



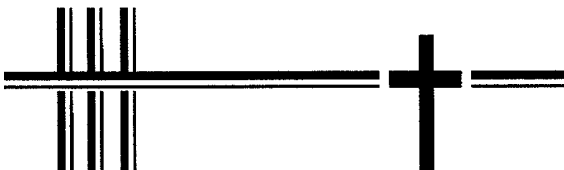
"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

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

Vol. LXII


May—June 2017

Nos. 5-6



"Hear, O Israel,
the Lord our God
is One Lord."

—Deuteronomy 6:4



*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. LXII May-June 2017 Nos. 5-6

Official Organ of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of \$10.00 per year.

***The Concordia Lutheran* Editor**

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

Book and Tract Editor

The Rev. Paul E. Bloedel
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355

Lay Member:

Mr. Jason A. Mabe
6249 El Morro Lane
Oak Forest, IL 60452

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

VICE PRESIDENT:

The Rev. Edward J. Worley
9658-54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118

SECRETARY:

The Rev. Paul E. Bloedel
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355

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.

www.concordialutheranconf.com

The Kingly Office of the Ascended Christ

*“[The Father] raised Him [Christ] from the dead,
and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.”*

— Ephesians 1:20

Forty days after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by God the Father, He ascended into heaven; and the Father set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, as Ephesians 1:20, our theme verse, declares. Dr. A. L. Graebner summarizes:

Christ’s ascension into Heaven was the glorious termination of His visible conversation with His church on earth and the visible entrance of the God-man, according to His human nature, into His Heavenly Kingdom, in which, while He is ever and everywhere present with His church on earth, He is being worshiped and adored by the heavenly host (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:11; Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19; Psalm 47:5; John 3:13; Ephesians 4:10; John 17:24; II Timothy 4:18; Matthew 18:20, 28:20; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 5:6). (*Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, p. 148-150).

Holy Scripture declares the right hand of God to be His omnipresent power and operation in the universe (Psalm 139:9-10; 118:15-16). Christ’s sitting at the Father’s right hand, therefore, refers to His full and uninterrupted use of the divine majesty communicated to His human nature in a universal government of a threefold kingdom (Power, Grace and Glory), a sovereign lordship and dominion over the entire universe (I Corinthians 15:25, 27; Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 2:7-8; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:10; I Peter 3:22; Acts 3:21). As the Son of God He had possessed and exercised this divine majesty from eternity already before His incarnation. And while this majesty was communicated to His human nature in His incarnation, He had voluntarily abstained from its full and continuous use during His *state of humiliation* in order to perform the work of redemption (Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:5-9).

Dr. John T. Mueller, in his *Christian Dogmatics*, cites the Formula of Concord regarding this:

The special comfort for the believer which attaches to Christ's triumphant session at the right hand of God is beautifully expressed by the *Formula of Concord* in the following words (Thor. Decl., VII, 78f.): "We hold ... that also according to His assumed nature and with the same He [Christ] can be, and also is, present where He will, and especially that in His Church and congregation on earth He is present as Mediator, Head, King, and High Priest, not in part, or one half of Him only, but the entire person of Christ is present, to which both natures belong, the divine and the human; not only according to His divinity, but also according to and with His assumed human nature, according to which He is our Brother and we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone, even as He has instituted His Holy Supper for the certain assurance and confirmation of this, that also according to that nature according to which He has flesh and blood He will be with us and dwell, work, and be efficacious in us." (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 301).

The focus of our present article is the Kingly Office of Christ at God's right hand after His ascension into heaven. The Kingly Office of Christ is declared by all the passages of Holy Writ in which it is stated that to Christ in time universal dominion has been communicated: "*Which [God the Father] wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet; and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Ephesians 1:20-23; cf. Matthew 11:27; 28:18; Psalm 2:6, 8; 8:6; I Corinthians 15:27). John Quenstedt gives an apt definition of the Kingly Office of Christ in these words:

[The Kingly Office of Christ] is the theanthropic function of Christ whereby He divinely controls and governs, according to both natures, the divine and the human (the latter as exalted to the right hand of majesty), all creatures whatever in the Kingdoms of Power, Grace and Glory by infinite majesty and power. (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 314-315).

It is important to remember that in the *state of humiliation* Christ was our Divine King, essentially, according to His divine nature and, by way of communication, also according to His human nature (Isaiah 9:6; John 18:37; Matthew 28:18); but in the *state of humiliation* He did not exercise the full and constant use of this divine dominion communicated to His human nature until His exaltation at the right hand of God the Father

(Ephesians 1:20-23, 4:10; Philippians 2:9-11). However, we are never to forget that also during His entire visible time on earth He was a true King (Luke 2:11, Matthew 2:2; 19:38; 27:11; Mark 14:62; etc.).

His Kingdom is one, as an exercise of divine, regal power; but we may distinguish, on the basis of Scripture, the different spheres in which He rules by the different character of those governed and the means by which they are so governed. In doing so we recognize a Threefold Kingdom: Of Power, of Grace and of Glory.

The Kingdom of Power is His rule over the entire universe, upholding and providentially governing all creatures, visible and invisible. In this realm even all unbelievers, fallen angels (demons and the devil) and irrational creatures in nature (Psalm 2:9f, 45:5, 8:6-8, 97:7, 10; I Timothy 6:14-16; Revelation 17:14) are subject to His dominion, as Christ, the King, rules over them by means of His almighty power (omnipotence). Christ exercises His rule according to His will to serve His wise, good and just purposes. Everything, in space and time, is under His omnipotent rule. This fact is to be remembered over against all ideas to the contrary, including the modern view that the universe is chaotic and random, driven only by amoral, physical laws. Any denial of Christ's rule in the Kingdom of Power undermines His rule also in all other areas! Dr. John T. Mueller reminds us:

“In this world the Kingdom of Power serves the Kingdom of Grace, Matt. 28, 18; Rom 8, 28; for in both kingdoms the same Lord governs all things to His glory, Eph. 1, 20-23, with the same almighty power, Eph. 1, 19; 1 Pet. 1, 5, sustaining the present world for the sake of His elect, Matt. 24, 22; 2 Pet. 3, 9, and protecting His Church Militant against all attacks of the gates of hell, Matt. 16, 18.” (Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 316).

