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.

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"And what I say unto you
I say unto all,
WATCH!"

-- MARK 13:37

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, 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 acknowledgement of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

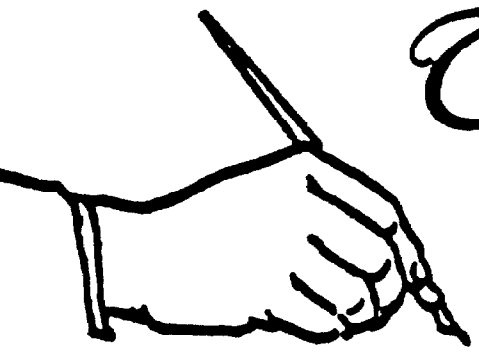
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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.



The President's Column

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings
in heavenly places in Christ." Ephesians 1:3

Dear Brethren,

I don't know how many of you have given any thought to the fact that this year our Conference celebrates its fortieth anniversary. Compared to the Christian Church, which has existed since Christ's institution nearly 2000 years ago, the 40 years which our Conference has existed would seem to be but a moment in time, a brief sidelight in church history, hardly worth noticing. But nothing could be further from the truth, for though all the other Lutheran bodies have forsaken the precious truths of God's Word, restored to the Church through God's servant, Martin Luther, in the Reformation, by God's grace, we remain the historic Lutheran Church, indeed, the historic **visible** Christian Church. All the things of this world will pass away, but the heritage which we have been privileged to receive and still enjoy today will last into all eternity, for our Savior Himself promises it: **"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away,"** Matthew 24:35.

When we think of our Conference, we have a great deal for which we should give thanks and praise to God each and every day of our lives. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"** for though troubled from without and within, God has preserved us in the purity of His Word for forty years. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"** for though Satan has tried to destroy us over the years by leading some in our midst down the path of false doctrine and practice, God has graciously maintained us in His truth. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord**

Jesus Christ," for despite the weakness of our flesh and all its sinful desires, its lusts and insidious pride, God has saved us from biting and devouring one another so that we have not consumed one another with our Old Adams.

From all outward appearances, the world would judge our little Conference to be a monumental failure. After forty years of existence, we have barely 400 baptized members. There are only six small congregations spread out over thousands of miles and six states. We have only six pastors and no students presently in our seminary. And yet, brethren, we are a success beyond measure, for our God and Savior **"has blessed us with all spiritual blessings."**

In a day and age when rationalism has taken the place of Spirit-led and Scripture-bound thinking, when church bodies find themselves more apt to outward growth if they just go along with the crowd and the way of the world's thinking, it is no small miracle that any Christians remain today, not to mention congregations of Christians and a Conference of Christian congregations. The visible church today would much rather scratch the itching ears of their members than give to them the truth of God's Word. It is not the truth people are looking for today. As we read in our last issue in the "Around the World" column, it is mega-churches which people are seeking out, churches which offer all kinds of programs and social inducements for young and old, but which fail in their first and only real duty as a Christian congregation, namely, to feed the flock of Christ with the pure and unadulterated Word of God. To be sure, wherever the Gospel is preached, there are Christians, and we pray that even where rationalism and the mega-church concept have taken hold, the Gospel is being preached to a sufficient degree that people still cling to Christ alone as their Savior from sin. But doctrine, as Luther describes it, is a golden ring, and **"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,"** Paul says (I Cor. 5:6.). Every doctrine of God's Word is inextricably tied to another, and whenever one doctrine is perverted, then the whole of Christian doctrine is perverted, and that puts souls at risk.

But in our little Conference, we have the blessing of God's Word preached, taught and practiced in all its truth

and purity. In short, we **"all speak the same thing, and.... there (are) no divisions among (us); but...(we are) perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment,"** I Cor. 1:10. Again, this is nothing short of a miracle. Consider that the Word of God alone is still the sole source and norm of Christian doctrine and life in the congregations of our Conference. Consider that Christ Crucified for the sins of the world is still preached and taught without addition or subtraction from our pulpits. Consider that objective justification, the truth that God has declared the whole world righteous for the sake of Jesus' perfect life and innocent suffering and death, is still the bedrock of all other doctrines among us. Consider that we still hold that the life of the Christian is bound up in Christ alone, and that all other things we count but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Brethren, the character of a church body is not measured by its outward appearance, or by its size, or by its myriads of programs, or by the size of its buildings, or even the number of its members, but is judged by God (and should be judged by men) on the basis of what it teaches and preaches and practices. By God's grace alone, with no glory to anyone else but Him, our heavenly Father **"hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ."** That is the greatest gift God could give to us in our forty years of existence, it is the greatest glory of our fortieth anniversary, and it is the greatest reason for us to give thanks as we remember the past forty years and look forward to the years to come that God in His mercy may grant us.

