the Concordia Lutheran

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

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

Vol. XXXXIII January-February, 1998 Nos. 1 - 2

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Rom. 16:17

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

This publication appears in a monthly or bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of $3.00 per year.

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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.

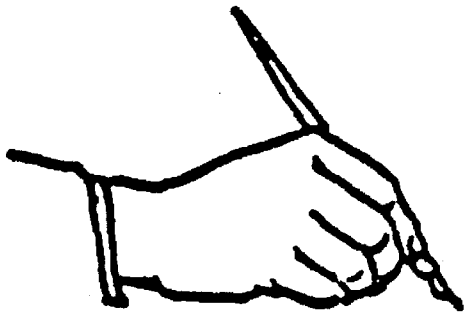
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

EVERY PASTOR IN THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE PREACHES THAT THE HOLY LAW OF GOD HAS INDEED AN IMPORTANT SERVICE IN THE LIFE OF EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN

In a rather cute, clever, and sensationalistic way (characteristic of the editorial policy of the *Lutheran Spokesman,* the official organ of the CoLC — Church of the Lutheran Confession), an article in its recent issue (January 1998, Vol. 40, No. 7) is entitled "The 'Nanny Service' of the Law" — based primarily on an exegetical study of Galatians 3:19-25. This article, by Pastor Rollin A. Reim, in our estimation, is somewhat demeaning to the nature of God's Holy Law, for, even though an exact example for the Greek word "paidagogus" is not found in modern society, the term "nanny" is extremely weak in describing the strict supervisory activity of a Greek household slave over the life of a boy from age 6 to 17 in a well-to-do Greek home in ancient times. In the light of the attitude of most people toward God's Word today, it would seem most unwise, to say the least, to characterize a portion of God's Word as performing a "Nanny Service." In his article, Pastor Reim does not clearly distinguish between the three kinds of Law given by the Lord God to His people in the Old Testament, nor does he set forth the great and important purpose of God in giving His Law to men and the distinction between the service of God's Holy Law in its application to unbelievers and to Christians. Because of such an omission his concluding two statements seem almost to give tacit approval to antinomianism, which is gaining in popularity also in the CoLC. (Antinomianism is the false teaching that gained prominence especially after Luther's death, namely, that "Evangelical preachers are to preach the Gospel only and no Law." This false teaching was rejected by the writers of the Formula of Concord in 1580.) The last two statements in Pastor Reim's article read as follows: "Thanks, Nanny. You did a great

job, but we won't need your services any more. The children are now mature enough to discipline and care for themselves!"

While the CoLC, and other so-called Lutheran bodies, apparently permit some in their midst to teach that their people no longer need the service of the Law, every pastor in the CLC (Concordia Lutheran Conference) preaches, in harmony with God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions, that God's Holy Law has indeed an important service in the life of every true Christian! In the **First Place**, every Christian, must, out of love for his Savior, use the Law of God as a curb for his Old Adam — his old sinful flesh. Since the Old Adam of a Christian cannot be converted, it must **not** be palliated by the Gospel, but must daily be put off, crucified, drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts. This can only be done by the strongest application of God's Holy Law! For example, a Christian, because of his Old Adam, may be disinclined to confess Christ before men. To such a Christian the Law must be preached in all its fury, even as the Lord Jesus Himself did in Matthew 10:33, saying to His followers who would be persecuted for His sake, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven!" If the Old Adam of a Christian tempts him to lie, even though the lie may be ever so small, to him the Law should be preached which says, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). One of the reasons why a Christian should commit to memory so many Law passages from the Bible is that, as he lives out his life in this world, he may be able to use such Scripture texts against the rebellious schemes and practices of his sinful flesh and thus to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," (Eph. 4:22). To speak of Christians as being "mature enough to discipline and care for themselves" and to say "good-bye" to the Law, telling that portion of God's Word, "We won't need your services any more," as Pastor Reim does in his Lutheran Spokesman article, is ludicrous. If he is speaking only of that purpose of the Law whereby **unbelievers** are caused to recognize their sinfulness and consequently their need for a Savior, and that **this** purpose of the Law is no longer necessary for Christians who, by God's grace through the power of the Gospel, have found in Christ their Savior who "is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4), should he not make this clear to his readers? (This is evidently the result of the pastors in the CoLC placing their emphasis on exegesis, Biblical interpretation, rather than

upon dogmatics and its principle of the analogy of faith, that is, setting forth the doctrines of God's Word in all their clarity.)

