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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"ALL MEN SHOULD HONOUR THE SON, EVEN AS THEY HONOUR THE FATHER"

JOHN 5:23

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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.

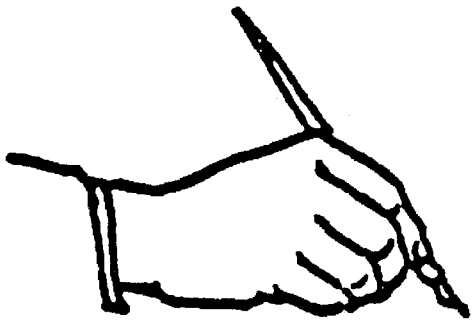
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the *Church and to expose modern phil*osophical 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

"I don't want to be a member of your church because your church is too judgmental!" These words spoken to me undoubtedly characterize the attitude of many who happen to visit our congregations or speak personally either to the pastor or our members. And in order to add some credence to their charge, they invariably refer to the words of Jesus, "***Judge not, and ye shall not be judged***" (Luke 6:37).

What about this charge? To answer this charge we must remember, first of all, that we confess in our Lutheran Confessions that the inspired Word of God alone is the sole source and norm of all true doctrine. We dare not use our feelings, our likes and dislikes, as the source of our teaching but all doctrine must be drawn from the inspired Scriptures and whatever is contrary to that Word of Truth must be rejected. It is the duty of the teachers of the Church not only to proclaim the Truth, but also to denounce error. Every teaching which is contrary to the Word of God is a deadly evil which emanates from the father of all lies (John 8:44) and ruins the soul that receives it and holds to it.

We see from the Scriptures that the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament spoke out against all false teaching. And what about the Savior Himself during His public ministry? We hear Him issue the warning, "***Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves***" (Matt. 7:15). He minced no words in His denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:13ff. He also warned His disciples, "***Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees***" (Matt. 16:6). Look at the judgment which the Apostle Paul spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Galatians, chapter 1, verse 8: "***But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***"

It is the duty not only of the pastors specifically but also of every Christian personally to judge doctrines on the basis of God's Word of Truth. The Apostle John directs the words to all Christians when he

writes, "***Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world***" (1 John 4:1). Such judging is not sinful but commanded by God Himself! Not to speak out against the false prophets as they reveal their false teaching and as the Lord grants us the opportunity makes us guilty of the sin of denial! Jesus says, "***Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels***" (Mark 8:38; see also Matt. 10:32,33).

Everything which is condemned by the Word of God must also be condemned by us. We have no right to excuse or minimize what God condemns in His Word! Yet, this is precisely what is going on within the visible church today. Those things which God so plainly labels as sins in His Word (homosexuality, adultery, etc.) are judged otherwise by some church bodies. "***Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil***" (Is. 5:20). And those who cry that we have no right to judge in such matters are either grossly ignorant of what God's Word teaches on this matter or in their puffed-up pride simply refuse to accept what God says.

But what about the passage which is often referred to by our accusers, "***Judge not, and ye shall not be judged***" (Luke 6:37)? The Savior here does not speak about labeling as false teaching whatever is plainly contrary to His Word. This, as we have seen, is commanded by Him! Instead, the Lord Jesus forbids all **loveless** judging, unjustly condemning our neighbor, making the good which he has done to appear evil and criticizing his praiseworthy activities in order to elevate ourselves.

It is **loveless** judging when we hastily pass sentence and are ignorant of all the facts and have not heard both sides. "***He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him***" (Prov. 18:13). It is **loveless** judging when we judge the thoughts or the motives of the heart for only "***the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man...***" (Ps. 94:11). It is **loveless** judging when we simply judge according to the outward appearance when the Savior warns us, "***Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment***" (John 7:24). It is **loveless** judging when we judge one another without taking into consideration our own faults. "***Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out***

of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:3-5). It is **loveless** judging unjustly to pass sentence in matters of Christian liberty. Concerning such adiaphora (things neither commanded nor forbidden) the Apostle warns, "***Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way***" (Rom. 14:13).

While we should be very careful, my dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, to avoid all loveless and sinful judging in our relationship with one another; on the other hand, we dare never hesitate to condemn what God Himself condemns in His Word!

Oh, let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth;
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And then, when in my place
I must and ought to speak,
My words grant power and grace
Lest I offend the weak.

(Hymn 395)

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

WHAT IS THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST?

