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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"Pray without ceasing."

I Thess 5:17

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief 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 acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

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

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

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

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

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

The President's Column

We are entering into the first quarter of the new year. Economists are busy assessing the financial situation of the country and making decisions and predictions very cautiously, simply because everything is so **uncertain.** There is the fear that the large increase in our taxes this year will have a deleterious effect upon our economy. There are not only the various problems within our own borders with which we must cope (crime, national health care and medical plan, etc.), but also global problems. All these things tend to increase the uncertainty already existing within the hearts of the children of this world because their attention is focused only on the things of this world with no thought concerning the life to come.

Are things any different within the pale of Christendom? Where are those Christians who profess **true Scriptural certainty**? Oh, indeed, we hear many nominal Christians speak about relying upon God's goodness and grace, but as soon as they are asked if they are **certain** of that goodness and grace and their salvation, they will often stammer and are not able to answer with certainty. On the other hand, we observe particularly in the Holiness Bodies a vast number who extol the fact that they are certain of their salvation. In fact, at first glance, no one seems to be more certain than they. They can frequently tell you the day and hour of their conversion and even enumerate many remarkable things connected with their conversion. But only too often it becomes apparent that their certainty turns into uncertainty when they must endure severe temptations and trials. He who bases his faith upon his emotions and feelings builds upon sinking sand. Then there is the Roman Church which declares by *divine* authority and power in the Council of Trent that no one, unless it be by special revelation, can be certain of the forgiveness of sins and his salvation (Trid., Sess. VI, chap.IX).

In sharp contrast to all this, we hear the Apostle Paul declaring by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "*For **I know** whom I have believed*" (2 Tim. 1:12) Paul's faith was no human opinion, no self-made hope resting upon an improbability. He knew in whom he believed and upon whom his faith was based - Jesus. As scripture declares, "*neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). **Here is true Scriptural certainty!**

There are those, however, who insist that this example of the Apostle Paul was an exceptional one. But what was it that brought Paul to the conviction, "*I know whom I have believed?*" It is true that the Lord appeared unto Paul in a miraculous manner on his way to Damascus. But this appearance was not in itself a means of grace to bring him to this certainty. It was an extraordinary means of bringing proud Saul to his senses. However during this special encounter Christ also spoke to Saul saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." (Acts 9:5). Then he told Saul, "*Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do*" (Acts 9:6). There, through Ananias, the Lord told him to "*arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). Thus the Apostle does not base his faith upon a special heavenly revelation but upon God's Word of Truth through which the Holy Spirit worked such certainty in his heart. Therefore we hear this same Apostle declaring, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). And again, "*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Rom. 1:16). Therefore the Apostle Paul reminds: "*the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3: 26): "*the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (Rom. 8:16,17).

What a blessing to possess this true Scriptural certainty! We are not to seek such certainty in extraordinary signs such as dreams, visions and revelations. Instead, we are to make use of the means which God Himself has provided: the Law and the Gospel. "*By the Law is the knowledge of sin*" (Rom. 3:20). The Law of God shows us our real condition in the sight of God: conceived and born in sin and iniquity, spiritually blind, dead, and enemies of God, deserving God's justifiable wrath and everlasting condemnation. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Rom.

6:23). And the deeper that we look into the Law of God and examine ourselves on the basis of that Law, the more precious will be that announcement from the Savior of sinners, "*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*" (Matt. 9:2). Where the hammer-blows of the Law have smashed our self-righteousness, there the sweet Gospel lifts us up and prompts us to "*give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*" (Col. 1:12-14).

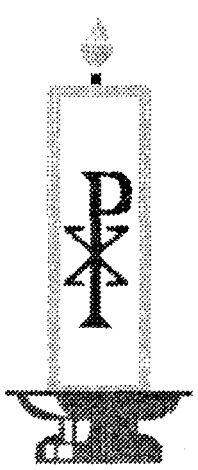
Now we Christians can and should be certain of the love of our dear heavenly Father in Christ for it is not a subjective certainty which we have devised, but an objective certainty which is based **solely and alone upon God's Word and promise!** That Word is the Truth (John 17:17). That Word has been given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16). That Word is not the word of fallible men, but the infallible Word of the Most High (1 Cor. 2:13). That Word is the Word of Him for whom it is impossible to lie (Heb. 6:18). No wonder our Lutheran fathers declared so emphatically, "First, (then, we receive and embrace with our whole heart) *the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged" (The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration. Comprehensive Summary, Trig. page 851). And we confidently sing the words of that fine Scriptural hymn by Erdmann Neumeister,

