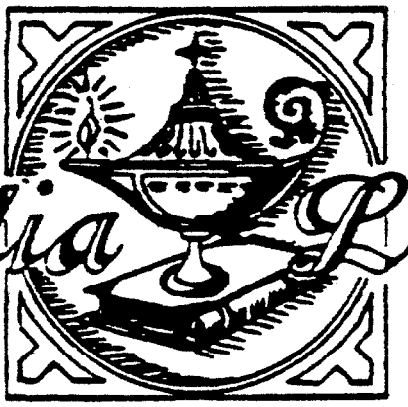
the Concordia Lutheran



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

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

Vol. XXXV. January -- March, 1990 Nos. 1 - 3.

"If any man be in Christ,

he is a new creature:

Old things are passed away;

behold, all things

are become new!"

--II Corinthians 5:17.

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STATEMENT of PURPOSE

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

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are, by God's grace, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

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

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

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

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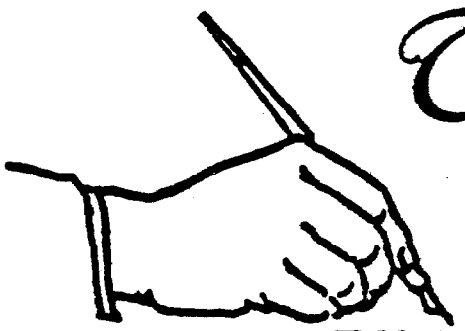


The President's Column

THOUGHTS FOR A NEW YEAR

Redeem the time. Eph. 5:14-17

As I write this article it is mid-February and, as of this writing, you still have not received your November/December issue of our "Concordia Lutheran." As I was thinking about what to write in this "New Year's" article, I began to consider the reasons why even the last issue of last year was not out yet and why I was writing an article for the January/March '90 issue half way through February. The reasons themselves serve as a good jumping off point for our meditation.

The Lord, according to His great love, allowed several of our pastors (including myself and our printer, Pastor Bloedel) to suffer the flu for several weeks in January. Happily this seems to be behind us now, but it was only a small part of the reason for the delay in publishing. By God's grace, several pastors, congregations, and individuals have inquired into the doctrinal position of our Conference. To respond to these people is obviously an important part of our mission outreach and takes a great deal of time both in correspondence and in trips. This is a work that none of us ever complain about but a work that does, nevertheless, draw us away from some of our more normal duties in our Conference. But the most important reason for delays in publishing our "CL" is simply that our pastors are just **that**, namely, pastors, shepherds to the precious sheep of Jesus' flock, and their responsibility is to those flocks. This local work, the work of our pastors in the midst of their respective congregations, is the most important work in the world, for it is through the regular preaching and teaching of God's Word in the local Christian congregation that souls are won and preserved in the saving faith (Isaiah 55:10,11). The work of our Conference is important, including the work of publishing this periodical. They are an **extention** of the local work of our congregations, but not the work itself, and so at times the

schedule with important Conference work, such as articles for our "CL," suffers. We are, therefore, at this time, providing you with an **enlarged January/March issue.**

Time, that's the issue, and time is really what this little meditation is all about. As the world passed from one year into another, from one decade into the last decade of this century, it spent a great deal of time corporately and individually examining the past and trying to predict the future. Celebrations raged around the world, many people drinking themselves into senselessness because. . . well, probably because they have little else to do to fulfill their lives.

For the Christian, however, the passing of one year and the beginning of another is simply another milestone on the pilgrimage through this life. Time is precious to the Christian only insofar as that time is regarded as a precious gift from God to be used wisely, to be used for the extension of Christ's Kingdom here on earth, for the edification of Christ's people, for the glorifying of God's Name through the fruits of faith which as disciples of the Lord Jesus we are bound to produce. Each moment that ticks by on the clock brings the Christian closer to the eternity he longs for in Christ. It is for these reasons that the Apostle Paul exhorts all Christians in Ephesians 5:15,16: **"See then that ye walk circumspectly** (that is, **carefully, in accordance with God's Word, with Christian wisdom) not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."** Redeeming the time, that is what the Christian's life is all about and why time is so important to him. The Christian is literally to buy up, to use up, to spend every moment God gives him and use it for our Lord. That's what it means to use the time wisely, **"to walk circumspectly."** Such wise use of time is especially important since the days we live in are very evil. The end of days is upon us. The world may count, and plan and celebrate the passing of time. The Christian must use the time left with all the Christian wisdom which he can muster, never forgetting that precious promise of God to each of us in James 1:5, which says, **"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."**

So even as you receive an issue in which an article appears somewhat late, remember that your pastors, like you

yourself, are trying to "**redeem the time**" wisely that God has given them. May the prayer of each of us be that God would help us all to use the time He has given us wisely and to His glory until that day when time comes to an end and all those who have remained in God's grace, through Christ Jesus their Savior, shall enter into the glory of God's eternity with Christ, to rule and reign forevermore.

