home has a Bible in it nowadays; and Bible societies make sure that every hotel and motel room has one. But the people’s knowledge of the Scriptures is so abysmal by and large that one would suspect little or no contact with the Bible at all! What is going on here? Luther would know — he saw it coming already when he penned those prophetic lines:

“The Word they still shall let remain,
And not a thank have for it!

Sadly, many in our own midst, contrary to what we would like to think, have far too much apathy for Bible study, Bible classes, Bible reading in our homes, Bible discussions in the family circle and with our brethren, Bible USE on a day-today basis, as if our pastors will take care of our spiritual growth FOR us! Luther would see *that too* if he were alive today. He would not be surprised (since the flesh in Satan’s service always seeks to weaken our knowledge, our confidence, and our strength); but he would be greatly disappointed, considering the precious heritage of grace we have had as “children of the Reformation.” Do we actually want to follow so many others down the road of ignorance, complacency, apathy, and finally contempt for the pure doctrines of God’s holy Word? God forbid! Therefore the Apostle Peter beseeches us in his second Epistle, chapter three: “*Ye therefore, beloved,*

seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (vv. 17 and 18).

If Luther were alive today, and we can thank God that he is not here to witness these distressing conditions, but safe in the arms of his Savior, “*which is far better*” (Philippians 1:23), what would he say to these things? Luther wrote so much about all these matters in sermons, exhortations, commentaries and confessions, that we could never cull just one quotation typical of what his attitude would be. But suffice it for the purpose of our little article to cite a few pertinent lines from his *Preface to the Small Catechism*, lines which only indicate that “history repeats itself” when the sinful heart of man, when the Old Adam within us Christians, writes the script. Luther wrote:

To all faithful and Godly pastors and preachers: Grace, Mercy, and Peace in Jesus Christ our Lord: The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced me and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian Doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Help, dear God! What manifold misery I beheld! The common people have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and alas, many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless all claim to be Christians, baptized, and enjoying the Holy Sacraments; and yet they can't so much as say the Lord's Prayer, nor the Creed, nor the Ten Commandments! They live like common cattle and irrational hogs! And yet, now that the Gospel has been restored to them [and they know that they're not saved by their works anymore], they think they can do as they please and have learned to abuse their newfound liberty like experts! O ye Bishops, what will you ever be able to answer Christ for your shameful neglect of your people and for never having for a moment really discharged your office as pastors?

Therefore I beg you for God's sake, you who are pastors or preachers, take your office to heart for a change, have pity upon your people who have been entrusted to you, and help us teach them the Catechism... And those of you who are so unskilled in teaching doctrine that you don't know these things yourselves, take these simple pages and teach them to your people word-for-word in a uniform, standard format, so that they don't get confused along the way.”

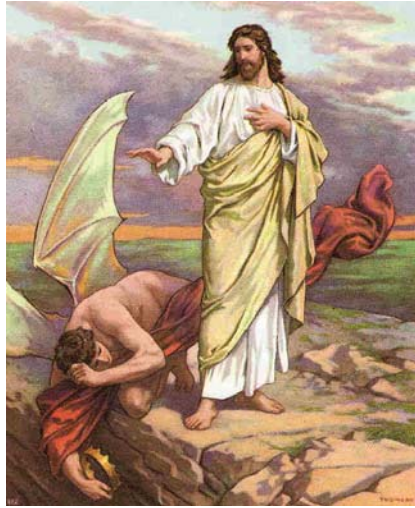
(Freely translated from the original German.)

If Luther were alive today, he would find things not a whole lot improved over what he had found on his visits to the German villages and towns in 1529 — maybe even somewhat worse, considering the wondrous benefits we Lutherans have enjoyed as heirs of the Reformation. And what he stated above could well be said also today to those pastors who do everything in their congregations but teach and preach the Word of God in its purity! Paul writes to Timothy what we pastors should be doing for our people: *“Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure [i.e. tolerate] sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears”* (II Timothy 4:2-3). That time is NOW! People generally won’t stand for sound doctrine anymore. And they want lots of teachers who will tickle their ears, telling them what they WANT to hear, rather than what they OUGHT to hear for their own soul’s welfare! May we, dearly-beloved brethren, never tire of the pure doctrine of God’s precious Word which He has in mercy preserved to us in our little Conference — scorned by men for its small size, derided for its doctrine, chided for its faithful practice. Let them say and do what they may! They can harm us none! Christ hath for us the battle won? *“The kingdom ours remaineth!”* That is indeed our legacy if we *“hold fast the form of sound words”* (II Timothy 1:13) and *“earnestly contend for the faith”* (Jude 3). If Luther were alive today, that would be his unrelenting plea and fervent exhortation as we see the Day approaching. May God grant it to all of us for Jesus’ sake!

Lord, help us ever to retain
the Catechism’s doctrine plain,
as Luther taught the Word of Truth
in simple style to tender youth.

In every season, every place,
may we regard Thy Word of Grace,
until, when life’s brief day is past,
we reach eternal joy at last!

— D. T. M.



„One little Word can fell him!”

“It is an exceedingly effectual help against the devil, the world, and the flesh and all evil thoughts to be occupied with the Word of God, and to speak of it, and meditate upon it, so that the First Psalm declares those blessed who meditate upon the Law of God day and night. Undoubtedly, you will not start a stronger incense or other fumigation against the devil than by being engaged upon God’s commandments and words, and speaking, singing, or thinking of them. For this is indeed the true “holy water” and “holy sign” from which he flees, and by which he may be driven away. Now, for this reason alone you ought gladly to read, speak, think and treat of these things, if you had no other profit and fruit from them than that, by doing so, you can drive away the devil and evil thoughts. For he cannot hear or endure God’s Word.”

Martinus Luther

What is a Confessional Lutheran?

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God.”