"I know my faith is founded
On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;
And this my faith confessing,
Unmoved I stand upon His Word.
Man's reason cannot fathom
The truth of God profound;
Who trusts her subtle wisdom
Relies on shifting ground.
God's Word is all-sufficient,
It makes divinely sure,
And trusting in its wisdom,
My faith shall rest secure"
(Lutheran Hymnal 381 v.1).

Therefore it is neither arrogance nor presumption on our part to declare with the Apostle Paul, "*I know whom I have believed...*" (2 Tim. 1:12). Such certainty is worked by God the Holy Ghost through the Gospel and dwells within the heart of every believer in Christ. While this certainty is not found among all Christians **in the same degree**, every true Christian possesses it. There is no doubt about it, we know that this certainty is attacked by the enemies of our souls especially when we must walk through the furnace of affliction. At such times we must often cry out, "*Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief*" (Mark 9:24). This certainty can also be lost if we allow ourselves to be ensnared by the devil to live in the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). But as long as our faith continues to hold steadfastly to God's Word and promise, it will never be put to shame (Rom. 10:11).

We Christians should therefore be "*stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor. 15:58). His promises stand sure! "*For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*" (Heb. 13:5,6).

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor M. L. Natterer, President



What Luther Says On Prayer

In the following section of this issue of "The Concordia Lutheran," we are presenting excerpts from Volume II of the three-volume set of WHAT LUTHER SAYS-An Anthology, Compiled by Ewald M. Plass, Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri, 1959, on the subject of Prayer. (Note: We wish to thank Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri, for granting us permission to use these quotations from Plass' work for this issue of "The Concordia Lutheran.")

NOTE: any annotations by Ewald M. Plass, the compiler of WHAT LUTHER SAYS, which we have seen fit to include with the quotations from Luther, are presented in *italics* and are designated, *(Plass)*. All other text quotes are those which Plass has gleaned from Luther's writings and are designated, (Luther). Plass' paragraph numbering and heading of each quotation from Luther are retained.

-- Editor.

PRAYER

FEW HAVE BEEN better qualified to speak about prayer than Martin Luther. In his exposition of Matt. 5:5-6 in 1532 he makes some general remarks. (Plass)

3430 Why and How to Pray But elsewhere I have often taken up and discussed the component parts and the characteristics which every real prayer has to possess; therefore I shall only summarize them briefly here. They are as follows: first, the urging of God's commandment, who has strictly required us to pray; second, His promise, in which he declares that He will hear us; third, an examination of our own need and misery,

which burden lies so heavily on our shoulders that we have to carry it to God immediately and pour it out before Him, in accordance with His order and commandment; fourth, true faith, based on this Word and promise of God, praying with the certainty and confidence that He will hear and help us--and all these things in the name of Christ, through whom our prayer is acceptable to the Father and for whose sake He gives us every grace and very good. (Luther)

WHY, THEN, dare man, a handful of corrupt dust and ashes, undertake to pray? Dr. Luther answers in his exposition of John 16:23 (1537 or 1538). (Plass)

3431 Why We May Pray You must base your prayer on God's Word and promise, nay, on His own command and bidding, and say: Dear Lord, You know that I do not appear before You of my own accord and out of personal presumption or because of any worthiness in me. For if I were to look at those things, I would not dare raise my eyes to You and would not know how to begin to pray. But I come because You Yourself have bidden and earnestly requested us to call on You and have also promised us a hearing. Besides this, You have sent Your own Son, who has taught us what we are to pray and has spoken the very words for us. Therefore I know that prayers such as this please You. Let my presumption--that I dare boast in Your presence of being God's child---appear as great as it pleases; yet I must be obedient to You who would have it so that I do not charge You with a lie and to the other sins committed against You add the more grievous ones of despising Your command and disbelieving Your promise. (Luther)

