



"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

September—October 2017

Nos. 9-10



Five-Hundred Years



October 31, 1517



The
Concordia Lutheran



"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.
"My Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path;" Psalm 119:105.

Vol. LXII September-October 2017 Nos. 1-2

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

VICE PRESIDENT:

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

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



"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

A Devotion on Psalm 46

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (TLH, 262) is probably the most famous hymn written by Dr. Martin Luther, who not only wrote the edifying words but also com-

posed the stirring melody. It is quite a well-known hymn even outside of Lutheran circles (especially among Protestants). This "Battle Hymn of the Reformation" provided Luther himself with great comfort in the face of intense opposition from many powerful enemies; and it has, likewise, supplied countless other Christians since that time with strong encouragement in times of distress. The reason why Luther's hymn can do such great things is because its content is thoroughly Scriptural; it is a clear, poetic, and musical declaration of the comforting and edifying doctrines recorded in numerous passages of God's Holy Word. However, it was one section of Scripture in particular that provided Luther with the theme and parts of what could accurately be described as a sermon set to verse and music in *"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"*—namely, *Psalm 46*. It is a relatively short Psalm, and one that many Christians have committed to memory. In the following paragraphs, the content of Psalm 46 will be examined for meditation. The word *"selah,"* which appears three times in this Psalm, will be skipped, however, because we do not know exactly what it means. (It obviously meant something to the people at the time it was originally written, but its precise meaning and usage is uncertain to us today.)

The Psalm begins by stating: *"God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble"* (v. 1). Notice how the Psalmist groups himself together with all true believers using first person, plural pronouns such as *"our," "we,"* and *"us"*—as Luther also does throughout his hymn.

The promises of God's powerful protection are indeed *universally applicable to all Christians*. The fact that God is "*our Refuge*" simply means that He keeps us safe from danger. He is, furthermore, called our "*Strength*," which is certainly a fitting title considering that the Lord God possesses all power in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), and that He is able to do everything (Matthew 19:26) —even more than we can imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Consequently, He is always able to provide us with sufficient help in times of trouble, in the very best way and at the very best time, no matter what our needs may be. Thus Luther writes in the first stanza: "*A mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty Shield and Weapon; He helps us free from ev'ry need that hath us now o'ertaken.*"

Because the Lord our God is, as the Psalmist declares, "*our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble*," therefore we need not fear anything no matter how disastrous and overwhelming it may appear to be. Think about what is pictured in the next two verses, where we are told: "*Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof*" (vv. 2–3). That is a description of a scene that would seem to be truly terrifying — the earth crumbling around us, huge mountains being cast into the sea, powerful waves of water rising up and shaking the very mountains around us. But even considering all of that, the Psalmist still says that we will not fear, for the exact reason that he stated at the outset, namely, because "*God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble.*" Similarly, Luther also expresses how we need not fear even in situations that would certainly be quite terrifying if we did *not* have the Lord "*by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit.*" He sings: "*Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none; he's judged; the deed is done; one little word can fell him.*"

The next two verses of the Psalm describe a very pleasant scene in which God's people dwell with Him in peace, safety, and happiness — completely protected from all outside threats. "*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early*" (vv. 4–5). The residents of God's "*city*" and "*holy place*" are the members of "the

Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints” —*all true Christians*. They are *made “glad”* and *helped* by the Lord God who “*is in the midst*” of that holy city (the Church being referred to by the feminine pronouns “*she*” and “*her*”). Indeed, “*if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say: ‘If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us; the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul’*” (Psalm 124:1–5). But since the Lord *is* on our side and in our midst, therefore, we “*shall not be moved*” — we shall not fall to our enemies’ attacks. Hence we may enjoy true *peace* as we rest in the *safety* and *security* of the almighty God (Psalm 124:8), who is our loving and gracious heavenly Father for Jesus’ sake (Galatians 4:4–6; Ephesians 2:7). “*I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety*” (Psalm 4:8). “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee*” (Isaiah 26:3).

But while there is such wonderful peace within the walls of Zion (Isaiah 52:7), there is still much warring without — the unbelievers fighting against God. “*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed*” (Psalm 2:2). Such opposition of the world should not at all surprise us. The Scriptures teach, and our own experiences also bear out, that the unbelievers firmly set themselves against God, His Word, and His faithful followers (John 15:18–21). And because the vast majority of people are unbelievers (Matthew 7:13–14), that means that we, the Lord’s “*little flock*” (Luke 12:32), are greatly outnumbered by those who hate us and want to destroy us because of our allegiance to Christ (Matthew 10:22). And yet we still have nothing to fear, because the Lord our God is infinitely more powerful than our enemies (Romans 8:31); He can melt the earth with a single utterance of His omnipotent voice! “*The heathen raged; the kingdoms were moved. He uttered His voice; the earth melted*” (v. 6).