Oh, praise Him, for He never
Forgets our daily need;
Oh, blest the hour whenever
To Him our thoughts can speed;
Yea, all the time we spend
Without Him is but wasted,
Till we His joy have tasted,
The joy that hath no end. Amen.
(TLH 393:4)

Your servant in Christ,
Mark W. Dierking, President

THE WISE MEN

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."
Matthew 2:11.

What a long and arduous journey it was for those Wise Men in the Christmas story. The little village of Bethlehem is about 5 miles south of the city of Jerusalem and we are told that the Wise Men came from the East. The country from which the Wise Men hailed is not stated in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Arabia, Babylonia, and Persia were eastern lands. Some Lutheran Bible commentators (e.g. Lenski) favor Babylonia as their choice because the Babylonians were well-known down through the centuries for their study and knowledge of the stars. If the Wise Men came from Babylonia, then it was necessary for them to travel some five to six hundred miles. Just think! No cars, trains, or airplanes to travel in comfort; instead, camels, donkeys, and on foot.

Who were these Wise Men or as they are called Magi from the Greek, magoi? They were not the magicians or sorcerers of their day as portrayed by the scoffers of the Bible. For when we look at the entire account in the 2nd chapter of St. Matthew we readily observe that they were true believers who obviously had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Note that they are not called "Kings" but Wise Men, men who were "learned and expert people in natural science" (Luther). "They were the learned men and scientists of their day, who devoted themselves to the study of nature, medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, and the like" (The Life of Christ, Adam Fahling, Pages 106,107). We must confess that we really do not know how it happened that the Wise Men associated the birth of the Lord Jesus with the star. Although the text does not specifically state, various explanations have been attempted. For example: the Wise Men probably acquired this knowledge concerning the coming Savior from the Jews who heard it from Daniel and who then passed it down to succeeding generations. We must admit that this explanation

sounds very plausible. After all, we read that King Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel **"chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon"** (Daniel 2:48). Moreover, Daniel, as we well know, very boldly and courageously confessed his faith and would have nothing to do with the shameful idolatrous practices of the Babylonians.

The Wise Men knew who this Child was in the little town of Bethlehem. **"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him."** Here was divine adoration. We are not told that Joseph and Mary said to the Wise Men, "Do not worship this Child, worship only God!" No, indeed, Mary and Joseph knew that the Child that had come to dwell with them was **"the Word made flesh"** (John 1:14). **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the WORD WAS GOD"** (John 1:1). Here was **"God manifest in the flesh"** (I Tim. 3:16). **"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"** (Col. 2:9). Luther's comments are pertinent, "Although they (the Wise Men) enter a poor house, find a poor young woman, with a poor child, and also there is an appearance so unlike a king that their servant is more honorable and reputable, yet they are not troubled, but in great, strong, full faith they put everything out of their eyes and mind which nature with its arrogance might adduce and bring into play; they simply follow the verse of the prophet and the testimony of the star and believe Him to be King, fall down, worship Him, and give presents to Him" (Quoted in Kretzmann's Popular Commentary, Vol.1, Page 10). In this poor, small Child the Wise Men beheld God and Man united in one Person, the Son of David and David's Lord (Matt. 22:41-46).

The faith of the Wise Men was revealed also in the presentation of their gifts: **"gold, frankincense, and myrrh."** A description of gold is not necessary; it has been and continues to be one of the most sought-after metals. How fitting that this precious metal be presented to the Christ Child, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Frankincense, a clear waxy, yellow oleo-gum-resin which emits a sweet fragrance when burned as incense, symbolizes the prayers of the believers ascending up to heaven (Ps. 141:2). With the presentation of frankincense the Wise Men were acknowledging that before them lay the only Mediator between God and men (I Tim. 2:5) and who would later declare during His public

ministry, **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you"** (John 16:23). And, finally, there was myrrh, a reddish-brown waxy resin, distilled from the bark of shrubs and small trees, used in the temple and in preparation of the dead. It is most significant that the Wise Men should present myrrh to the Christ Child who as our great High Priest would offer up Himself upon the Cross for the sins of the world.

The Wise Men were truly wise. They showed their wisdom by believing the prophecies concerning the Savior, following the miraculous star which the Lord had placed in the heavens to lead them to Bethlehem, worshipping the Christ Child as their Savior, and presenting their gifts to Him.

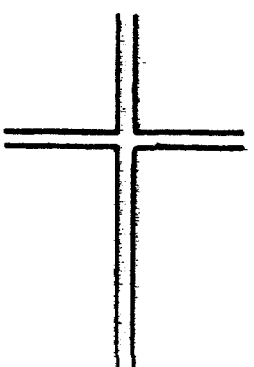
The world does not look upon such individuals as being wise. On the contrary, they regard those who believe in this Christ Child as their Savior to be foolish and unlearned. They take great pride in their so-called up-to-date knowledge and look upon the true believers in Christ as being out-of-date, simple-minded people. But the Word of the Lord reminds us that **"great men are not always wise"** (Job 32:9). **"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise"** (I Cor. 1:27). What the worldly-wise consider to be foolishness is **"the wisdom of God"** (I Cor. 1:24) and the most precious treasure to us Christians. In our dear Lord Jesus **"are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** (Col. 2:3), and He **"is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"** (1 Cor. 1:30).