3432 Praying Is Not Optional You are to look closely at this command and stress it that you do not consider prayer an optional work and act as if it were no sin for you not to pray and as if it were enough that others pray. You should know that praying is earnestly enjoined, with the threat of God's supreme displeasure and punishment if it is neglected. It is enjoined just as well as the command that you should have no other gods and should not blaspheme and abuse God's name but should confess and preach, laud and praise it. He who does not do this should know that he is no Christian and does not belong in the kingdom

of God. If, then, you believe that God is justly angry with the idolatrous, the blasphemers, and the despisers of His Word, with murderers and thieves, and that terrible punishments come upon the world because of such sins, why do you not fear God's wrath when you despise this command and live on in security as if you were not obliged to pray?

You can, firstly, herewith refute and beat down the temptation of the devil when he pretends that you are not fit or worthy to pray. A subterfuge such as this means nothing: I am also unfit to believe God's Word and to hear it, to love my neighbor, etc. For this reason the command of God is to mean nothing? The question is not whether you are worthy or unworthy, but whether you owe God obedience. I am not worthy either to be baptized and to be called a Christian; nay, I am not worthy of the daily bread which I eat. Should I, therefore, deny my Christ or never let myself be baptized or neither eat nor drink? (Luther)

IN HIS EXPOSITION of John 15:7 Luther points out why only Christians can pray. (Plass)

3440 Why Only Christians Can Pray Praying is the work of faith alone and something no one but a Christian can do. For Christians do not base their prayer on themselves but on the name of the Son of God, in whose name they have been baptized; and they are certain that praying in this way is pleasing to God because He has told us to pray in the name of Christ and has promised to hear us. Others, who undertake to pray in their own name, do not know this. They want to prepare and collect themselves until they become worthy and fit enough to pray and so make nothing but a work of it. And when you ask them whether they are sure that they are heard, they say: I did pray, but whether I was heard God alone knows.

But what sort of praying is it when you do not know what you are doing or what God has to say about it? This is not the mind of a Christian after prayer; but just as he begins on the command and promise of God, so he offers his prayer to Him in the name of Christ and knows that God will not deny him that for which he has asked. And he finds in reality that God helps him in all troubles; and although he is not at once freed from his plight, he nevertheless knows that his prayer is pleasing and is heard. And God grants him the ability to bear and overcome what is troubling

him. This amounts to having the trouble taken from him; for once it is overcome, it is no longer a misfortune and a plague. (Luther)

BUT THIS GRACE is mediated only through Christ, the Reformer declares in his exposition of Gen. 49:13 (1545). (Plass)

3441 Only the God Gracious in Christ Answers Prayers If anyone wants to call upon God, he must believe in his heart that God is appeased, is kind and gracious toward him, and want to hear him...You will never call upon God the Father, the Creator, who has made you, who feeds you with bread, and who frees you from all evils, unless you believe and are sure that He is a gracious God to you...(Luther) [The second paragraph of 3441 is being omitted. --ERS]

WITHOUT the apprehension of this God of grace real praying is impossible, says the Doctor in explanation of Gal. 3:7 (1531). (Plass)

3442 When Confident Prayer Is Not Possible In faith the confidence that God is merciful must always be present. But this confidence embraces faith in the remission of sins for Christ's sake, for it is impossible for a conscience to expect anything from God unless it first gains the conviction that God is gracious for Christ's sake. (Luther)

BUT ONCE it is sure of this, it cannot but pray, Luther remarks in his exposition of I Peter 4:8 in 1539. (Plass)

3443 No Christian Without Prayer Here he [Peter] exhorts Christians to pray and thereby shows incidentally that the duty (*Amt*) to pray is imposed on every Christian, for "the Spirit of grace and of supplications" is poured out on all believers (Zech. 12:10). Therefore let the man who fails to pray not imagine that he is a Christian. (Luther)

HE WHO would pray should, then, turn his eyes, not inward but outward and upward, the Doctor advises in an exposition of Matt. 6:5-6 (1532). (Plass)