The Kingdom of Grace includes all true believers in Christ, the members of His Church on earth “in which Christ collects the Church Militant upon earth, governs it, furnishes it with spiritual gifts, preserves and defends it, to the praise of the divine name, to the destruction of Satan's kingdom, and the salvation of believers” (David Hollaz, *Examen Theologicum Acroamaticum*, p. 763). In the Kingdom of Grace (Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 9:9), Christ rules, through His revealed Word, all true believers in the Gospel of Grace: “*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, ‘If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the*

truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Christ exercises His gracious dominion in all who have been converted: “*Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘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). The Lord told Pontius Pilate: “*Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice*” (John 18:37). This King, who is the Truth incarnate (John 14:6), uses His Word, “*the Truth,*” to bring sinners into the Kingdom of Grace (John 17:17; Romans 10:17; I Peter 1:23; etc.).

It is important never to confuse the Kingdom of Grace with the Kingdom of Power. The Lord distinguished the two in His response to Pilate: “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36).

The Kingdom of Grace is not **of** the world. Although it is **in** the world, it is not created and preserved after the manner of earthly kingdoms (Mark 16:15-16), for it is founded and sustained only through the Means of Grace (the Gospel, Holy Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, Matthew 28:19-20). Any error regarding the Means of Grace also perverts the doctrine of the Kingdom of Grace, for Christ rules solely by His Word: “*But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9). Scripture warns of such disobedience to Christ’s rule: “*If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is Godliness; from such withdraw thyself*” (I Timothy 6:3-5).

Our King prays for His own: “*I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word. ... I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ... They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*” (John 17:6, 14, 16; cf. John 10:28-29). Only genuine believers are members of Christ’s Kingdom of Grace: “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*” (Romans 8:9).

All genuine believers, those who remain in the Kingdom of Grace by faith alone, will enter Christ's Kingdom of Glory (Acts 7:55-56; I Peter 5:4; I John 3:2) when they transfer from the Church Militant on earth, at death, into the Church Triumphant in Heaven: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better"* (Philippians 1:21, 23). True believers in Christ long for this transfer to perfection, to the Heavenly Jerusalem: *"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Hebrews 12:23). This sure and certain hope (I Corinthians 1:7; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; II Peter 3:13) is created and preserved in believers by the Gospel which proclaims that *"the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ"* (Romans 6:23b). The Kingdom of Glory is Christ's gift: *"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me"* (Luke 22:29). *"And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise'"* (Luke 23:42-43).

Although all true believers experience the blessedness of Kingdom of Glory in their souls at the moment of temporal death (Revelation 14:13), the full experience comes to them after the bodily resurrection on the Last Day: *"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory"* (Colossians 3:4). *"For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself"* (Philippians 3:20-21). *"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'"* (Matthew 25:34).

The Kingdom of Glory remains forever, even as Christ will reign everlastingly, as was foretold: *"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this"* (Isaiah 9:7; cf. Matthew 25:31; Revelation 5:5-13).

We must carefully distinguish the Kingdom of Glory from the Kingdom of Grace: *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we*

shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:2). “*For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*” (Romans 8:24-25).

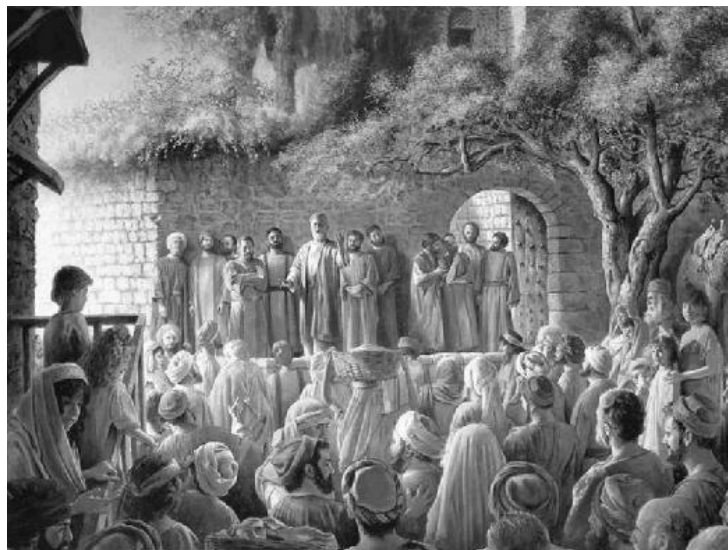
In the Kingdom of Grace, we know, assent and believe with confidence created, strengthened and preserved in us through *means*, the *Means of Grace*; but in the Kingdom of Glory, we know *directly* what God wants us to know (cf. John 8:31-32 with I Corinthians 13:12). Now, in the Kingdom of Grace, we exist under the cross, enduring trials and suffering tribulation; but then, in the Kingdom of Glory, we shall enjoy perfect bliss (cf. Acts 14:22 with Revelation 7:17; 21:3-4).

Only by the grace of God do we believe the doctrine of Christ’s Kingly Office as the Holy Ghost, through the clear, pertinent passages of Holy Writ, works faith in our hearts. We must walk by faith not by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). As far as Christ’s reign in the Kingdom of Power is concerned, “*now we see not yet all things put under Him*” (Hebrews 2:8); but we must believe it on the basis of God’s Word alone. Concerning the rule of Christ in the Kingdom of Grace, the Lord says to us: “*The kingdom of God cometh not with observation*” (Luke 17:20). Yet we know and understand by faith that it exists and will remain because God says so in His Word (Luke 17:21; Matthew 16:18; John 16:33). And we “*rejoice in hope [in sure expectation] of the glory of God*” (Romans 5:2) in the future Kingdom of Glory, even though “*it doth not yet appear what we shall be*” (I John 3:2). By faith we are sure that “*an entrance shall be ministered unto [us] abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (I Peter 1:11) because God’s Word declares it so!

May the doctrine of the Kingly Office of the ascended Christ continue to bless all true believers! “*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 Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*” (Jude 24-25).

— E. J. W.