(II Timothy 1:8)



According to a 2006 study of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, there are at least 217 different Christian denominations in the United States and Canada.¹ This doesn't even include those who operate as a denomination, but who don't regard themselves as such, namely, the so-called "non-denominational" churches. That means that there are literally hundreds of differing private interpretations of God's Word, hundreds of different ideas about what it means to be a Christian, and hundreds of distinctly divided groups, all of which *profess* to be true followers of the Lord Jesus (Luke 6:46). Seeing that the instruction of the Lord to those

who would be His brethren that they be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (I Corinthians 1:10), "he that teaches and lives otherwise than God's Word teaches" (Luther: First Petition) really has a lot to repent of. After all, one of God's purposes in committing His holy Word to the prophets, apostles and evangelists, who would later also commit it to "*faithful men*" for its continued teaching (II Timothy 2:2), was to preserve the unity and the integrity of His Church as it kept on growing by the power of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:11-13). And yet, because of the constant wiles of the devil, the corrupt teachings of false prophets, and the temptations of the wicked world, the true teachings of Christ and His precious Gospel have become perverted; and the true [*orthodox*] visible church of God has become increasingly difficult to find. Thanks be to God, however, that in spite of mankind's failings with respect to the proper teaching, preaching, and practice of His Word in the external, visible churches, the Lord

¹ http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#denom

has preserved and will continue to preserve for Himself the *invisible* Church, or Communion of Saints, “*who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*” (I Peter 1:5). This Church will always be found wherever the Gospel of Christ is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered (Augsburg Confession, Art. VII). And, by God’s grace, out of the 217 plus denominations of the nominal Christian faith found here in America, there remains at least one which still regularly and consistently (Isaiah 55:10-11) has, teaches, professes and practices these things in their truth and purity, namely *true* Lutheranism, of which our precious Concordia Lutheran Conference is *identifiably* a part (Cf. *Statement of Purpose* of our CONCORDIA LUTHERAN, ¶ 4, on the inside front cover of every issue).

Every denomination distinguishes itself from other groups by a unique confession, or testimony, of what it believes and teaches. For example, the “Roman” Catholic Church is so named because it holds to the teachings of Rome, *i.e.* of the Vatican and its various canons, decrees, and Papal edicts. “Reformed” church bodies are so called because they hold to the teachings of the Swiss Reformation, *i.e.* the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the canons of the Synod of Dort. And, of course, “Lutherans” are so called because, at least by profession, they hold to the Lutheran Confessions, comprising the *Book of Concord* of 1580. All of these religious groups can be filed under the name of “Christianity” insofar as they confess Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinful men (I Timothy 1:15), but they separate and distinguish themselves by their *distinctive differences* in doctrine and practice. The purpose of this article is to identify what a “confessional” Lutheran is. This title might seem to be somewhat redundant, since being a “Lutheran” assumes subscribing to the Lutheran “confession” of faith as found in the *Book of Concord*. But, just as many people who claim to be “Christians” do not really “*continue in [Christ’s] Word*” as His “*disciples indeed*” (John 8:31), so also there are many who claim to be “Lutherans” who do not really believe, teach, profess and practice their faith according to the standard of the Lutheran Confessions.

So, just as *true* disciples of the Lord distinguish themselves from other professing Christians by words like “orthodox,” those who sincerely uphold the symbols of the Lutheran faith distinguish themselves from those who do not by the word “confessional.” In short, a “confessional” Lutheran is someone who wholeheartedly accepts the doctrines taught in the *Book of Concord* of 1580 in their entirety because (*quia*) they are completely faithful to the teachings of Holy Scripture:

This Confession also, by the help of God, we will retain to our last breath, when we shall go forth from this life to the heavenly fatherland, to appear with joyful and undaunted mind and with a pure conscience before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Preface to the *Book of Concord*, **Triglotta**, p. 15)

Seeing that holding to the Lutheran Confessions “because they are a faithful exhibition of the Word of God in the matters they treat” is by definition essential to being a “confessional” Lutheran, it is important for everyone who would describe himself as such to know what it is he holds to. The *Book of Concord* is a collection of documents which contain the testimonies of Christians who lived from the fourth to the sixteenth century about what they believed and taught on the basis of God’s Word². The first group of testimonies found in this book is the most ancient, dating back to the post-apostolic Church of the New Testament. This first group consists of the three *Ecumenical* or Universal Creeds, also called the three “main symbols” or confessions of the Christian faith, concerning which there was no controversy between the Romanists and the Lutherans. These are the *Apostles’ Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the *Athanasian Creed*. The second group originated during the time of the Lutheran Reformation. Some of these documents were intended for the instruction of simple Christians and ill-educated pastors, while the others treated at length the main doctrinal differences between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholic Church and served as the chief confessions of the Lutheran faith. These include the *Small and Large Catechisms* of Dr. Luther, the *Augsburg Confession* (also known as the *Augustana*), and the *Apology* (or *Defense*) of the *Augsburg Confession*. The third and final group of testimonies was written after the *Augustana* and served to defend previous confessions and, in the case of the *Formula of Concord*, further to unify the Lutherans, settling the doctrinal controversies that came up after Luther’s death in 1546. These are the *Smalcald Articles*, the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, and the *Formula of Concord* (made up of an *Epitome* and a *Thorough Declaration* of doctrine). These ten documents faithfully expound the teachings of Holy Scripture in the matters they treat and thus serve as a standard of doctrine within the Lutheran Church (*Epitome*, Summary Content, **Triglotta**, 777). Those who are confirmed and received as communicant members of a Lutheran congregation are asked whether they hold “the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, drawn from the Bible, as [they] have learned to know it from

² <http://bookofconcord.org/intro.php>

Luther's Small Catechism, to be the true and correct one" (*The Lutheran Agenda*, p. 24); and every Lutheran pastor promises to perform the duties of his office "in accordance with these Confessions" and that all of his teaching and the administration of the Sacraments shall be in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and with the afore-mentioned Confessions" (*The Lutheran Agenda*, p. 107).