But even while we give thanks and praise to God for His innumerable blessings over the past four decades, let us not become complacent and self-satisfied, for that is the broad path that leads to dead orthodoxy and destruction. Rather, let us, as Jesus Himself exhorts us, continue to **"search the Scriptures"** (John 5:39), and, as Paul urges, **"let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly: in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord"** (Col 3:16), that we may not lose this precious heritage and gift God has given us. In short, let our thanksgiving be shown by thanksliving, that by **"the mercies of God...(we)**

may present (our) bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is (our) reasonable service," Romans 12:1.

Grant that we thy Word may cherish
And its purity retain.
Lord, unless Thou art the Builder,
All our labor is in vain.
Keep us from all pride and boasting,
Vanity and foolish trust,
Knowing that our work without Thee
Soon will crumble into dust.

God of grace and love and blessing,
Thine alone shall be the praise;
Give us hearts to trust Thee truly,
Hands to serve Thee all our days.
Lord, bestow Thy future blessing
Till we join the heavn'ly host,
There to praise and serve Thee ever,
Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
(LH 640, vs. 3,4)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Your servant in Christ,

Mark W. Dierking, President

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How Should a Christian View Education?

Many Christians would undoubtedly agree with most educators who state that education begins at birth and continues throughout a person's life; that a child learns more from birth to age 5 than he learns the rest of his life, and that the **home** is where most education (or mal-education) takes place—more than anywhere else in the world. Even when a child is receiving formal classroom education in school, his actual hours spent in his home environment under the influence of his parents (or others) far exceed the time he spends in school. Almost twice as much of his waking hours on a school day are spent at home, or under home (or day-care) influence, than under a structured classroom environment. Since there are, at most, only 180 school days out of 365 days in the year, it should be quite obvious where the most education is received. It is then actually the breakdown of the home rather than an inept school system which has brought about most of the problems in the education of children in our nation.

Christians should certainly be aware of the educational needs of their smallest **pre-school** children, helping them to grow mentally and emotionally, developing their attention span, singing to them, reading to them, conversing with them, entertaining them with varied experiences, showing proper love and concern for them by appropriate discipline and social training—and all this in the light of bringing **"them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"** Eph. 6:4, stressing above all things the Word of God in the proper application of Law and Gospel; teaching their children to recognize themselves as sinners who deserve nothing but eternal condemnation in hell and leading them to the loving arms of their Savior who kept the holy Law of God perfectly in their place and suffered the punishment of hell, which they themselves deserved, on the accursed tree of the cross--that all who believe in Jesus might not perish but have

everlasting life; teaching them to fold their hands in prayer, to **"know the Holy Scriptures"** (II Tim. 3:15), and to begin to apply God's Word to their lives, to whatever they say, do, and learn. This is how a Christian should consider the education of the very young in his household. Christians should be concerned about the physical and mental abilities of their **grade-school age** children and that these God-given endowments and skills be developed, as far as possible, to the full extent of their potential so that they may find their niche as productive members of society. This is where the educational system of our nation has an important role to play. People who are skilled in imparting knowledge to others are hired as grade school teachers throughout our nation. Such teachers are often waging an uphill battle against poor or inadequate school board directives governing the discipline of children and teaching methods on the one hand and their pupil's lack of parental help and guidance and/or wretched home environment on the other. These teachers perform a very important and generally thankless job, namely, that of helping children to recognize the merits of an upright and decent life from which Christians also benefit indirectly by being enabled to live in a society of law and order, of outward uprightness and dignity--one which does not hinder them in the profession of their faith. This is indeed a blessing in the area of education for which all Christians should be thankful. The public educational system in our country, although deficient in many respects and supporting theories and teachings which are not in harmony with God's Word, is evidently of great benefit for unbelievers and for our nation in the area of civil righteousness and is therefore beneficial also for Christians in helping to make life tolerable in this world—that "we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." (General Prayer, The Lutheran Hymnal, p. 23)