The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel in Peter's Pentecost Sermon



“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, ‘Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.’” —Acts 2:14

As was foretold by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11) and by Jesus Himself (Acts 1:5, 8), the disciples received a special kind of *baptism* with the Holy Ghost when on the day of Pentecost God poured out His Spirit upon them. On that occasion, the disciples were “*filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:4). After a large group of Jews and proselytes (i.e. converts) had come together to the house where the disciples were assembled and “*were all amazed and marveled*” (Acts 2:7) that those Galilean disciples were speaking fluently in many different languages other than their own native dialect of Aramaic, the Apostle Peter stood up and preached a sermon to the multitude. And one interesting way that this sermon was quite different from sermons that Christian pastors typically preach to their congregations is that there was no Gospel application

made to the hearers until they had verbally expressed their deep sorrow over their sins. And this was completely appropriate considering that the group to whom Peter was speaking had, as a whole, rejected Jesus as their Messiah and demanded that He be crucified (Acts 2:23). Hence, prior to his transition into Gospel, every reference Peter made to Christ's crucifixion was used strictly with a *Law* application (Acts 2:23, 36) —not even slightly hinting that His death had purchased forgiveness also for all His *enemies* (cf. Romans 5:10). For while it would have been a *true statement* for Peter to have told the people that Christ died on the cross in payment for their sins (I John 2:1–2; II Peter 2:1), it would have provided *false comfort* to those who had not yet been brought to repentance (Hebrews 4:2; II Thessalonians 1:7–9) and would, therefore, have been a gross confounding of Law and Gospel (Ezekiel 13:22).

It should be understood that the Bible does not always record the things people said (in sermons, statements, comments, etc.) in their *entirety*. For example, Jesus' sermon in Nazareth, as this is found in Luke chapter four, certainly was much longer than the single sentence that we find in Scripture (v. 21), as is obvious from the people's reaction recorded in the following verse (v. 22). Likewise, in Acts 14:21–22, the exhortations given to the Christians in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch are summarized in just one sentence. Now in the case of Peter's Pentecost sermon, recorded by inspiration of God in Acts 2:14–39, because so much is here written, one might think that the *entire* sermon is contained in those verses. However, in the very next verse (v. 40), we are told that Peter continued to “*testify*” and “*exhort*” “*with many other words.*” Hence we should *not* assume that Peter's *entire* Pentecost sermon is recorded in Acts 2. But we also know that what we have here written is an accurate account of what was said. It is, therefore, instructive to examine the content of this sermon and to observe the way in which the Law and the Gospel are properly divided and applied (II Timothy 2:15).

After quickly rebuking those who mocked —refuting their claim that the disciples were drunk (vv. 13, 15)— Peter explains at the beginning of his sermon that this out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, witnessed by his hearers, was a direct fulfillment of a section of Old Testament Scripture in which the prophet Joel wrote: “*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of*

smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered" (Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:16–21). Now there is certainly a reference to God's grace here, but it is given specifically to those who "*call on the name of the Lord.*" And notice that Peter does *not* yet say that his hearers should consider themselves to be part of that group.

As he continues, Peter talks to the people about *Jesus* —not for their comfort but to convict them of their wickedness in rejecting Him and having Him killed. "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain*" (vv. 22–23). They knew who Jesus of Nazareth was, and they knew of the miracles He had done that gave evidence of His Messiahship and divine approval (John 3:2; 5:36; 10:25). But what did they do? They caused Him to be *crucified*! And while Peter mentions that all this happened according to "*the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,*" in order for lost and condemned mankind to be redeemed, yet he does *not* in any way excuse the Jews' "*wicked*" conduct in this matter.

The enemies of Christ had successfully killed Him; but they were *not* victorious over Him, *because He did not remain dead*. It is this point that Peter stresses in the next verse: "*Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it*" (v. 24). That the Messiah would triumph over death was foretold by the Old Testament "*prophet*" (v. 30), King David, in Psalm 16, where we read: "*I have set the Lord always before Me. Because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth; My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life. In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*" (vv. 8–11). And those very verses are quoted by Peter in his sermon (vv. 25–28). But how can it be known that David was speaking of the *Messiah's* resurrection and *not of his own*? Peter addresses that point as he continues, saying: "*Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, accord-*

ing to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption” (vv. 29–31).

While we are used to hearing the doctrine of Christ’s resurrection from the dead cited in Christian sermons in the context of comfort for believers—as a fundamental point of the Gospel (I Corinthians 15:17–22; Romans 4:25)—that is *not* the way Peter *here* refers to this pivotal event since he was still addressing those who were, barring any evidence of repentance, impenitent unbelievers (vv. 23b, 36). The fact that Jesus rose from the dead did *not* convey any comfort to those who had demanded Jesus’ crucifixion and rejoiced when they thought that He had been put out of the way. No, any talk about Him rising from the dead would only fill *them* with anger and fear. And so Peter makes a *Law* application to terrify them with the consequences of their sins, rather than a Gospel application to give them the comfort of forgiveness. Since Christ had *won* (as evidenced by His resurrection), that meant that His enemies had *lost*; and now they had great reason to fear, indeed.

Triumphantly rising from the dead, Jesus did *not* re-take upon Himself “*the form of a servant*” that His enemies observed when “*He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:7–8). No, on the contrary, the risen Christ was exalted to the right hand of God’s power; and from there He sent forth His Holy Spirit—the effects of which were clearly observable by Peter’s hearers. Thus he continues in his sermon: “*This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool’*” (vv. 32–35). Here again Peter quotes from the inspired writings of King David, this time from Psalm 110:1. The point that is here emphasized is that the exalted Christ is ruling over all things at the right hand of God’s power. Consequently, not only can His enemies not harm Him anymore, but they are *under His feet*, that is, subject to His authority and rule. This is yet another application of the *Law* designed to strike terror into the hearts of those who dare to oppose God’s Messiah.

Peter concludes the *Law* section of his sermon by declaring: “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (v. 36). It is in-

teresting to observe how Peter refers to events that convey so much *Gospel* comfort to believers (Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension and session at the right hand of God) and strictly *Law* applications in this sermon (directing his impenitent hearers to recognize their sins and the impending punishment of the Lord). And that powerful proclamation of the *Law* brought about God's desired effect. "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'*" (v. 37). Their hearts had been "*pricked*," made sorrowful, at the realization that they had rejected and crucified the *Messiah (Christ)*, the Lord. They were filled with regret, and they were desperate to know what they could possibly do to avoid falling under the divine punishment that they so clearly deserved. But instead of directing them to any work of the *Law* whereby they could compensate God for their wickedness, Peter speaks to them words of pure *Gospel*. "*Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call'*" (vv. 38–39). Through *Baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ"* and through these very words of the *Gospel*, the promise of "*the remission of sins*" was given; and that forgiveness was then *received* by all of those hearers who truly *repented*—having *contrition* worked in their hearts by the *Law* and *faith* worked in their hearts by the *Gospel*.