The fact that we are completely safe in God’s protective care is emphasized in the following refrain found in verses 7 and 11: “*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge.*” The Hebrew word translated as “*hosts*” is “*sabaoth*” [SÆ-bah-ōth; Hebrew: TSAY-vah-ōt]. It means “*armies*” and is a reference to the exceedingly large company of angels that serve the Lord. We find this word in the second verse of Luther’s hymn—“of sabaoth Lord”—as well as in the

“*Sanctus*” in our communion liturgy—“holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth” (*TLH*, page 26; based upon the chant of the angels recorded in Isaiah 6:3). The armies of angels that God sends for the protection of His believing children are undetectable by human senses; but if we *could* see them, they would certainly make any of our earthly foes appear to be very insignificant by comparison (see II Kings 6:15–17). The Hebrew word translated in verses 7 and 11 as “*Refuge*” [misgab] is different than the word translated as “*Refuge*” in verse 1 [machaceh], and indicates a place of safety that is situated high above the threats of enemies below. Secure in such a refuge, with the Lord of hosts by our side, true Christians may declare in the words of Luther: “*We tremble not; we fear no ill,*” knowing that the enemies of our soul “*shall not overpower us.*”

Further accentuating God’s boundless power and supremacy over all that would seek to harm us, the Psalmist bids his readers observe how God demonstrates His overarching control in thwarting the endeavors of the heathen, destroying their instruments of war. “*Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire*” (vv. 8–9). But why does God even involve Himself in the wars of humans who cannot possibly do anything that would harm Him? We learn from the Scriptures that the Lord takes it personally when His followers are attacked and persecuted (Acts 9:1–5). Because He loves His own (John 13:1), He does not want evil to come upon them in this world (John 17:14–15); and because He also does not want the wicked to die in their sins and be eternally damned (Ezekiel 33:11), God desires that the unbelievers stop their futile campaign against Him and His people, acknowledging that they cannot possibly defeat Him, thoroughly humbling themselves before Him, repenting of their sins, and looking to Him for mercy through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Psalm 2:9–12; James 4:8–10; Romans 3:19–24). Thus He declares in the next verse of the Psalm: “*Be still [cease and desist], and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth*” (v. 10). It is interesting to note that this is the only verse of Psalm 46 in which God directly speaks from the *first person* perspective: “*I*”. In the rest of the Psalm, He is consistently referred to in the *third person*: “*He*”). Sadly, the words of the Lord (every single word of the Bible) are too often ignored by the vast majority of people to their eternal peril (Matthew 7:26–27; II Thessalonians 1:7–9).

This grand and glorious Psalm concludes with its predominate theme repeated one final time: *“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge”* (v. 11). Though we sinful creatures deserve none of God’s protection and loving care, yet on account of His rich grace for the sake of Christ Jesus’ perfect atonement as our Substitute under divine justice, *“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge!”* What Christian could not be encouraged and strengthened by such words? These are the words of the faithful and all-powerful God of heaven and earth (Psalm 146:5–6)! For Luther, and for all Christians who have placed their trust in the comforting expressions of divine inspiration recorded in Psalm 46, God’s promises of constant protection have provided them with the courage and ability to prevail against the harsh threats, and sometimes even violent persecution, from the enemies of Christ’s Church. Indeed, our adversaries are many and may to a certain extent wound us — *“we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”* But *“who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...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).

“And take they our life,
goods, fame, child, and wife,
let these all be gone!
They yet have nothing won.
The kingdom ours remaineth!”

Amen.

(the conclusion of *“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”*)

—P. E. B.



The significance of Luther's Ninety-five Theses to the Lutheran Reformation

*"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." —II Peter 3:18*



As a youth, Luther was brought up by his devout Catholic parents, Hans and Margareta, in a very austere home with strict training and stern discipline, though not *"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4) centered in the Gospel. In spite of their meager financial circumstances, Luther's parents were determined to provide their children, Martin and his six siblings, with a good education. So, as a young child, he attended the local Latin school in his hometown of Mansfeld, where his father was a copper miner. At the age of fourteen, he was sent to a kind of middle school in Magdeburg, about 43 miles to the north, where he and his schoolmates sang in the streets of the city to earn money for their room and board; and after a year there he was moved by his parents to Eisenach, about 150 miles southwest, where his mother had relatives, in hopes that they would be of some financial assistance to the youngster. Sadly the help never materialized, but the young Luther was befriended by a wealthy lady in the city who specially appreciated Luther's singing voice and pleasant personality and took him into her home. In 1501 he went to study at the University of Erfurt, where as a diligent student he earned his bachelor's degree in only one year and his master's degree three years later, intending at his father's urging to become a lawyer. Up to this point, Luther's early years were rather unremarkable and typical of other young men preparing for a "professional" career. But, according to the course that the Lord had set for him, his life was about to take a decidedly different turn, for his own spiritual welfare and, as it turned out, for the great blessing of God's people.

For us Lutheran Christians, most of whom grew up educated by pious parents (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4) and taught by orthodox pastors “*in the Word and doctrine*” (I Timothy 5:17), it is difficult to imagine Luther’s *spiritual* life as a young man — brought up as “a faithful son of the [Roman Catholic] Church” in the darkness of ignorance, as a stranger to the Scriptures, in fear of God’s wrath and of Christ the Judge, and devoid of the peace and joy afforded to *us* by the precious Word of the Gospel. Both by the attacks of his own conscience and by the distorted view of Christianity taught by the church, Luther was spiritually depressed, emotionally miserable, psychologically morose, mentally distressed and in constant despair because of his inability to appease God’s just wrath against him because of his sins and many failings, and because he knew he could never satisfy God’s just demands and merit His favor. He had been brought up without any knowledge of the Bible and only came into contact with it at the age of twenty years while at Erfurt. And then he did not truly understand it, reading it with the perspective inculcated upon him by “Holy Mother Church.” Well could he have cried out with the Apostle Paul (and he probably did just that): “*O wretched man that I am!! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death??!*” (Romans 7:24).