> ***"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."***
>
> *--Matthew 12:31*

It often comes as quite a shock when Christians hear of a sin that is ***unpardonable***. After all, they learned, most of them since childhood already, confidently to declare with the Apostle John in his first epistle (1:7), *"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from* ***all*** *sin."* There *seems* at first glance to be a contradiction here, even though this descriptive adjective, *"unpardonable",* is consistently applied to ONE sin and one sin ONLY, namely, to *"The sin against the Holy Ghost"* as it is also called. There is, of course, *no contradiction whatsoever in the Holy Scriptures*. A misunderstanding sometimes arises, however, when we attempt *with only one word* of human language to describe a somewhat complex concept or issue. Jesus uses the expressions, *"...shall not be forgiven"* and *"hath never forgiveness".*

When we use the word *"unpardonable"*, this is not to suggest that God, on His part, is **not able** to pardon any sin committed against Him in thoughts, desires, words or deeds; for such an idea flies in the face of God Himself, His divine attributes, His objective justification of the world for Jesus' sake, and His holy will, as if ***He*** were in this instance "defective". On the contrary, this *Sin against the Holy Ghost* is ***UNPARDONABLE...***

> ...**not** because God does not desire the sinner's salvation (I Timothy 2:4; Ezekiel 33:11; II Peter 3:9);
>
> ...**not** because this particular sin is greater than the grace of God is able to cover (Romans 5:20);
>
> ...**not** because the sacrifice of Christ was insufficient to atone for it (I John 1:7);

...**but rather** because *the very nature of the sin* is such that the person who commits it *persistently rejects and blasphemes the saving operation of the Holy Ghost through the Means of Grace* whereby he could otherwise be brought to true repentance and faith. Thus he keeps forgiveness *from himself* forever.

By definition, ***the Sin against the Holy Ghost*** is a *conscious*, *malicious*, and *unrelenting opposition* to the **work** of the Holy Spirit of God, including *bold* and *openly hostile blasphemy* against God's saving truth, on the part of a person who himself was once *converted*, was personally *convinced* of the truth, or who at least *experienced* the influence of the Holy Ghost in his heart. This definition, a composite of those offered over the years by sound Lutheran theologians, has been derived from what the various passages have to say which treat of this grievous sin.

Besides the Savior's words in Matthew's Gospel, quoted in part above (**Matthew 12:22-32**, especially verses 31-32), other passages specifically refer to this heinous sin and describe both its characteristics and its eventual result, namely, **Mark 3:22-30** (very pointedly verses 28 and 29); **Luke 12:10**; **I John 5:16**; **Hebrews 6:4-8**; and **Hebrews 10:26-31**. Based on these clear words of God, the following details should be noted:

--This sin is not committed against the **person** of the Holy Ghost (who is a person no more glorious, majestic, or important than is either the Father or the Son, but is co-equal with them). Rather, it is deliberate opposition to the Holy Spirit's **office**, to His **work** of calling sinners by the Gospel, enlightening them with His gifts, sanctifying and keeping them in the one true and saving faith through the Means of Grace (*Sanctification in the wider sense*).

--Only such a person can commit this sin who was once **enlightened** by the operation of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4), who became **convinced in his heart of the Truth** (Hebrews 10:26), and who **tasted the sweetness of the Gospel** (Hebrews 6:5), but who subsequently and deliberately **rejects** the Truth contrary to such better knowledge and personal conviction (Hebrews 10:26).

--According to the passages, the person committing this sin **blasphemes** the work of the Holy Ghost, that is, he willfully mocks and ridicules it, not merely in his *heart*; but he *"**speaketh** against the Holy Ghost"* (Matthew 12:32), openly and contemptuously vilifying and reviling the Spirit's work with wicked abandon!

--A person who commits this sin will **persist in it even unto death**. He cannot and will not repent; he has no desire for forgiveness; and he rejects all pardon because he consciously despises the grace of God proclaimed in the Gospel, puts the Lord Jesus and His vicarious atonement to an open shame, and stubbornly resists every effort of the Holy Spirit to convert him.

--While this sin **IS identifiable** (I John 5:16), we should never be **hasty** in charging someone with committing it! A rash and unfounded charge may destroy in one who is truly penitent for the sin of blasphemy, for example, any hope of forgiveness! Should a person, who to all *appearances* has committed this sin against the Holy Ghost, repent upon his deathbed, it is certain that he has NOT committed it.

--We are **not to pray** for those who have committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, the "sin unto death" (I John 5:16). The judgment of eternal damnation for this sin has already been pronounced upon them by God in this present life!

--Nevertheless, if a person commits this sin, a sin that persists unto death with irrecoverable hardness of heart (*obduration*), **it is not GOD who put him into that condition**, but it is entirely **the sinner's OWN FAULT** who **first** despised God's grace, resisted the Holy Spirit, and hardened his OWN heart! (I Timothy 2:4; Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51; Hosea 13:9; etc.)

