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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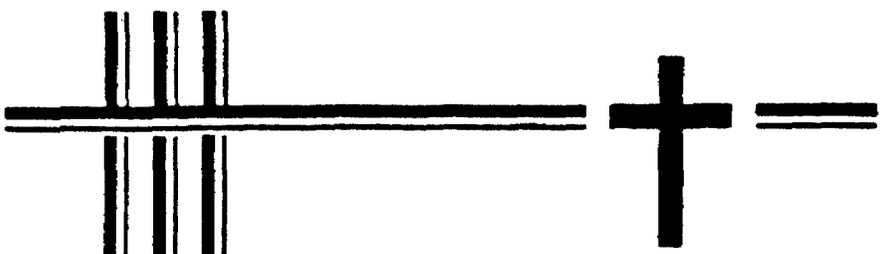

Declared to be the Son of God with power . . . , by the Resurrection from the dead!

—Romans 1:4.

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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.

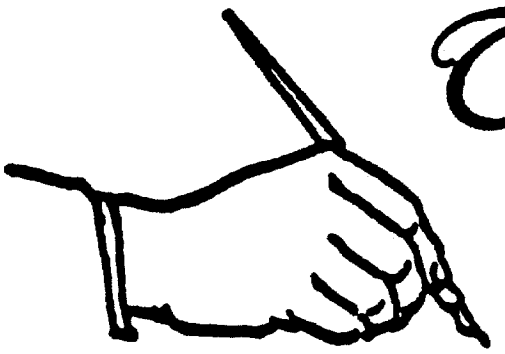
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

My Dear Brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ:

Unity, that is, being one in doctrine and practice, or as Paul says, **"that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,"** I Cor. 1:10, is a gift of the Holy Spirit which is rare indeed in these last days before the return of our Savior **"in the which He will judge the world in righteousness,"** Acts 17:31. Visible Christendom puts great store in their supposed "unity," but they do not know and will not understand the Scriptural meaning of unity.

Unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace is a precious gift from God, a gift which we have had for so many years, despite the attacks of Satan both from within and without the congregations of our Conference, that we can fall into the real danger of taking this unity for granted, as something that has always been there and always will be there. To take such an attitude is dangerous and downright foolish!

Brethren, upon what is it that our unity is based? Is it on outward matters such as liturgies, catechisms, hymnals, even Bible translations? No; for these things are simply the outward manifestations of the unity which we share with one another. Is it then based upon agreement "concerning the doctrine of the Gospel" ('Augsburg Confession,' Art. VII, Trig. p 47)? No; not if agreement in "the doctrine of the Gospel" is taken to mean what so many so-called Lutherans claim today, that is, the Gospel in the narrow sense, the Good News of our salvation through Christ Jesus. Rather, that Gospel upon which our unity it based is the Gospel in the "wide" sense, that is, **every doctrine of Holy Writ.** Jesus Himself defines this "Gospel" for us when He gave the command to "proclaim" His Gospel to all the world, for in

that command He also instructs all His followers to **"(teach) them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,"** Matt. 28:20. Thus, upon what is our unity based, why are we able to "fellowship" together? The answer is, of course, God's Word.

The Lord Jesus Himself affirms this to be true when in His High Priestly Prayer He prays that the heavenly Father will maintain this unity among His disciples—not only those present with Him when He uttered this prayer, but for all who would be drawn to Him by His Gospel (John 17:20). Though we quote the whole context, the first words Jesus utters sum up the basis for our unity: **"Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth! As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word; that they all may be ONE; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be ONE in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be ONE, even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in ONE; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me,"** John 17:17-23. It is upon God's Word, His Truth, that our unity, our **ONE**ness, is based and upon nothing else. By God's grace alone, even after 40 years of nearly ceaseless attacks by Satan, not only upon our Conference as a whole, but upon its individual congregations, we still do speak the same thing; we are still joined together in the same mind and the same judgment; and in spite of strong personalities amongst both our pastors and laymen, God still preserves us in that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We don't claim to have any special insights into God's Word. We do not claim that God has given any of us special revelations to explain that Word. Indeed, with possibly a few exceptions, both pastors and laymen in our Conference are very ordinary people, with no extraordinary gifts or aptitudes. Indeed, we are, as Paul describes us, **"not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble"** (I Cor. 1:26), but instead are, for the most part, considered by the world to be the base things of this world,

those which are despised, those which are weak, those which are foolish. Our only claim is that we cling in faith to the clear words of Scripture as God has preserved them for us, and again, by His grace alone, have neither suffered aught to be added to what God has revealed to us, nor allowed anything to be taken away. This and this alone is the sole basis for our **ONE**ness, and thus, our fellowship together and it must always remain so!

My friends, let us not for one moment despise or take for granted this blessed unity and fellowship. Satan wants nothing more than to rend and devour us and will use every means at his disposal to do so. But his most dangerous weapon is not offensive, but our own lethargy, apathy, listlessness, a casual attitude about God's Word and about our fellowship! When you have the chance to join with your other brethren in growing in your knowledge of God's Word, **take it! Make time** at home for family devotions. **Make time** for personal reading of the Scriptures. When you have questions, **ask your pastor;** that's what he's there for! In short, do as Jesus Himself exhorts you, namely, **"Search the Scriptures; for in Them ye think ye have eternal life: and They are They which testify of Me,"** John 5:39. And when an opportunity arises to gather around the Word with others in our fellowship, do so! Plan your vacations so that you can attend conventions or, at other times of the year, to be present at divine services of sister congregations. When pastoral conferences are held in your home congregation, take some time off so you can sit in on the sessions. Brethren, we have a precious gift! Do nothing that may jeopardize that blessing, for while the blessing is purely the gift of God and nothing which we have deserved or merited or earned in any way, the truth remains that we can, by apathy, lethargy, listlessness toward the foundation of our fellowship, God's Word, destroy that unity among us.