When the unexpected death of a dear friend and the trauma of a violent thunderstorm teamed up to drive him to unrelenting panic, he vowed in a prayer to Saint Anna that if she would spare him from a sudden and violent death and from the inevitable terror of having to meet his wrathful God, he would become a monk. Perhaps by availing himself of the Sacrament of Holy Orders (the Ministry) he might have hope of gaining God’s favor. Much to his father’s displeasure and the astonishment of his friends, he suddenly left the study of law and in 1505 entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, where he thought he could finally give due attention to the miserable condition of his soul. However, the ascetic lifestyle of *monasticism*, including the vow of obedience to Holy Mother Church and her clerical princes, performing the penances they imposed upon him **and** those which he imposed upon himself, gave him no peace of mind, no peace of conscience, and no peace with God. When he confided his spiritual misery to his mentor at the monastery, Johann von Staupitz, he advised Luther to study the Scriptures anew as a comfort to his soul and to see in them the *mercy* of God to poor sinners in Christ. This was something completely new to Luther; and even though, particularly in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, he found the passages in which he discovered the doctrine of justification by grace for Christ’s sake through faith, Luther for quite some time did not fully

realize that what he was learning from the Scriptures was in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Roman Church. Yet, by the grace of God, he continued to immerse himself in the Word of God, to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of [his] Lord and Savior*” (II Peter 3:18), and to understand at length what it meant that “*the just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17) and that “*being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (5:1).

In the year 1507, Luther was ordained a priest and the next year was assigned a professorship at the new university at Wittenberg, where the study of the Scriptures and the task of lecturing on them to students of theology became his full-time occupation. In 1510 he was sent to the “Holy City” of Rome as a representative of his order and was deeply disappointed and frankly shocked by the unbridled immorality he observed there, especially among the leaders of the church; and yet his fidelity to the church did not waver. It was as if he had “blindness” on which prevented him from recognizing the soul-destroying doctrine and practice of the Papacy.

The year after his return from Rome to Wittenberg, Luther received the degree of Doctor of Theology and was called to be the preacher at the City Church in Wittenberg, the smaller of the two churches there, in addition to his duties as professor of theology. During the next five years Luther was busily immersed in the Scriptures, lecturing, preaching and teaching avid students and hearers the precious Gospel he had discovered, namely, that forgiveness of sins was not obtained by works of penance and satisfactions but alone by faith in the mercy of God won by Christ’s redemptive work—all the while firmly believing that he was faithfully serving the “Holy Father” in Rome and the “Holy Catholic” church of which he was the head... *UNTIL* a situation arose which aroused in Luther’s *new man* the need to address a horrible abuse that endangered the souls of his people! And it was his involvement in correcting that abuse which signaled the beginning of what we refer to today as “the Lutheran Reformation.”

In 1517, Pope Leo X, in order to finance the construction of St. Peter’s in Rome, issued an “indulgence” or remission from the *temporal punishment* of sins which, the church taught, had to be endured either in this life or after death in *Purgatory*. This “indulgence” could be *purchased* by the people and serve the dual purpose of building St. Peter’s basilica and of gaining peace of mind and conscience against the anticipated horrors of protracted cleansing by fire in *Purgatory* after they



died. The indulgences were *plenary*, granting life-long remission in advance for ALL *temporal* punishments. [The doctrine of indulgences from the temporal punishments of sins already forgiven is still taught by the Roman Church today (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1994, §1471-1473).] The sale of these indulgences was forbidden in the state of Saxony (where Wittenberg was located), but many people flocked to buy them in neighboring states from a “pitchman” appointed by the Archbishop of Mainz in the name

of the Pope. The man was a Dominican friar named Johann Tetzel, who as part of his sales pitch scandalously expanded the warranty of the indulgence to cover those who had already died and sold *forgiveness* for sins *not yet committed!* This came to Luther’s attention when his people came to *confession* and, instead of confessing their sins and seeking forgiveness for Christ’s sake, demanded *absolution* from Luther for all *guilt* and from the *eternal* punishment they deserved, all on the basis of the paper they had purchased.

Luther was in disbelief that the Holy Father would have countenanced such “abuse” of his otherwise legitimate indulgences, and he preached against Tetzel’s “fraudulent” indulgences and against Tetzel himself, sincerely believing that, as a faithful son of the church, he was defending the Pope’s integrity and that the Pope would surely set things right if he were informed of Tetzel’s unscrupulous and scandalous marketing of the forgiveness of sins. On October 31, 1517, Luther called upon the clergy and theological professors to engage in a public examination and debate about the virtue of indulgences and the abuses being carried out in the name of the Pope, and he posted on the church door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg a list of *ninety-five “theses”* or talking-points to be considered in the debate. The theses were written in Latin, specifically targeted for the theologians, and were fastened to the door because it was the unofficial bulletin board of the university in Wittenberg. It was not his intention to have them translated into German, printed, and distributed throughout Germany for clerics and laymen alike to debate,

but that is exactly what happened; and they ignited a virtual firestorm. The public debate or discussion that Luther desired never took place.

Luther later wrote concerning his initial motive and his desire to defend the honor of the Pope:

I was then a monk and a mad papist and so submerged in the dogmas of the Pope that I would have readily murdered any person who denied obedience to the Pope (Quoted in Hageman's *Sketches from the History of the Church*). So great was the authority of the Pope in my eyes that I thought it a crime worthy of eternal damnation to disagree with him on the most insignificant point. And this godless notion moved me to believe that John Huss [a Bohemian reformer burned at the stake for heresy in 1415] was such an accursed heretic that even thinking of him was wicked. And for the defense of the Pope's authority, I myself would have brought sword and fire to burn this heretic, convinced that I was doing God the best of service (*Commentary on Galatians 1:15-17*, cited in *What Luther Says*, § 3379).