We, together with all men, stand condemned by the Law of God. **"Now we know that 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"..."for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Rom. 3:19,23). And what is God's righteous judgment upon all the transgressors of His Law? **"The wages of sin is death"**(Rom. 6:23). Ah, but there is hope. It is neither a self-manufactured hope nor a self-delusion, but a certain hope which rests upon the promise of Him who cannot lie. In the birth of the Christ Child we have the unfathomable revelation of God's unmerited love whom the heavenly Father has sent **"that we might live through Him"** (I John 4:9). Now all those whose hearts have been brought to a saving knowledge

of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel have as their very own possession: the forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, the hope of an everlasting life with Jesus in the joys of heaven. The unbelieving worldly-wise will hear from the lips of the almighty Son of God, "**Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels**" while those who are truly wise in having their sin-stained garments washed white in the blood of the Lamb will be given the gracious invitation, "**Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**" (Matt. 25:41,34). Now I ask you, dear reader, who is really a **wise** man - the true believer in Christ or the worldly-wise unbeliever?

Having had such undeserved love bestowed upon us by our dear heavenly Father through Christ our Savior we bring Him our gifts, dedicating ourselves and all that we have to Him who loved us beyond measure. After all, the Savior came to die for all "**that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again**" (2 Cor. 5:15). "**We love Him, because He first loved us**" (I John 4:19). Our faith expresses itself in doing those things which are well-pleasing to the Lord. And how do we know what pleases Him? Here we make use of the Law of God as a **rule** which teaches us Christians which works please Him. While, by God's grace we are Christians, we still retain our sinful flesh which constantly seeks to hinder our new man from carrying out the good which we so earnestly desire (Rom.7:19). That means we must make faithful use of God's Word, the Sword of the Spirit, lest our sinful flesh gain the control over us, always pleading for His help as we strive to love Him more fervently and seek to be more solicitous about those who are in need of our help.

--MLN



THE GREATEST WALL

EVER BROKEN DOWN

Without question, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, news stories of 1989 was the "tearing down" of the Berlin Wall. We place the words, "tearing down," within quotation marks because the wall has not as yet been physically torn down. Much of the wall remains standing. However, the Berlin Wall no longer functions as a barrier between East and West. East and West Berliners may go freely back and forth. For all practical purposes the wall has been torn down.

As recently as six months ago no one would have dared to predict that this wall, which has stood for over twenty-five years and has been used by the communists to keep people enslaved, would come down. It was simply unthinkable. That it **has** happened takes time to sink in. What a combined sense of shock, joy, relief, and thanksgiving the East Germans must have experienced and still do experience!

Now then, as we give thought to the "tearing down" of the Berlin Wall, we cannot but think of an even greater wall which was torn down almost two-thousand years ago. When our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross and rose again the third day, the greatest barrier which ever existed, the barrier between God and sinful man, was torn down.

What was the origin and nature of this greatest of all walls? The words of Isaiah 59:2 tell us: **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."** The sin of man erected a wall between God and man. It was erected when Adam fell into sin. When Adam fell, all mankind fell. The Bible says, **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** (Romans 5:12) Since all sinned in Adam's fall, all were separated from God because of their sins.

How is it that sin separates us from God? Though simple, the answer is fundamental. God is a just, holy God. **"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."** (Isaiah 6:3) God says, **"Be ye holy; for I am holy."** (I Peter 1:15) As a just, holy God, God hates sin. It is an abhorring to Him. There-

fore man in his sins cannot be in spiritual communion or fellowship with God. Scripture says, "**God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.**" (I John 1:5-6) In Adam's fall, all began to walk in darkness and were separated from God, and His face was hid from us. Man was under the wrath and punishment of God.

However, as we just celebrated a few weeks ago, "**when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.**" (Galatians 4:4,5) When Christ came into the world as a true man, born of the virgin Mary, yet remaining true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, He, as our Substitute under God's Law, fulfilled all the Law's demands. By His **active obedience** (actively in words and deeds), He obeyed perfectly all the precepts of God's Law in our place. By His **passive obedience,** He submitted Himself to the full penalty of the Law and suffered, in our place, the eternal wrath and punishment of God against sin. The Bible says, "**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.**" (Galatians 3:13)

This perfect fulfillment of the Law by Christ, in our stead, tore down the wall or barrier which separated us from our holy God. The enmity between God and man was erased. "**To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.**" (II Corinthians 5:19) Likewise, the Bible says, "**And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in His sight.**" (Colossians 1:20-22) And what is most interesting and significant is that God, in His providence, saw fit to give visible, symbolic evidence of this broken down wall. As soon as Jesus died, having cried, "**It is finished.**" the huge veil in the temple was torn in half from top to bottom to signify that all men now have direct access to God through Christ.