Finally, this is the last column I write as your President. I want to take this opportunity to formally thank you for the great honor of serving you in this capacity for the past three years. My most fervent prayer regarding my work as your president has always been that nothing I would do would in any way hinder the work of the Conference and that, according to God's grace and blessing, in some small

way the glorious fellowship we share together would not only be strengthened internally, but that others too might be reached through our mutual efforts. God's richest blessings be and abide upon each of you, as I remain

Your servant in Christ,
Rev. Mark W. Dierking

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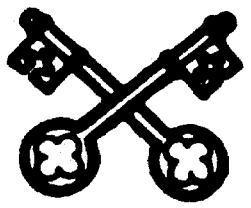
The Resurrected Christ Reaffirms

The Office of the Keys 

"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,'" John 20:22,23

In his Small Catechism, Luther defines the Office of the Keys as **"the peculiar** (that is, special), **"church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent."** And when, characteristically and quite properly, he asks, "Where is this written?" Luther quotes the verses above from John chapter 20 as the chief **sedes** or Scripture proof-text on which this doctrine rests. Nevertheless, these were not Jesus' first words on the subject. Rather, they were His **reaffirmation** of the Office of the Keys after His mighty resurrection from the dead. Much earlier already, shortly before His glorious transfiguration before Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17; Mark 9; Luke 9), Jesus had vested this special power and authority in Peter as an individual believer after his bold confession of the Savior's person and work (Matt. 16:16), NOT as his exclusive right, nor to exercise as his alone, as the Church of Rome dares to claim ("Smalcald Articles," Triglot, p. 511; also Christian Dogmatics, Vol. 3, p. 413-414, footnote #18). Yet that passage is especially striking (Matt. 16:19) because of the Lord's metaphorical description of this

power as **"the keys of the kingdom of heaven"**—opening its gates to penitent sinners by forgiving their sins, and closing those gates against impenitent sinners by withholding forgiveness from them "as long as they do not repent." Hence the name **Office of the Keys.**

As just noted, however, those "keys" were not the exclusive property of Peter; for in Matthew 18, verse 18, Jesus shows that He vested this very same power in **all** the disciples, saying, **"Whatsoever YE shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever YE shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."** This verse, together with the risen Savior's words in John chapter 20 (as "The Smalcald Articles," Triglot, page 511, para 2, rightly point out), show conclusively that the Office of the Keys has been given by Him **to His Church on earth**, that is, to all true believers in Christ, their Savior; **"for all believers, and only believers, are members of this church (the invisible church)."** (Catechism Question and Answer 179). Thus every individual Christian possesses the power of the Keys, the authority to forgive and retain sins, according to Jesus' own words. Moreover, the Office of the Keys has been given by Christ Himself **very particularly** or **especially** to every **local Christian congregation**, that is, to the **group** of true believers who regularly assemble for worship in one place or locality (the local congregation **as only God can see it**, who alone knows the hearts—John 10:27; II Tim. 2:19), and AS WELL AS to the **group** of professing Christians in such a locality, true believers and hypocrites **together** (the local congregation, **as men see it**, who are limited in their identification of Christian brethren by profession and practice of Christian doctrine). This is unquestionably clear from the Words of Jesus in Matthew 18:17, **"Tell it unto the church,"** for one cannot "tell it" to those he cannot identify. And the action of that **visible, identifiable body** "is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself" (Luther) because Jesus says of **its** procedure in Christian Church discipline: **"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."** (v. 18).

It is also evident from the Savior's words Matthew 16, Matthew 18, John 20, that "the power to forgive and retain

sins" includes **more** than the formal pronouncement of absolution, **more** than the formal retention of sins, to an individual sinner. For the full function of the keys is inherent in the whole scope of the congregation's activity and its Pastoral Office, as ordained by God and clearly delineated in Holy Scripture, namely, the **preaching of the Word of God** and the **administration of the Sacraments.** Indeed, when the Savior commissioned His apostles (and all succeeding Christians of all times and places) to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and by teaching them (Matt. 28:19-20) and commanded them to **"preach the Gospel to every creature"** (Mark 16:15), He made it plain that the content of their message was to be the Gospel in the **wider sense,** the **whole** counsel of God, **both** the Law and the Gospel; for He said in Matthew 28:20, **"teaching them to observe ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you,"** and in Mark 16:16, **"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,"** the sweetest **Gospel, "but he that believeth not shall be damned,"** the harshest **Law.** In these two chief doctrines of the Bible lie **remission of sins** and **retention of sins** respectively. Therefore it is in the **power of the Word** that lies the power to forgive and to retain sins, the **power of the Keys.** Likewise, it is the **power of the Word** through which the Holy Spirit of God is imparted to men and through which He operates in the hearts of men, making them **"both to will and to do of His good pleasure,"** Phil. 2:13. Consequently, the risen Savior said to His disciples: **"Receive ye the Holy Ghost,"** and then **reaffirmed the Office of the Keys,** which they were to exercise in His Church through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. We, too, have received the Holy Ghost through the washing of Baptism (Titus 3:5; Acts 2:38b; etc.) and by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2; Rom. 10:17; etc.); and it is now incumbent on us, **privately** in our dealings with fellow Christians, and **publicly** in the local congregation through the Pastoral Office, to administer the **Office of the Keys** "by His divine command" (Luther), according to His directives, with His assurance of validity, and the confidence of His blessing.