It is striking to the reader of "early Luther" and particularly of his *Ninety-five Theses* how solicitous he was of the Pope and critical not of Roman Catholic doctrine nor of the indulgences themselves but only of their abuses. Luther indeed had to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of [his] Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" to discern "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to Godliness" (I Timothy 6:3) and to isolate and combat the "good words and fair speeches [designed to] deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). In a preface to a collection of his earlier works in Latin, Luther wrote in 1545:

I pray the pious reader, and pray him for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he read this [edition] with discrimination, indeed, with much mercy. ...In these writings of mine you will find how many and great concessions I at first, in all humility, made to the Pope, concessions which in later times and in these days I regard and execrate as supreme blasphemy and abomination. But I was alone at first and was certainly inept and unlearned for the handling of such great matters. (*Luther's Works, St. Louis Ed.*, XIV, 439).

It is interesting to note that as early as 1520, before Luther stood before the diet at Worms in 1521 and refused to recant what he had written and taught, he asked all bookdealers and readers to burn his earlier books on

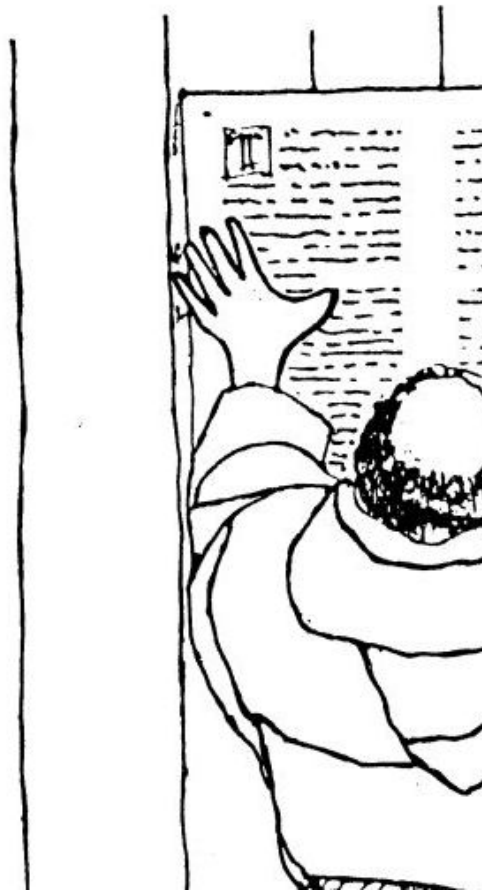
the indulgences controversy because at that time he did not yet know that the Pope is the Antichrist (*Luther's Works*, Weimar Edition, cited by Plass in *What Luther Says*, p. 1367). He also wrote in his preface to *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520): "Two years ago I wrote on indulgences but in such a way that I now deeply regret having published the book" (Weimar Edition, V, 497). We should be grateful to God that He kept Luther a humble scholar, ready and even eager to confess his inadequacies and missteps along the way and zealous of being a perpetual learner of divine truth from the Holy Scriptures to the glory of God!

Nevertheless three important outcomes resulted under the mighty hand of God from Luther's "well-intentioned" efforts: **1)** The Pope and his adherents did *not* recognize Luther's desire to be helpful in calling his attention to Tetzels abuses but demanded his immediate retraction of his objections, thus causing Luther to see their true spirit and to fight against it. **2)** Luther's objections immediately became the focal point of something *quite different*, namely, the impression that Luther was another upstart like John Huss of Bohemia (†1415) and wanted to establish a church in his own image—which of course was not true. It was the "reformation" of the church which he sought, not its "destruction." And **3)** Luther's intensive study of Holy Scripture during the course of the initial controversy and then certainly thereafter brought to light the corruption of the entire papal system and the damning false doctrine and practice which had been hidden for centuries under the guise of holiness and preserved under the threat of papal power; and the "formal principle" of the Reformation was established that Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*) is and must always be the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice.

Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* themselves, hardly worthy of recognition as the beginning of the Reformation, were evidence of his engagement in a Scriptural examination of the Papacy and, though a mere spark in the spiritual darkness which had engulfed outward Christendom for well over a thousand years, the ignition of a cleansing bonfire which exposed the Roman Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2) and restored to God's people the full truth of His precious Word, including especially the doctrine of justification by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, totally apart from the works of the Law (Romans 3:23-28; 4:5; 5:12-21; I John 2:2; Ephesians 2:8-9; II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 5:1; etc.). In the *Lutheran Confessions* comprising the *Book of Concord* of 1580, we find the documents written and agreed upon during Luther's lifetime as the

treasure-chest of Luther's settled Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, the position so surely grounded "*upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*" (Ephesians 2:20) that we still today gratefully subscribe to them without qualification "because they are a correct exposition of God's Word in the matters they treat."

— D. T. M



For our children:

Martin Luther

Hero of the Reformation

Many years ago, a young man in Germany named Martin Luther was very unhappy because he was worried about his sins. He had been



taught by his church, the Catholic church, that Jesus, instead of being a loving Savior, was an angry judge who wanted to punish sinners. But the church said that a person could get help and protection from Jesus' anger by praying to saints, Christians who had died and gone to heaven, and especially to Jesus' mother, Mary. It also said that, in order to get to heaven, a person had to do good works, obey the church, and even pay money to earn

God's forgiveness. Because, just like us, Luther was a poor sinner, he was afraid of God and even punished himself, hoping that God would feel sorry for him, forgive him, and take him to heaven someday. But Luther knew that he could never be perfect, as God demands in His Law. And even though he had given his life to God and had become a pastor, he knew that he could never earn his way to heaven; and he was constantly afraid of going to hell.