Now, how can the public school system with its total lack of a Scriptural approach to the subjects taught, with its setting forth of scientific theories as fact, and with its humanistic teaching philosophy and materialistic world view, be of any benefit whatever to Christian children? Here is where the role of Christian parents becomes vitally important! The longer time spent in the home environment must be used to a good advantage. How important it is NOW to

teach God's Word **diligently** to the children in the home, talking about the Scriptures **"when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,"** Deut. 6:7. It is certainly **not harmful** for the child to learn in his tender years how **to apply the Word of God** (negatively or positively), to what he is taught in the public school classroom. In science he should be encouraged to marvel at the wonders of God's creation and to oppose the man-made theories of evolution and the origin of the universe. He should be shown how developing his reading, writing, and speaking skills can serve to glorify the Lord God and his Savior Jesus Christ before others in this world; how his mathematics ability can help him in being just in business dealings with others; how history reveals God's dealing with mankind down through the ages and how he should oppose all pre-historical speculation which is contrary to Scripture. At this time, Christian parents throughout our nation can have their children **excused** from sex education classes which generally simply serve to arouse interest in sex prematurely among those children who have a good Christian home environment and to encourage the loose sexual attitudes of our permissive society. The child, who is taught the Scriptures properly at home and whose home training is reinforced by parental example as well as by the instruction and example of his fellow Christians in Sunday school and church, should be enabled to evaluate, in the light of God's Word, the social activities promoted in his school, unionistic behavior, such as hymn singing and joint prayer, in and out of the classroom, as well as songs and music which are not conducive to Christian education but rather stimulate the baser feelings in human consciousness.

In the public **High School** also, the Christian's view of education should be one of helping the youngster apply the Word of God to every course to which he is committed. He has now been attending Confirmation instruction classes and his home should have a reinforcing influence on his growth in his knowledge and understanding of God's Word and his ability to apply it to the new and unusual conditions and circumstances of his life. Upon finishing his instruction in the pure teachings of God's Word, upon memorizing Luther's Small Catechism and about 700 proof passages from Scrip-

ture, and upon becoming a communicant member of a local congregation where the Word of God is taught in all its truth and purity and where the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, he should be well-equipped to meet the more vigorous onslaughts of the devil, the world and his sinful flesh in his high school environment, and especially **to grow** in his knowledge and understanding of every subject, being encouraged by that Word of God which says, **"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"** Eccl. 9:10. A Christian should not be a lazy student. He should not permit himself to gravitate toward unChristian friends or activities. He should honor and respect his teachers according to the Fourth Commandment—recognizing that they are placed over him by God. The Christian high school student should obey his teachers and apply himself diligently to their teaching in all areas which do not conflict with the Word of God (Acts 5:29). Wise Christian parents will closely monitor the performance and behavior of their children in high school as well as the subject matter of the courses they are taking.

Out of high school the son or daughter is a young adult. He may find a satisfactory job for himself. Here is where most people think that their education is over and that they are free to go and come, to do and not to do as they please. Finding employment right after high school generally puts an end to formal education as such, but it is a mistake to think that now education itself stops. The young adult now finds himself in the mainstream of life—**the work-place**, and as a Christian he should learn to apply God's Word (which, by God's grace, he has continued in since infancy) to his new found "freedom" and added responsibilities. A well-paying job may take him away from church and from the fellowship of Christian friends. He should be ready to put his job on the line if it requires him to **"forsake"** his **"assembling together"** (Heb. 10:25) with his fellow Christians, especially in Divine Services. Temptations both in connection with his job and in his social life will increase. He will find that experience is oftentimes a severe teacher which, if the young person does not grow in his understanding of God's Word and its application to life, can reverse the process of a good education and can cause him to forsake the Lord and His Word. He may begin to despise

the counsel of his parents, pastor and friends. Here a continuance in the hearing, reading and studying of the Bible, which is the only food for spiritual growth and strength, is indeed a necessity. Added formal training in a vocational or technical school may be helpful in reaching the goals toward which his skills and aptitude direct him. Here a Christian's view of education does not discourage the use of such facilities which enable a Christian to be well qualified for his life's work.