Now part of being a correct exposition of the teachings of God's Word is, first and foremost, acknowledging God's Word to be the highest and purest norm and standard of Christian doctrine. The documents of the Book of Concord do not claim any authority in and of themselves to serve as a norm in the church, but they are accorded normative authority *in a secondary sense* only because of the *primary* authority of Holy Scripture which they faithfully set forth. In the introduction to the *Epitome of the Formula of Concord*, for instance, concerning the authority of Holy Scripture the Lutheran Confessions state:

We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone^{1/4} In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong. (*Epitome*, Summary Content, *Triglotta*, pp. 777, 779)

And later on in the *Thorough Declaration*, the Confessions state concerning their own normative authority:

What has thus far been said concerning the summary of our Christian doctrine is intended to mean only this, that we should have a unanimously accepted, definite, common form of doctrine, which all our evangelical Churches together and in common confess, from and according to which, because it has been derived from God's Word, all other writings should be judged and adjusted as to how far they are to be approved and accepted. (*Thorough Declaration*, II, *Triglotta*, p. 885)

In order that this proper distinction between the authority of Scripture and the authority of the Lutheran Confessions is properly maintained, the Scriptures have been given the title *norma normans*, meaning "the

rule that rules;” and the Confessions are designated as *norma normata*, meaning “the rule that is ruled.” Both serve as standards, or rules (*normae*), of what is to be taught as the clear will of God; both are authoritative; but they aren’t equal. The one is normed by the other. This proper distinction must be preserved so that the glory, honor, integrity and authority of Holy Scripture are always maintained and that Holy Scriptures is always recognized as the one and only source of Christian faith and life. A true, “confessional” Lutheran keeps this distinction in mind every time he studies God’s Word and whenever he reads the *Book of Concord*.

One can think of the relationship between the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions according to the following analogy. In the beginning, God created two lights in the heavens: the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night (Genesis 1:16). Of the two, the sun is the greater, brighter light; and the moon is the lesser, dimmer light. Both are lights, and both rule in their respective times. Yet, the moon doesn’t produce any light; it only reflects the light of the sun. So really, one could say the sun continues to rule even during the nighttime because *its* light is reflected by the moon. Now, the Holy Scriptures are like the sun in that respect; they are the great, spiritual light, ruling the day by their own power. They have spiritual power in and of themselves, being the verbally-inspired, revealed will of the Lord; and they are completely sufficient to teach men the way of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus and to train them in holy living (II Timothy 3:15-17). The Confessions are like the moon; they faithfully reflect and testify to the spiritual light of the Bible and rule the night by its truthfulness. They do not have any spiritual power of themselves, being the simple writings of men; but they are a correct witness of the Gospel in the wider sense, *i.e.* the entire Word of God in its purity. Together and in their proper order, these two great lights serve the Church to protect and maintain purity of doctrine and holiness of living, ruling God’s people by His glorious Word.

But in spite of these fine distinctions made by the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, there are many who do not stay true to them, but rather try to obstruct their clarity. There are three main groups of Lutherans that do this. The first group is made up of those who give only a partial or qualified subscription to the *Book of Concord*. While a true, confessional Lutheran subscribes to the Confessions *because (quia)* they are a completely faithful exposition of God’s Word in the matters they treat, these so-called Lutherans subscribe to them only *insofar as*

(*quatenus*) they correctly set forth God's Word. This means that in their estimation the *Book of Concord* is not completely faithful to what the Bible says, that there are places where it is not correct in its exposition of the Bible, and that therefore they can ignore or contradict certain things that are set forth in the Confessions.

The second group consists of those who confound the *Norma Normans* and the *Norma Normata*. While a true, confessional Lutheran recognizes that the Confessions are normed by Holy Scripture, and that the Confessions serve as a proper witness of what Scripture clearly teaches, in practice these Lutherans act as though the Confessions norm the Scriptures, or that they are the key to properly understanding the teachings of the Bible. In their uncontrolled zeal for the Lutheran faith, they turn the sun into the moon, give more honor to the writings of men than to those of God, and turn the Confessions into their primary source and norm of doctrine and practice.

And the third group of Lutherans who don't stay true to the distinctions of their own Confessions is made up of those who claim to give a *quia* subscription to the *Book of Concord*, but who in practice act like those who give a *quatenus* subscription. These are the people who pride themselves on being Lutherans, proudly teaching the two principles of the Reformation, *i.e.* Scripture alone and Grace and Faith alone, but who never really promote the confessional documents of their church. At times, they almost seem ashamed of the *Book of Concord* or even show contempt for it. They often roll their eyes when someone brings it up in discussion or shy away from reading it themselves or from studying it in their local congregations. Oftentimes, it's the opinion of these Lutherans that the Confessions are really insufficient for our day either to establish a basis for unity or to mark out the differences between church bodies. These are the same people who don't like to be called "confessional" Lutherans, as though it were a stigma to have such a name; and they use that term to describe the fanatics, or zealots, who over-emphasize the writings of the Lutheran fathers, rather than wearing this name as a badge of honor. All three of these groups of Lutherans miss the mark when it comes to being a true, "confessional" Lutheran. They either fall too short, go too far, or feign real enthusiasm for the testimony of their spiritual fathers.