--On the other hand, if a person is **kept from** this sin, this is due not in the least to his own better conduct, receptiveness, diligence and faithfulness and therefore to his OWN glory, but alone **to the glory of God's grace in Christ Jesus**. (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 11:6; I Peter 1:5)

The Unpardonable Sin or ***The Sin Against the Holy Ghost*** must not be identified with or in any way confused with *other* sins committed against God's Holy Spirit, from which it should be carefully distinguished. ***The Sin Against the Holy Ghost*** is...

...**NOT to be applied to one who has been *excommunicated*** from the Christian congregation as "an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17) because of persistent impenitence for manifest sins. The purpose of excommunication (after all other efforts to gain a brother have been exhausted) is that the sinner see the gravity of his sins and repent. Such an outcome cannot be expected in one who has committed *The Sin Against the Holy Ghost.*

...**NOT the same as *mere unbelief***; for the Savior directs us, *"Preach the Gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15) to the end that unbelievers may come unto the knowledge of the truth and be saved. (I Timothy 2:4) This will not happen in those who have committed *The Sin Against the Holy Ghost.*

...**NOT identical to *final impenitence.*** Not all those who die in unbelief and thus perish in everlasting damnation have necessarily committed *The Sin Against the Holy Ghost* with all of its attendant features.

...**NOT every *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* or *against the Truth of His Word***, particularly such blasphemy as comes from the mouth of *"the natural man"* (I Corinthians 2:14) in his spiritual blindness. Such a person has never become personally convinced of the Truth in his own heart. (We have a poignant example in the Apostle Paul, who, before his conversion, was *"a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."* --I Timothy 1:13)

...**NOT every *denial or blasphemy of the Truth* on the part of one who *IS convinced***, when such sins are motivated by self-righteousness and pride, by the love of this present world, by selfishness, or by the fear of one's earthly enemies. While he is certainly *in danger* of doing so, he may not yet have committed *the Unpardonable Sin.*

(An example of this is Peter, who by God's grace *repented* of his denial and blasphemy and was restored to his apostleship. --John 21:15-19)

...**NOT every *resistance against the Holy Spirit* and His sincere efforts to convert the sinner**. By nature, all men are spiritually blind, dead and enemies of God, oppose His good and gracious will, and resist His Holy Spirit. Such resistance is *pardonable*, however; and the sinner receives that pardon by faith when the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace changes his heart in *conversion*. (Jeremiah 31:18; I Corinthians 12:3; Acts 3:19; Romans 5:1; etc.)

...**NOT every case of *spiritual obduracy* or *hardening of the heart***. There are *degrees of obduracy*, all of which place the soul in jeopardy of a *punitive* or *judicial hardening* by God (Romans 9:18). But not every case of hardening is beyond recovery, with an obvious exception being *The Sin Against the Holy Ghost*, which persists unto death.

A word of comfort is in order here for those who are troubled in their minds about the possibility that they might have committed ***the Unpardonable Sin*** by an earlier apostasy or blasphemy: Those who are at all concerned about their sins have *not* committed ***The Sin Against the Holy Ghost***. On the contrary, those who *have* committed it are not in the least worried about it or in any way contrite; nor is there in their hearts the slightest longing for God's gracious forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

The passages which speak of and describe in detail ***The Sin Against the Holy Ghost*** were *"written for **our** learning"* (Romans 15:4), chiefly as an **earnest warning** to us *"who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good work of God, and the powers of the world to come,"* namely, to us who are, by the Spirit's operation in our hearts through the Gospel, true believers in Christ and heirs of eternal life. (Hebrews 6:4-5) We ourselves in these last evil days of sore distress are targets of Satan, who *"as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour."* (I Peter 5:8-9) Let us therefore be warned against taking the manifold grace of God for granted (Romans 6:1; II Corinthians 6:1), against following after the world with its disdain for God's precious Word and doctrine pure

(II Timothy 4:3), against minimizing or making light of the work of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31-32, etc.), and against the trend among so many who call themselves Christians not to be seriously concerned about the welfare of their eternal souls (Mark 13:33-37; II Peter 3:17)! Luther aptly exhorts us in his sermon on our title-text, Matthew 12:31-32, ***"For this let us pray that we do not fall into this sin that will not endure the plain truth; for in that case there is no counsel, or help, or excuse; but the final wrath of God has set in!"*** (St. Louis Ed., X, p. 1206, 14)

Only by having our hearts and minds and thoughts turned completely to the *absolutely universal* and *absolutely free* ***grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Savior***, as this is so clearly and so comfortingly revealed to us in the Gospel, can we be truly relieved of any personal apprehension or anxiety that we might have committed this heinous sin. To that end, may *"the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus...stablish, strengthen, settle"* us all by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit through His Word, unto life everlasting! *"To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* (I Peter 5:10-11)

--D. T. M.