Continued formal education in a **College** or **University** is perhaps the most dangerous time in the education of a young Christian. He is still very impressionable and the vast ocean of worldly human thinking (rationalism) will flow over him like a flood in the classroom--more often than not by teachers who do not hesitate to demean the Bible and who have no respect for God and His Word. One who holds fast to the pure teachings of God's Word may well be belittled and made miserable by teachers of philosophy, psychology, and of the natural, physical and political sciences. Here the wisdom of the student is put to a real test, for the Bible says that **"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"** Psalm 111:10, and he will be encouraged in his situation with that Word of God in Psalm 119:99 which declares, **"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation."**

No one, of course, can be educated in all the areas of human knowledge, and a person can have an over-abundance of knowledge but very little wisdom. The person who has learned to look to the Lord and His Word for direction in every aspect of his life; who has learned to draw peace, hope, joy, comfort and strength from the Scriptures as he lives out his life in this world and who has learned to continue diligently in his study of the Bible and its application to his life here and hereafter—such a person is **truly** educated no matter how much formal education he may have acquired or what his profession or occupation might be. Such a person has learned to be **first** a Christian, **then** a farmer; **first** a Christian, **then** a doctor; **first** a Christian, **then** a pastor; **first** a Christian, **then** an office worker; **first** a Christian, **then** a salesman; **first** a Christian, **then** an executive; **first** a Christian, **then** a teacher; **first** a Christian,

then a nurse; **first** a Christian, **then** a mechanic; etc.; etc.; etc.

So often we tend to view education in a very narrow way, merely as book learning. In fact many people actually think that "book learning" is the beginning, middle and end of education. Of course, this is not the case! Book learning, although important, is really only one small part of education. Education may be formal or informal, theoretical or practical; it may be provided by the home, church, state or employer; it may emphasize book learning, hands-on experience, or both, and it may even come entirely from the school of experience and hard knocks. One thing, however, is certain: Education will continue throughout a person's life, from the cradle to the grave, and, aside from civic righteousness, it will be for better or for worse depending upon the application of God's Word to the process of education and the life of the individual.

Many people look at formal education as a goal in itself. This also is a gross mistake. They seem to think that a formal education is going to solve all problems. Many such people even think it is smart to become perpetual scholars. They glory in their ability to accumulate knowledge for no other reason than to accumulate knowledge. A formal type education becomes kind of a god to them. A formal education should always be a means to an end, and what is learned should always be subject to the pure teachings of Scripture in doctrine and application.

A Christian, then, as we have tried to illustrate above, ought to view education as **a continuous, never-ending process through which** especially he grows in his knowledge and love of Christ Jesus, his Savior, **and through which** he learns to become a better witness of Christ before the world as a productive member of society in the use of his God-given talents and skills. A person therefore is being properly educated who is growing in his ability, by God's grace, to **apply the Word of God** to every aspect of his life as a Christian—in his home, church, state, society, business and occupation. This is indeed a Christian view of education. May God help us all to this end!

PRB

IF LUTHER WERE ALIVE TODAY...

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

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

this assessment, Luther would surely agree were he alive today!

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

But surely Luther would be gratified at the success enjoyed by **"Lutheranism"** today, wouldn't he? Just before LCUSA went out of existence in 1987, its final statistics showed in the United States and Canada alone almost 30,000 ordained ministers, almost 20,000 Lutheran congregations, and over six and one-half **million** communicant members! Think of those NUMBERS! And yet, as Luther himself would be quick to point out, they are just numbers! They actually say nothing at all about **genuine Lutheranism** based on **Scripture alone**, the "formal principle" of the Reformation. In fact, it is no secret nowadays that many so-called "Lutheran" pastors deny the most basic, fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: The inerrancy, immutability and infallibility of the

verbally-inspired Holy Scriptures; the Vicarious Atonement; Christ's bodily Resurrection from the dead and the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day; Objective Justification; and the deity of Christ. "Lutheran" theological professors are permitted to attack with impunity such doctrines as the **Trinity,** the **Virgin Birth,** the **Creation** of the world by God in six twenty-four-hour days, and the **Real Presence** of the Savior's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. To many "Lutherans," the killing of unborn children should be a mother's prerogative; homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle which should not be condemned; women should be eligible for the public ministry; and pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are perfectly acceptable as the personal expression of love, provided that couples are encouraged to practice "safe sex." Would Luther join the ranks of those "enlightened" modernists who dare to bear his name and hold all these (and many other aberrations) to be **PROGRESS** in the church? The reader can intelligently answer that question in the negative without any help from this writer!