As St. Paul writes in II Timothy 1:8, we should not be ashamed of the testimony of God or of His apostles which is found first and foremost in the inspired writings of Holy Scripture but also in the faithful confessions of those who have gone before us. Instead we are supposed to

honor and remember those who have faithfully spoken God's Word to us, as our Lutheran fathers did, emulate their devotion to the Lord and to His truth, and by God's grace hold to that right confession (Hebrews 13:7). In other words, we should want to call ourselves "confessional Lutherans," because of what that name truly stands for: Pure and right doctrine (*orthodoxy*), faithful practice (the consistent application of Scripture doctrine), courage and fortitude to defend God's truth in the face of error and adversity, and proper humility to know where all true authority lies. By God's grace, we should be willing to make the same pledge regarding the Confessions of the Lutheran Church that the princes of Germany did when they wrote:

Therefore we also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves, or from the phrases which are found in them, but, the Spirit of the Lord aiding us, to persevere constantly, with the greatest harmony, in this Godly agreement; and we intend to examine all controversies according to this true norm and declaration of the pure doctrine. (Preface to the *Book of Concord, Triglotta*, p. 23)

To bear the name "Lutheran" is a great honor and privilege when one thinks about everything that it stands for. How much more an honor should it be to emphasize the fact that a "Lutheran" Christian wholeheartedly adheres to the correct doctrines of Holy Scripture by adding the word "confessional" to his title? It is becoming more important now than ever that we Christians, we "Lutherans," yes even we "confessional Lutherans," be able to stand up and testify to others what we believe, teach, and confess on the basis of God's Word. After all, we are living in a time where there are over 217 different (*heterodox*) so-called Christian denominations, or confessions, in America alone, whose doctrine and whose practice is different (*hetero-*) or "*contrary to the doctrine which [we] have learned*" from the Word of God (Romans 16:17). Therefore let us diligently read and study our Bibles, read and study also the *Book of Concord*, and pray that the Lord give us proper, spiritual "*understanding in all things*" (II Timothy 2:7), so that as St. Peter says, you are always ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear (I Peter 3:15).

In his preface to the *Concordia Triglotta*, an edition of the *Book of Concord* containing both the German and Latin languages in which the original confessions were written, as well as an authoritative translation into English, Dr. F. Bente concludes his opening remarks with the following passage, which also serves as an appropriate conclusion to this article:

The Lutheran Church differs from all other churches in being essentially the Church of the pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments. Not the great numbers of her adherents, not her organizations, not her charitable and other institutions, not her beautiful customs and liturgical forms, etc., but the precious truths confessed by her symbols in perfect agreement with the Holy Scriptures constitute the true beauty and rich treasures of our Church, as well as the never-failing source of her vitality and power.

Wherever the Lutheran Church ignored her symbols or rejected all or some of them, there she always fell an easy prey to her enemies. But wherever she held fast to her God-given crown, esteemed and studied her confessions, and actually made them a norm and standard of her entire life and practice, there the Lutheran Church flourished and confounded all her enemies.

Accordingly, if Lutherans truly love their Church, and desire and seek her welfare, they must be faithful to her confessions and constantly be on their guard lest anyone rob her of her treasure. (Dr. F. Bente, Preface, *Concordia Triglotta*)

May the Lord keep us all steadfast, intrepid, faithful, and confessional Lutherans, for Jesus' sake.

— D. P. M.

Lutheran in Name Only?

“Would it not be wonderful if all those who bore the name Lutheran would stand truly united in doctrine and practice against the manifestations of the devil! But alas, such is not the case. Already our Lutheran forefathers experienced the truth of the Apostle's words, ‘*Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*’ (Acts 20:30).

“And so it has been down through the years. There are those who, as we sing in one of our hymns ‘always set forth something new, devised to change Thy doctrine true’ (TLH 292).”

M. L. Natterer

Our Faithfulness to the Lord in the Light of Judgment Day
Convention Essay 1979

Our Responsibility as the Salt of the Earth



“Ye are the salt of the earth. But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.”

— Matthew 5:13

Our theme text is found in the Beatitudes of our Lord in Matthew 5. The Beatitudes are statements of fact about the character and Godly life of all true Christians and the divine blessing which abides on them. In particular, the immediate context speaks about the crosses borne by Christians, according to the truism of Scripture: *“All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (II Timothy 3:12). Just prior to our theme text the Savior declares: *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”* (Matthew 5:10-12). The blessing of God, His gracious and empowering Gospel-benediction, abides on His true disciples as they live out their Godly lives in the midst of evil men and seducers (II Timothy 3:13), *“in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation”* (Philippians 2:15). We are to view such persecution properly: *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end*

be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (I Peter 4:12-19). The trials which shall come upon Christ’s true followers, His genuine disciples, are simply part of the permissive will of God for our benefit! God uses all of them, according to His wise will, to strengthen our faith through His Word so that Romans 8:28 prevails: *“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”* The chief thing His disciples must, by the grace and power of God’s Spirit, keep in mind is this: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:35-39).

So, in this context of the blessing abiding upon His persecuted followers, as they continue to live Godly in Him, in well-doing, for His cause and to His glory, their God-given task is to *remain* who they are! Who are they, in reference to their present position? The Savior says: “You, my persecuted flock, are the salt of the earth.” At once, the figure strikes! What is more obvious than salt? We all recognize the taste sensation! In ancient times salt was such a valuable commodity that soldiers were paid their compensation as “salary” (Latin: “pertaining to salt”) – the sum given to *buy* salt, or even wages paid not in silver but *in* salt!

What does the Lord mean here that His true disciples are *“the salt of the earth?”* Remember the context! Living in the world, but not of the world, the believers are hated for what they stand for (God’s Word of Truth) as evidenced by their words and deeds. Their very existence *in* the world, *who* they are, stands out and sets them apart from those of the world. The world treats Christ’s own as they treated Him! The Lord explained this in John 15: *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own. But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you: The servant is not greater than his lord. If*

they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also” (vv. 18-20). So the point of comparison is simply this: In this world of unbelief and gross outward sin, the children of God, in faith and life, are distinct! They have a taste, a flavor, a “saltiness,” which is only true of them and of no other people. It is the “savor” or taste (saltiness) of salt that is the chief point here. True Christians are a distinct, unique flavor in the earth! It is what they are. It is inherent in their converted state.