Secondly, the **chief** use of God's Law, namely, as a mirror, should not be neglected by Christians. It is self-understood that they do **not** have to use the Law as a mirror to show them their wretchedness and helplessness in order that they recognize their **need** for a Savior since, by the power of the Gospel, the Holy Ghost has already worked in their hearts a saving knowledge of Christ in whom **alone** they trust and believe for their eternal salvation — not in their own good works and merits which are of the Law. Nevertheless, **because of their sinful flesh**, Christians are inclined to become proud and to think themselves better than others, and even to become satiated or surfeited with the Gospel. Here is where the Law must be used again as a mirror to show them their sins, for "by the Law is the knowledge of sin," (Rom. 3:20) — that they do not become smug in their complacency and conceit but recognize that they too are the *"chief of sinners"* even as the Apostle Paul confessed concerning himself in I Tim. 1:15; that they are sinners from their mother's womb and deserving of everlasting condemnation in hell, and that their best works are as filthy rags in God's sight. The more a Christian thus looks into God's Holy Law, the more exceedingly precious the Savior becomes to him — the Savior, who kept the Law perfectly in his stead and suffered the punishment which he deserved by his sins. The more a Christian sees himself in the mirror of God's Holy Law, the more he becomes vitally aware of the fact that his salvation is alone by God's undeserved kindness. In our congregations, adults and children memorize hundreds of Law passages from the 1943 Synodical Catechism and are taught to use them diligently against carnal security, to make them constantly aware of their natural sinfulness because of which they deserve nothing but God's wrath and displeasure, death and damnation, and that the Savior and His precious Gospel might always remain exceedingly precious in their hearts. Yes, the more we, as Christians, study and apply the Holy Law of God to ourselves, the more will the Gospel of Christ and His Work of Redemption be meaningful to us, namely, how necessary it was for Christ, the eternal Son of God, to become man that He might be able 1) to take our place under the Law, 2) to keep God's Holy Law perfectly in our stead, and 3) to suffer in His own sinless person, as our Substitute, the curse of the Law, namely, eternal punishment in Hell.

And, finally, the Third Important Service of God's Law in the life of every true Christian is its use as a **Rule** — to show sincere Christians what thoughts, words, and actions are pleasing to God and what thoughts, words and actions displease Him. The Law passages in Scripture, therefore, answer the question which every true Child of God should have in his heart, namely, "How can I show my love for Jesus in my life by my words and actions?" Earnestly and eagerly studying God's Holy Law and applying it to his life, as a fruit of his faith in Jesus, is a proper and important use of this portion of God's Word — not as a Nanny whom we should discharge as no longer necessary in our lives because we are such mature Christians — but as important directives expressing the will of our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier which we, as Christians, earnestly desire to follow NOT TO MAKE US BETTER CHRISTIANS BUT BECAUSE WE ARE CHRISTIANS; NOT TO GAIN HEAVEN FOR OURSELVES BUT BECAUSE HEAVEN IS ALREADY OURS; NOT IN ORDER TO EARN FOR OURSELVES THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, BUT BECAUSE OUR SINS ARE ALREADY FORGIVEN IN CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR; NOT IN ORDER TO BECOME CITIZENS OF GOD'S KINGDOM, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD! In other words, IF WE ARE CHRISTIANS, LET'S LIVE LIKE CHRISTIANS OUT OF LOVE FOR JESUS! IF WE ARE CHRISTIANS, LET'S SHOW OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH IN OUR LIVES — by what we say and by what we do in harmony with God's Holy Law! Thus, the Lord Jesus says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words!" (John 14:23) "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments!" (John 14:15) The Apostle Paul writes, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification!" (I Thess. 4:3) "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called!" (Eph. 4:1) Christians should be taught to use such Law passages to combat what is known as dead-orthodoxy. O that these distinctions were *properly* and *clearly* set forth in external Christendom today — especially among those who bear the name Lutheran!