Moreover, this tearing down of the wall of sin and guilt and the removal of God's enmity toward sinners also resulted in the tearing down of still another wall--the wall between Jew and Gentile. In the Old Testament times the people of the Hebrews, the children of Abraham, were the covenant people of God. They were the bearers of the Messianic promise. Out of their descendants would come the Savior. They were also given the seal of the covenant of the Gospel, the sacrament of circumcision. To the Hebrews were given the Law and the prophets; hence they were given the divine revelation of the one true God. Then, so as to ensure the preservation of the Messianic line and the continued propagation of the Messianic promise, God "fenced-in" His people by means of the Ceremonial Law. The Ceremonial Law kept the Hebrews separate from the Gentile nations who were, in the words of Paul, **"without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."** (Ephesians 2:12) Thus, the Jews were forbidden to intermarry with the Gentiles as such intermarriage would lead potentially to a compromise of the true faith and eventually lead to idolatry and the forfeiture of the Messianic promise. The history of Old Testament Israel is sufficient testimony of just such pollution when the people of Israel fell into disobedience. Yet, by His grace, God preserved a remnant among His covenant people for the sake of the promise of the Savior.

Then, when Christ came as promised and fulfilled all the Law of God, including the Ceremonial Law, the wall or barrier between Jew and Gentile was also broken down. This is clearly explained and expressed in the following words which Paul addressed to the Gentiles: **"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our Peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."** (Ephesians 2:13-18) Christ, by the blood of His cross, in paying the penalty of all sins, both of the Jews and the Gentiles, made

the distinction between Jew and Gentile no longer existent. God's grace in Christ encompasses all men. All people, whether they be Jew or Gentile, who embrace Christ by faith are joined together in that one spiritual Body of Christ, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. Because all distinction between Jew and Gentile has been abolished, the Apostle Paul also says, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."** (Galatians 3:28,29)

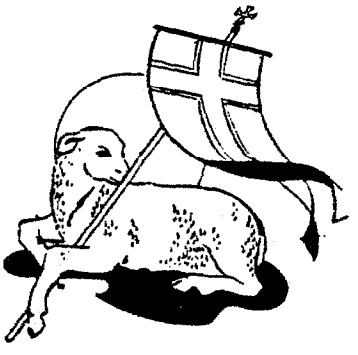
Here we must insert a word of warning against those who make a false conclusion concerning the breaking down of the wall between Jew and Gentile. There are many, especially in the Reformed bodies, particularly those who espouse millenialism or chiliasm, who include among the children of God even the **unbelieving** Jews. However, Jews who reject Jesus Christ as their Savior whom the Scriptures promised have rebuilt for themselves the wall of sin between themselves and God, and between themselves and the true Israel of God, the Holy Christian Church. By their rejection of Christ in unbelief, the words of Isaiah still apply: **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear."** (Isaiah 59:2) Now, the Jews who have rejected Christ are in the same condition as the Gentiles were in beforehand, namely, **"having no hope, and without God in the world."** (Ephesians 2:12) Tragically and ironically, the Jews who had all the advantages of the grace of God have forfeited for themselves all the blessings of the freedom which Christ won for all men by His breaking down the wall of sin.

Indeed, let us all be thankful that the wall of all walls has been broken down by Christ. Let us not become high-minded and in the end fall into the same condemnation which awaits the unbelieving Jews. Just as people who have gained temporal freedom can soon forget the horrors of their former slavery and the sacrificial price of their liberty by falling into a life of sloth, licentiousness, and disobedience, so we, the free people of God in Christ, if we are not diligent, can fall back into the spiritual slavery of disobedience and carnal living. Therefore, the Apostle Paul says to us, **"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not**

as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:17-24)

As great as the breaking down of the Berlin Wall is, let us never forget nor lose sight of the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ has broken down the **wall of sin** and has given us a freedom above all freedoms, the freedom from sin, death, the devil, and damnation. All praise and glory be to Christ! Amen.

--ERS



The Proper Observance Of Lent

Mardi Gras--an occasion for colorful festivities and parades - is observed on Tuesday, the day before Lent begins. Mardi Gras is really a French term which means **"Fat Tuesday."** The term is quite appropriate. Associated with the celebration of Mardi Gras is the excessive consumption of food and drink, and other sins of the flesh. We are told (**World Book Encyclopedia**) that French colonists introduced Mardi Gras into the United States in 1766. This Roman Catholic custom found many adherents particularly in New Orleans and soon spread throughout the southern states.