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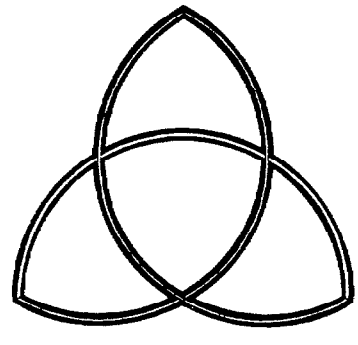
Classic Errors Against the Doctrine of the Trinity



"The Father is God; the Son is God; the Holy Ghost is God." If this is true, **human reason** would naturally conclude that there are **three** Gods--as the Jehovah's Witnesses who comes to your door will maintain. Or, if it is stated that there is only **ONE** God and that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, **human reason** would naturally conclude that the words "Father," "Son," and "Holy Ghost" are simply different names for that ONE God since there are actually hundreds of different names for God throughout the Holy

Scriptures. In harmony with this **human deduction**, students, in one of the Bible Colleges in Seattle, WA, are taught that the ONE TRUE GOD wears different *masks*. On one occasion He will wear the *mask* of the Father, on another occasion the *mask* of the Son, and on another the *mask* of the Holy Ghost. In this way, thousands of unsuspecting souls are led to believe in a god who is *not* the Triune God--who is **not** the only true God as He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible--and who, because they do not believe in the true God, will "**perish everlastingly**."

Such false teachings with regard to the Doctrine of God are nothing new, but involve simply a restatement or renovation of the old classic errors against the Doctrine of the Trinity which were already begun in the writings of **Origen** (b. 182, d. 251), who, although he was one of the most distinguished early church fathers, taught that the Son and the Holy Ghost are subordinate to the Father. Human reason, on which alone such errors are based, can only go so far and consequently reaches the same conclusions--even though these conclusions may be expressed in different words today than they were in the days of the early Church.

The **Jews**, of course, continue to maintain, in opposition to the deity of Christ and in spite of considerable proof from the Old Testament Scriptures, that the names by which the true God is called in the Old Testament, such as, **Yahhovaw**, **Eloheem**, and **Adonoy** (transliterations found in Strong's Concordance), refer only to ONE god, the god of Israel, and that there are **not** THREE PERSONS in God. Around him their worship is centered as they proclaim in their worship service the unity of their god in the supreme affirmation of Judaism as they find it in **Deuteronomy 6:4** which they call the Sh'ma: "***Hear O Israel: The Lord, our God, is one Lord.***" This same god is called by the Moslems "**Allah**," and is not the true God who plainly reveals Himself to us in the Bible. **Mohammed** (b. 570, d. 632), the founder of the Moslem religion, capitalized on the false teachings with regard to the Doctrine of God which prevailed in external Christendom during the early centuries after Pentecost and mixed with these false teachings certain tenets of the Jews together with some of the teachings found in both the Old and New Testaments as well as his own fanciful thoughts and ideas, and compiled his heterodox, anti-Trinitarian religion in his own corrupt volume known as the Koran.

When pronouncements about God are made in the ritual and literature of the Masonic Lodge, as well as other lodges, and in the

literature of the Boy Scouts of America, *a least common denominator god* is meant, namely, a god who is the god of any and all religions, heathen as well as Christian, and is consequently a god of man's own invention such as is **condemned** by the First Commandment and in such passages as, "***Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve***" (Matt. 4:10); "***I am the Lord; that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another***" (Isaiah 42:8); "***This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God***" (John 17:3); "***All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father, which hath sent Him***" (John 5:23). Such concepts of God are promoted by popular books with titles such as, "*God, And How He Is Worshipped*," and encouraged especially by the Bahai religion and through the syncretistic tenets of the New Age.