How did this come to be? Christ choose them out of the world and made them His own! He graciously made them all they are, in His grace, through the converting and preserving Gospel! Every passage which declares God’s converting grace can here be cited as proof! In particular, we have the following: *“You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); ... For 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” (Ephesians 2:1-5, 8-10). “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you 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. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:9-12).*

As long as a person is a true convert, a genuine Gospel believer, he will be “salt” in this present world. God has made him so! What a true Christian has to offer, as a believer, is entirely unique due to the fact that the Christian is the only, true and saving, religion! Only true Christians are “salt,” because what made them Christians is the saving truth of God — the only hope for the fallen inhabitants of planet earth!

How does the “*salt*” character of a true believer manifest itself to the world? This question may be easily answered by asking it this way: What do true believers say and do in their daily lives that is unique, a savor or flavor which only they have? They *confess* Christ in word and deed as the only Savior of all mankind! They *live* lives of consistent Godliness, showing that what they believe in their heart (the Gospel) drives and motivates them to genuine Godliness!

For example, take the abiding principle of rightly dividing Law and Gospel (II Timothy 2:15). A true believer will be “*salt*” by testifying to the evil, reproving the sin, preaching God’s law to the impenitent, unmoved by the fear or favor of men! “*Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ*” (I Peter 3:13-16). “*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man*” (Colossians 4:6). In our day of “political correctness,” when former vices are legalized and protected as “rights” under the civil laws, when so-called Christian churches are full of ungodliness and false doctrine, the true Christian remains “*salt*.” He speaks the truth in love, Law and Gospel. He desires only one thing and will risk life and limb to see God’s universal will of grace fulfilled! He desires what His Savior desires: the conversion of sinners! True Christians are enabled by the Gospel to heed the exhortation of Jude: “*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*” (vv. 20-23). We cannot lose our character, our saltiness, as long as we remain in the true faith! And we shall remain in the faith by the gracious, preserving work of God through His ordained means of grace, the Gospel and Sacraments. Hence, just after the exhortation cited above, Jude concludes with this doxology: “*Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*” (vv. 24-25).

And this brings us to the second part of our theme verse: *“But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men”* (Matthew 5:13b). This is a warning, pure and simple, not to lose your identity, what you are, as His own — not to fall from grace, not to become unbelieving!

Since saltiness is inherent in salt, the only way an individual Christian could end up without it is to fall from faith, as, for example, during a time of persecution. Does this happen? Sadly, yes. The Lord spoke of it and *to* it in the Parable of the Sower: *“These are they likewise which are sown on stony ground, who, when they have heard the Word, immediately receive it with gladness, and have no root in themselves and so endure but for a time. Afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the Word’s sake, immediately they are offended”* (Mark 4:16-17). By this warning the Lord is telling us of the danger of literally losing ourselves due to the persecution of the world, the devil and our own sinful flesh — their hatred and what flows from their malice. The Apostle Paul feared for the Galatians in the same regard and asked them if they really wanted to return to their former state — a state described by our Lord as *“salt”* having *“lost his savor”* and therefore become *“good for nothing,”* fit only to be *“cast out and to be trodden under foot.”* *“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?”* (Galatians 4:9).

Why would we want to do that? Return to the bondage of sin and Satan? Why would we, once enlightened, turn to darkness again? Why would we, who have tasted of the heavenly Gospel-gift of imputed righteousness and forgiveness, who have by faith been made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good Word of God, the sweet grace of salvation, and the powers of the world to come, fall away and put our Savior to open shame by crucifying to ourselves God’s Son afresh?! (See Hebrews 6:4-6).

Rather, let us, solely by the grace of the Gospel, remain steadfast, as those *“sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1), holding fast *“the common salvation”* (Jude 3) and heeding the exhortation that God directs to all His own, *“earnestly [to] contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3), remaining what God has made us, namely, *“the salt of the earth”!* God grant us this for Jesus’ sake.

— E. J. W.

*O Lord, look down from heaven, behold,
and let Thy pity waken!
How few are we within Thy fold,
Thy saints by men forsaken!
True faith seems quenched on every hand;
men suffer not Thy Word to stand;
but Thou art our salvation.*

*With fraud which they themselves invent
Thy truth they have confounded.
Their hearts are not with one consent
on Thy pure doctrine grounded.
While they parade with outward show,
they lead the people to and fro
in error's maze astounded.*

*May God root out all heresy
and from false teachers rid us,
who proudly say, "Now where is he
that shall our speech forbid us??
By right or might we shall prevail;
what we determine cannot fail;
we own no lord and master!"*

*Defend Thy truth, O Lord, and stay
this evil generation;
and from the error of its way
keep Thine own congregations.
The wicked everywhere abound
and would Thy little flock confound;
but Thou art our Salvation!*

(TLH 260, 1-3 and 6)

Report from Our
COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS

“Bear ye one another’s burdens.” — Galatians 6:2a

For the sake of our readers who may not be acquainted with our Conference and its polity, the purposes of its *Committee on Missions* (according to its *Constitution*, Article IX, 3) include (among others) the following:

- a. To review the mission opportunities which are brought to its attention and to seek out further opportunities for extending God’s Kingdom.
- b. To advise new missions of our fellowship which seek their advice as to the calling of available missionaries and as to other matters pertaining to a new congregation.
- c. To survey the field and general circumstances of congregations requesting financial subsidy from the Conference and to make recommendation regarding such requests to the Conference at its conventions, with the view both to assisting truly needy congregations and also to using the Conference treasury in the wisest way for the extension of the Savior’s Kingdom. Requests for subsidy, in order to be included in convention business, shall ordinarily be submitted through the Committee on Missions at least four (4) months before the end of each fiscal year [i.e. before May 31st].