3449 Look at God's Word and Promise Learn, therefore, that there can be no real prayer without this faith. But do you feel weak and fearful? Your flesh and blood is always putting obstacles in the way of faith, as if you were not worthy enough or earnest enough to pray. Or do you doubt that God has heard you, since you are a sinner? Then hold on to the Word and say: Though I am sinful and unworthy, still I have the commandment of God, telling me to pray, and His promise that He will graciously hear me, not on account of my worthiness but on account of the Lord Christ. In this way you can chase away the thoughts and the doubts, and you can cheerfully kneel down to pray. You need not consider whether you are worthy or unworthy; all you need to consider is your need and His Word, on which He tells you to build. (Luther)

TO BE SURE, now and then Luther himself found it hard to practice what he preached in this respect, he confesses in his exposition of Ps. 51:1 (1532). (Plass)

3451 Luther's Own Experience At times I, who teach this and prescribe it to others, have learned from my own example that praying comes close to being the most difficult of all works. Therefore I do not claim to be a master in this task. But this I do confess: In the greatest perils I have often only coldly pronounced these words: God, be merciful to me--because I took offense at my own unworthiness. (Luther)

YET SUCH an attitude is wrong, Luther points out in his "sermon" on good works, from which we quoted above. (Plass)

3452 The Sick Need the Physician Such is our blindness: with our bodily sickness and need we run to God; with the sickness of the soul we run away from Him, nor are we willing to come back until we are well; just as if there were one God who helps the body and another God who helps the soul, or as if we were determined to help ourselves in spiritual need, although this certainly is greater than bodily need. That is the

devil's own counsel and undertaking.

Not so, my good man. If you want to be cured of sin, you must not run away from God, but you must run to Him and pray more confidently than you would if bodily need had overtaken you. God is not hostile to sinners but only to unbelievers, that is, to those who do not recognize and lament their sin and seek help against it from God but in their own presumption want to purify themselves, do not want to be in need of His grace, and do not want to let Him be a God who gives to everyone and takes nothing in return. (Luther)

3454 Prayer and the Triune God When you call upon Jesus Christ and say: O my dear Lord God, my Creator and Father, Jesus Christ, Thou one eternal God, you need not worry that the Father and the Holy Spirit will be angry on this account. They know that no matter which Person you call upon, you call upon all three Persons and upon the One God at the same time. For you cannot call upon one Person without calling upon the others, because the one, undivided divine Essence exists in all and in each Person. Conversely, you cannot deny any Person in particular without denying all three and the One God in His entirety, as I John 2:23 says: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." (Luther)

3455 Do Not Pray to Saints It is not to be advised or tolerated that one should call upon the departed saints to intercede for him or should teach others to do so, but this is rather to be condemned and people are to be taught to avoid it. Therefore I, too, shall not advise it and burden my conscience with other peoples' iniquities. It was exceedingly bitter for me to tear myself away from the worship of the saints, for I was completely steeped and drowned in it. But the light of the Gospel is now so clear that henceforth no one has any excuse if he remains in darkness. (Luther)

NEVERTHELESS, prayer life is far from what it should have been. The devil sees to this, says Luther in his exposition of John 16:23. (Plass)

3456 Many Things Hinder Prayer When I would speak and pray to God by myself, a hundred thousand hindrances at once intervene before I get at it. Then the devil can throw all sorts of reasons for delay into my path; he can block and hinder me on all sides; as a result, I go my way and never think of it again. Let him who has not experienced this only try it. Resolve to pray earnestly, and no doubt you will see how large an assortment of your own thoughts will rush in on you and distract you, so that you cannot begin aright.

For instance, to speak now only of the greatest and foremost hindrance, the first thing that hinders and delays us is the thought, inspired by the devil: Why, at present you are really not yet fit for praying; wait another half hour or day, until you become better prepared or have done this or that. Meanwhile the devil is there to lead you away for the half hour. Accordingly, you think no more of praying throughout the day, and so you go on from one day to another, rushed and hindered by other business. This comes close to being the commonest hindrance and is a very bad trick and device of the devil, which he often plays on me and on others. Besides, he finds his advantage in our flesh and blood, because these are lazy and cold to begin with. Therefore we cannot pray as we ourselves should like to, and though we may begin, we soon flutter away with foreign, worthless thoughts and so lose the prayer. (Luther)