In the first and second centuries after Christ had ascended into heaven, a sect within visible Christianity, called the Monarchians, appeared on the scene of Church History. In **Monarchianism** and later on in **Arianism** (third and fourth centuries) we find many of the strange man-made teachings about god which are re-echoed today in anti-Trinitarian bodies and among many sects which consider themselves within the pale of Christianity--even among modernistic Lutherans. The word "**Monarchian**" or "**Unitarian**" simply denotes those who represented a strict form of monotheism (one god) in the early church (prior to the formulation of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds). The Monarchians taught that there is only ONE GOD, namely the Father. The Holy Spirit, to them, was simply a reference to God's power. The Son, Christ Jesus, was regarded as man only--but a man who was filled with God's power (the Holy Spirit) and called to be the Son of God (dynamic Monarchianism), or, according to modalistic Monarchianism, Christ was regarded as the incarnation of the Father. Modalistic Monarchianism was later called **Patripassianism** in the West and **Sabellianism** in the East. The chief teaching of Sabellius (end of the second and beginning of the third centuries) was that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are identical, but with three names; that the Father is not the Son simultaneously but that he became operative in three successive energies (*modalism--modes of appearance*): **First**, as the person or manifestation of the Father, the creator and legislator; **Second**, as the person or manifestation of the Son as the Redeemer; and **Third**, as

the person or manifestation of the Holy Ghost as the maker and giver of life.

The word "**Arianism**" comes from its founder, Arius, who was born around 256 and died at Constantinople in the year 336. He was a presbyter of Alexandria, having been pupil of **Lucian** the martyr who was an adherent of **Paul of Samosata**, a modalistic monarchian. He was also influenced by **Eusebius of Nicomedia** who was a fellow pupil of Lucian and held the same views as Arius from the very beginning of their life-long friendship. The false teaching of Arius spread like wildfire throughout the visible Christian church and was carried by missionaries to the Germanic tribes where it continued to retain a foothold long after Arius had died. Basically, Arius taught that the Father alone is God; that the Son of God is a middle being between God and the world, the perfect image of the Father, the executor of his thoughts, even the creator of the world, but nevertheless a creature of the Father through whom the Father called other creatures into existence. Arians expressly assert that the Son is "**essentially different**" from the Father. They ascribe to Christ a body without a soul. The later Semi-Arians called the Son "**similar in essence or substance**" to the Father, and still other Arians called the Son "**unlike**" the Father in everything. The Arians adopted eighteen or more creeds to settle the differences arising among themselves.

Although Arianism itself gradually died out toward the end of the 4th century, the seeds of this false teachings concerning God continued to exist in various forms down to this present day where we find them yielding their blasphemous fruits in such groups as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Moslems, Bahai, Congregationalists, Quakers, and the Lodges. And through these groups the influence of this false teaching is permeating some of the more liberal Reformed sects and modernistic Lutheran bodies. Many view these things as the beginnings of a glorious "**One World Religion**" to correspond with the "**New Order**" throughout the world spoken of by our presidents and politicians.

There were still other strange false teachings concerning God which made their appearance and flourished for a while with a toehold in external Christendom. The devil, of course, never quits. In the sixth century and, more restricted, in the eleventh century and even in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, there arose a false teaching which put so much emphasis on the three persons of the Trinity

that the essential unity of the Godhead was destroyed. Instead of God who is **ONE** IN ESSENCE or BEING, as the Bible plainly teaches, these false prophets (**Tritheists**) actually denied the unity of God and taught that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three essences or beings with equal attributes.

How do false teachings with regard to "**who God is**" affect the Gospel or the Way of Salvation? Like every false teaching, no matter what it is, where one clear teaching of the Bible is destroyed every other doctrine is affected because all of the teachings of Scripture form one organic whole. Everything set forth in the Bible is God's Word. If one doctrine is thrown out, every other doctrine becomes unreliable, even the very Gospel of salvation itself. But false teaching which denies the Doctrine of the Triune God directly affects the Way of Salvation. The turning point of all controversies concerning the Trinity has reference to the nature of Christ; the truth of His declarations as the One who reveals to us His heavenly Father, and the strength and effectiveness of His Work as the Redeemer of the entire human race. If Christ were not true God, one in essence with the Father and the Holy Ghost, His blood shed on Calvary's cross would be worthless. It would not be sufficient to wash away the sins of anyone, much less the sins of the whole world. His perfect fulfillment of God's Holy Law would have benefited not one person beside Himself. If Christ were not true God, His true body and blood with which He could not have earned for us and all mankind the forgiveness of sins, could not be given us to eat and to drink under the earthly elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper as a memorial of His great sacrifice of love and for our soul's health. One way in which disciples are made is through Baptism "**into the name**" of the Triune God through which the one who is baptized is placed into communion with the Trinity in such a way that he becomes God's own dear child and is dedicated to His holy service. And the name of God is His NAME as He has revealed Himself to mankind, namely, ***"of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"*** as the God of our salvation: The Father as the Source, the Son as the Mediator, and the Holy Ghost as the Dispenser of the gifts of God's undeserved kindness, even the saving knowledge of Jesus our Savior. When the person who is baptized is brought into communion with this Triune God, it is a spiritual fellowship through which he may receive the great blessings of salvation which the Holy Trinity freely bestows upon us. Such a Baptism is a Baptism of Redemption which makes us children of God and heirs of His promises. It is merely a further commentary on these