Historically, since its founding in 1951 as the *Orthodox Lutheran Conference* and since its reorganization in 1956 as the *Concordia Lutheran Conference* and up to 1983, the *Committee on Missions* had been involved with “home missions” rather than “foreign missions.” Thus it had dealt chiefly with local congregations *stateside* which were and are in need of logistical and financial aid, particularly for the specific purpose of supporting their respective pastors according to God’s ordinance “*that they which preach the Gospel should live [that is, have their living] of the Gospel*” (I Corinthians 9:14) and not be engaged in secular work for the provision of their families. Then, for several years in the mid-eighties, the Conference subsidized a member-congregation in Brisbane, Australia, whose pastor was a graduate of our seminary;

but, due to difficulties encountered in his ultimate migration to Australia, the congregation tired of the complications and dissolved in December of 1985. It was not until the turn of the century that our Conference once again became involved in “foreign” mission work, when a pastor and his congregation in Ekaterinburg, Russia, joined our fellowship and availed itself of offered financial subsidy. By God’s grace, that congregation has “*continued with us*” (I John 2:19); and its pastor is able to “*make full proof of [his] ministry*” (II Timothy 4:5) unencumbered with secular employment.

Then, when the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations* (1979-2004) corporately merged with our Conference in June, 2004, our fellowship grew to encompass not only the stateside congregations of the former *F.L.C.* but also the congregations of the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations in Nigeria* (*F.L.C.N.*), though they maintained their organizational identity in Africa. While the Nigerian congregations have not applied to our Conference for regular financial subsidy, we continue, through our *Committee on Missions*, to render to these dear brethren other support as requested (books, supplies, Bibles printed in their indigenous Kalabari language, and so on); and our congregations have, individually and collectively, contributed funds to help relieve special financial burdens of various kinds, including the health care needs of some of the pastors and growing indebtedness which, in their economy and because of their great poverty, is increasingly prevalent (cf. the situation of the Macedonian Christians in the early church, II Corinthians 8:2, etc.). We, of course, stand ready, by the grace of God, to do everything possible to continue to help them, motivated by the grace and love of our Savior (II Corinthians 5:14; 8:9; I John 3:16; etc.) to bear not only our own but also *their* burdens (cf. Galatians 6:2a, our title-text above).

It is perhaps an overworked adage that “I complained I had no shoes ‘til I met a man who had no feet;” but to a certain extent the truth embodied in those words is a hard pill to swallow for our self-absorbed and self-defensive sinful flesh. It’s not so much that we tend to overlook the disparity that exists between people as to their advantages and disadvantages, but we are inclined in our Old Adam to resent the fact that the disparity is sometimes shoved in front of us by the urgency of the moment and makes us feel guilty of being insensitive and unsympathetic to the plight of the less fortunate. We tend to bristle when people speak of all Americans as being “rich” just because we have a median income far and away higher than people in any other so-called “developed” country —

just because we have a “disposable” income with which to purchase non-essential “comfort items;” just because many of us own two cars and perhaps even a “recreational vehicle” besides; just because we have a savings account, several CD’s, a stock portfolio, and a 401K; just because we have the latest electronic gadgets and games, I-phones and -pads, and pricey data-plans. While not all of us may have all such things, they are not at all uncommon among us. We cannot deny that, generally-speaking, we have, by virtue of God’s gracious providence, “all that we need to support this body and life” (Luther, *First Article*) and certainly more than mere “*food and raiment*” (I Timothy 6:8).

In this “information age,” it is certainly not difficult (and may take only a very few minutes) to “search” the Web for information about both the “mean” (average) and “median” (mid-point) of the standard of living “enjoyed” by our Russian and Nigerian brethren — about their housing, their diet, their wardrobe, their income, their healthcare, their personal transportation, their “electronics,” their creature-comforts — you know, their “*life*” (Matthew 6:25) of temporal advantages. And it may well surprise you (as it always surprises your writer) how much we have that we take for granted as being “necessities” for *our* life but that many around the world only dream about. The fact that, even in our sluggish economy, most of us enjoy so much lays upon us Christians in particular a very specific responsibility according to God’s Word when it comes to our relationship with those less fortunate: “*Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*” (I John 3:17). The compassionate love of God toward us in giving His only-begotten Son to the world of sinners, who “*became poor*” in His state of humiliation, “*that we through His poverty might be rich*” (II Corinthians 8:9) should “*constrain us*” (II Corinthians 5:14) to be “*likeminded one toward another*” (Romans 15:5) as the fruit of our faith in Him, as evidence that God’s love dwells in us.

“*Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ,*” Paul instructs us in our title-text. Mere “talk” doesn’t “cut it,” as we say. And the Apostle John, not unsurprisingly, says the same thing in almost the same words: “*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*” (I John 3:18). Indeed, the Apostle James echoes the expression common in our day, “Talk is cheap,” when he writes: “*If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, ‘Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled’ [‘Have a nice day!’], notwithstanding ye give them not those*

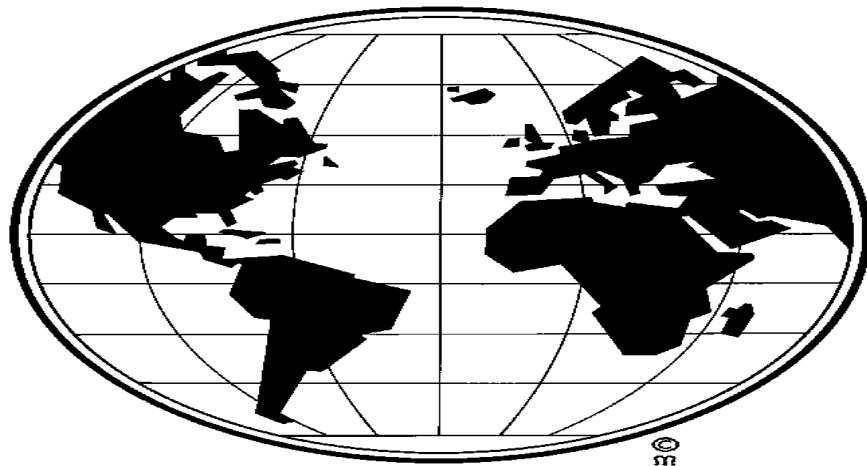
things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" [What good does all that talk do for him?] (James 2:15-16).