The remainder of Peter's preaching and teaching on this occasion is summarized in verse 40 as follows: "*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation.'*" Where the KJV translates Peter's words as "*save yourselves*," it does not accurately convey the meaning of the original Greek, which uses the *passive voice* for the verb "to save," and should, therefore, be translated instead as "*be saved*." (This is an important point because sinners never save themselves, but rather *are saved* by God's grace in Christ). By the grace of God alone, and by the power of the Holy Ghost working through the preached Word, approximately 3,000 people were brought to repentance and saving faith in Christ and were baptized that day (v. 41). The proper division or distinction between the *Law* and *Gospel* and their proper application in that sermon was crucial. The ***Law*** convicted the people of their sins and made them fearful of God's wrath (brought them to *contrition*); and the ***Gospel*** directed them to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only Savior from sin and worked in them confidence in His merits alone for salvation (brought them to *saving faith*).

Likewise, when we are in the position of speaking the Word of God to others, it is important that we use the Law and the Gospel correctly. The *Gospel* must *not* be used to give false comfort to the impenitent; and the *Law* must *not* be used to make those who are troubled in their minds because of their sins to think that they must do anything to merit God's favor —thus either leading them to despair or to become self-righteous. On the contrary, the *Law* is to be used to show man his inability to save himself; and the *Gospel* is to be used to show man the grace of God in Christ Jesus, received by faith alone, without the deeds of the Law. *"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. ...Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Galatians 3:21–24).

It is, furthermore, important that we who are true believers use the Law and the Gospel correctly, *"rightly dividing the Word of Truth"* (II Timothy 2:15b), in their application to *our own* hearts and lives. When we are tempted to think too highly of ourselves (Romans 12:3) —either in our standing before God (I Corinthians 1:29) or in comparison to our fellow human beings (Luke 18:11)— we should use the *Law* of God to remind ourselves of how sinfully wretched we are (Romans 7:23–24). And when we are tempted to doubt God's love, or question the facts of our forgiveness and salvation —either because of our unworthiness (Luke 15:21) or because of sore afflictions (Psalm 77:2–9)— we should use the *Gospel* of God's rich mercy and grace to comfort our hearts with the assurance that we have been forgiven and declared righteous by Him on account of Christ Jesus' work of redemption. *"What things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested ...even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified [declared righteous, forgiven] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:19–24).

— P. E. B.



“In God We Trust”??

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.” — Psalm 33:12

The words, “In God we trust,” are embossed on our national coinage, engraved on our federal currency, and emblazoned on the facades of our public buildings “from sea to shining sea;” and yet we must ask, since what many regard as “the obvious” is not all that obvious: What do those words *mean*? and What do those words *indicate*, if anything, about the *faith* of our country?

On Sunday, June 11th, we mark the **Feast of the Holy Trinity** — the fourth major festival on our Christian church calendar. On that day each year we note in particular and study very specifically the primary fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith that “the only true God is the *Triune God*, **Father**, **Son**, and **Holy Ghost**, three distinct persons in one divine being or essence” (*A Short Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*, Q/A 26, CPH, 1943, p. 49). That simple statement sets forth in clear, concise, and unequivocal terms the mysterious doctrine of Holy Scripture that there is **only one true and living God**, who manifests Himself in **three persons**, “the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal... and yet they are not three gods, but one God” (Athanasian Creed). That we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity is the universal (Lat., “*catholic*”) Christian faith, “which faith, except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly” (*Ibid.*). If the reader is not familiar with the *Athanasian*

Creed, its text in full is found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* on page 53. It is the third of our ecumenical creeds (the others being the *Apostles' Creed* and the *Nicene Creed*), and we unconditionally subscribe to it as one of our Lutheran Confessions and a secondary norm of our faith and life because [*quia*] it is a clear exposition of God's Word in the matters which it treats.

Moreover, as we confess in the *Athanasian Creed*, it is also "necessary to salvation" that we believe faithfully in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *second* person of the Trinity, "*the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14), true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, who must be worshiped as **true God** and **true man**, yet the "one Christ" whose threefold office as the Redeemer of the world is clearly manifested in Holy Scripture. "*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). The Lord Jesus Himself makes the unequivocal statement that those who deny His deity and refuse to honor Him as true God do not believe in God the Father — or in God the Holy Ghost, for that matter, who testifies of Him (John 15:26). They do not believe in **the only true and living God**. Jesus says: "*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).

Sadly, but undeniably, the word "God," as used among people here in this world and particularly among our own countrymen, does NOT refer to the **Triune God at all**. —The pagan Muslims, for example, use the word to denote *their* god, Allah, who, according to the Psalmist's clear and unmistakable judgment, "*given by inspiration of God*" (II Timothy 3:16) is an "**idol**" (Psalm 96:5). And the Apostle Paul characterizes an idol as "**nothing in the world**" (I Corinthians 8:4). —Anti-trinitarian religions and religious organizations, that is, those which deny and decry the Triune God, use the word "God" to denote a supreme being of their own creation, specific to their own definition, and deliberately exclusive of Jesus Christ and His deity as well as of the Holy Ghost as a distinct person. Among these we can easily identify the Unitarians and Universalists, the Mormons, the Russellites (a.k.a "Witnesses of Jehovah"), the Jews (who reject their own Messiah and the God revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures), so-called "Christian Scientists," the Masonic and similar lodges, the Scouting organizations, anti-Christian cults of which there are many, as well as all "modernists" in whatever nominally-Christian denomination who deny not only the Trinity but

just about every other fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Then, of course, we note the rather *generic* use of the word “God” by the man-on-the-street. In many cases, the utterance of that word is a mere epithet, having no *religious* significance whatsoever: “God, did you see *that?*” “God, it’s hot today!” “Oh my God! What an awesome sale on software!” And it is common also in curses and in frivolous oaths: “God damn it!” “By God!” “So help me God!” When asked what they mean by using God’s Name in such an off-hand manner, most simply reply: “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by it. It’s just an expression,” a classic example of using the Name of God “*in vain*” (Exodus 20:7).

But what about the claim of so-called “evangelicals,” of sectarian groups particularly among the Reformed, that ours is a “*Christian*” country, founded on *Christian* principles, with nominal *Christianity* not only as the majority religion but also as the professed creed of our nation and of our government? And this in spite of the clear guarantee stated in the 1st Amendment to the Constitution in the Bill of Rights that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”? This is a “hot-button” topic today, with ever greater demands being made on our governmental agencies to mix church and state by introducing joint prayer into the public schools, by posting the Ten Commandments in classrooms in an effort to raise the morality of our youth, and by substituting for our purely secular public education a curriculum laced with sectarian-based course content. This effort to strip our citizenry of true freedom of religion and to end the right of every American in this melting-pot society to enjoy equality under the law and to exercise his religious tenets without restraint or hindrance is only the first step toward the “establishment of religion” — and it is beyond any reasonable expectation that an established state religion will be **orthodox Christianity**.