words by which our Savior instituted Baptism when the Apostle Peter states, "***Baptism doth also now save us***" (I Peter 3:21); when Paul writes that it is "***the washing of water by the word***" which sanctifies and cleanses us from our sins (Eph. 5:26), and when he calls Baptism a "***washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost***" in Titus 3:5. Let us not be deceived by modern day parrots who simply re-echo the old classic errors against the Doctrine of the Trinity and thereby mock and blaspheme the God of our salvation. And BEWARE of those so-called Christians who would remove or have removed from their worship service and from their confessional position the classic creeds of Christendom: THE APOSTLES' CREED, THE NICENE CREED, and THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

--P. R. B.

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CONVENTION ESSAY

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Rev. Mark W. Dierking, Essayist
Pastor of St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church, Wilmot, South Dakota

[Editor's Note: The following is part of an article entitled "The Imperfection of Christian Sanctification in this Life", taken from the excellent theological textbook, *CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS*, by John Theodore Mueller, Th. D., Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1955, pages 396-398. It certainly deserves the attention of our readers.]

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The Imperfection of Christian Scantification in this Life

While justification is complete and therefore admits of no degrees, sanctification, on account of the remaining sinfulness of the flesh, Rom. 7, 24, is never complete, or perfect, in this life, Phil. 3, 12-14, but gradual and susceptible of constant growth, Eph. 4, 15. 16; Col. 2, 19. This truth, which is so prominently impressed upon believers by Scripture, is of greatest importance for the proper understanding of their Christian duties.

Of the imperfection of Christian sanctification in this life, Quenstedt writes: "Renovation [sanctification] in this life is partial and imperfect, admitting degrees, and therefore never attains the highest pinnacles of perfection. For sin remains in the regenerate, affecting their self-control, and the flesh lusts against the Spirit; wherefore our renovation progresses from day to day and is to be continued through life, 2 Cor. 4, 16. The want of perfection in renovation does not arise from the impotency of God, who renews, but from the weakness of man, who is the recipient of divine action." (*Doctr. Theol.*, p. 490.)

And again: "Renovation is increased by godly acts and frequent efforts. If these are intermitted or diminished, a diminution follows, so that at one time there is an increase, at another a decrease. The Holy Scriptures expressly affirm that the renovation of the regenerate in this life ought continually to increase and grow, Eph. 4, 16."

These quotations show how earnestly our Lutheran dogmaticians stress the imperfection of Christian sanctification and the daily need of the believer to strive after progress in the grace of holiness. Our Lutheran teachers indeed acknowledge the fact that the regenerate, according to the new man, are spiritual, I Cor. 2, 15; 14, 37; Gal. 6, 1, but, on the other hand, they affirm that the regenerate are also carnal, Rom. 7,14, namely, so far as their evil flesh (σαρξ) is concerned, Rom. 7, 22. 23.

Hollaz comments on this as follows: "When a renewed man is called spiritual, the reason why he is so denominated is derived from that which is preponderant, namely, from the prevailing spirit (the inward or new man); but when the same (the renewed man) is called carnal, the reason is derived from that which is subordinate, namely, from the flesh, which is indeed subdued, but yet rebels and resists and with which the justified person, placed in the way of life, is continually carrying on war." *(Doctr. Theol.*, p. 491.)

The doctrine of the imperfection of Christian sanctification is well supported by Scripture. From the viewpoint of their imperfections it admonishes believers "to grow up into Christ in all things," Eph. 4, 15; "to abound in every good work," 2 Cor. 9, 8; "to abound in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. 15, 58; "to increase in the knowledge of God," Col. 1, 10; "to be strengthened with all might...unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness," Col. 1, 11; "to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men," 1 Thess. 3, 12; "to abound yet more and more in the knowledge and in all judgment," Phil. 1, 9; "to abound more and more in pleasing God," 1 Thess. 4, 1; etc.

All these exhortations show that the Christian believer, according to the old man (παλαιοσ ανθρωποσ), who is still in him, is very imperfect indeed and that his whole life must be a perpetual effort to overcome his evil inclinations, struggle against sin, and accomplish that which is good in the sight of God.