What a **comfort** this Office of the Keys should bring to our hearts, when, for example, a Christian brother or sister, **having admonished us** for our sins from the Word of God, and having evidence of our **contrition**--our **sorrow** over

those sins worked by God's Law—and our expression of **true repentance**—including **faith** in God's grace to poor sinners for Jesus' sake worked by His Gospel—what **comfort** comes to our smitten souls when in the Savior's Name the brother or sister says: **"Be of good cheer! Thy sins be forgiven thee!"** What comfort likewise in the words of absolution pronounced by our Pastor in the divine service: "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, **I forgive you all your sins**, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!" For their absolution is "as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself," (Luther).

On the other hand, **what a warning** there is for us Christians in the power of the Keys against despisal of the Means of Grace dispensed in our local congregations, against refusal to hear the admonition of dear brethren from the Word of God against a life of manifest wickedness and offense, and against impenitence and unbelief characteristic of heathen men and publicans. For, if we were to harden ourselves in such sins against the grace of God, refuse to repent, and show ourselves unwilling to amend, our brethren, individually and collectively, would have no choice but to **retain our sins**, that is, to hold back God's forgiveness from us and to "bind" our sins upon our conscience (Matt. 16:19; 18:18) as long as we do not repent. This action, too, including the **exclusion** of a manifest and impenitent sinner from the Christian congregation ("excommunication"), is "as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself." Nevertheless, even such drastic action required by our Savior of a Christian congregation in Matthew 18:17 is not intended for the eternal ruin of a blood-bought soul, but, to the contrary, that such a former brother recognize the gravity of his sins and repent unto everlasting salvation! (I Cor. 5:5).

The entire **Office of the Keys**, reaffirmed by our risen and ever-living Savior at His appearance to the ten disciples on Easter evening, should fill our hearts and minds with gratitude to the Lord for this ever-present reminder of His grace and mercy to us poor sinners, for the means whereby His grace is conveyed to us, for the assurance of God's forgiveness for Christ's sake, and for His abiding blessings upon us,

the sheep of His pasture. And may we, individually and collectively, continue in His Word (John 8:31-32) both privately in our homes and publicly in the local congregations ordained by Him for the nourishment of our souls by the regular and consistent proclamation and teaching of His precious truths by faithful undershepherds of the Savior. Thus, may these priceless blessings continue among us for Jesus' sake!

—DTM

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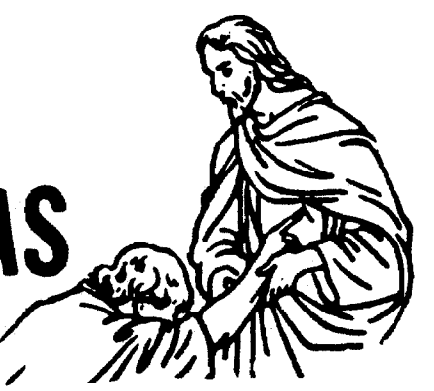
THE RESURRECTED CHRIST DEALS WITH THOMAS



Agnosticism! Webster's Dictionary defines an agnostic as "one who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable." The attitude of "I do not know" is given in answer to the questions: Is the Bible the Word of God? Does man have a soul? Is Jesus the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father? Is there a heaven and a hell? One prominent agnostic has stated in answer to the question if he believes in heaven and hell:

> "The question whether people survive death is one as to which evidence is possible. Psychical research and spiritualism are thought by many to supply such evidence. An agnostic, as such, does not take a view about survival unless he thinks that there is evidence one way or the other. For my part, I do not think there is any good reason to believe that we survive death, but I am open to conviction if adequate evidence should appear. Heaven and Hell are a different matter. Belief in Hell is bound up with the belief that vindictive punishment of sin is a good thing, quite independently of any reformative or deterrent effect that it may have. Hardly any agnostic believes this. As

> for Heaven, there might conceivably someday be evidence of its existence through spiritualism, but most agnostics do not think that there is evidence, and therefore do not believe in Heaven." (Bertrand Russell).

An agnostic is really an unbeliever, a child of Satan, and on his way to hell. The attitude of the agnostic, "I do not know," has been working insidiously among all classes of people. Even Christians are not exempt from its poisonous influences. Our sinful flesh constantly assails us with doubts.

Look at the example of Thomas. **"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."** Thomas, as we know, was not present on the evening of Easter Day when the Savior appeared before His disciples. Obviously Thomas was of the opinion that Jesus was dead; he had surrendered to his thoughts of doubt!