While we Lutherans do not observe Mardi Gras, we do observe what begins on the day after--the Lenten Season. With the beginning of Ash Wednesday, 40 days before Easter, we devote special time to a devout meditation of the bitter suffering and death of our dear Lord Jesus Christ who endured such indescribable anguish of body and soul that we might receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life through faith in Him.

As we follow the Savior in spirit from Gethsemane to Golgotha we remind ourselves that **"God hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Cor. 5:21). We were the ones who deserved the bonds and stripes, the shameful indignities and reproaches, the agonizing torment of body and soul in hell. **"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (Rom. 5:8). Paul Gerhardt expresses this Scriptural truth so well in the words:

I caused Thy grief and sighing
By evils multiplying
As countless as the sands.
I caused the woes unnumbered
With which Thy soul is cumbered;
Thy sorrows raised by wicked hands.

'Tis I who should be smitten,
My doom should here be written:
Bound hand and foot in hell.

The fetters and the scourging,
The floods around Thee surging,
'Tis I who have deserved them well.
(TLH, 171:4,5)

While, indeed, the suffering and death of Jesus impresses upon us the enormity of our sin--for if there were no sin there would be no need for a Savior--there shines forth in such a far greater measure the sunshine of the heavenly Father's love for us in Christ which dispels the darkness of our sin-darkened minds and makes us rejoice and take comfort in our dear Savior "**who loved me, and gave Himself for me**" (Galatians 2:20).

The Savior's intense suffering began in the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed, "**O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt**" (Matt. 26:39). Willingly the Savior submitted His Will to His heavenly Father that we might be the beneficiaries of His submission. The realization of the ordeal that lay before Him in submitting to His heavenly Father's will caused Him such agony that "**His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground**" Luke 22:44).

Just think! He bore the sins of the whole world--original sin and all actual sins--and yet He was pure and holy (Heb. 7:26). He was our Substitute who paid the penalty of our guilt and thus atoned, once and for all, for our sins. "**Now where remission of these (sins and iniquities) is, there is no more offering for sin**" (Heb. 10:17). He endured the torments of hell for us that we might have everlasting life through faith in Him as our Savior. He battled with the prince of darkness "**that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage**" (Heb. 2:14,15). From Gethsemane to Golgotha we behold the incomprehensible and unfathomable love of our dear Savior.

Such a sincere contemplation of the Savior's suffering and death during the Lenten Season must surely move our hearts to exclaim with Paul Gerhardt:

From morn till eve my theme shall be

Thy mercy's wondrous measure;
To sacrifice myself for Thee
Shall be my aim and pleasure.
My stream of life shall ever be
A current flowing ceaselessly,
Thy constant praise outpouring.
I'll treasure in my memory,
O Lord, all thou hast done for me,
Thy gracious love adoring.

(TLH, 142:4)

--M.L.N.

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

39th Annual Convention

to be held at

St. John's Lutheran Church
Lebanon, Oregon
Rev. M. L. Natterer, pastor

on

June 22nd, 23rd and 24th

with

Pastoral Conference
on June 19th and 20th

and

Board of Director's Meeting
on June 21st

---Convention Theme---
Be Strong And Of A Good Courage
--Joshua 1:9.

---Convention Essay---
The Crosses That The Christian Bears
Are Evidence Of God's Love For Him
by Rev. David T. Mensing

The Offense
Of The Cross Of Christ

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness."
--I Corinthians 1:23.

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One of the most popular pieces of jewelry is a gold or silver cross attached to a matching necklace. And, judging from the fruits of many wearers of a cross, it is not only Christians who wear crosses, but ironically the heathen also. The wearing of a cross is actually stylish!

While it is perfectly fine for a Christian to wear a cross, it is indeed ironic that unbelievers would want to wear one. After all, the heathen despise the true meaning of the cross. They are offended by the real significance of the cross. And this is not new. Long ago the Apostle Paul wrote: **"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."** In the days of the Apostles, the Jews stumbled over the message of Christ crucified because it did not harmonize with their carnal notions of a Messiah whose triumphs, they supposed, were to be of a temporal nature. The Jews, in their self-righteousness and work-righteousness, were offended that their Messiah should be a Suffering Servant, One who is **"despised and rejected of men."** (Isaiah 53:3) Similarly, the Greeks, who were noted for their advanced learning, culture, and philosophy, considered the whole idea of a crucified Savior to be utter foolishness. The Greeks were the humanists of the ancient world. They were proud of human achievement. They gloried in man. Hence, the idea of man being a poor, miserable sinner who needs the atoning blood of a crucified Savior was an offense to their high and sophisticated appraisal of themselves.