— P. R. B.

CONVENTION ESSAY

delivered to the

46th Annual Convention of the *Concordia Lutheran Conference*

by

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Pastor
Peace Ev. Lutheran Church
Oak Forest, Illinois

"The Nature, Exercise, and Preservation of Christian Fellowship"

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III. The Preservation of Christian Fellowship

As we noted in the first part of our essay, ***true*** *Christian fellowship* can be **assumed** only among those who are members of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; for *"[they] are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26). Those who have been *"justified by faith"* and *"have peace with God"* through Christ are members of His spiritual household, have fellowship with the Triune God, have the Lord Jesus dwelling in their hearts by faith, have the internal and external testimony of the Spirit, and have the distinction of such intimacy with their Savior that they are called collectively *"the bride of Christ."*

But since the **true** believers are **known only to God**, we cannot recognize them to a certainty. Even on the basis of their profession, we cannot be sure of their *spiritual* fellowship; for hypocrites, too, are confessors of Jesus Christ as their Savior, but are artful liars and deceivers and remain undetectable until they manifest themselves, or until God Himself unmasks them. Therefore the Lord directs us away from the *subjective judgment* of hearts (Luke 17:20-21; 6:37) to the ***objective judgment*** of that which can be seen, examined, tested, measured, and enjoined, namely, **purity of doctrine and faithful practice** (Matthew 7:15ff; 15:9; Jeremiah 23:31; I John 4:1; Romans

16:17; I Corinthians 1:10; etc.) on the basis of its **only source and norm**, the Holy Scriptures (Deuteronomy 12:32; Luke 11:28; Jeremiah 23:28; Ephesians 2:20; John 8:31-32; II Timothy 1:13; 4:2; etc.). According to Scripture, there is no room for "theological creativity" in what is preached and taught in Christ's church, no room for "academic freedom" for self-styled "experts" who would re-design the doctrines of Holy Writ on the basis of worldly scholarship, no room for human reason to vaunt itself above the wisdom of God, and no room for so-called "healthy dissent" and "honest differences of opinion" in matters of Christian doctrine.

True, Godpleasing Christian fellowship is, therefore, based solely upon *"the unity of the Spirit"* (Ephesians 4:3) which is ***confessed*** and which is ***evidenced*** by strict conformity with the Word of God. Is that *too much* to ask? **God** doesn't think so! He **demands** it! Is such unity even *possible* to achieve in this world of sin and error? **God** says that it ***is***, since it is wrought and preserved by *Him;* and He **insists** that we *"endeavor to keep [it] in the bond of peace"* by not permitting vain talkers and deceivers and spiritual know-nothings to distract us from the *"one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in [us] all,"* as He manifests Himself in His precious Word!

Where *"the unity of the Spirit"* is **evident**, where it **manifests itself** in observable, verifiable purity of doctrine and practice, when *"[we] all speak the same thing,"* when there are *"no divisions among [us],"* and when we are *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,"* (I Corinthians 1:10), **then and only then** do we also enjoy that ***God-given, intimate relationship that exists between those who are truly one in faith and confession*** known as **fellowship**.

How is that true Christian fellowship **preserved**? The question is almost superfluous after what has been said about the nature and exercise of fellowship. Its answer is ***obvious*** in the simple proof-texts which all our children, and hopefully our adults as well, memorize in connection with their pre-confirmation instruction in the chief doctrines of our faith. Jesus says, for example, in John 8:31 and 32:

*"If ye continue in **My Word**, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* Paul writes to Timothy: *"Hold fast the **form of sound words** which thou hast heard of me"* (II Timothy 1:13); *"take heed unto thyself and unto the **doctrine**; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"* (I Timothy 4:16); and to Titus, describing the staunch Christian pastor as *"holding fast **the faithful Word** as he hath been taught, that he may be able by **sound doctrine** both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"* (1:9) Peter writes: *"If any man speak, let him speak as the **oracles of God**"* (I Peter 4:11). Again St. Paul to the Romans: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to **the doctrine which ye have learned**; and avoid them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly."* And there are, of course, **many more** —some short and easy to learn, some longer and well worth looking up and studying— but ALL pointing to the one and only standard of what is to be preached and taught and believed in the Savior's church, the only standard of **true unity**, and the only standard of **Godpleasing fellowship**. How then is that fellowship to be **preserved**? *"Search **the Scriptures!**"* (John 5:39). *"Preach **the Word!**"* (II Timothy 4:2) *"Grow in ... the **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!"* (II Peter 3:18). *"Let the **Word of Christ** dwell in you richly!"* (Colossians 3:16). *"Not forsaking the **assembling** of ourselves together ..., but **exhorting** one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."* (Hebrews 10:25). THAT'S how our blessed unity and our Christian fellowship will be preserved — preserved in us by the Holy Spirit of God through the means of His precious, inerrant, infallible, all-sufficient, and perfectly clear Word!

There are, however, lurking in the "shadows" in the service of Satan several **vicious threats** to true unity and Godpleasing fellowship — besides ignorance of the Scriptures, that is— and these need to be briefly identified, defined, and exposed for what they are. They aren't the *false **prophets*** who lie in wait to deceive; for they are easy to identify, to beware of, and to avoid if we hold to the only legitimate standard of divine truth. They aren't the *false **doctrines*** which have been invented by men over the years to supplant *"the doctrine which is according to Godliness"* (I Timothy 6:3), for those

bruised and rotten and pithy fruits can easily be spotted and promptly removed from the banquet table of spiritual nourishment. But the threats to which we refer are *false* ***practices*** which detract from the importance of true unity, which abolish the difference between truth and error and nullify the importance of pure doctrine, which minimize the importance of faithful practice consistent with sound doctrine, and which give the impression that Christian fellowship has no more real, intrinsic value and meaning than a cigar-band ring at a children's make-believe wedding! While there are **three false practices** in particular that we intend to address briefly but forthrightly in this essay, we would first of all speak to a matter of utmost importance to the maintenance of true unity, particularly in the local Christian congregation.

The bringing of ***Christian admonition*** to a brother *"overtaken in a fault"* (Galatians 6:1) is the exercise or practice of fellowship on the part of those who are *"endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3) by combating sin and error. Admonition of the erring, contrary to the label of "lovelessness" falsely attached to it by its antinomistic opponents, is really **Christian love in action**; and it begins (in the case of *private* sins) with the meek and loving approach of just one brother who is concerned enough about the spiritual welfare of his fellow Christian and about the unity they share that he wants to *"restore such an one"* (Galatians 6:1) to the paths of righteousness for his Savior's sake. The entire process of ***Christian admonition*** or ***discipline***, as the Savior Himself instituted it, is intended, not for the eternal ruin of those who are admonished, but for the salvation of their souls. The Lord Jesus in Matthew 18 clearly states that, if a sinning brother hears and heeds[1] the Christian admonition brought to him from the Word of God, he has been *"gained"* from his sins for heaven. The rebuke of a sinning brother is (and always has been) regarded by the Lord Himself as an

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[1] The aorist of ακούω assumes a hearing to completion, to agreement, to obedience. Hearing merely of the ear and not of the heart, i.e. short of **heeding**, would not result in the "gaining" of an erring brother.

act of **love**, while to *"suffer sin upon him,"* simply to let him continue in sin without admonition, is to *"**hate** [one's] brother"* (Leviticus 19:17). Yea, the Savior says of His own loving desire for the repentance of erring members in His churches, *"As many as I **love**, I **rebuke** and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent"* (Revelation 3:19). But when Christian discipline is **not** maintained in the Christian congregation, either by individual members in their relationships with one another or by the congregation as a body in the case of public sins or sins brought before the church in the third step of admonition (Matthew 18:17), then *"[they] which are spiritual"* (Galatians 6:1), indeed, they who certainly ***ought to be*** spiritual — instead of restoring erring brethren to *"keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* —foster **dis**unity, aid and abet those who *"cause **divisions** and **offences**,"* become *"**partaker** of other men's sins"* (I Timothy 5:22), and bring upon themselves and upon their congregations the Savior's angry rebuke and threat of swift punishment (I Corinthians 5; Revelation 2:14-16, 20-23; 3:2-3).