Then one day, while reading in the Bible, Luther suddenly discovered the good news that Jesus had been perfect in his place, had paid for all his sins on the cross, and that God had forgiven all sinners in the whole world because of what Jesus did for them! Luther learned that heaven is God's free gift to poor sinners! All they have to do is trust His merciful forgiveness, and they have peace with Him through their Lord Jesus Christ! The Catholic Church and its leader, the Pope, were wrong about the true way to heaven and were really leading poor souls to hell! And still today, the Catholic Church teaches the very same things.

On October 31, 1517 Luther made a list, in *Latin* (the official language of the church), of ninety-five statements about certain teachings of the church and nailed them to the front door of his church in Wittenberg for other pastors and professors to read and to study, so that together they could talk about them in a special meeting. But the meeting never took place. Instead Luther's statements were copied down, printed in *German* (the language of the ordinary people), and spread all over Europe. The leaders of the church were very upset with Luther because he dared to question what was being done in the name of the Pope, and they thought that Luther was trying to cause trouble among the people so that they would no longer obey the Pope's teachings. But Luther only wanted the pastors to teach the truth of God's Word, especially the good news of salvation by God's grace through faith in Jesus, without the deeds of the Law. But they told him to be quiet, burned many of his writings, threw him out of the church, and even threatened to kill him. But God protected Luther and

helped him to bring back to the Christian Church the precious truth of God's pure Word.

Even though Luther was at first only *beginning* to learn about the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus, and his *Ninety-five Theses* were only *a start* for him in his search for the truth in his study of the Bible, we count the posting of those statements as the beginning of the **Reformation**, which we celebrate each year on October 31st. *This year we specially rejoice as Lutheran Christians that, as "children of the Reformation," we can celebrate together **five hundred years** of God's grace because of Luther's work. With the Lord's help and protection, and by His wondrous grace revealed in the Gospel, Luther, like Gideon in the Bible, was a real hero for Jesus' sake! Let us thank God for this faithful pastor!*

God's Word they still shall let remain
and not a thank have for it! *
He's by our side upon the plain
with His good gifts and Spirit!
And take they our life,
goods, fame, child and wife,
let these all be gone!
They yet have nothing won!
The kingdom ours remaineth!

*Original German words

(*TLH* 262, 4)

— D. T. M.

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott



“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

(based on Psalm 46)

Luther's "*Battlehymn of the Reformation*,"
the manuscript in his own hand.

Note that Luther also composed the melody for this hymn, which is the theme of Mendelssohn's "*Reformation Symphony*" Nr. 5, composed in honor of the Augsburg Confession of 1530.

“The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”

“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 16:19



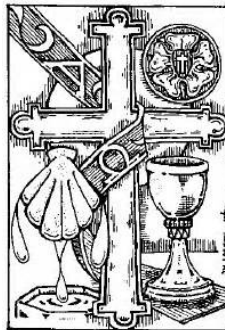
One of the chief differences between the Church of Rome and the rest of outward Christendom is its claim that the Lord Jesus gave “*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*” *exclusively* to the **Apostle Peter** and to his direct line of successors, namely, the incumbents of **the Papacy**, that “line of succession” lacking ANY proof whatsoever from Holy Scripture. The Savior did in fact say to Peter in explanation of “*the keys*” and in description of their function: “*Whatsoever thou [singular] shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven [the binding or closing key], and whatsoever thou [singular] shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [the loosing or opening key]*” (Matthew 16:19b). **However**, in direct *contradiction* of Rome’s assertion that Christ gave the keys *exclusively* to **Peter**, we read two chapters further on in Matthew’s Gospel that He gave the very same keys and their function to **ALL the apostles**, saying to them: “*Verily I say unto you [plural]: ‘Whatsoever ye [plural] shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye [plural] shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’*” (Matthew 18:18). And this latter authorization comes immediately after Christ’s directive to bring the trespass of an impenitent sinner, after admonition by two or three brethren, “*unto the church*” or local congregation, so that he or she may “*hear*” **its** admonition as the third and final step in Christian remonstrance, to the end that the *penitent* sinner may be **absolved** by the ministration of the *Gospel* (the *remitting* key), and that the *impenitent* may be **excluded** by the ministration of the *Law* (the *retaining* key), “as long as he does not repent” (Luther; cf. Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19).

Thus Luther sets forth in his *Small Catechism* or *Enchiridion* the following question under the Fifth Chief Part of Christian Doctrine: “What is the Office of the Keys?” And he answers on the basis of Scripture: “It is the peculiar [i.e. unique] church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but to retain

the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.” And, as Scripture proof of this function of **the Keys**, he cites the Savior in John 20:22-23 as answering the question “Where is this written?” saying: “Thus writes the holy Evangelist John, chapter twentieth: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and saith unto them, *‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.’*”

Therefore we summarize the definition of the **Office of the Keys** in our “short explanation of Luther’s *Small Catechism*” (CPH, 1943, Q/A 267) as follows: “The Office of the Keys is the power, or authority, to preach the Word of God, to administer the Sacraments, and especially the power to forgive and retain sins” (I Peter 2:9; Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:22-23; Matthew 18:18). Then in Q/A 268: “This power is called the Office of **the Keys** because it *opens heaven* by forgiving sins, or *closes heaven* by retaining sins” (Matthew 16:19); and in Q/A 270: “Christ has given this power to His Church on earth [that is, to every individual believer], especially [for its special *public* administration and application] to every local congregation” (Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23; I Peter 2:9; and Matthew 18:17-20) which (Q/A 275) “according to God’s will...chooses and calls men as ministers [pastors], who in the name of Christ and in the name of the congregation *publicly* perform the functions of the Office of the Keys” (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:10-12; I Corinthians 4:1; I Peter 5:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; II Timothy 4:1-5). —“What do you believe according to these words?” asks Luther. “I believe that when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and again when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself” (The *Pastoral Office* of the local congregation).