Yet, the offense of the cross did not cease with the Biblical era. In fact, both before and after the death of Christ, natural man of all nationalities has been offended by the message of the cross. As the Bible says, **"For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."** (I Cor. 2:14)

What is it about the cross, the death of Christ, that offends natural man? It is basically the same as that which offended the Jews and Greeks in Paul's day. Fallen man is naturally proud, self-righteous, and wishes to rationalize away his sin and guilt before God. This is especially evident in those who are highly gifted and intelligent, who are successful, high achievers, well-educated, and so called "**born leaders.**" Such people usually see themselves as self-sufficient. They hate to think they need to depend on anyone--not even God! The mere thought of having weaknesses, let alone sins, is abhorrent to them. To have to repent and to confess sin is contrary to the pride of natural man. For example, this writer once attended a lecture given by an accomplished musician who mocked the Christian faith. In his mockings he referred to the hymn, "**Amazing Grace.**" In particular he attacked the words, "**for such a wretch like me.**" The idea of seeing one's self as a wretch who is in need of God"s grace was highly offensive to him. He deemed such a thought to be absurd to anyone of any intelligence. This is what Scripture means in I Corinthians 1:26-29 where it says, "**For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are.**"

Indeed, it is not until anyone comes to the full and clear realization that he **is** a wretch, that is, a poor miserable sinner who has offended God and deserves the wrath of God, that he will glory in the cross of Christ. When a person sees that he is a lost and condemned creature and is in dread of God's holy justice, then he will not be offended by the cross of Christ. He will be thankful that God's only begotten Son became our Suffering Servant on the cross. How well Luther expresses this truth in our Catechism where he gives the following question and answer: "**Why ought we to remember and proclaim His death? That we may learn to believe that no creature could make satisfaction for our sins but Christ, true God and man; and that we may learn to look with terror at our sins, and to regard them as great indeed, and to find joy and comfort in Him alone, and thus be saved through such faith.**" (Question #16 of "**Christian Questions With Their Answers**")

Indeed, how thankful a repentant sinner is as he takes comfort in the fact that God actually forgives sins for the sake of Jesus Christ who was "**wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed** (Isaiah 53:5). To the believer, to the one who trusts in Christ crucified for his salvation, the cross of Christ is both the wisdom and power of God. Paul says, "**But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.**" (I Cor. 1:24)

If we should wear a cross, let us wear it with the conscious understanding of its true meaning. And each time we see a cross, whether at church or on someone's necklace, let us view it with the humble awareness that our sins put Jesus on the cross, and that by His blood shed on the cross, our sins are paid for and forgiven.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride."
(TLH, 175:1)

--E.R.S.

The Great Value Of Good Works

Although good works have **no** value so far as the justification of a sinner is concerned, since salvation is not by works, but by grace, Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8,9, it is incorrect to declare that good works are of no value whatsoever. To say that good works have no value whatever, as the Anabaptists at Luther's time claimed, is both anti-Scriptural, since Scripture with great earnestness inculcates good works, Eph. 2:10; Matt. 5:13-16, and unreasonable, since even conscience, on the basis of the divine Law inscribed in the human heart, prompts a person to do what is good, Rom. 2:14,15. Over against the enthusiasts, Luther (St. L., IX, 442ff.) emphasized the truth that outside the article of justification good works indeed could not be praised enough.

Against the Anabaptists, Luther wrote (St.L., X:IV, 310ff.): "See how nobly they teach regarding good works, saying that they would give away all their good works for a farthing! By this they want to be our apes and imitate our doctrine, having heard that we teach that good works do not make a sinner pious, do not blot out sins, and do not reconcile us to God. To this the devil adds his supplement and despises good works, so much so that he would sell them all for one farthing. . . . We teach that to reconcile God, to make pious, to blot out sin is so high, great, and glorious a work that alone Christ, the Son of God, could do it and that this is really a pure, special, peculiar work of the one true God and His grace, in comparison with which our works are nothing and can do nothing. But that for this reason good works should amount to , and be worth nothing, who ever has taught or heard such a thing except out of the lying mouth of the devil? I would not give one of my sermons, not one of my lectures, not one of my writings, not one of my Lord's Prayers, indeed, not even the least of the good works I have done or yet do for all the goods of the world; yes, I regard it (each of these good works) greater than my own life, which certainly is dearer to every one, and must be dearer, than the whole world; for each is a good work which God has done through and in me. But if God has done it, and if it is God's work, what is the whole world compared with God and His work? And though I am not made pious through such works--for that can be done

alone through Christ's blood and righteousness, without works--nevertheless they are done to the praise and glory of God and to the benefit and weal of my neighbor, so that not even a single one of them could be paid for by the whole world or compared with those of the world. And this fine rabble would take only a farthing for them! Oh, how well Satan has hidden himself here! Who could not detect him here?"