These exhortations of the Lord through His apostles do not apply merely to our budgetary considerations as a Conference when we determine and decide at our annual conventions what we, as an organization, can “afford” to authorize as financial subsidies. They apply to each of us individually, as we review, consider, and decide upon our offerings for mission work — both for “*home* missions” as we seek to bear the burdens of our brethren stateside whose congregations are extremely small and yet who seek under God to support the ministry of Word and Sacrament in their midst as the Lord Himself has commanded (I Corinthians 9:14) — AND for “*foreign* missions” as we seek to bear the burdens of brethren in far off lands who are in desperate need of our assistance in so many ways.

By the grace of God, the poor Macedonians contributed richly out of their great poverty for the relief of the impoverished saints in Jerusalem. St. Paul writes concerning them as an example to the Corinthians and to us: *“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power [to the best of their ability], I bear record, yea, and beyond their power [more than their ability] they were willing of themselves, praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints* (I Corinthians 8:1-4). Moreover, Paul, in urging the Corinthians as well to contribute to that effort, sets before them a most wonderful truth and promise concerning God’s ability, according to the riches of His grace, to make sure that they would not “go broke” because of their abundant support of their impoverished brethren but would have sufficient to take care of their own needs and also to bear the burdens of others: *“God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”* (II Corinthians 9:8). To those who put His kingdom first in their lives (Matthew 6:33) and give evidence of the sincerity of their love (II Corinthian 8:8) by making sure that there is food on **His** table, as it were, and not worrying about their own needs, He challenges them to **test Him** concerning the *limitless* blessings He will provide, saying: *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house; and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”* (Malachi 3:10).

Therefore, concerning the financial subsidy of our Conference granted to two stateside congregations and to our congregation-in-fellowship in Ekaterinburg, Russia, as well as our readiness, at their request, to help as possible also our dear brethren in Nigeria, your Committee on Missions leaves you, our readers, with the “mission” of our title-text, namely, “*Bear ye one another’s burdens*” (Galatians 6:2a). And, as you continue generously to support the work of the Lord’s kingdom at large by contributing to the General Fund of the Conference for all of the other endeavors in which it engages (the publishing of books, periodicals, tracts and Sunday School materials, the theological training of future pastors, Lutheran union activities, etc.) that, concerning **mission work** in particular, “*as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also*” (II Corinthians 8:7), “*not by commandment, but to prove the sincerity of your love; for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich*” (vv. 8 and 9).

— **Pastor David T. Mensing, Chairman**
Committee on Missions



Received into the mansions of heaven...



It hath pleased Almighty God in His all-wise providence (Romans 11:33-36) and according to His gracious promises in Christ Jesus (John 11:25-26; 14:2-3) to call out of this vale of tears to Himself in heaven the soul of **Melvin Louis Natterer**, Pastor-Emeritus of St. John's Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Oregon, who died peacefully at home on Friday morning, October 9, 2015, at the age of 89 years.

Melvin L. Natterer was born on September 3, 1926 in Cleveland, Ohio. Already as an infant, he was received into the kingdom of God's grace in Holy Baptism and was brought up by his parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In his youth, he was instructed in the chief parts of Christian doctrine and was received by the rite of confirmation into the communicant membership of an orthodox Lutheran congregation. As a young man he attended Concordia Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, and served his vicarage at Concordia Ev. Lutheran Church (*Missouri Synod*) in Chicago, where he met his future bride, Waltraut Elisabeth Koenig. He graduated in 1949 and accepted his first call to a small congregation in Fessenden, North Dakota. After a short time there, he was called to Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Lansing, Illinois.

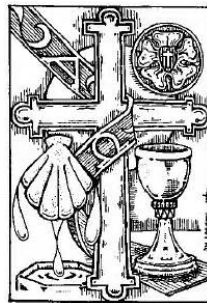
It was in Lansing that the young pastor, who had marked the Missouri Synod as a heterodox church body because of its persistent toleration of false doctrine and practice, was persecuted by the officials of the synod's Northern Illinois District because he refused to join it. After its adoption in 1950 of the *Common Confession* and its refusal to exercise doctrinal discipline against the signers of *A Statement*, it seemed ludicrous that Pastor Natterer would be required to sign Synod's constitution when the synod's own officials refused to follow it. Instead, in September, 1951, he and other brother pastors became founding members of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference at a meeting in Okabena, Minnesota, even though they knew that they would pay a heavy price for doing so. On Reformation Day, 1951, the officials invaded Pastor Natterer's congregation, falsely accused him of unfaithfulness, and tyrannically had him deposed from his God-given office as the shepherd and overseer of that flock (cf. Acts 20:28). Temporarily without a call, Pastor Natterer, his wife, Waltraut, and their two toddling daughters

were members of Peace Ev. Lutheran Church in Tinley Park, Illinois (now Oak Forest), where for six months he served as secretary of the congregation. Then in May of 1952 he accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran Church of Lebanon, Oregon, where by God's grace and with His abiding help he spent over sixty years as its faithful pastor.

In 1956, Pastor Natterer, together with the faithful remnant of the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, joined in the reorganization of that body after a heartrending controversy over selective fellowship left her sorely wounded. Since the formation of the Concordia Lutheran Conference as the legitimate continuation of the parent body, Pastor Natterer held virtually every office of leadership at some time or other, including that of professor in its seminary program; and he contributed regularly for many years to the Conference's official organ, the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*, in a serialized column entitled "Around the World." He continued, as the senior pastor in our fellowship since 2002, to be, by God's grace, a role model of humble service, loving patience, and diligent faithfulness, both to his congregation and to his Conference brethren. At the age of 87 years, Pastor Natterer retired from the ministry but continued to serve his congregation in Lebanon as a faithful layman and as a valued help to his pastor.