It is true that we have references to “God” on our coinage, on our currency, in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, in the concluding stanza of our national anthem, on the facades of many of our governmental buildings, in many patriotic songs, and in many of our historical documents. But (and this must be clearly understood) such references to “God” do **not** make ours a “Christian country,” nor does the word “God” **itself** in such contexts necessarily refer to the *Triune God*. Rather, it connotes a *generic* “supreme being” who doesn’t really get involved in the lives of His creatures, an impersonal “force for good,” a “creator” and “architect of the universe” only in an allegorical sense, a

principle of so-called intellectual and spiritual “enlightenment” with which our founding fathers were comfortable and with which all but rabid atheists can “live” without feeling discriminated against.

The vast majority of the founding fathers were, after all, *deists*. They were products of the rationalistic “Enlightenment” in 18th Century Europe which fostered rejection of the Bible as the source and norm of spiritual knowledge and truth, morality as the expression of an individual’s character, the “Gospel” as love for one’s fellow man, and religion as the betterment of society for the common good. Many were devotees of the revolutionary activist and philosopher, Thomas Paine, and his book, *Age of Reason*. Deists consistently deny the Trinity, reject the deity of Jesus Christ, regard “sin” as unwise choices which often result in negative consequences in life, think of “heaven” (if they even speak of it) as the well-deserved reward of good character and positive social contributions, and dismiss outright the concept of damnation and the existence of hell. They believe in work righteousness; they feel no need for a Redeemer, for a vicarious atonement, or for forgiveness; and they reject every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. The founding fathers were for the most part professing *deists*, even though some of them were outwardly practicing members of religious denominations. Many were Anglicans or Episcopalians, Unitarians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians; and a good number were also practicing Masons. In fact, the principles of *freemasonry* exerted much more influence upon their philosophy than did the principles of Christianity. A casual search of the Internet for “God, Founding Fathers” will provide ample evidence from their own writings that the framers of our government and the writers of our primary historical documents were, for the most part, NOT even *nominal* Christians, did NOT believe in the Triune God, did NOT accept the Bible as God’s revelation, did NOT profess Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, their Redeemer and Savior, and were religious skeptics, rationalists, and some even blasphemers.

It is interesting to note that the statement “In God we trust” was not embossed upon our coinage until 1864, when Congress first authorized it; and it was not engraved on our paper currency until 1957, when it eventually superceded the motto *E pluribus unum* [“Out of many, one”] adopted in 1782. Moreover, the words “under God” were not added to the Pledge of Allegiance until June 14, 1954, when a joint resolution of Congress, upon the urging of President Eisenhower, included them during the “cold war” as a testimony against atheistic communism. Eisenhower had been moved to that action by a sermon preached by a Pres-

byterian minister on Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, in which that phrase was used — even though Lincoln himself is quoted by Joseph Lewis (1889-1968), an American “freethinker” and atheist, as declaring, “The Bible is not my book, nor Christianity my profession.” Given Lewis’ philosophy and agenda, we might, of course, consider that quote to be suspect, except that it has been documented by others also. Nevertheless Lincoln, a nominal Presbyterian, also made statements confessing faith in God and in Christ as revealed in the Bible. Thus Lincoln’s personal faith remains a question to most historians.

The *Triune God* is NOT the “God” of the United States of America — sad to say; neither is the *Christian* religion (in the proper sense of the term) even remotely the creed of our nation. The statement, “In God we trust,” is therefore a **sham**, easily disproved by the record of legislative acts, court decisions, and executive mandates which fly directly in the face of Holy Scripture and enact public policy in violation of God’s revealed will. The coinage and currency on which those words appear are trafficked in state-sponsored gambling, pay for state-condoned abortions, fund state-sponsored abominations of all kinds, and endow organizations which defend and validate homosexuality as a legitimate “alternative lifestyle.” The religion that is actually *practiced* by our government and by its people by-and-large, their personal profession notwithstanding, is a worldly combination of *universalism* [all gods and religions being regarded as equally valid and beneficial to mankind], *materialism* [with the fear, love and trust of the people residing in “the almighty dollar,” in what that dollar can buy, and in the security that the dollar can provide], and *hedonism* [with one’s own self-image, personal fulfillment, and self-satisfaction being the overriding goals of life].

While we are indeed grateful that God has ordained “*the powers that be*” (Romans 13:1) to govern our country as His servants to keep order in our world and to rule “*for good*” (v. 4), “*that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty*” (I Timothy 2:2); and although we appreciate the fact that our government has maintained a relatively high wall of separation between church and state in accordance with God’s Word (Matthew 22:21) so that *freedom of religion* has been preserved to us in our time according to the First Amendment of the *Bill of Rights*; nevertheless such neutrality of the state with respect to religion is jeopardized by the adoption and inclusion of theological words and expressions which convey a contrary stance. And that verbiage is precisely what the so-called “evangelicals” point to in their efforts to “Christianize” our government and to gain control of its

agenda for their own sectarian purposes. They, of course, deny that the framers of the Constitution *intended* to establish and preserve as a “blessing of liberty [for] ourselves and [for] our posterity” (Preamble) the “**separation of church and state**,” claiming that such words do not occur in the Constitution itself. But then neither do the words “freedom of religion.” Thomas Jefferson himself interpreted that First Amendment protection when he wrote on January 1, 1802 to the Danbury [Connecticut] Baptist Association: “I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between church and state.” We thank God that there is such a wall, despite on-going efforts to tear it down, and despite language on our coinage and currency that *seems* to indicate the opposite.