This high estimate of the value of Christian good works is in full agreement with the clear teaching of Scripture. Christian good works are indeed of great value, and this for the following reasons:--

a. They are done according to the **norm of God's Law.** While all works that are not done according to God's will are worthless and displeasing to God, those which are accomplished according to His will are esteemed by Him as infinitely precious in His sight, Rev. 2:2ff.

b. They are **God's own works in us**; for He is the efficient Cause of all Christian good works, Phil. 2:13; II Cor. 3:5; I Cor. 12:6-11; Eph. 2:10. While all "good works" that are done by men to merit salvation are condemned in Scripture as "works of the flesh," Gal. 3:2,3,10, the good works of believers are praised and glorified in Holy Scripture as "fruits of the Spirit," Gal. 5:22,23, which God Himself works in them to His glory, Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:5,6; I Tim. 6:17-19; Titus 2:11-14; etc.

c. They are **tokens and testimonies** of the state of grace into which the believer has been placed through faith in Christ, Luke 7:47; I John 3:14. As such they are of great value to the believer himself, Rev. 2:19, and to all other men, Matt. 5:16.

d. They are **imperishable,** following the believer into eternal life, where they are rewarded most graciously, Rev. 14:13; Matt. 5:12; 19:29; 10:42; Gal 6:9, while all earthly works will be consumed by fire on the Last Day, Matt. 24:35; I Cor. 7:31; II Peter 3:10.

e. On account of the good works of believers, of which the preaching of the Gospel is the foremost, **God defers Judgment Day,** Matt. 24:14; I Pet. 2:9. For this reason Christians should at all times be most diligent in performing good

works, Gal. 6:10; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5, and Christian ministers should constantly inculcate them, Titus 3:8; I Tim. 6:17ff.

f. The performance of good works is **the real objective of the Christian's life here on earth.** As soon as a person has become a believer in Christ, he no longer belongs to this world, but to the kingdom of heaven, Phil. 3:20; John 5:24. But God wants His saints to live on earth for a while in order that they may serve Christ, publish His Gospel, and perform many good works to the praise of His name, Matt. 5:13-16. From all this it is evident that Christian good works are indeed of the greatest value. Luther says (St.L., I 867): "The works which we do in our calling through faith in the Son of God shine before God, the holy angels, and the whole Church."

--Christian Dogmatics, J.T.Mueller, pp. 417-419.

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Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments Nov. 6 in a case involving the state of Oregon's attempt to proscribe use of the hallucinogenic cactus peyote by the Native American Church. Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer has appealed for the second time an Oregon Supreme Court ruling that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution exempts Native Americans using peyote in religious ceremonies from prosecution under the state's criminal drug laws. Possession of peyote, which contains mescaline, is otherwise illegal under Oregon law. Alfred Smith, a Klamath Indian who turns 70 the day the Supreme Court hears the case, says use of peyote in the Native American Church is a sacrament and that the state's pursuit of the case the past six years is "racism and bigotry." But Frohnmayer says an exemption for the Native American Church threatens the state's ability to control dangerous drugs. Federal regulations specify an exemption for use of peyote in Native American Church ceremonies, but the exemption has not been adopted by all of the states.

We are told that the peyote cactus, found mainly in the southwestern part of our country and in certain parts of Mexico, yields mescaline a very potent drug which is similar to LSD in its effects upon the mind. That fact, in itself, should be enough to deter any rational person from making such use of this hallucinogenic drug, the effects of which last about 12 hours. If all of the states allow its use, then what prevents any so-called religious group of individuals from claiming a constitutional right in using marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.? And what about allowing the religious sects in the backwoods of Appalachia to handle poisonous snakes and drink strychnine in their services? Whatever decision the U.S. Supreme Court hands down, it will certainly generate more controversy. For the past several years a vigorous program has been launched by our government against drug-abuse which has infested every segment of our society. We Christians must be especially careful lest we succumb to this snare of the devil who seeks to destroy our souls and bodies. Faithful use of God's Word and earnest prayer (Ephesians 6:13-19) on our part will thwart his evil designs!

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Rev. Robert D. Preus will remain president of Concordia Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., pending a court decision on whether he can be removed from office while appealing a board of regents decision that he be "honorably retired." In a ruling issued Aug. 14. the Allen County, Ind., Circuit Court granted a temporary restraining order that keeps Dr. Preus in office until arguments are concluded on an injunction that would allow him to remain president during the entire appeals process. The hearing process began in Circuit Court Aug. 23, but was continued until Sept. 11, according to a court official. Dr. Preus is appealing the regents action through the adjudication procedures of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, which operates Concordia Seminary. The regents voted July 27, by a 5-3 majority, to "honorably retire" Dr. Preus, who has the reputation of being conservative. At the center of the most recent round of controversies at the seminary is the June 1988 firing of tenured Professor Alvin J. Schmidt, who is suing the seminary. Dr. Schmidt was fired on grounds that he advocated the ordination of women in opposition to the synod's official position. In an effort at compromise, Dr. Schmidt signed a prepared statement recognizing that there are some biblical texts that forbid female ministers, but he added an amendment expressing a

desire to continue pursuing his "right to academic freedom." However, Dr. Preus rejected the statement and ordered that Dr. Schmidt be fired.