The *Formula of Concord* aptly remarks (Thor. Decl., II, 68): "Since we receive in this life only the first-fruits of the Spirit and the new birth is not complete, but only begun in us *(regeneratio nondum sit absoluta, sed solummodo in nobis inchoata)*, the combat and struggle of the flesh against the spirit remains even in the elect and truly regenerate men; for there is a great difference perceptible among Christians, not only in this, that one is weak an another strong in the spirit, but each Christian

moreover experiences in himself that at one time he is joyful in spirit and at another fearful and alarmed; at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak."

In order to impress this point, our dogmaticians have said: "The righteousness of faith, or our imputed righteousness, is perfect or complete; the righteousness of life, or our inherent righteousness, is imperfect, begun, and incomplete." *Iustitia fidei sive imputata perfecta sive consummata est, iustitia vitae sive inhaerens imperfecta, inchoata, non consummata.* (Baier.)

There is, then, in the believer a constant warfare between his new man (νουσ, εσω ανθρωποσ, καινοσ ανθρωποσ) and between his flesh (σαρξ), as St. Paul clearly shows Rom. 7,25. (Cp. Luther, St. L., XV, 1552.)

The doctrine of the imperfection of Christian sanctification must be held and defended in all its Scriptural truth and force against the error of perfectionism (papists, Unitarians, Arminians [Limborch], enthusiasts [Weigel, Schwenkfeld, etc.], Methodists, Finney of Oberlin, etc.).

(Our excerpt from Mueller's article ends here.)

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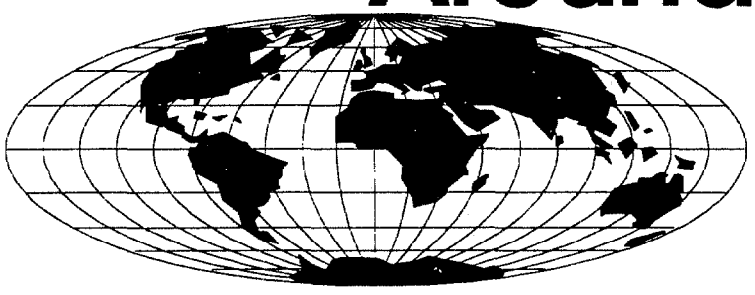

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

"Express Worship, 22 minutes" advertised the sign outside the township's First Lutheran Church. The minister is attempting a new way to draw people into the fold - limit the service to 22 minutes by omitting sermons and sacraments. The shortened service started Jan. 9. It includes a greeting, statement of faith, apology for sins, prayer, an interpretation of the weekly Bible reading and a song without accompaniment. "It really is ideal," the Rev. John Kleist told The Star-Ledger of Newark, New Jersey. "The service is not rushed at all." The pastor, who has been at the church for 15 years, said the idea may bring in people who do not have a lot of time or desire to attend church. "It wasn't out of a sense of frustration, but a sense that the church needs to be a voice to all people and try something different," he said. Nine people came for the first Sunday the shortened service was given, and it grew to 23 at the service Jan. 22.

When we turn to the 15th chapter of Matthew we observe that the Lord Jesus had compassion on the people because they continued with Him three days and had nothing to eat (v.32). They had followed the Savior for three days, listening to His Word and beholding the miracles which He performed. Just imagine! That was their first concern! In Luther's day a sermon usually lasted an hour. The undersigned remembers that when he vicared in Montana for 3 months in 1948 the length of his sermon was about 25 minutes. Imagine his surprise when some of the farmers complained that it was hardly worthwhile to travel the distance to church if the vicar was going to preach such short sermons! Things have changed drastically in our day and age. People can stand in line for an hour to attend some sporting event, putting up with the crowds and snarled traffic, but when it comes to a church service which usually lasts only an hour, it is a different story. Many churches cater to the flesh of people

by surrendering the doctrines of Holy Writ and in seeking to make religion more accommodating to the worldly desires and whims of those who want only the least possible interruption of their worldly interests and pleasures. We know, of course, that materialism is a sign which characterizes these last evil days. The Apostle reminds us, "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be....lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*" (2 Tim. 3:1-4). Materialism is such an insidious poison for us Christians since it has an ally in our sinful flesh. Hence the Apostle John warns us, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 John 2:15). God's Word should be our dearest treasure, for in it we have Jesus our Savior in whom we have forgiveness of all sins and the promise of eternal life. "The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know" (Hymn 350). For only they can truly declare with the Psalmist, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" therefore "I rejoice at Thy Word" (Ps. 119:103,162).