And what would the dear Dr. Luther see in the so-called "conservative" Lutheran bodies today? Certainly much of the above in pockets or enclaves of liberalism, benignly ignored by many, tolerated by most, dealt with according to sound doctrinal discipline by practically no one! Some of the "**staunch** conservatives" PROTEST, WRITE ARTICLES and LETTERS TO EDITORS, and even SPEAK OUT at conferences and conventions; but their words, "full of sound and fury," signify "nothing" but so much hot air and harmless paperwork generated by "smoking typewriters" and computers. When push comes to shove and the Lord through the Apostle says **"Avoid them!,"** they choose to avoid **HIM** instead, to "keep protesting," and thus to serve not **His** cause but their **own belly,** deceiving the hearts of simple fellow-Christians into believing that they are really orthodox! Would Luther see through the sham of conservatism today? By God's grace, Luther was not the fool that so many so-called "conservatives" try to take **us** for! He had no use for the poor ignorant laymen who were led about by the nose by those whom they trusted to be stalwart soldiers of the cross, laymen who themselves are without excuse for tolerating limp washrags in their pulpits, but who can be pitied for not having the Christian fortitude to depose them!

If Luther were alive today, what would he see in the **theological training programs** maintained by so-called "Lutheran" colleges and seminaries? Surely the **miserable preparation** of candidates for the Ministry nowadays accounts for much of the problem described thus far; for younger pastors in particular are, for want of a better word, **ignorant** of Christian doctrine. They are unable succinctly and clearly to state **"the first principles of the oracles of God"** (Heb. 5:12), even the **rudimentary doctrines** of Holy Scripture, quote **proof-texts** upon which they have been established, and **apply** them consistently in their practice. Many are so **"unskilful in the Word of Righteousness"** by reason of **non-use** that they are incapable of discerning good and evil, Heb. 5:13,14. Is it any wonder that they are **"tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine** (Ephesians 4:14) when the winds of controversy begin to blow? Theological students nowadays "major" in scholarly branches of study --history, languages, sociology, psychology, counseling, textual criticism, and philosophy--but can't recite the Enchiridion (Small Catechism) word-for-word, nor give simple definitions or brief explanations of such basic concepts as Justification, the State of Humiliation, the Vicarious Atonement, the Church, the Doctrine of Election, and Christian Church Discipline. Religious unionism, selective fellowship, and separatism are such foggy notions that many frankly admit their inadequacy to deal with them! "Dogmatics" is "out;" "exegesis" is "in." Preaching the Law is to be avoided as "unloving;" and yet the Gospel is to be appreciated and cherished without the Law and the knowledge of sin that it imparts! Would Luther find such a state of affairs an "improvement" or "progress" in the making of theologians? **Need we even ask?**

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

coming already when he penned those prophetic lines:

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

Sadly, we too in **our midst,** contrary to what we would **like** to think, have far too much **apathy** for Bible study, Bible classes, Bible reading in our homes, Bible discussions in the family circle and with our brethren, Bible **USE** on a day-to-day basis, as if our pastors will take care of our spiritual growth FOR us! Luther would see that too if he were alive today. He would not be **surprised** (since the flesh in Satan's service always seeks to weaken our knowledge, our confidence, and our strength); but he would be greatly **disappointed,** considering the precious heritage of grace we have had as "children of the Reformation." Do we actually want to follow so many others down the road of ignorance, complacency, apathy, and finally contempt for the pure doctrines of God's holy Word? God forbid! Therefore the Apostle Peter beseeches you and me in his second Epistle, chapter three: **"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"** (vs. 17, 18).