IN 1535 Dr. Luther wrote "a simple way to pray for a good friend." In the opening words he cautions against putting off prayer. (Plass)

3457 Do Not Delay Prayer It is well to let prayer be the first work in the early morning and the last work in the evening and to guard with care against the false, deceptive thoughts which say: Wait a bit; after an hour I shall pray. First I must do this or that. For with such thoughts one gets from prayer into business matters, which then hold one captive. As a result, nothing comes of prayer on that day. (Luther) [The second paragraph of 3457 is being omitted. --ERS]

IN SOMEONE'S Bible (?) Dr. Luther once wrote the following comment on Deut. 8:10. (Plass)

3459 The Shame of Neglecting Table Prayer We who are called such [Christians] and desire to be considered such should take this to heart: We should receive our gifts from God Almighty with reverence and thanksgiving and not go to the table as pigs to the trough and leave the table, after we have taken our fill, without thanking our good God with the slightest little prayer or whisper, nay, without ever thinking of our Lord God, who feeds us ingrates out of pure mercy and kind benevolence. So we forget our good God, who richly offers us all sorts of things for our enjoyment. (Luther)

TO BE SURE, at times we may find our heart cold and our spirit dead. But by prayer we should struggle against such dullness, Luther advises in his exposition of Ps. 51:1 (1532). (Plass)

3460 Overcoming Disinclination to Pray Just when you feel that temptation is strongest and you are most unprepared to pray, then go to a place where you are alone, and pray the Lord's Prayer and whatever you can possibly say against Satan and his temptation. Then you will feel that the temptation becomes less severe and that Satan takes flight. (Luther)

TO COUNTERACT the wordiness of praying, common at that time, the Reformer had emphasized this as early as April 1519 in the opening words of his German exposition of the Lord's Prayer for simple laymen. (Plass)

3465 Long Prayers Are Not Necessary The way to pray is to use few words but to give them a great and deep meaning or intention. The fewer the words, the better the prayer; the more the words, the poorer the prayer. Few words and much meaning is Christian; many words and little meaning is heathenish. (Luther)

IN OPPOSITION to the lifeless recitation so common in the Christendom of his day Luther, therefore, emphasized the prayer which the individual composed on the basis of his own needs. He does so in a sermon on Rom. 12:7-16, with reference to verse twelve. (Plass)

3467 Self-Made Prayers Commended Out of a book you will never pray anything good. To be sure, you may read from the book and learn how and what you should pray, and you may kindle your devotion; but a prayer must come from the heart spontaneously, without any prepared and prescribed words; it must speak its own language according to the fervor of the heart. (Luther) [Note: Luther's remarks should not be taken to mean he was opposed absolutely to any and all written or prepared prayers as this would preclude praying the appointed collects of the Church Year or even the Lord's Prayer. --ERS]

IN SOMEONE'S Bible (?) Luther once wrote the following comments on Ps. 34:17. (Plass)

3484 Let Us Pray More, Especially in These Latter Days This is a great assurance: When we call, the Lord will hear, and will hear more gladly and intently than we are able to call. But do we not deserve blame for being so slow to call, we who, after all, have such glorious and comforting and numerous promises? Oh, let everyone who can do so call and cry. There is no lack of hearing. And especially in these terrible last days, so close to the end of the world, calling and crying to God, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is indeed very necessary. Therefore let us watch and call without ceasing, that we do not fall into temptation. (Luther)

THE FACT is that the Christian does live in a constant attitude of prayer, though he may not always engage in the formal act of prayer, Luther states in his exposition of John 14:13-14. (Plass)

3487 Prayer, Spiritual Pulse of Christian Wherever a Christian is, there the Holy Spirit is, who does nothing else but pray constantly. For though a Christian is not constantly moving his lips and speaking words, his heart nevertheless moves and beats (just like the pulse in his body) and always throbs with such sighs as these: Dear Father, may Thy name

be hallowed; may Thy kingdom come; may Thy will be done by us and everyone. And the harder the blows of life or temptation and trouble press and beat upon him, the stronger such sighs and prayers become, even vocally. Therefore you cannot find a Christian without prayer, just as you cannot find a living man without a pulse. The pulse never stands still; it is always throbbing and beating by itself, even though a man is sleeping or doing something else and, therefore, is not aware of it. (Luther)