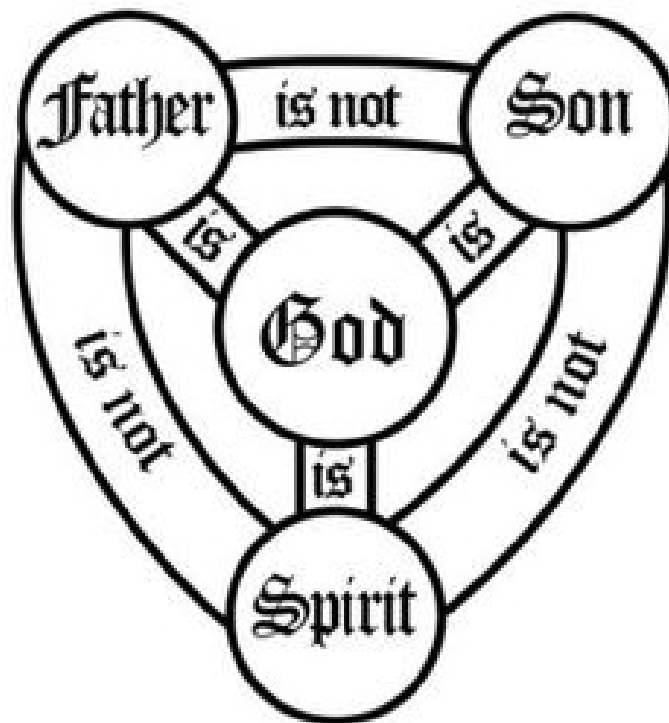
We, for our part, by the grace and with the continued help of God, honestly confess: “In God we trust,” not together with our countrymen, as in a joint testimony of bogus “brotherhood from sea to shining sea,” but **separate** from them, as the Lord through St. Paul bids us (II Corinthians 6:17). For *their* testimony is the empty claim of *deism* and *universalism* (as is that of Freemasonry and of the *Boy Scouts of America*, which, according to its own published handbook, insists that members promise to do their duty to “God” and define that duty as reverence to the deities of Buddhism, Hinduism, Mormonism, Unitarianism and Judaism, as well as to the “God” of Christianity). *Our* testimony, on the other hand, is this, “that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance,” and that “we believe and confess...our Lord Jesus Christ...perfect God and perfect man,” our Redeemer and Savior, “who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day; He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” Though this is **NOT** the so-called “faith of our fathers,” expressed on our coinage and on our currency, “THIS **IS** the *catholic* [i.e. *universal Christian*] faith, which, except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved” (*Athanasian Creed*).

It is because of the *true believers* in our country that the Lord blesses it, causes it to maintain peace and prosperity within its borders, and enables it to insure liberty to all its citizens, to preserve law and order on our streets and in our neighborhoods as part of His governance of all things, and especially to insure our freedom to worship Him, the only

true and living God, without restraint or hindrance. It is because of the *true believers* in it that He does not immediately visit His righteous wrath upon it because of its Godlessness, perversity, and iniquity (Cf. Genesis 18:23-32; Nehemiah 9:28-31). “*Blessed [indeed] are the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance*” (Psalm 33:12b), “*for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28). May the Lord graciously preserve us steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end! For “this is His gracious and good will”! (I Peter 5:10-11; Luther: *Third Petition*).

—D. T. M.

(Adapted from the article which appeared in the May-June 2007 issue.)



(Series: Exposition and Application of the Ten Commandments)

IV. The Fifth Commandment



“Thou shalt not kill.”

Of all the commandments in the Decalog, it is the fifth that seems to be represented most faithfully in the collective conscience of mankind as a universally-accepted moral prohibition, the slaying or “*murder*” (Matthew 19:18) of another human being (*homicide*). In almost all of the world’s cultures —with the notable exception of those which permit and even extol *cannibalism*— the taking of a human life is regarded as the most extreme violation of “natural law” (cf. Romans 2:14) and a crime against humanity itself, “human life” being so sacred and so precious that few circumstances permit its deliberate termination (“...*for in the image of God made He man,*” Genesis 9:6b). The term “murder” [“homicide”] refers not to a purely accidental *loss of life* due to unforeseeable and generally unpreventable circumstances, but the deliberate *taking of a life* by reason of malice, anger, hatred, or depraved indifference — premeditated or unpremeditated. When the *taking of a life* was not intentional but only consequential as the result of recklessness, wantonness, carelessness, or even a flash of temper, the term “manslaughter” is generally used in criminal law. For the purpose of determining criminal culpability and assigning degrees of responsibility *before the law* here in this world, inquests are convened to exam-

ine whatever facts are in evidence; but ultimately “*the Lord looketh on the heart*” (I Samuel 16:7b). And, as we shall presently see, the **Fifth Commandment** and its application according to Scripture involves much more than the unjustified taking of a human life.

However, the concept of “*justifiable* homicide” is not foreign to Holy Scripture, provided that the justification is not arbitrary, subjective, capricious, or specifically *contrary to Scripture*. Thus the civil and criminal statutes of most governments recognize *self-defense* as “justifiable homicide,” even in the case of a burglar who is legally regarded as a clear and present threat to the life of the resident (cf. Exodus 22:2); and the *defense of another human being*, particularly of the helpless, is also justification for taking the life of an attacker (cf. Moses’ defense of a Hebrew being beaten by an Egyptian taskmaster, Exodus 2:11-15a — even though Pharaoh regarded it a criminal act). And *capital punishment*, particularly of a murderer, is declared by God Himself to be appropriate and therefore justifiable, as we read in Genesis 9:6 and also in the Savior’s own words in Matthew 26:52b. While Scripture specifically forbids personal vengeance and reserves it to God Himself (e.g., Romans 12:19), a civil government is permitted to employ capital punishment (“*the sword*”) against evildoers as God’s servant (“*minister*”) in the Kingdom of Power, functioning as “*a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*” (Romans 13:4) — not only for murder but also for other evil acts as well. Finally, the killing of a *combatant* in a “just war” (that is, in a war of *defense* or a war of *just retribution*) is justified in Romans 13:4 as the government’s right; and a soldier is therefore not a “murderer” when he fights against and kills an adversary as a citizen and agent of his God-ordained government, subject to its legitimate authority (Romans 13:1-2; 5) under such circumstances. A Christian may *object* to service in combat only when the country’s warfare is unjust (as in an unprovoked conquest, for the arbitrary annexation of sovereign territory, or violent aggression against a weak and defenseless nation), or when he is directed to kill innocent non-combatants who pose no threat to him or to his country (Term: “Conscientious objector” status; cf. Acts 5:29).

Nevertheless we find it occurring with greater frequency over the past two decades or so that, from an erring conscience and claiming *respect* for human life, **capital punishment** is being assailed as “murder” by those who are ignorant of or who reject what God’s Word plainly says; and many states and countries throughout the world have discontinued it as an “immoral and barbaric practice,” despite Scripture’s validation of it.