Now as to the **three false practices** in particular to which we address ourselves in this present essay, practices which militate against and destroy true Godpleasing fellowship among professing Christians, they are the sins of ***unionism***, ***separatism***, and ***selective fellowship***.

Unionism can be defined very simply as *engaging in religious work and/or worship with those who are not of the same faith and confession, that is, with those with whom one is not in fellowship.* Unionists practice fellowship where there is no true fellowship, feign unity where there is no true unity, grant the same authority to error as they do to the truth of God's Word, and establish unions where there is no Scriptural basis for union. In this present study we have defined Christian fellowship as ***"the God-given intimate relationship that exists between those who are truly one in faith and confession on the basis of God's Word;"*** and therefore, according to St. Paul's analogy in Ephesians chapter 5, the **exercise** of Christian fellowship —fellowship with Christ and with one another— can be likened to the intimacy enjoyed between husband and wife in Holy Marriage, based on their mutually exclusive commitment to one another. ***Unionism***, then, very simply put, is **spiritual adultery** on the part of

those who profess to be *"chaste virgin[s] ... espoused ... to one Husband,"* namely, Christ (II Corinthians 11:2), and *"members one of another"* (Romans 12:5), those who, at their Confirmation, swore faithfulness to their Savior, His Word and Church even unto death; for they engage in religious intimacy with those who are not in *"the unity of the Spirit,"* with those who are not committed to the truth of God's Word, with those who *"cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine"* of Holy Scripture, with those who are *"the enemies of the cross of Christ,"* with those who *"serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly."* Unionists quite literally *"embrace the bosom of a stranger"* (Proverbs 5:20) by practicing the spiritual intimacy of fellowship with those who mock the very principles upon which true fellowship is based. And, in so doing, they claim the Lord Jesus, the bridegroom of His chaste believers, as the author of their promiscuity. They violently rape the Savior's prayer in John 17, *"that they all may be one,"* tearing the words from their context, and turning them quite literally "on their head" to make it seem as if the Lord Jesus *advocated* the indiscriminate joining together of all professing Christians into one outward fellowship, regardless of their lack of real unity! But unionism is **the devil's** work and results in the very opposite of what the term at first hearing seems to imply. It ***divides*** *the church* instead of uniting it; it *fosters* ***heterodoxy*** at the expense of orthodoxy; it *destroys* ***true*** *fellowship* with a false concept of love; it *makes God a* ***liar*** by denying the existence of divine truth; it not only *permits* truth and error to exist side-by-side, but it *promotes* spiritual ***promiscuity*** and *praises* doctrinal ***pluralism***.

Since the term "unionism" has always been used **negatively** to denote something to be **avoided** by sincere Christians, errorists have devised a more attractive-sounding word for exactly the same thing, the name under which they are successfully "selling" the concept in the marketplace of outward Christendom. They call it ***ecumenism***. It's BIG; it's popular; it's everywhere; but the ***ecumenical movement*** is nothing but a "wild party" of spiritual "swingers" whose concept of fellowship is "free love" with no commitment, no bounds, no faithfulness.

Contrary to what we see and hear nowadays of spiritual promiscuity in outward Lutheranism, unionism is clearly "**un**Lutheran" judging from the Reformer's own words: "Whoever really regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain cannot remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine."[2] Luther, of course, did not arrive at this conclusion on his own. Rather, he paraphrased the Holy Ghost through St. Paul, who warns us in the strongest of terms: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers! For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said: 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,' saith the Lord, 'and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters,' saith the Lord Almighty"* (II Corinthians 6:14-18). Dr. Pieper notes concerning these verses that

> "Objections have been raised against the use of this passage as proof that God has forbidden fellowship with heterodox churches. The objectors claim that this passage speaks of unbelievers and not of erring believers. But erring churches are, to the extent that they err, also unbelieving. They are unbelieving with respect to quite a number of Bible passages. And to this they add the terrible sin, that on the basis of their errors they have established sectarian communions in the Christian Church. Thereby they split up Christendom and oppose, fight against, the orthodox Church. Word for word, the passage, II Corinthians 6,