Did Thomas have reason to be faithless? Indeed not! Let us bear in mind that Thomas was one of the twelve disciples. He, like the rest of the disciples, had personally witnessed the marvelous manifestations of Christ's almighty power in healing the sick and raising the dead. In the 10th chapter of Matthew we are told that Jesus sent the twelve disciples out, equipping them with the necessary power to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils (v. 8). He, too, had also heard from the lips of the Savior the references to His suffering, death, and resurrection (Matt. 16:21).

Besides, had not the risen Savior proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that He no longer lay in the tomb? He had appeared to the women, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to the Apostle Peter, and to the rest of the disciples on the evening of His resurrection. The other disciples had even told Thomas, **"We have seen the Lord!"** Yet Thomas doubted, he was faithless.

Let us not think that Thomas was the first believer to doubt the Word of the Lord. When we turn back to the Old Testament in the very first book of the Bible, we find an example of one who doubted the Word of the Lord. When Sarah, the wife of Abraham, heard that she would give birth to a child, she laughed and doubted the Word of the Lord because she was now an old woman past the years of child-bearing (Gen. 18:11,12). In the New Testament we read that when the Apostle Peter attempted to walk to Jesus on the water, he saw the boisterous waves—he doubted and began to sink (Matt. 14:29-31).

Do we not see in Thomas a picture of ourselves? Is there one of us who has never doubted one single Word of the Holy Scriptures? As long as we are in this world we shall be plagued with doubts which arise from our sinful flesh which attempts to lead us away from the one true faith in Jesus, our dear Savior. Slyly Satan whispers to us even as he tempted Eve to doubt: Can you really be sure? Do you really know for certain? Then doubts arise concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures and its precious teachings. Some Christians are thus tempted to doubt one teaching more than another. Perhaps one is continually tempted to doubt the resurrection which will take place on the Last Day when Jesus comes. Such thoughts as: How can it be that bodies which have utterly gone back into the elements of the earth come back together again? How can it be that bodies which have been dead for thousands of years will all be raised together with all those which have died within recent years? Another may be tempted to doubt the Scriptural teaching on fellowship. Must there be perfect agreement in all teachings before we can have altar, pulpit, and prayer fellowship? Another may doubt the promises of the Lord in His Word such as: **"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,"** Matt. 6:33. Will God really keep all His promises? Do we not see that, when we entertain such thoughts, we are not one whit better than Thomas? For it is utterly impossible for God to lie. When we lay dead in trespasses and sins, our dear heavenly Father loved us in Christ Jesus who suffered and died for all our sins, that through faith in Him we are now the dear children of our dear heavenly Father who never leaves us, but comforts us with the precious promises from

His Word in all our temptations and trials. There is NEVER any reason to doubt His Word, concerning which the Savior declares, **"Thy Word is TRUTH!"** John 17:17.

"And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' Then saith He to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said unto Him, 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'" What a change in Thomas! Now Thomas was no longer faithless, but believing. What great love on the part of the Savior who condescended to Thomas' demand!

Note that Jesus does not reject Thomas' confession, **"My Lord and my God."** He accepts it because **HE IS TRUE GOD! "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life,"** I John 5:20. Jesus proved that He is true God by the divine names which the Holy Scriptures ascribe to Him, by His divine attributes, by His divine works, and by the divine honor and glory which the Bible ascribes to Him. Therefore, **"all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him,"** John 5:23. Locked doors cannot keep the Savior out, for He is not bound to human limitations as our bodies are—He is the omnipresent God (See Catechism, pages 103, 104).

Thomas had to see in order to be convinced. We Christians walk by faith and not by sight. The Old Testament believers walked by faith. With their physical eyes they did not see the promised Messiah, but they did see Him with the eyes of faith. Jesus told the Jews, **"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad,"** John 8:56. Look at the 11th chapter of Hebrews. **"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God....By faith Abel**

offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain....By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death....By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house....By faith Abraham...obeyed....These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," Heb. 1-7,13.

Lovingly the Lord Jesus admonishes us Christians even today, **"Be not faithless, but believing!"** Let us be faithful in hearing, reading, and studying the Word of God. For it is through this Word that the Holy Spirit effectually works also in them that believe (I Thess. 2:13) and strengthens their faith. We Christians pray:

"Increase my faith, dear Savior,
For Satan seeks by night and day
To rob me of this treasure
And take my hope of bliss away.
But, Lord, with Thee beside me,
I shall be undismayed;
And led by Thy good Spirit,
I shall be unafraid.
Abide with me, O Savior,
A firmer faith bestow;
Then I shall bid defiance
To every evil foe." **(LH 381)**

M.L.N.

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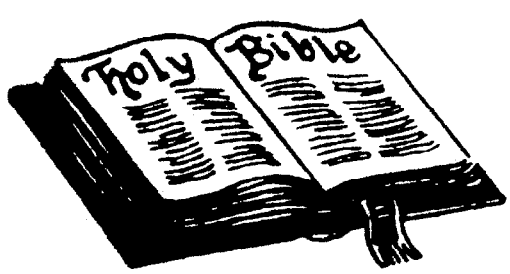

The Resurrected Christ

Deals with Simon Peter

The first two times Jesus asked Peter, **"Loveth thou Me?"** He used the Greek work "agapao," saying **"agapas me?"** Peter, however, changed the word for love in his answer to the Savior saying, **"Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I philo se."** This, of course, was not what Jesus had asked him. **"Agapao"** generally refers to that deep love which God required in the first table of the Decalog: A love which puts God first in our every thought, word, and deed, and gladly consecrates our lives to His service; a love which is devoted to God above all things—with all our heart, and with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37). This is the love of which the Lord Jesus inquired of Peter, when, the first two times, He asked, **"Lovest thou Me?"** ("agapas me?").