—D. T. M.

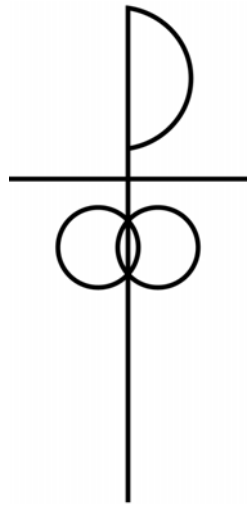


(Series: Exposition and Application of the Ten Commandments)

IV. The Sixth Commandment

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

Part One — Holy Marriage



“Adultery” by its most common definition is the violation of the sanctity of Holy Marriage by either the husband or the wife — or perhaps even both — by fornication (consensual sexual intercourse) with a third party, a sin not only against one’s spouse but also against God’s own holy ordinance. It therefore behooves us in our consideration of the *Sixth Commandment* first of all to address Holy Marriage itself. Thus, in the *first part* of our article, we shall explore on the basis of Scripture: **1)** what marriage is, **2)** how and by whom it was instituted, **3)** how it is entered into, **4)** what its purposes are, and **5)** how marriage is to be kept sacred in the fear of God, namely, as each party to the marriage *individually* carries out his or her respective and specific duties and responsibilities toward the other with diligence and faithfulness, and as both spouses *cooperatively*, as a cohesive unit, live together as one entity, *mutually sharing* the various facets of their God-ordained relationship according to His will as revealed in His Word.

Since Holy Marriage as such is barely touched on in traditional “Confirmation classes” and even in adult instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine preparatory to communicant membership, and the *Synodical Catechism* (CPH, 1943) mentions it in only three questions, many pastors endeavor to engage in instruction or so-called “pre-marital counseling” with Christian couples *before* they commit themselves to one another in engagement. In many cases, however, the man and woman have already become engaged *before* such instruction and have merely notified their pastor after-the-fact that they are essentially *already married* in the sight of God. In such situations, “*pre-marital*” instruction is not possible; and the “in love” part of their relationship is the primary focus of their attention. Because Holy Marriage is a divine

institution and consists of a life-long commitment, it should not be entered into casually, chiefly on the basis of romantic attraction or physical and emotional “magnetism;” but the entrance of God’s Word gives light and understanding to Christian men and women (Psalm 119:130) so that they commit their way unto the Lord and trust in Him to bring a truly Godly and happy life to pass for them (Psalm 37:5).

1) For the sake of simplicity and brevity, we shall use **the definition of marriage** as found in the *Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism* (CPH, 1943), Question/Answer 61: “Marriage is **the life-long* union of one man and one woman**** unto **one flesh**.” And, with Luther, we should always ask, motivated by God’s grace to seek *His* authority: “Where is this written?” God says the following in His Word:

*And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called **woman** because she was **taken out of man**.” Therefore shall **a man** leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto **his wife** [lit., **his woman**]; and they shall be **one flesh** (Genesis 2:23-24; cf. Mark 10:7-8).*

*They are no more twain, but **one flesh** (Matthew 19:6).*

The woman which hath an husband is **bound by the Law to her husband **as long as he liveth** (Romans 7:2; cf. I Corinthians 7:39) ... **NOT** “as long as they are ‘in love’ with each other,” **NOT** “as long as there are no ‘irreconcilable differences’ between them,” **NOT** “as long as they ‘get along’ with one another,” **NOT** “as long as each one respects the other’s ‘individuality’ and ‘autonomy’.” All such humanly-imposed conditions (and others) result in a 50% failure rate in marriages, often within the first five years!*

*** For this cause God gave them up unto **vile affections**; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is **against nature**; and likewise also the men, **leaving the natural use of the woman**, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is **unseemly** and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (Romans 1:26-27). NO homosexual marriage!*

*But **if the unbelieving depart**, let him depart. A brother or sister in **NOT under bondage in SUCH cases**... (I Corinthians 7:15). Malicious desertion dissolves the “bond” of marriage.*

2) “Marriage was **instituted by GOD**” (*Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, Question/Answer 61). While marriage is a *civil*

estate —intended for all people, not only for Christians— marriage is **not** merely a relationship of convenience, good order and “relative” permanence established by civilized mankind in society [people who, after millions of years finally distinguished themselves from brute and irrational animals (*Evolution!*)] for the stability of the “family unit,” for the documentation of parentage, and for the control of sexual promiscuity, as secular sociologists view it. It was instituted by **God Himself** in the beginning, immediately after His creation of man and woman, for the welfare of His foremost visible creatures, made in His image with rational minds, immortal souls, and moral responsibility. Marriage was instituted *BEFORE man fell into sin* and was therefore originally intended to be a holy, blessed, and completely compatible union between His sinless creatures.