IN HIS LECTURES on Eliezer's petition (Gen. 24:12-14) Dr. Luther touches on a matter that is likewise of vital concern to all who pray. (Plass)

3488 As to the Answer of Prayer The Word of God teaches that the time, the place, and the manner of the disposition of a matter should be entrusted to God and that we should simply ask for the matter as such, confident that our request will be granted in His time and place. But if the help is deferred, we should not stop praying for this reason. And yet the time and similar specific requests may be submitted conditionally to God by saying: Lord God, if my prayer could be answered at this time or in that place, as I should like to have it, I pray Thee not to deny me my request. (Luther)

THE FACT is that the prayers of Christians sustain the entire world, Luther asserts in his exposition of Matt. 23:39. (Plass)

3499 Christians' Prayers Uphold the World Our prayer and the prayer of all God-fearing people in the world do the work. Otherwise, if they were to cease, God have mercy on the world! (Luther)

LUTHER was firmly convinced that he and his associates had prayed the Reformation to success, he says in his lectures on the pleading of Judah (Gen. 44:18). (Plass)

3500 Prayer Promoted and Protected the Reformation Since we can slay Satan by prayer, why should we not also dispose of the Turk and the pope in this way?...In fact, to date we have for fully fourteen years held

back the hostile attack of emperor, Turk, and pope by prayer. But the church at large and individual saints are not always aflame with an ardor of prayer as intense as this. (Luther)

THE REFORMER had the same experience in his personal and private life, according to a remark recorded of him. (From the Dietrich-Weller collection of the early 1530's.). (Plass)

3501 Luther Found That God Answers Prayer No one believes how great the power and the efficacy of our prayer are unless he has learned it by experience. It is a great thing when a man who feels himself in dire need can turn to prayer. This I know: As often as I have earnestly prayed, prayed in dead earnest, I have certainly been very freely heard and have received more than I had desired. To be sure, at times our Lord God has delayed a little while; yet He has heard. What is delayed is not denied. (Luther)

THE POINT, then, is that at times we are too nearsighted to see what the will of God really is and what would redound to His glory and our welfare. One day Luther illustrated this truth with a reference to his own experience. (Plass)

3508 God Often Improves on Our Petition All who pray to God in faith are heard and receive that for which they have asked, although not in the hour or at the time or in the manner or in the matter which they desire. Yet they receive something better and more glorious than they dared hope for. Paul testifies to this: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8:26) because we do not know by what or in which way we would be better served. So when I pray for the death of Duke George and am not heard, I should hold that I have nonetheless been heard. For it may be better that one godless prince lives than that six or seven godless rulers occupy his place after his death. Therefore God certainly hears those who pray in faith, yet not in the hour, the manner, and the matter which they prescribe to Him but when and how it appears to Him to be good for us. Then, too, we may be certain of this: If what we ask for will hallow His name and glorify His kingdom and is according to His will, He assuredly hears us. But if we ask for anything

contrary to this, we are not heard; for God does nothing contrary to His name, kingdom, and will. (Luther)

THEREFORE though we may not get what we want when we want it, we should persevere in prayer. So God would have us do, says Luther in his explanation and application of Gen. 19:21-22. (Plass)

3509 True Prayer Is Never in Vain God is moved to wrath if we stop praying, for thus His command is ignored. Let us, therefore, pray boldly and confidently; for if what we ask for is not given, something better will be given, because prayer cannot be in vain, as James says: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16). (Luther)

BUT A CHRISTIAN should not think only of himself. In his early (April 1519) exposition of the Lord's Prayer Luther bids his lay readers note that the very wording of the Fourth Petition indicates this. (Plass)

3514 Pray Also for Others According to the true order of love, we should, most of all, pray for Christendom. This is better than praying for ourselves only; for, as Chrysostom says, for him who prays for all Christendom, all Christendom also prays. In fact, in this way he, together with Christendom, prays for himself. But a man who prays for himself only does not offer a good prayer. (Luther)

3515 Pray for Church and State If any good is to be done and evil is to be prevented, it must to this day be accomplished by prayer. Therefore, although you think you are unfit and unworthy, do not neglect your praying; otherwise no one would pray. Rather every Christian should say to himself: Since prayer is so pleasing to God and so highly necessary and useful to me, to the church, and to temporal government, I, too, intend to come to the assistance of the church with my prayers as much as I can; for I know that prayer shall not and cannot be offered in vain.