Peter, however, undoubtedly thought that he was unworthy to ascribe to himself such a deep and perfect love for his Master as that of which the Savior had inquired. He felt himself capable only of that human affection which all people are able to have for certain of their fellowmen to whom they are attracted or whom have done for them some great or kindly service. The **third** time, however, the Lord Jesus changes the word for "love" in His question from **"agapas me?"** to **"phileis me?"** In other words the Lord Jesus **now** inquired of Peter whether he really even had that mere imperfect human affection for Him which he certainly had not shown when he began to curse and to swear in the courtyard of the high priest's palace, saying, **"I know not this man of whom ye speak!"** This is what undoubtedly "grieved" Peter, made him deeply sorrowful, namely, that Jesus changed the word for "love" in His question **from "agapao" to "phileo"** by which the Savior questioned even his human affection for Him, and he responded, **"Lord, Thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I love Thee** (philo se)!"—still (by

The Resurrected Christ

Deals with Simon Peter

The first two times Jesus asked Peter, **"Loveth thou Me?"** He used the Greek work "agapao," saying **"agapas me?"** Peter, however, changed the word for love in his answer to the Savior saying, **"Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I philo se."** This, of course, was not what Jesus had asked him. **"Agapao"** generally refers to that deep love which God required in the first table of the Decalog: A love which puts God first in our every thought, word, and deed, and gladly consecrates our lives to His service; a love which is devoted to God above all things—with all our heart, and with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37). This is the love of which the Lord Jesus inquired of Peter, when, the first two times, He asked, **"Lovest thou Me?"** ("agapas me?").

Peter, however, undoubtedly thought that he was unworthy to ascribe to himself such a deep and perfect love for his Master as that of which the Savior had inquired. He felt himself capable only of that human affection which all people are able to have for certain of their fellowmen to whom they are attracted or whom have done for them some great or kindly service. The **third** time, however, the Lord Jesus changes the word for "love" in His question from **"agapas me?"** to **"phileis me?"** In other words the Lord Jesus **now** inquired of Peter whether he really even had that mere imperfect human affection for Him which he certainly had not shown when he began to curse and to swear in the courtyard of the high priest's palace, saying, **"I know not this man of whom ye speak!"** This is what undoubtedly "grieved" Peter, made him deeply sorrowful, namely, that Jesus changed the word for "love" in His question **from "agapao" to "phileo"** by which the Savior questioned even his human affection for Him, and he responded, **"Lord, Thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I love Thee** (philo se)!"—still (by

using the words, **"philo se"**) insisting that he is incapable, of himself, of that deep and perfect love for Christ which is required of him in the First Table of the Law. Peter's deep remorse still did not permit him to claim for himself more than that lower form of love (phileo).

With His incisive questions, the Lord Jesus had deeply wounded Peter—but only in order to heal him spiritually. Peter had committed a most vile and disgraceful sin. Three times he had vigorously denied his Savior. Now Jesus questions him three times with regard to his love, and **not only** the fact that Jesus asks a similar question three times is significant, **but especially** what these questions themselves convey to Peter in bringing to his remembrance his terrible sin.

By His first question, Jesus wants to know whether Peter thinks that his love for Him exceeds the love of his fellow apostles—reminding Peter of his words on the night of His betrayal. **"Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee,"** Matt. 26:33,35. **"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise,"** Mark 14:29. **"Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both to prison and to death,"** Luke 22:33.

By His second question, Jesus wants to know whether Peter has any deep love for Him **at all.** Peter had confessed, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."** Yet, under pressure, in the high priest's palace, in the presence of a girl and others to whom she spoke, he denied the Lord Jesus a **first time,** saying, **"I know not what thou sayest,"** Matt. 26:69; **"Woman, I know Him not!"** Luke 22:57; and, a **second time,** with an oath, **"I do not know the man."** Matt. 26:72; **"I am not"** one of this man's disciples, John 18:25; and, a **third time,** he began to curse and to swear, saying, **"I know not the man!"** Matt. 26:74; **"I know not this man of whom ye speak!"** Mark 14:71.

And **now, by His third question,** Jesus wants to know

if, in the light of his three denials, Peter can actually say (as he has said twice already), **"Philo se?"** (I love Thee)—"Do you really have even a **mere affection** for Me as you say you have?" Peter's grief over his sinful behavior in the palace of the high priest causes him to cry out in anguish of heart, **"Lord, Thou knowest all things! Thou knowest that I love Thee!"** ("I do **have an affection** for You!"). With these words, Peter, in great humility, truly honors Jesus by looking away from himself and submitting himself entirely to the omniscience of his Lord and his God. He is not annoyed with the Savior's questions for he knows the purpose for which Jesus has asked them. The Lord Jesus is pleased with the great sincerity and deep humility with which Peter responds to His questions and promptly reinstates this penitent disciple to his apostolic office.