However, due to the total depravity of the whole human race by virtue of man’s fall into sin (Genesis 3), God’s institution of marriage was violated and perverted from what He had originally intended because “*the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Romans 8:7). Consequently, from the earliest times among the children of the world, man sought his marriage partner on the basis of *physical* and *emotional* suitability (cf. Genesis 6:1-7), not at all concerned about finding a mate ***spiritually*** “*meet for him*.” And that problem continues to this day and establishes the difference between a legal and legitimate marriage, and a Godpleasing marriage wherein both parties are “*in the faith*” (II Corinthians 13:5) and in “*the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3; I Corinthians 1:10), dwelling together in the love of Christ and motivated and enabled thereby to love one another (John 13:34; 15:12), first as Christian brethren and then also as Christian spouses. “*Where is THIS written?*”

And God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over...every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28).

And the Lord God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help MEET for him....” And the rib which the Lord God had taken from him made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. ...Therefore shall a man leave his

father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife [that is, woman with the suffix “his”]; *and they shall be one flesh* (Genesis 2:18, 22, 24).

[**GOD**] said: “**For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife** [lit., woman, understood as wife when used with the possessive “his” — as also in the Hebrew], **and they twain shall be one flesh**” (Matthew 19:5; cf. also Ephesians 5:31).

What therefore **GOD hath joined together** let not man put asunder (Matthew 19:6).

Ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives]...*as being heirs together of the grace of life* (I Peter 3:7). This passage assumes that the spouses in a *Godpleasing* marriage are believers in Christ Jesus and are in Christian fellowship with one another (Cf. Romans 8:16-17; Titus 3:5-7; I Corinthians 1:10).

3) “Marriage is **entered into** by rightful **betrothal** or **engagement**” (*Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism*, CPH, 1943, Question/Answer 61). The estate of *marriage* is not created by the act of sexual intercourse, whereby two people become “*one flesh*” ONLY in a purely physical sense, for then a man would be “married” to a harlot by virtue of their fornication (I Corinthians 6:16), and their “casual sex” would have established a life-long “*honorable*” union between them (Hebrews 13:4). On the contrary, we rightly confess that the essence of marriage is the **mutual consent** of the parties, their complete understanding of the life-long relationship of *exclusivity* in their intimacy, and their completely voluntary commitment to *permanent* wedded love and faithfulness. Thus marriage is not merely a *physical* and *temporary* relationship (as is *fornication* between so-called “friends with benefits”), but it is a *contractual* and *permanent* relationship entered into by the solemn agreement of both parties, already before the consummation of their marriage.

Thus we teach and confess that the **mutual consent**, the understanding, agreement, commitment and promise of both parties, expressed in a **rightful betrothal** or **engagement**, **IS marriage in the sight of God**, is binding upon both parties, and is the beginning of the married estate between them, even though their marriage has not yet been *publicly solemnized* according to the regulations of the state and thus is not yet *publicly recognized*, with *witnesses*, as being in effect. It is for the latter reason, however, that, in order to avoid offense — in order not to

give the impression that they are merely “living together” *apart* from marriage — the betrothed couple should not consummate their marriage and, as a result, perhaps even beget children, until the vows whereby they entered into marriage have been *publicly witnessed* and the marriage is thus *acknowledged* and *civilly recognized*. “Where is *THIS* written?”

*And they said, “We will call the damsel and inquire at her mouth.” And they called Rebekah and said unto her, “**Wilt thou go** with this man?” And she said, “**I will go.**” And they sent away Rebekah their sister. (Genesis 24:57-59). Rebekah **consented** to be Isaac’s wife — in *their* case “sight unseen.”*

*The angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a **virgin espoused** to a man whose name was Joseph...and the virgin’s name was Mary. ...Then said Mary unto the angel: “How shall this be [the conception of Jesus in her womb], seeing **I know not a man** [since she had never had sexual intercourse]?” (Luke 1:26-28, 34).*

*When as His mother, Mary, was **espoused** to Joseph, ...Then Joseph, her **husband**, ...was minded to **put her away** [divorce her] privily. ...The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, “Joseph, ...fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy **wife**” Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto his **wife**, and **knew her not** [did not immediately consummate their marriage].... (Matthew 1:18-20, 24-25).*

*In the mouth of **two or three witnesses** shall every word be **established** (II Corinthians 13:1).*

*Be subject to **every ordinance of man** for the Lord’s sake ...for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (I Peter 2:13-15).*

*Wherefore ye **must needs be subject**, not only for wrath, but also **for conscience’ sake** (Romans 13:5).*

4) Marriage has **three purposes**, the first two existing from the beginning, the third having been added after the Fall because of sin in the world: God instituted marriage a) for **mutual companionship**; b) for the **procreation of children**; and c) as **an aid against unchastity**. “Where is *THIS* written?”

a) *And the Lord God said, “It is **not good** that the man should be **alone**. I will make him an help **meet** [suitable, suited] **for him**” (Genesis 2:18) ...a female fellow human being.*

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Whoso findeth a [Godly] wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord (Proverbs 18:22).

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of Thine house (Psalm 128:3).

b) Male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:27-28).

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. (Psalm 127:3-5).

c) To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (I Corinthians 7:2).

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [the intimacy that is due her, owed to her according to his consent in marriage], *and likewise also the wife unto the husband* [the intimacy that is due him, owed to him according to her consent in marriage] (I Corinthians 7:3).