While it is not our intention to meddle into a controversy which concerns the two opposing factions in the Missouri Synod, nonetheless, it is necessary to point out certain Scriptural truths. First of all, we must recognize that there dare not be any "academic freedom" on the part of seminary instructors with the truths of God's Holy Word! Our Lutheran Confessions rightly emphasize that the Holy Scriptures are the only source and norm of doctrine, the sole authority, and that nothing may be taught in the Church contrary to that Word. Thus a Lutheran professor, if he is sincere and desires to be faithful to his calling, will instruct his students according to that Word. Failure to do so, should result in his dismissal. Secondly, it is common knowledge that there are those within the Missouri Synod agitating for the ordination of women. Many of their congregations already have women in their congregational meetings as voting members, some have women occupying various offices such as treasurer, trustee, etc., while a few even have women as "pastoral assistants." How sad to observe the words of Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth concerning the course of error being fulfilled in the Missouri Synod--"toleration, equal rights, supremacy" (Conservative Reformation, page 195-196). Those who oppose the errors must either apply Romans 16:17 to the errorists or stay in and be leavened.

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"What is a Mason?" an advertisement from a Masonic lodge in the May 24th Washington Missourian answers: "A MASON is a MAN and a BROTHER who meets you on the LEVEL and acts upon the SQUARE. Truth is his COMPASS and he is ever PLUMB. He has a true GRIP on all that is RITE. He is loyal to his ORDER and whatever his DEGREE he is MASTER of himself. In the LODGE of Life he wears unstained the white LAMBSKIN of Innocence. From his INITIATION as an ENTERED APPRENTICE he travels over EAST toward the LIGHT of Wisdom until he receives the final--the DIVINE PASSWORD that admits him into the INEFFABLE PRESENCE of the ETERNAL SUPREME GRAND MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE."

Let there be no doubt about it! Masonry is a religion! The official encylopedia of the Masonic Lodge

(Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry by Albert Pike) states, "Every Masonic Temple is a Temple of Religion, and its teachings are instructions in religion" (page 213). Is it Christian? Masonry answers, "Freemasonry is not Christianity nor a substitute for it" (page 618). Again, "Masonry reverences all the great reformers. It sees in Moses, the lawgiver to the Jews, in Confucius and Zoroaster, in Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Arabian Iconoclast, great teachers of morality, and eminent reformers, if no more; and allows every brother of the order to assign to each such higher and even divine characteristics as his creed and truth require" (page 525). What a hodge-podge! "Masonry, around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Moslem, the Brahmin, the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer" (page 226). The god of the Masonic Lodge is a pagan idol and not the only true God of the Bible. The Royal Arch Degree refers to God as J (Jehovah) B (the Babylonian name, Baal) O (Osirsis, the chief god of the Egyptians). Masonry thus blasphemes and mocks the name of God. Right down the line Masonry rejects the precious teachings of God's holy Word. It requires blasphemous oaths, it rejects Jesus as the ONLY Way to heaven, it teaches that man can get to heaven on the basis of his own good works, etc. How sad that many so-called Christians have been deceived into joining the lodge. God says to such, "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate," (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

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Scientists have long believed that at the genetic level, men and women are pretty much the same. According to text books, only two of the 46 gene-carrying chromosomes in a human cell, a pair known as the sex chromosomes, are noticeably different in males and females. But at a genetics seminar this last August at Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Me., this conventional wisdom took a beating. Participants cited evidence that there may be many more differences in male and female genes than previously thought. That revelation challenges assump-

tions about heredity held for more than a century. Human chromosomes come in 23 pairs. One member of each pair is from a person's mother and the other from the father. Except for the two sex chromosomes, the members of each pair were thought to be interchangeable. It seemed that the way a chromosome functioned in the cell had nothing to do with whether it came from the mother or the father. But new studies of genetic diseases suggest that the chromosomes from the two parents can play slightly different roles. "This is just absolutely mind boggling," said Judith Hall, a geneticist from the University of British Columbia. "It's a new way of thinking." And that new way may continue to reveal subtle differences in the genetic makeup of the two sexes.

The distinctions between male and female are set forth in Holy Writ. In creating Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:7,21-23) God clearly distinguished between male and female. And in Genesis 3:16, after the fall into sin, we observe a greater distinction. Physically, of course, there is an obvious difference between the sexes. As a general rule, the male is physically stronger. And it is the Lord who has given this characteristic to the male since, according to God's Will, it is the male who is to provide the necessities of life for his family through his mental and physical labor (I Timothy 5:8). There are also emotional characteristics distinguishable between the sexes. While the Bible indeed refers to the wife as "the weaker vessel" (I Peter 3:7) yet we must marvel, for example, how "the weaker vessel" is able to endure the pains of child-birth. We dare not forget that the biological distinctions between male and female are from the hand of the all-wise Creator so that male and female might recognize their rightful place in life according to His Word and thus lead a happy and productive life, rejoicing that God made them male or female.

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