After Peter had said, in answer to the Savior's first question, **"Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee,"** Jesus declares to Peter, **"Feed My lambs,"** ("Provide pasturage for My lambs!"). With these words the Lord Jesus absolves Peter and emphasizes His forgiveness with a solemn and absolutely authoritative reinstatement into his apostolic office. Jesus here gives Peter the awesome responsibility of feeding and nourishing the precious lambs of His flock whose **"angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven,"** Matt. 18:10. A called shepherd must never minimize the great value of the souls of the little ones in his congregation. These he must provide with true spiritual nourishment from the **"milk of the Word"** (I Peter 2:2), that they may grow in their knowledge and understanding, and especially in their ability to use God's Word in their lives.

The Lord Jesus also **accepts** Peter's answer to His second question, **BUT this time He changes His commission** to Peter **slightly** by saying, **"Feed My sheep,"** ("Shepherd My sheep!" "Be carrying out the work of a shepherd for the sheep of My fold!"). Here the word which is translated "Feed" is a different word, in the original language, from that which the Savior used in response to Peter's first statement, namely, **"Feed My lambs."** The distinction cannot be discerned in the English translation, but, because it involves the words which the Lord Jesus actually spoke, it is an important distinction. In the command, **"Feed My**

lambs," the word for "feed" is a form of the verb **"boskein"** which means **"to nourish"** while in the command, **"Feed My sheep,"** the word for "feed" is a form of the verb **"poimainein"** which means **"to shepherd."** (The **noun "poimayn"** is the Greek word for **"shepherd."**) Here Peter is asked **"to guide and to lead"** all the sheep of Christ (children and adults) into the pleasant pastures and beside the still waters of His Word, to provide guidance, warning, exhortation and admonition for Christians on the Way of Life. This, of course, is also a vital responsibility of the pastor of every Christian congregation. In his first epistle (5:2), Peter writes to all Christian pastors: **"Feed (shepherd) the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."** And the Apostle Paul uses the same word in his charge to the pastors of the Ephesian congregation, **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed (shepherd) the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood,"** Acts 20:28,29. Such shepherding includes those important responsibilities which the Apostle mentions in his second letter to Timothy, where he writes, **"Preach the Word; be instant** (attending immediately to problems and eventualities) **in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."** How important it was for Jesus to reinstate Peter into his apostolic office with the words, **"Feed** (shepherd) **My sheep!"**

In His **third response** to Peter's reply, the Lord Jesus emphasizes His **compassionate love** for those whom He knows as His own sheep and who know Him (John 10:14) and commits them to Peter's care and guidance. Here, where the English translation simply has once again, **"Feed My sheep,"** (John 21:17), the Savior actually says, **"Feed** (shepherd) **My dear little sheep"**—denoting not age or size but **special affection** for those who **"hear His voice"** and **"follow Him"** and to whom He will **"give eternal life."** These whom He loves so dearly, He now entrusts into the shepherding care of His newly absolved and reinstated Apostle. These thrilling words of Jesus must have remained in the ears and heart of that now humbled and penitent Peter throughout His ministry as an holy Apostle of the Lord. Again and again he expresses his Savior's love for His sheep and how we should love our precious Savior both by our words and by our ac-

tions: **"Ye know that ye were...redeemed....with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,"** I Peter 1:18,19; **"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls,"** I Peter 1:8,9. **"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious,"** I Peter 2:2,3; **"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,"** I Peter 3:18. **"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,"** I Peter 2:9. **"The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation....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 Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen,"** II Peter 3:15,17-18.

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The Biblical Pentecost

vs.

the Unbiblical "Pentecostals"

"And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4b

With each passing year, visible or organized Christendom becomes less and less Biblical. To true Bible-believing Christians, this is not surprising. Paul writes in II Timothy 4:3-4: **"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."** This describes the great and prevailing apostacy of

the last days.

What also characterizes this apostacy is much confusion and lack of proper discrimination between true and false doctrines and practices. Generally speaking, people simply do not know what is to be believed and not to be believed. No wonder! Many supposed teachers are no longer teaching, that is, they are not teaching the Scriptures in their truth and purity.

One particular manifestation of the apostacy as we witness it today is the false teaching and practice concerning miraculous or charismatic gifts. The word, charismatic, comes from the Greek work charisma, which means gift. Today the Pentecostals and their more recent offspring, the Neo-Pentecostals (or Charismatics), claim to possess such gifts. However, the Scriptural charismata or gifts which are called charismatic gifts were never ordinary gifts bestowed commonly on all believers. They were granted to the Apostles and other individuals as the Spirit saw fit to grant them. Thus, even in the Apostolic age when charismatic gifts were more commonly bestowed, they were not held in common possession by all believers. As I Corinthians 12:11 says, they were given **"severally as He (the Holy Spirit) will."** They were administered in accord with the will and discretion of the Holy Ghost. This is why Paul asked, **"Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all miracle workers? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak in tongues? do all interpret?"** This series of questions is obviously rhetorical, that is, the answer is implied, and the implied answer is, NO!