Defraud ye not one the other [by withholding sexual intimacy], ... *that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency* [lack of ability to control one’s need for sexual gratification] (I Corinthians 7:5).

5) Each party to the marriage has specific individual duties and responsibilities according to God’s Word, as well as mutual responsibilities which they share together as a couple (“one flesh”). “Where is THIS written?”

~ *The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body* (Ephesians 5:23).

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church. ...Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself (Ephesians 5:25, 28-29, 33; cf. Colossians 3:19).

Ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered (I Peter 3:7). This passage assumes that the couple are believers in Christ Jesus and in Christian fellowship with one another (Cf. I Corinthians 1:10).

If any provide not for his own, and specially for them of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel [a heathen] (I Timothy 5:8). The Christian husband is to support his wife and children.

Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)

~ *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the Body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything* (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord (Colossians 3:18).

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands (I Peter 3:1).

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him 'Lord,' whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (I Peter 3:6).

Let not the wife depart from her husband (I Corinthians 7:10).

And the wife, see that she reverence her husband (Ephesians 5:33).

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, giving none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully (I Timothy 5:14).

Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:4-5).

There are thus MANY passages of God's Word which specify to both husbands and wives their individual and mutual responsibilities toward one another in Christian marriage and in the Christian home. *OTHER* requi-

sites that are recognized by *the world* as being “socially-” and/or “politically correct” and therefore “essential” to a successful marriage are NOT required by God’s Word. They are for the most part *carnal* expectations that arise out of the “me-first” mentality of selfishness in *violation* of Scripture (cf. Romans 12:3, 10; I Corinthians 13:4-5; Ephesians 4:32; etc.) which require *self-esteem*, *self-realization*, *self-fulfillment*, *self-image*, *self-confidence*, *self-reliance*, and the like, all of which militate against the cooperative and self-*sacrificing* spirit that should exist between husbands and wives according to God’s Word. Common among these are: The spouse isn’t “*attentive* enough” —doesn’t do what **I** want; he or she “doesn’t *listen*” —doesn’t agree with **me**; “doesn’t *communicate*” — doesn’t tell me what **I** want to hear;” he or she is “*opinionated*” —expresses an opinion that is different from **mine**; “makes me feel *worthless*” —comes up with an idea that is better than **mine**; “I’m not ‘*in love*’ with him or her anymore” —he or she no longer satisfies **my** desires or appetites the way he (she) used to when our love was “new.” The *self-concepts* result in the repudiation of responsibility toward *anyone else*; and so our society today, driven as it is by selfishness, now accepts “**no-fault**” divorce — the breaking of the marriage covenant and its permanent relationship for capricious reasons and selfish expectations which no one wants to recognize as “**faults**.”

Typical of these is “**irreconcilable differences**,” of which the Bible says in no uncertain terms: “***If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses***” (Matthew 6:15). “***And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses; but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses***” (Mark 11:25-26). “***Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you***” (Ephesians 4:32). “***First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift***” (Matthew 5:24); etc.

Is it any wonder that **Holy Marriage**, the estate that God intended from the beginning to be “a **life-long** union,” is becoming “unpopular” nowadays? This is particularly the case among those who are not Christians. For they have no respect for God’s commandments, ordinances and institutions (Romans 8:7). Because they are unbelievers and are not “*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26), they are not motivated by the Gospel of God’s love and mercy to them in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:14-15, 19; I John 4:11; etc.) to fear, love and trust in Him above all things. “*For it is God which worketh in [believers] both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13). More and more worldly-minded couples are deciding just to “live together” as “friends with benefits” with no “long-term” commitment. It’s easier to “break up” than to get divorced,

they say. And when the commitment wears thin for one or the other in a marriage, when they become bored with the relationship and find that they are no longer emotionally “attracted” and “connected” to their mates nor personally “satisfied” in their self-interests, instead of renewing and strengthening the relationship with the grace that only God supplies in and through His Word (II Corinthians 12:9), the marriage is simply canceled like a magazine subscription. It’s “the easy way out.” Sadly, one out of two marriages today is dissolved in fewer than five years on average! And even more sadly, what started out as a *Christian* marriage with God’s blessing upon it often falls victim to Satan’s interference, as one or the other partner forsakes the Lord, makes shipwreck of his faith, falls into the idolatry of “self,” and virtually destroys the family! With Luther, we pray “that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice; and though we be assailed by them, that still we may finally overcome and obtain the victory” by His grace in Christ our Savior!

The **violation of sexual purity**, including the topic of divorce, will be taken up in the next installment of our article, as well as sexual sins which defile people’s chaste and decent lives here in this world and to which even Christians are inclined because of their flesh (Romans 7:18).

—D. T. M.



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

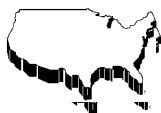
The Rev. Nimi B. Fyneyface and

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

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyneyface@yahoo.co.uk



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordiallutheranconf.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.

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

Telephone (520) 721-7618

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.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 532-4288

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.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

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.

Adult Bible Class 4:45 p.m.

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

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.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

Pastor: (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

Five hundred years later...

...we celebrate with thanksgiving to God Luther's bold move, by His grace and with His help, to address the sale of indulgences by John Tetzel, the commissary of the Pope, and, in the course of time, growing in grace and in the knowledge of God's Word (II Peter 3:18), to identify and combat on the basis of *Scripture alone* (John 17:17; Ephesians 2:20) the many soul-destroying errors of the Papacy which were then, and still are, leading countless souls to hell.



Soli Deo gloria!