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[2]Martin Luther, *Sämmtliche Schriften,* St. Louis Ed., Vol. XVII, p. 1180.

applies to the erring churches *insofar* as they are such."[3]

While the term "unionism" is usually applied to indiscriminate ***church* fellowship**, we note that the very same *spiritual adultery* is committed by **individuals** who engage in acts of ***personal* fellowship** in their casual everyday contact with the heterodox —with family members who are not of the same fellowship, with neighbors, with peers at school, with colleagues in the workplace, with players on sports teams, and in other social associations. When Christians in weakness yield to pressure to set aside differences and to concentrate only on those things they have in common with such people, they are swept into the treacherous undertow of unionism and soon find themselves casually engaging with the heterodox in joint table prayers, in the singing of hymns and carols (especially at Christmas time), in pre-game devotions led by coaches and team chaplains, or in religious rituals at otherwise civic observances. Regarding even such *personal* acts of fellowship with the heterodox, the Lord's Apostle Paul writes in Romans 16:17, *"**Mark** them ... and **avoid** them!"* And, as we heard just before, *"Come **out** from among them, and be ye **separate**, saith the Lord!"*

In 1945, as the Missouri Synod began its cataclysmic slide into the heterodoxy from which it was never to recover, the liberal signers of *"A Statement"* "deplored the fact" that Romans 16:17 had been applied by faithful pastors and professors to joint prayer in private and semi-private settings between **individual Christians** not united in doctrine and practice. They maintained that the passage speaks only to fraternization with false **teachers**, with false **churches**, with false **groups**. Thus the "Statementarians" set the stage, as it were, for church-approved spiritual adultery and the unscriptural notion that differences between **individual Christians** are not divisive of

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[3] F. Pieper, *The Difference between Orthodox and Heterodox Churches,* an essay delivered by Dr. Pieper in 1889 to the Southern District Convention of the Missouri Synod. (Tr. by E.L.M. 1981)

fellowship. It was apparently all right with them for their people, in their *spiritual lives*, to engage in promiscuous "sleeping around" on a one-to-one basis, as long as they didn't do it in groups! Some "family values"! —And yet, (and this shouldn't surprise us in the least), it was within just **five years** that not only that vocal minority of "the 44" and their subsequent co-signers of *"A Statement"* but the entire Missouri Synod at its Milwaukee convention adopted a so-called *"Common Confession"* with the American Lutheran Church in which doctrines of Holy Scripture were artfully compromised in an effort to form a union where there was no true unity. And, when those who were our "fathers" in the early Orthodox Lutheran Conference, but were still at *that* time members of the Missouri Synod, spoke out against such blatant unionism with an undeniably heterodox church body, they were booed on the convention floor, ruled "out of order," and for all practical purposes silenced, while that ***doctrinal*** measure passed by a mere ***majority vote!*** Whatever happened to the unanimity required by I Corinthians 1:10 and other passages in matters of Christian doctrine and practice?? We **know** what happened! It was ignored, shoved aside, and deliberately rejected as being at all necessary in determining whether there is true unity between Christians, between churches, and between church bodies! And **today**, as even the most casual reader of religious newspapers and magazines can observe, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod routinely passes resolutions "confirming" its stand on a doctrine of Holy Scripture *by a* ***majority*** *vote!!*

Our younger members, and those who came into our fellowship long after "the split" with the Missouri Synod, should know that *the very formation of our Conference* was due to the blatant **unionism** that was practiced and officially tolerated in that synod in spite of repeated and almost incessant admonition by those who were then our brethren in a true "state of confession" or active, meaningful protest over against the synod. In the **Preamble** of our Conference ***Constitution*** we find the following testimony by our orthodox fathers:

"1. In obedience to the Word of God (Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10), a number of our original members withdrew from the Missouri Synod in the year 1951 for the following reasons:

a. Because of that Synod's progressive deterioration in doctrine and practice during the two preceding decades, in spite of much patient admonition to the contrary on the part of many pastors and congregations in its midst ...

b. More specifically because of:
   1) Its **unionistic character** evinced by the unretracted "A Statement," Chicago, 1945, and the unscriptural, compromising "Common Confession" of 1950.
   2) Its **tyrannical procedures** over against its own protesting pastors and congregations in defiance of God's Word, Matthew 23:8-12; Mark 10:42-45; and contrary to its own Constitution, Article VII."