Therefore, when Mark 16:17-18 says, **"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues...."**, etc., again we are not to understand these miraculous signs to be possessed singly or collectively by every Christian. Note that the text says, **"these signs shall follow them that believe."** For the sake of the work of the Apostles, as a witness and a testimony of the divine authority of their ministry, these gifts were given. This is why this Mark passage speaks of these gifts as SIGNS! Conclusively the same context adds these words: **"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word**

with signs following," Mark 16:20. A case in point is that of the Apostle Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 where we are told that Cornelius and his household began to speak in tongues. This served to confirm to the Jews who were present that, in fact, the Gentiles were accepted by God.

Yet in spite of what has just been cited from Scripture, the traditional Pentecostals and their current cousins, the Charismatics, continue to claim the possession and use of many, although interestingly not all, of the miraculous gifts common to the Apostolic age. Despite the clear evidence of Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost whom He has sent, have directed us to the completed Word of God alone as our sole source and norm of faith and doctrine, and **NOT** the signs and wonders of the charismata, the Pentecostals not only claim to have these gifts, but also they imply that any Christian that does not have them is a sort of "second-rate" Christian and therefore should pray for and expect to receive them today. Among the gifts they claim to be common to all Christians, their favorite and most consistently touted "gift" is that of speaking in tongues.

But what does Scripture tell us of speaking in tongues? We first learn of the speaking in tongues in Acts 2, where on Pentecost Sunday the Apostles began to speak in tongues. It says, **"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,"** (vs. 4). And what tongues did they speak? Were they unheard of, other-worldly, or heavenly languages? Let the multitude of people who were present tell us. They said, **"Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in OUR OWN TONGUE, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,....We do hear them speak in OUR TONGUES the wonderful works of God,"** Acts 2:7-9,11. Clearly the Apostles were granted by the special outpouring of the Holy Ghost to be able to speak known and existing languages of the world. The tongues or languages were in themselves not unusual, unheard of, or miraculous. That the Apostles who naturally knew how to speak only

their own language could suddenly communicate the Word of God in other languages, was miraculous! The miracle of Pentecost was that the Apostles could suddenly speak in foreign (another nation's) language.

But the tongues of which the Pentecostals and Charismatics speak are supposedly other-worldly and truly unknown to human experience. This is most evident to anyone who would listen to the tongue-speakers who appear on T.V. What they speak is just plain gibberish! And even if such gibberish were a valid, Biblical tongues-speaking, the Bible in I Corinthians 14 would require that interpreters be present or that those speaking remain silent! Since Scripture requires to be present those who can interpret, why are these alleged tongues-speakers broadcasting their unintelligible "tongues" across the airways? Indeed, should the Pentecostals direct us to I Corinthians 12 and 14 where the matter of tongues among the Corinthians is discussed, even if we would concede (which we do not) that the tongues spoken of in these chapters were of a different kind than that spoken on Pentecost, a form of prayer-talk or heavenly language, this does not mean that such ecstatic, inarticulate tongue-speaking continued past the Apostolic age. Thus, the miraculous gifts granted to the Apostles and to other individuals associated with the Apostles, because of the completed Word, are no longer to be expected as signs or confirmation of the Word of God. Indeed, in regard to tongues, I Corinthians 13:8 says: **"Whether there be tongues, they shall cease."**

Thus, in evaluating the claims of the Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals, we must do so on the basis of I John 4:1: **"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."** We try the spirits (teachers) by comparing what they teach with what the Bible teaches. Astonishingly many Pentecostals and Charismatics are anti-Trinitarian! They deny the very doctrine of the Trinity! Where such be the case, they place themselves outside of the Christian Church! Moreover, the Charismatics and Neo-Pentecostals are highly unionistic. They worship, pray, and "speak in tongues" with people of virtually all denominations or religious groups who claim to be Christian, and who speak

in tongues or profess to have a special indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This explains how Charismatics from out of the Roman Catholics, the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, etc., will gather in unison for Charismatic prayer and praise services! The unity of these groups is not the true unity of the Spirit, a unity in doctrine which the Holy Ghost requires us to have (Eph. 4:3ff; I Cor. 1:10), but a unity of agreement on claims to have and to exercise the miraculous gifts of the Spirit found in the Apostolic age.

We must, therefore, in accord with Roman 16:17, **"mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."** Likewise, we should also be warned by Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21-23: **"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."**

Especially let us cherish God's greatest gift to us, a gift offered to all, and intended for all—the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. **"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,"** Rom. 6:23. Christ died on the cross and paid for the sins of all mankind so that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Of this gift the Bible says: **"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift,"** II Cor. 9:15. If there by any special praise, let it be for this gift!

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CORRECTION

On the cover of the **July-August, 1991** issue, an inadvertent typographical error was made which has since compounded itself and identifies each subsequent issue as belonging to the volume that appeared two years earlier. The Roman numeral XXX**VI** was mis-typed as XXX**IV**, and the error was copied from one issue to the next. Beginning with the January-February, 1992 issue, one year was added to the **incorrect** volume number, making it XXXV instead of the correct volume number: **XXXVII**. Please make a note of this correction, particularly in the case of library copies and periodical indexes. We sincerely regret any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused.