On the other hand, in flagrant *disregard* for “human life,” which both God Himself and *true* science recognize as existing from the moment of conception, and in opposition to thousands of years of almost universal condemnation of it as cold-blooded murder and unjustified under any circumstances, we find the **abortion** of living but as yet unborn children now since 1973 *legally* characterized as “a woman’s right to choose” — to “choose” or decide whether to protect and defend the life of her unborn baby or *willfully and deliberately* to terminate its life and destroy it by surgical or chemical slaughter! Almost *a million* such procedures are performed *in this country alone every year!* Of this heinous practice contrary to God’s holy Fifth Commandment, it should be noted that a human fetus is NOT “the woman’s body,” as are her tonsils, her appendix, or a skin-tag. A fetus, no matter at what stage of development, whether “viable” outside of the womb or not, is *scientifically its own person* — with its own distinctive chromosomes and DNA structure, circulatory system, nervous system, blood type, etc. Moreover, the Lord Himself says that He “*formed [it] from the womb*” (Isaiah 44:2, 24; 49:5). He tells Jeremiah, “*Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; ...*” (Jeremiah 1:5). Killing the unborn is not an act of self-defense; and, “in the case of rape or incest,” a child is just as much a *victim* of such crimes as is the mother. How unthinkable to inflict “capital punishment” upon the *victim!!*

Suicide [from the Latin *sui-* (oneself) and *-cide* (slaying)] is an especially grievous murder because, by its very nature, the victim deprives himself of any opportunity to repent, in unbelief and despair cuts short his time of grace, and, whether knowingly or unknowingly, plunges himself into everlasting death (Romans 6:23; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16b). Judas did that when he hanged himself (Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:18) and went “*to his own place*” (Acts 1:25). Tragically, suicide is currently on the rise — one suicide every thirteen minutes in our own country — on the part of those who have no hope (cf. Ephesians 2:12) and actually believe that they will be better off dead at their own hand than to live on in this world; and in a misguided and anti-Scriptural effort to “let people die *with dignity*,” many states have enacted laws making suicide legal and enabling “doctor-assisted suicide” by removing criminal penalties for euthanasia (mercy-killing). In our warped society in these latter days, it is considered to be “politically-correct” and “socially desirable” to remove all stigma from self-murder!

Moreover, life itself has become so cheapened in these last days when,

as it was in the days of Noah, “*the earth [is] filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:11), that people are killing their own children —born and unborn— in greater numbers than ever before; citizens are being shot down on the streets of their neighborhoods by drive-by murderers in gangs of thugs; and suicide-bombers wreak terror in crowded marketplaces, on airplanes and at sporting events.

Genocide, the killing of an **entire race** of people, while rare in number of occurrences, is well-documented both in Scripture and in secular history. Notable in Scripture is Pharaoh’s effort to exterminate the Children of Israel in Egypt by ordering that every male child born to the Hebrew women be **killed** (Exodus chapter 1). In secular history we recall the Turkish **massacre** of Armenians during World War I, the Holocaust under the Nazis in World War II, so-called “**ethnic cleansing**” during the Yugoslav (Bosnian) wars (1991-2001), and the **mass killings** of Tutsis carried out in African Rwanda in 1994. And, as we well know, Iran and other radical Islamists *still today* keep screaming, “Death!! Death to America and to Israel!”

But, as noted above, the **Fifth Commandment** and its application according to Scripture involves much more than the unjustified taking of a human life. Therefore Luther in his *Enchiridion* (Small Catechism) explains the Fifth Commandment as follows: “***What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.***”

The Savior’s summary of what “*the Law and the prophets*” require of us with respect to the Second Table of the Law, namely, love of our neighbor as we love ourselves (Leviticus 19:18b; Matthew 19:19b; 22:39) is instructive here: “***All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them***” (Matthew 7:12). Therefore, with respect to our neighbor’s body and life, his safety and welfare, we are not only to *respect* his temporal life by **not killing** him, but we are to do for him what we would want him to do for us, and *not* to do to him what we would *not* want him to do to us. Now that opens to us a broad vista of responsibilities over against our neighbor to which the Scriptures enjoin us.

“*We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body....*” While we do not have a specific passage of which Luther’s words are a paraphrase, or a specific prohibition against what we call today *assault*, or *battery*, or *beating someone up*, or

“mugging” someone, or child abuse, there are many instances in Scripture of violence against one’s person that are either identified or characterized as wickedness and are condemned as “evil” acts. Compare as illustrations the following examples: **a)** The conduct of his brothers toward Joseph (Genesis 37:23-24), their sale of him to the Ishmaelites (vv. 25-28), Reuben’s guilt-ridden panic as the responsible eldest brother (vv. 29-30), the vicious cover-up of their sin by the deceit of their aged father, which embittered his life (vv. 31-34), and their hypocritical “comfort” of their father afterward (v. 35). While there is no specific condemnation of these acts in the text, Joseph’s own characterization of it, “written for our learning” (Romans 15:4) “by inspiration of God” as “profitable...” (II Timothy 3:16), says it all in few words: “Ye thought *evil* against me,...” (Genesis 50:20). **b)** Pharaoh’s cruel slavery of the Children of Israel in Egypt, in which he caused them to “serve with rigor” and “made their lives bitter with hard bondage” (Exodus 1:13-14), which the Lord Himself characterized as “affliction” and “sorrows” and “oppression” (Exodus 3:7-9). **c)** Saul’s conduct toward David (and even toward Jonathan) in I Samuel 18:9ff; 19:9-10, 15, 33ff. in which he assaulted both David and Jonathan with a javelin — characterized as the result of the “*evil spirit*” that had overtaken him (I Samuel 18:10; 19:9; etc.) as God’s own punishment for his disobedience and unbelief (I Samuel 15:23; 16:14). **d)** The man in Jesus’ parable who “fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead” (Luke 10:30). These and numerous other examples demonstrate, even without specific prohibitions, that to “***hurt [or] harm our neighbor in his body***” (Luther), that is, “**to do or say anything which may destroy, shorten or embitter his life**” (Exposition of the *Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, Q/A 59B), is clearly a sin against God’s Fifth Commandment.

God also forbids us “**to bear [unjust] anger and hatred in our hearts against our neighbor**” (Exposition of the *Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, Q/A 59C), saying in Matthew 5:22, “Whosoever is ***angry*** with his brother ***without a cause*** shall be in danger of the judgment,” and in I John 3:15, “Whosoever ***hateth*** his brother is a ***murderer***; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” Unjustified anger and hatred of one’s neighbor may or may not be *evident*. If indeed it IS evident, it should be admonished in all seriousness, as the Lord admonished Cain for his unjustified anger against his brother Abel (Genesis 4), including the warning that it should be repented of *without delay* (Ephesians 4:26). Such a sin against the Fifth Commandment, whether

its evil fruit is visible or not, a sin which begins in the fleshly heart (Matthew 15:19; cf. Romans 7:18), is to be *abhorred* by the believer according to his New Man, because “*no murderer*,” no one who sins against the Fifth Commandment and does not sincerely repent, “*hath eternal life abiding in him*” (I John 3:15).