And, after almost half a century, the Missouri Synod is more unionistic than ever before, permits error to stand on an equal footing with the truth, refuses to exercise doctrinal discipline toward its erring members, allows marked errorists to teach in its colleges and seminaries, and actively persecutes anyone who publicly challenges its false doctrine and practice. How humbly grateful we should be to the God of all grace for having delivered us from such a spiritual cesspool in which we ourselves would no doubt have drowned had we remained in it to be leavened with indifference to the truth and tolerance of error, all for the sake of "temporal peace and tranquillity"!

Another vicious threat to Christian fellowship is ***sinful separatism.*** Our dogmaticians have comparatively little to say about this threat, no doubt because of its easily recognizable *terminus* or end result. While in *unionism*, those who profess to be true brethren also "sleep with the enemy," as it were, in spiritual adultery, and carry on secret "affairs" with the heterodox —often going undetected by the unwary and undisciplined by those who don't want to "rock the boat," ***separatism*** occurs when professing Christians ***refuse to practice fellowship with those whom they recognize to be orthodox in doctrine and practice.*** They refuse to acknowledge and stand along

side those who are their brethren in the faith; they refuse to defend them; and after a relatively short time, they desert them altogether (II Timothy 1:8). Thus they cause "schisms" or splits in the church, not for reasons that God in His holy Word *commands* (such as we discussed under sinful unionism), but **for purely carnal or fleshly reasons**: Their feelings were hurt by someone in the church; they don't like to be admonished for their sins; they don't like the length of the pastor's sermons, his expectations for children in Confirmation Class, and the way in which he preaches against false prophets. For others, it's the use of the "common cup" in the Lord's Supper, the "ornate" liturgy in the worship service, the "old" music that may be hard for them to sing, or the type of gown that the pastor wears. Perhaps it is what some refer to as "a personality conflict" with the pastor or with another member, because of which a person estranges himself from the congregation and permits resentment, disrespect, and even hatred to destroy his love for the brethren. But whatever it is, it is **not** a matter because of which a Christian should leave an orthodox Christian congregation and fellowship. Rather, it is a matter to be discussed with dear brethren in the spirit of meekness and love, so that in all things the Name of the Lord Jesus is glorified and the unity of the Spirit is kept in the bond of peace.

Again, it is a matter of "family values" in the *"household of faith"* in that ***sinful separatism*** is much like malicious desertion from the marriage relationship. *"If the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases"* (I Corinthians 7:15). Just about all of us at some time or other have witnessed the defection of a brother or sister from the fellowship —sometimes without warning— and we feel hurt, used, deserted, and deceived, much like an innocent spouse whose partner suddenly leaves the marriage over "irreconcilable differences," "mental cruelty," or simply because there is "no love in the marriage" anymore. When such a desertion occurs from the fellowship, the faithful members should not feel guilty; they should not feel that it was somehow "their fault," or ask themselves what they could have done to prevent such a carnal act. For the Apostle John writes concerning ***sinful separatists*** who have left our fellowship: *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have*

continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (I John 2:19). —*"Will* ***ye also*** *go away?"* Jesus asked His faithful disciples (John 6:67); and we must answer, as we steadfastly continue in His precious doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers, *"Lord, to whom shall we go?? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God!"*