On the other hand, it is not good, nay, it is dangerous, to think: Let

others pray; your prayer is nothing extraordinary. Beware of this notion. Rather you should think: Praise God, I certainly love Christ and His Gospel and would rather forsake everything than deny my Lord Christ. In consequence, the Father must also love me, and my prayer must be heard. (Luther)

MOREOVER, we should pray, above all, for the spiritual needs of our fellow man, Luther urges in a sermon of 1522 on Luke 15:1-10, the story of the Pharisee and the publican. (Plass)

3516 Pray for Conversion of Sinners You would be doing real Christian works if you interested yourself in sinners and went into your private room and earnestly implored God, saying: O my God, this is what I hear of so-and-so; that man is lying in sin, and that other one has fallen; O Lord, help him to rise again, etc.---In this way you would assist him and would serve him. (Luther)

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Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

It's tempting to make excuses for violence. The mugger came from a broken home and was trying to lift himself out of poverty. The wife beater was himself abused as a child. The juvenile murderer was exposed to Mötley Crüe records and Terminator movies. But do environmental factors wholly account for the seven-year-old child who tortures frogs? The teenager who knifes a teacher? The employee who slaughters workmates with an AK-47? Can society's ills really be responsible for all the savagery that is sweeping America? Or could some people be predisposed to violence by their genes? Until recently, scientists had no good way to explore such questions-and little incentive: the issue was seen as so politically inflammatory that it was best left alone. But advances in genetics and bio-chemistry have given researchers new tools to search for biological clues to criminality. The U.S. is the most violent nation in the industrialized world. Homicide is the second most frequent cause of death among Americans between the ages of 15 and 24 (after accidents) and the most common among young black men and women. More than 2 million people are beaten, knifed, shot or otherwise assaulted each year, 23,000 of them fatally. **(TIME, April 19, 1993)**

You don't have to be a scientist to know the real reason for such violence. Christians turn to the Word of God, for "***the entrance of Thy words giveth light***" (Ps. 119:130). There we see that violent crimes have been the order of the day ever since our first parents fell into sin by disobeying the plain command of God. Look at the hideous crime committed by Cain who murdered his very own brother (Gen. 4). We do not deny that environmental factors contribute their share to the stirring up of man's propensity to do evil, but the real factor is the innate sinful condition which we have inherited from our first parents! Of course, worldly-minded scientists, psychiatrists, and psychologists would not dream of acknowledging the Scriptural teaching concerning original sin

and how it brings forth all manner of actual sin. Particularly in the last evil days of the world wherein Satan is loosed we observe a multiplication of such violent crimes. The Apostle Paul writes, "***This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous...incontinent, fierce***" ...(2 Tim. 3:1-3). How this should impress upon us as Christians faithfully to "***preach the Gospel to every creature***" (Mark 16:15), confessing the Savior with our mouths, and showing by our behavior that such confession is also the conviction of our hearts. That Word which we are privileged to confess is not a dead word, but a living Word through which the Holy Spirit works upon the heart of the hearer and seeks to bring him to faith. And when the individual repents and believes the Gospel (Mark 1:14,15), there inevitably follows the fruits of such a genuine faith. Being a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), there is now the earnest desire to please God by walking the way of His Commandments and avoiding whatever is displeasing to Him who has redeemed us with His precious blood. This is the real cure for such horrible acts of violence!