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Israeli members of the large and powerful Hasidic movement, Habad, are convinced that at any moment the Redeemer will arrive in Jerusalem. In a burst of fervor, they have erected yellow billboards across Israel, instructing passersby to PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. Bumper stickers carry the same message, as do electrified signs atop Habad cars. A full-page ad announcing "The Time for Your Redemption Has Arrived," has run in the New York Times, and Habad speakers have been crisscrossing the U.S. to deliver their message. And who might the Messiah be? Easy, say Israel's Habadniks: their leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 89, of Brooklyn, N.Y. Within Habad, a well-financed organization with 30,000 followers in Brooklyn and at least 100,000 worldwide, the expectation of the Messiah's coming has been building since Schneerson in the past few years began exhorting his disciples more and more to actively prepare for the last day. Last month, the rebbe gave permission to one of his flock to begin building a house for him in Kfar Habad, the movement's village in Israel. Schneerson has never set foot in the Jewish state, and his followers believe he will do so only at the moment of Redemption. It is not an official tenet of Habad's belief that Schneerson is the Messiah, but many of his followers say outright that he is, and some have petitioned him to "reveal" himself. (Time, March 23, 1992)

The promise of the Seed of the Woman given to the believers in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Christ, the promised Messiah. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is CHRIST," **Gal. 3:16. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus asking Him,**

"Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them,'" **Matt. 11:3-5. The Lord Jesus boldly testified before friend and foe that He was indeed the promised Messiah, the Savior and the Redeemer of the world. The proof is indisputable and overwhelming! Unfortunately, however, Jesus** "came unto His own, and His own received Him not," **John 1:11. Particularly when the Jews learned that Jesus had not come to establish an earthly kingdom, then their opposition and resentment increased until it culminated in their screaming before Pontius Pilate,** "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" **Luke 23:21. Their opposition to the Savior and His Kingdom which is not of this world (John 18:36) has not changed!**

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A British scientist believes ancestors of the human race first began to walk erect when they moved from forests into the open and found it was too hot to stay down on all fours. "Between 4 million and 7 million years ago, they began walking upright to keep cool, because an upright animal exposes only one-third of its surface to the sun's rays compared to a four-legged animal," said Peter Wheeler, director of biological and earth sciences at Liverpool Polytechnic. Many anthropologists have said humans' ancestors rose to two legs to make it easier to hunt, scavenge, use tools, or see prey. "But I believe heat was the key to evolution," Wheeler said. "It appears that because of global climate change, the rain-forest covering Africa began to fragment and shrink in size when temperatures rose and caused increasing aridity," he said. "That led some early humans to colonize the unforested areas, including savannahs. Out on the African savannah, a four-legged animal must have often been on the verge of heatstroke, so heat regulation was the reason why early man evolved," the scientist said. Robert Foley, a biological anthropologist at Cambridge University, said he was very impressed by Wheeler's studies, published earlier last year in the Journal of Human Evolution, edited in London and New York. Christopher Stringer, head of the

human origins group at London's Natural History Museum, said of Wheeler's studies, "His is one of the better explanations of the factor that lay behind early man starting to walk upright...."

While Wheeler's explanation may receive the enthusiastic acclaim of his colleagues, it certainly does not meet with God's approval! How God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, and when He created them, is plainly taught in His Word! On the sixth day of Creation God "formed man of the dust of the ground," **then He created Eve by causing** "a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof," **Gen. 2:7,21. God did not create our first parents to go about on all fours but to walk on two legs in distinction from the animals. The eminent British scientist does not explain why the four-legged animals do not continue to change to walking on two legs to escape the heat! O what preposterous and ridiculous explanations arise out of the sin-darkened mind of man when he, in his pride, foolishly rejects the Wisdom of the Creator whose Word alone is a Lamp unto our feet and a Light unto our path (Psalm 119:105).**

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The summer issue of the "Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology" published an article, "Apparel and Sex Crimes." This journal is published by the Guilford Press and edited by Dr. Edward Scott, professor emeritus of psychiatry at Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland. A majority of psychiatrists agreed with these statements:

> *Female attire that appears to the male to invite direct sex attention tends to increase the risk of sex crimes. (Yes: 63%; No: 21%; rest undecided)
> *A male may interpret sexually teasing attire as uncaring and unfair, subjecting him to temptation while rejecting him. This may result in thoughts of revenge against the female who brought on the distress, sometimes expanded to hostility against females in general. (Yes: 85%; No: 11%)

*Parents of young females who wish to minimize the risk of sex crime should consider what the girl's attire may be signaling as interpreted by males. (Yes: 88%; No: 9%)
*When a female minor is involved in intercourse or molestation in the home, one factor may be informality as to nudity or revealing attire. (Yes: 81%; No: 17%)

The above article was taken from THE FREE PRESS in Mankato, Minnesota (November 20, 1991). One would naturally assume that the responses of these psychiatrists were based upon cases that they had either personally handled or that were brought to their attention by others. For the Christian that which determines his attire is the Word of God which is always to be the sole source and norm of Christian teaching in the Church. Every sincere Christian, male and female, looks to God's Word which "is a Lamp unto my feet and a Light unto my path," **Psalm 119:105. And in that Word the Lord tells us** "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel," **I Tim. 2:9. And this surely applies to the men also! While there are no specifics laid down in Holy Writ (style of clothing, length of dress, etc.), the general principle of** "modest apparel" **certainly is! And that** "modest apparel" **is then determined by that Christian who sincerely seeks his** "salvation with fear and trembling" **(Phil. 2:12) and would not want to offend His Savior in leading someone into sin by neglecting to follow that Scriptural principle!** "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" **Matt. 18:7.**

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