But let no one imagine that, just because he may not have committed “*murder*” in an overt act of slaying someone, or by hurting or harming someone in his body, or by harboring unjust anger or hatred toward his neighbor, that is, by a *sin of commission*, he is therefore innocent of “murder” according to this commandment! For the Bible has included everyone “*under sin*” (Galatians 3:22), even sin against the Fifth Commandment; “*for whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*” (James 2:10). It is indeed our *sins of omission* that should be all too obvious to us when we examine ourselves in the mirror of God’s Law, which demands of every one of us: “*Ye shall be holy!*” (Leviticus 19:2); “*Be ye therefore perfect!*” (Matthew 5:48). Be perfectly loving to your neighbor in thoughts, desires, words and deeds, even as you would like your neighbor to be perfectly loving to you!

Thus we come to the **positive** side of the Fifth Commandment, those things which God **requires** of us with respect to our neighbor’s body and life here in this world. Again, we repeat the Savior’s own summary, as it were, of the Second Table of the Law: “*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*” (Matthew 7:12). This isn’t merely a so-called “golden rule” of good advice as to how we should try to get along with our neighbor and cultivate a cooperative relationship with him. “*This is the Law and the prophets*,” Jesus says. This is what God **demand**s. This is what the Holy Scriptures **enjoin** upon us.

As the **positive opposites** of those sins which we have thus far identified as *transgressions* of the Fifth Commandment, of those “actual” sins of thought, word and deed that constitute “*murder*” in God’s sight, we have Luther’s summary of them as follows: “... that we may...**help and befriend [our neighbor] in every bodily need.**” Needless to say, we should help and befriend our neighbor if and when he is attacked in his body (as the Good Samaritan did to the man who fell among thieves, Luke 10:30ff.), if and when he is physically, mentally and even emotionally abused (as Moses came to the aid of an enslaved Hebrew, Exodus 2:11ff.), if and when he is subjected to hatred and unjust anger (as

Jonathan befriended David, I Samuel 18:10ff.), if and when he is deprived of food and drink — whether he be a friend (James 2:15) or an enemy (Romans 12:20). Because of our wretched, sinful flesh, however, we daily transgress the Fifth Commandment by *omission*, that is, we fail miserably to keep His precepts and to bring forth those “*good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10), our best intentions notwithstanding. St. Paul writes thus about his frustrations concerning his own “good intentions” that remained unfulfilled: “*To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would I do not... O wretched man that I am!*” (Romans 7:18-19). — “*Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin*” (Romans 3:20).

In spite of all the positives that have come to us because of advances in portable, wireless communication whereby we can know in a nano-second about one another’s needs, and the advantages we have in rapid transportation even in our personal lives, the sad fact is that the “speed” of our lives also leaves our neighbor behind in a virtual cloud of dust as we literally *zoom past him “on the other side”* (Luke 10:30ff.). The following may serve as examples: — A person has car trouble and is stranded on the side of the road; we assume that he has towing insurance and a cell phone; and we “*pass by on the other side*” at sixty miles per hour, barely having reduced our speed. — We see a car accident and get caught up in the “gaper’s block,” but we don’t “get involved.” We don’t even call “9-1-1” because we assume that someone *else* has already done it. — There’s a man or woman, “*destitute of daily food*” (James 2:15), standing at an intersection, looking for even a dollar to buy a sandwich; and the light turns green just before we get to him. “Whew! Surely wouldn’t want to hold up traffic by stopping. Maybe next time. Besides, the smallest bill I have in my wallet is a twenty.” “*Depart in peace. Be ye warmed and filled*” (v. 16)... “See ya! Have a nice day!” If often seems that our empathy and sympathy have all but disappeared —**or** that they have deteriorated into mere words. The Apostle John exhorts us: “*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?? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth*” (I John 3:17-18).

Truth be told, we have so many *opportunities* to “*do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:10)

that it is virtually impossible to devise an excuse in each and every case for ignoring the will of God toward our fellow men; and yet how easy it is to plead lack of *time*, lack of *money*, fear of *getting involved* (whatever that means), discomfort of inviting a *homeless stranger* under our roof, unwillingness to volunteer *foster care* to a child in need, and, of course, the age-old cop-out, “You can’t help *everybody*.” The Lord’s penman of His Proverbs says: “*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto **the Lord**; and that which he hath given will **He** pay him again*” (Proverbs 19:17). Therefore, motivated and enabled by the Gospel, the Lord Jesus says: “*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*” (Matthew 5:42). “*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto Me*” (Matthew 25:40). This is not only “*the Law and the prophets*” (Matthew 7:12), but manifest love for our fellow men is a fruit of our faith and evidence of our gratitude to Him who first loved us (John 14:15; I John 4:19) and gave Himself for us “*when we were [His] enemies*” (Romans 5:10). May He thus, by His Holy Spirit, through the Gospel, “*work in [us] both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13), also with respect to His holy Fifth Commandment!

—D. T. M.

“All things whatsoever ye would
that men should do to you,
do ye even so to them;
for this is the Law and the Prophets”

—Matthew 7:12

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

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

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. Balaiyi Thompson and The Rev. Bateinm Bestman, Pastors

Thompson Compound Abalama

Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobele Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

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

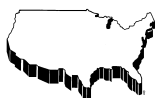
The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface and

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

8464 East Wildcat Drive, Tucson, AZ 85730 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

Worship Service 3:30 p.m.

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

Adult Bible Class 4:45 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

Announcing the
Sixty-sixth Annual Convention
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference
June 23, 24, 25, 2017

at

Peace Ev. Lutheran Church

Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452-4913

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor

Plenary Pastoral Conference on June 20th and 21st

The Board of Directors Meeting on June 22nd



Essay: *“The Inerrancy of Holy Scripture”*

by Pastor Daniel P. Mensing

Friday Sermon on John 17:17 — President David T. Mensing

Sunday Sermon on John 8:31-32 — Pastor David J. Mensing

Motto: **The Inerrancy of Scripture**

John 17:17