What makes people gay? To conservative moralists, homosexuality is a sin, a willful choice of godless evil. To many orthodox behaviorists, homosexuality is a result of a misguided upbringing, a detour from a straight path to marital adulthood; indeed, until 1974 the American Psychiatric Association listed it as a mental disorder. To gays themselves, homosexuality is neither a choice nor a disease but an identity, deeply felt for as far back as their memory can reach...The origins of homosexuality may never be fully understood, and the phenomenon is so complex and varied...that no single neat explanation is likely to suffice to explain any one man or woman, let alone multitudes. But the search for understanding advanced considerably last week with the release of new studies that make the most compelling case yet that homosexual orientation is at least partly genetic. A team at the National Cancer Institute's Laboratory of Biochemistry reported in the journal Science that families of 76 gay men included a much higher proportion of homosexual male relatives than found in the general population. Intriguingly, almost all the disproportion was on the mother's side of the family...A study of DNA samples from 40 pairs of homosexual brothers revealed that 33 of them shared a common piece of the chromosome, indicating that a gene related to homosexuality could be in this area.

The devil never gives up in his attempts to excuse sin and make it acceptable. We observe this in our news media where, for example, Time magazine (see above, July 26, 1993) devotes four pages to "educate" the people that "Studies of family trees and DNA make the case that male homosexuality is in the genes." The devil has already successfully deceived so many people into thinking that drunkenness is a disease for which a person is not really responsible since the genes were inherited from some relative. Now the same argument is being used concerning homosexuality. If drunkenness and homosexuality were diseases, how is it possible that a person can stop being a drunkard or a homosexual? Soon we shall be hearing that the murderer, rapist, robber, etc., is also afflicted with a disease having inherited these genes from some relative. And we Christians are the ones who should be educated??? The position which we Christians take against homosexuality is not dictated to us by "conservative moralists," but by the Word of God (Rom. 1:26,27; I Cor. 6:9,10; I Tim. 1:10) which plainly forbids homosexuality. There is no disease which excludes a person from the Kingdom of God. Leprosy was a hideous disease (Leviticus chapters 13 & 14), but neither it nor any other disease, not even Aids, bars a person from entering God's Kingdom. To enter God's Kingdom we must "*repent and believe the Gospel*" (Mark 1:15), for "*except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). Being a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) such a person will no longer live in those sins of the flesh (I Cor. 6:11; Gal. 5:24,25).

Leaders of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, the conservative Southern Baptist Convention, have rejected a measure that would have allowed expulsion of congregations for ordaining women. The action, taken during a September 20-21 meeting in Nashville, Tenn. of the denomination's Executive Committee, leaves just two reasons for expulsion of congregations - lack of financial support for the national organization and actions to "affirm, approve or endorse" homosexual behavior, such as ordaining homosexuals. Meanwhile, a recent poll by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, Calif. reveals that a sizable majority of Americans agree that it is acceptable for women to be

pastors of churches. The survey results, released earlier this month, show that 76 per cent of all American adults are comfortable with women ministers, with only one category - the most conservative Christians - showing a slight majority. The issue of women ministers has been a divisive one in the Southern Baptist convention for much of the past two decades....Most recently, the issue surfaced at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual gathering in June, in the form of the expulsion motion that was referred for action to the Executive Committee..... The report quoted the Executive Committee chairman, the Rev. Fred Wolfe of Mobile, Ala., as saying, "While we don't believe in ordaining women, most of us on this committee, we felt like it was a local church matter." (Religious News Service, Sept. 24, 1993)

In accord with sound Scriptural principles true Lutherans recognize the autonomy of the local congregation which is a self-governing body and in its Christian liberty has the right to manage its own affairs. At the same time, however, we must remember that the local congregation is not free from the Word of God to allow any and every kind of teaching it desires. A true Lutheran congregation is willingly subject to the authority of the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of His Word! "*One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*" (Matt. 23:8). And our Lord and Master reminds us, "*If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed*" (John 8:31). The local congregation has no right to decide by majority vote to teach a doctrine contrary to the Word of God. This Scriptural position should surely be obvious to every one who wants to be known as a Lutheran. It is set forth so well in our Lutheran Confessions. "*The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel*" (The Smalcald Articles of 1537, Part II, Art. II, Conc. Trig. page 467). Unfortunately, so many congregations have surrendered this Scriptural position in favor of "majority rule." Simply because a majority of so-called Christians have allowed themselves to be influenced by the world into erroneously believing that certain teachings of Holy Writ are no longer fashionable does not mean that the congregation now has the right to sacrifice those teachings to please men! "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Col. 2:8).

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