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

> **"The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has**

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

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

If Luther were alive today, he would find things not a whole lot improved over what he had found on his visits to the German villages and towns in 1529 — maybe even somewhat **worse,** considering the wondrous benefits we Lutherans have enjoyed as heirs of the Reformation. And what he stated above could well be said also today to those pastors who do **everything** in their congregations **BUT** TEACH AND

PREACH THE WORD OF GOD IN ITS PURITY! Paul writes to Timothy what we pastors should be doing for our people: **"Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure** (i.e. tolerate) **sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears,"** II Timothy 4:2,3. That time is **NOW**! People generally won't stand for sound doctrine anymore! And they want lots of teachers who will tickle their ears, telling them what they WANT to hear, rather than what they OUGHT to hear for their own soul's welfare! May we, dearly-beloved brethren, never tire of the pure doctrine of God's precious Word which He has in mercy preserved to us in our little Conference—scorned by men for its small size, derided for its doctrine, chided for its faithful practice. Let them say and do what they may! They can harm us none! Christ hath for us the battle won! "The kingdom ours remaineth!" That is indeed our legacy if we **"hold fast the form of sound words"** (II Timothy 1:13), and **"earnestly contend for the faith,"** Jude 3. If Luther were alive today, **that** would be his unrelenting plea and fervent exhortation, as we see the Day approaching. May God grant it to all of us for Jesus' sake!

Lord, help us ever to retain
The Catechism's doctrine plain,
As Luther taught the Word of Truth
In simple style to tender youth.

In every season, every place,
May we regard Thy Word of Grace,
Until, when life's brief day is past
We reach eternal joy at last!

D.T.M.

"Let your light shine before men!"

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father **which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16**

These are the words of Christ directed to Christians. They are taken from Christ's well-known "Sermon on the Mount." What does Jesus mean when He says that we should let our light shine before men? He provides an answer in this same passage when He explains that Christians should let their light shine so that people may see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven. Thus, according to the passage, we let our light shine by doing good works, the fruit of our faith in Jesus. A Christian desires to do good works out of love for His Savior, who did everything necessary for his salvation when He paid his sin-debt on the cross.

At this time of the year, the fall season, it has been customary for many churches to emphasize mission work, the reaching out to lost souls with the Gospel. If one should use Christ's words, **"let your light so shine before men"** as a mission theme, could not the conclusion be drawn that to do mission work simply means to do good things, good works, and be a good person, and then mankind will benefit, and the earth will be a better place on which to live? Many have drawn that conclusion. It is common practice for many Christians to believe that by their exemplary lifestyle that they are showing themselves to be the best evangelists. They aim to show love, kindness, self-control, understanding, consideration, etc., towards others in their daily lives and, having fulfilled their aim, in their estimation, they conclude that they have done their job as evangelists.

But is this all that Christ meant when He said, **"Let your light so shine before men"**? No, that's not all He meant. That's part of it, an important part, but there's more. Letting our light shine will also include a clear

proclamation of the Gospel. We will want to tell others how the Savior died for all mankind's sins, for unless they know the truth of the events connected with that most important fact, they cannot be saved for eternal life. Could they be saved just by our example of a good life? No! Our example might lead them to inquire about what the Savior has also done for them, but they must hear the Word of God, the Gospel, in order to be saved. St. Paul said, **"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,"** Romans 10:17.

Is there an urgent need for mission work? You know the answer. Even with all the many different kinds of churches in the world, of which few proclaim a true, Bible Gospel, the vast majority of people still sit in their sins and the darkness of unbelief, and in this state they are lost and condemned for all eternity to hell, for only those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their only Savior are saved. As Jesus said, **"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned,"** Mark 16:16. Moreover, Scripture also says, **"And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,"** John 3:19. So mission work on the part of each one of us, on the part of individual congregations and as a Conference of congregations is urgently needed.

What is our Concordia Lutheran Conference doing in this regard? What is its mission activity? It is certainly not the mere feeding of the hungry or the promoting of social causes as is the case with the Papists and many of the Reformed. At this time, we are unable to send missionaries to the far corners of the world. So, at this stage of its existence, with size and funding limitations, and knowing what is of primary importance, our Conference has as its chief mission activity the recruiting and training of men for the ministry. That was the emphasis of our last convention in South Dakota in June. Men must be found to take the places of our pastors who may no longer be able to serve, or who die, that the pure teaching and preaching of God's Word may be preserved among us so that we may continue to be "lights" for Christ.