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Just as last week's tremors were destroying highways, buildings and lives in Southern California, an even deadlier natural disaster was advancing slowly but inexorably south from Canada into the U. S. By midweek a huge mass of frigid arctic air had practically paralyzed much of the Midwest and East. Temperatures in dozens of cities dropped to all-time lows: -22 F in Pittsburgh; -25 in Akron, Ohio, and Clarksburg, West Virginia; -27 in Indianapolis, Indiana. Chicago schools closed because of cold weather for the first time in history...By week's end the unprecedented cold wave had killed more than 130 people. What ever happened to global warming? Scientists have issued apocalyptic warnings for years, claiming that gases from cars, power plants and factories are creating a greenhouse effect that will boost the temperature dangerously over the next 75 years or so. But if last week is any indication of winters to come, it might be more to the point to start worrying about the next Ice Age instead....By studying ancient ice buried deep within Greenland's ice cap, scientists have put together a record of temperature changes over the past 160,000 years - vividly showing that climate changes can be frequent and abrupt....The next Ice Age could start tens of thousands of years from now. Or tens of years. Or it may have already started. (TIME, January 31, 1994)

"Great men are not always wise" (Job 32:9). Many climatologists, geophysicists, and scientists, who are held in high esteem by the world are not wise in the eyes of the Creator who looks with great displeasure upon those who exalt their puny reason above the Word of God! Such "wise-acres" (as Luther calls them) expound their theories as truths and the gullible swallow them hook, line, and sinker! As pointed out in the above article "What ever happened to global warming?" Scientists were so sure of themselves that those who questioned their self-made calculations were regarded as ignorant. Now we hear a different story from the "wise-acres!" God, the Creator of heaven and earth, also preserves and sustains His creation. "*O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast*" (Ps. 36:6). He upholds "*all things by the word of His power*" (Heb. 1:3). He told Noah after the Flood, "*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*" (Gen. 8:22). We dare not forget that it is "*impossible for God to lie*" (Heb. 6:18). While the severity of the seasons may vary according to God's Will, nonetheless, they shall continue as God has promised! "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created*" (Rev. 4:11). "*Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite...Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains...He giveth snow like wool: He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold? He sendeth out His word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow*"...(Psalm 147).

A theological hubbub had broken out over an ecumenical conference on women that invoked "Sophia, Creator God," and used other feminine images of the deity. The furor is the latest round of conflict over attempts to modify pervasively male references to God as "He" or "Father" and to bring out biblical indications that God also has "motherly" qualities. However, some unusually graphic feminizing of the divine at a "Reimagining" women's conference in Minneapolis last November produced some unusually sharp denunciations. United Methodist Bishop

Earl G. Hunt of Lake Junaluska, N.C., says deifying Sophia is an "attempt to reconstitute the godhead...No comparable heresy has appeared in the church in the last 15 centuries." But participants in the conference defended it. Besides venerating Sophia as a goddess, critics also charged the conference included self-identified lesbians as speakers...About 2,200 participants - nearly all women - were from 49 states and 27 countries. More than half were either Presbyterians or Methodist in background. United Methodist News Service said a liturgy at the Minneapolis conference read in part: "Our maker Sophia, we are women in your image"...The Rev. Jeanne Audrey Powers, an executive of the United Methodist Church's Council on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, says the concept of Sophia is just beginning to be incorporated into Christian speech. (The Associated Press)

That such a glaring false teaching has arisen in the Methodist and Presbyterian camps, does not greatly surprise us. After all, these churches have accepted the abominable sin of homosexuality as being compatible with their teachings although the Lord says that "*abusers of themselves with mankind shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Women are also openly permitted to occupy the pastoral office in spite of what the Lord says in such passages as 1 Cor. 14:35 and 1 Tim. 2:12. Once any teaching of God's Word has been set aside in favor of man's teaching, then we soon observe that one teaching after another quickly falls to the wayside. What a lesson for us! How careful we must be to hold steadfastly to all of God's Word and never yield to the temptation of trying to be popular with the world by surrendering any teaching of God's Word simply to satisfy the wicked desires of man. What God has written in His Word is not ours to do with as we choose! The Lord declares, "*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word*" (Is. 66:2). Wisdom is an attribute of God, Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17, which He reveals in creation, Ps. 104:24, and especially in the redemption of the world through the substitutional suffering and death of our Savior, 1 Cor. 1: 23,24. But such wisdom is foolishness unto the sin-darkened "wisdom" of man, 1 Cor. 1:18-21, until the Holy Spirit enlightens the heart with the sunlight of the Holy Gospel and translates us out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light, 1 Pet. 2:9. It is therefore the duty of the church to be the speaker of God's wisdom which He has revealed in His Word. "*He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully*" (Jer. 23:28).

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