His dear wife, Waltraut, preceded him to the glories of heaven in November, 2014. He is survived by eight daughters and two sons, as well as loving grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His body was committed to the ground in Lebanon, Oregon, after a funeral service at St. John's Lutheran Church, the Rev. Paul E. Bloedel, Pastor. In addition to the members of his family and of the local congregation, brethren from our sister-congregation in Seattle were also in attendance; and expressions of brotherly sympathy and memorials of love were received from other brethren as well. While his physical presence will be sorely missed among us, we rejoice in his salvation by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith in His merits and joyfully await his sure and certain bodily resurrection on the Last Day. To God alone the glory!

—Ed



Scripture alone, by grace alone, through faith alone!

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;
my soul, believe and doubt it not.
Why stagger at this word of promise?
Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?
Nay; then this word must true remain:
By grace thou, too, shalt heav'n obtain.

By grace! None dare lay claim to merit;
our works and conduct have no worth.
God in His love sent our Redeemer,
Christ Jesus, to this sinful earth.
His death did for our sins atone,
and we are saved by grace alone.

By grace God's Son, our only Savior,
came down to earth to bear our sin.
Was it because of thine own merit
that Jesus died thy soul to win?
Nay, it was grace, and grace alone,
that brought Him from His heavenly throne.

By grace! This ground of faith is certain;
so long as God is true, it stands.
What saints have penned by inspiration,
what in His Word our God commands,
what our whole faith must rest upon,
Is grace alone, grace in His Son.

By grace! On this I'll rest when dying.
In Jesus' promise I rejoice;
for, though I know my heart's condition,
I also know my Savior's voice.
My heart is glad, all grief is flown,
Since I am saved by grace alone.

(TLH 373, 1,2,4,5,7)

Oh, how blest are they whose toils are ended,
who in faith have unto God ascended!
They have arisen from this world
which is to us a prison.

Christ has wiped away their tears forever;
they have that for which we still endeavor.
By them are chanted songs
that ne'er to mortal tongues are granted!

Ah, who would not then depart with gladness
to inherit heaven for earthly sadness?
Who here would languish longer
in bewailing and in anguish??

Come, O Christ, and loose the chains that bind us!
Lead us forth and cast this world behind us!
With Thee, th' Anointed,
finds our soul its joy and rest appointed!

Thou didst bear the sins that would condemn us,
justly viewed by God as cause to damn us!
Thou wast the Victim
to make good for us whose crimes did vex Him!

Now by faith we have the peace that gladdens,
justified and freed from all that saddens!
What could we render
for Thy love and grace to us so tender?

To Thy keeping I commend my spirit,
justified and cleansed by Jesus' merit!
Father, I thank Thee,
that Thine own dear child I dare to call me!

Take me now to be with Thee in heaven.
Let me rest in peace which Thou hast given.
With joy I yield me!
In Thy loving arms, dear Lord, receive me!

Amen.

[The hymn, "Oh, how blest are ye whose toils are ended" ("O wie selig seid ihr doch, ihr Frommen!"), *The Lutheran Hymnal* #589, was penned in German by Simon Dach in 1635 and was translated into English by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1845. Originally addressed poetically to the departed dead, the above stanzas were revised and amplified as a loving gift to Pastor M. L. Natterer in his last days here on earth, whose humble faith in Christ's merits for salvation is expressed in the last four, added verses. As he now enjoys the blessedness of heaven, we sing with the hymnwriter the words cherished by Pastor Natterer as he looked forward to that glory (Romans 8:18), "O, that we were there!" "Eia! Wären wir da!" (TLH 92, 4). —**Pastor David T. Mensing**]



Churches in Fellowship

ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG

Ekaterinburg, Russia

The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor

P. O. Box 27

620039 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA

E-mail: Schurganoff@mail.ru

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

Pastoral Vacancy at present

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

The Rev. Onesimus Ekele, Pastor

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria

The Rev. Innocent Karibo, Pastor

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria

The Rev. Elison B. Agborubere, Balaiyi Thompson and Bateinm Bestman, Pastors

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobebe Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

The Rev. Allenson Karibi Asawo, Pastor

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Kula, Nigeria

Pastoral Vacancy at present

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S NYEMONI LUTHERAN CATHEDRAL

Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface and

The Rev. God'stime E. D. Douglas, Co-Pastors

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyeface@yahoo.co.uk



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the Web at:

4090 S. Melpomene Way, Tucson, AZ 85730 GoodShepherdLutheranChurchTucson.com

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Telephone (520) 721-7618

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

The Rev. DANIEL P. MENSING, Pastor

550 North Harrison Road, Apt. 11107, Tucson, AZ 85748 Pastor: (520) 448-8694

E-mail: goodshepherdlutherantucson@gmail.com

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the Web at:

Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 PeaceEvLutheran.com

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 Pastor: (708) 532-9035

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

Pastor: (541) 258-2941

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the Web at:

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178 StLukes-CLC.com

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118

Pastor: (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.

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the Web at:

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 StMarksEvLutheran.com

Adult Bible Class 3:00 p.m.

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

Worship Service 4:00 p.m.

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

Pastor: (708) 655-7549

E-mail: d_mensing@hotmail.com

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the Web at:

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 TrinityEvLutheran.com

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

Pastor: (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

Reflections on the Past

We [of our Conference] have seen, we have been beset on all sides by dangers and temptations— manifold and grave. Yet, the Lord has ever been with us and has remained true to His promise “*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” (Hebrews 13:5). That Word, which has cheered our hearts through all these years, is still the sunshine which dispels the gloom within our hearts by assuring us of God’s boundless love in Christ Jesus, who has redeemed us with His holy, precious blood, so that we, miserable sinners that we are, might continue to serve Him in His kingdom here on earth, until he takes us into His kingdom of glory where we shall praise Him world without end. As we ponder upon the unmerited blessings which the Lord has bestowed upon us, we must surely exclaim:

O that I had a thousand voices
to praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
would then proclaim in grateful songs
to all, wherever I might be,
what great things God hath done for me.

TLH 30,1

Melvin L. Natterer
Reflections on the Past, Convention Essay 1976