How should this mission be accomplished. That answer

nas to come from every "light," that is, every individual believer in the congregations of our Conference. It should not simply be expected, as it often is, that the pastors' sons within the Conference will provide the solution. It would be natural to look that way first for the solution, but it is important that the entire Conference become actively involved. This is crucial mission activity for all of us. Each congregation should encourage its young men to give prayerful consideration to preparing for the Office of the Ministry.

Important also is the writing, printing, and disseminating of sound, Biblical, Lutheran materials. But how can each individual member of the congregations of our Conference become involved in this activity? It will primarily be the pastors of the Conference who will do the writing of appropriate materials, but, in addition to other work, which assists in the preparation of such materials, surely the disseminating of the materials to an ever-widening readership should be borne by all the congregations of our Conference.

And after this primary mission activity has been done and the foundation laid, then will naturally follow, according to God's grace and blessing, what would be considered to be more common mission work, the opening of new churches in the United States and throughout the world.

Mission work in the Conference, then, is continuing with our support. Therefore, we are letting our lights shine in all the ways mentioned above. And our labors will not be in vain, for the Gospel of Christ is still **"the power of God unto salvation,"** Rom. 1:16, and our labors also serve to **"glorify our Father which is in heaven."**

DGR

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Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

The basement in what was formerly the John Dickson Home for Elderly Men now serves as the inner sanctum of the Greater Washington D.C. Association of Professionals Practicing the Transcendental Meditation Program. Since early March, several hundred doctors, lawyers and executives have been gathering twice daily inside this weathered mansion—located only a few miles north of the White House—to sit in straight-back, lotus position and meditate for periods ranging from 20 minutes to more than an hour. Richard Quinn, director of TM's Institute for Social Rehabilitation, says that it "will transform Washington from the murder capital of the world to the center of peace and prosperity in the world." The secret weapon being used to effectuate that transformation is the Super Radiance Effect... Maharishi, who earned a degree in physics in India before spiritual enlightenment radically altered his career path, contends that this psychic force is the missing element in the unified field theory that Einstein so desperately sought. Today, Maharishi is said to have 3 million disciples and $3 billion in assets. A push is being made to convince U.S. prison administrators that TM could lower recidivism rates and cool out troubled inmates at $1500.00 a head.

The author of this 2 page article in INSIGHT, May 20, 1991, justifiably pokes fun at the guru and his bizarre claims. If Washington D.C. or any other city in our country is to be made safer from crime, it will be accomplished not by the ridiculous practices of this guru and his followers, but by the fervent and persistent prayers of faithful Christians ascending to the Throne of Grace! The Apostle writes, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour," I Tim. 1:1-3. **We Christians are to pray that the government would be more conscientious in fulfilling its responsibilities. After all, those in authority** "are sent by God for the punishment of evildoers" (I Peter 2:13), **that the rights and lives of the law-abiding citizens might be protected.**

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Worship Service..... 10:00 a.m.
REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452
Telephones -- Church Office and Pastor's Study: (708) 532-4288
Parsonage: (708) 532-9035

Note: On the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month, services are held in our Midland, Michigan chapel at 2409 Rodd Street:
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 6:30 p.m.
Worship Service..... 7:30 p.m.
(Taped services on other Sundays)

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
6th and Tangent
Lebanon, Oregon 97355
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 10:00 a.m.
Worship Service..... 11:00 a.m.
REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, Oregon 97355
Telephone: (503) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
55th Ave. S. & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, Washington 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-1078
Sunday School and
Bible Class..... 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service..... 10:30 a.m.
REV. PAUL R. BLOEDEL, Pastor
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-7418

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.
Sunday School..... 3:00 p.m.
Worship Service..... 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class..... 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
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Worship Service.....
(June 1st thru September 30th)
..... 9:30 a.m.
(October 1st through May 31st)
..... 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class...
.....after the service.
REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
Box 33
Wilmot, South Dakota 57279
Telephone: (605) 938-4710