But there is yet one other significant threat to Christian fellowship, an insidious and cunning trick of Satan that we call ***selective fellowship***. The term itself has a hollow ring to it, because the "selectivity" is purely subjective, purely personal; and no one is quite sure who is in fellowship with whom. That kind of uncertainty is not characteristic of ***"the God-given intimate relationship that exists between those who are truly one in faith and confession on the basis of His Word."*** We find this arbitrary "picking and choosing" rather typical of spiritual fence-sitters who find themselves, particularly in relationships with family members, relatives, and close personal friends, unable objectively to distinguish between true brethren and *"false brethren"* (II Corinthians 11:26). Because of flesh-and-blood ties ("Blood is thicker than water!"), they are reticent to mark close friends and relatives as heterodox, even when the perfect, objective measuring stick of Holy Writ makes the spiritual rift as plain as night and day and forbids the practice of fellowship with those who are not *"agreed"* (Amos 3:3) in doctrine and practice. The Lord Jesus Himself made it abundantly clear to **His** earthly relatives that there is an affinity "thicker than blood", namely, the affinity of *"the household* ***of faith****"*, the affinity of Christian fellowship (Matthew 12:48-50). Moreover, His requirement that we confess Him before men (Matthew 10:32-33) dare not be so limited that it makes an exception to forthright testimony to those who are erring *relatives* and *friends* in a heterodox fellowship —for the sake of "domestic" peace and tranquillity!

While the selfish snobbery of ***selective fellowship*** is common also among the sects, it is most rampant among those **Lutherans** who identify themselves as "conservatives" and "confessionals". One might expect *such* people to be very **careful** about the exercise of

Christian fellowship and to make sure that their fellowship is based on the true ***"unity of the Spirit."*** But these are spiritual "two-timers" who practice a finely chopped form of spiritual promiscuity. They are "selective" adulterers who won't sleep with just **anybody**, but their "standards" go only as deep as the label in their prospective partner's clothes. They only seek to determine whether a person is a "conservative" or a "confessional" (whatever that means nowadays) and don't really care to examine a person's doctrine and practice in **everything**. For if they do **that**, they'll have to eliminate most from consideration. And so they pick and choose, practicing fellowship with the consistency of a buckshot pattern on a paper target! "Brother **A** and I are in fellowship together. I realize that he's a member of a heterodox church body and isn't about to leave it, but he's a *conservative* after all. He communes at pastoral conferences with fellas with whom **I** could never commune in good conscience, but he's trying to gain them for the *conservative* cause. That has to count for something! I'm also in fellowship with Brother **B** in a still different church body. He's a *conservative* too, but he and Brother **A** just don't see eye-to-eye and aren't in fellowship. Too bad, too, because I consider BOTH of them MY brethren. I think it's just one of those doctrines that is not divisive of fellowship that is coming between them. You just can't tell nowadays what's divisive and what's not. But you surely treasure **fellowship**, don't you?" — Sometimes such examples sound a bit far-fetched and far-stretched to make a point; but there is no exaggeration in **this** one. So-called "conservatives" who are **far** from being truly one in doctrine and practice think nothing of wishing one another "God's richest blessings," when they should know that God does not bless those who pervert, subvert, and ignore His Word! (Cf. II John 10-11). This loose-lipped dialog, almost to the word, goes on every day in the circles of ***"Lutheran conservatives"*** and makes a mockery of true Christian fellowship!

In conclusion, let us very briefly refer again to David's words in Psalm 133:1, *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* Why?? Because true Christian fellowship is a precious blessing from God, *"good"* and *"pleasant"* not just because of the sociability it affords us in our congregations,

not merely because of the friendships that it creates and builds in our Conference, not only because our marriages and families are more likely to remain strong and stable when their members are in fellowship with one another, but because of the *"unity"* in which we *"dwell together,"* the *"unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* That unity is only possible when *"[we] all speak the same thing, [when] there are no divisions among [us], [when we are] perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (I Corinthians 1:10). Such unity is no "pipedream" of the Holy Spirit, it's not a theoretical goal for Christians which can never be fully achieved, it's not the "ideal situation" which we will only realize in heaven someday! No, by God's grace, true unity is ours **right now**, **right here** in our precious Conference, not because of *our* faithfulness, but because of *God's* faithfulness to us in His Word. We are His dear children *"by faith in Christ Jesus,"* and we are *"members one of another"* according to the tangible, observable, discoverable test of full adherence to the Holy Scriptures in both doctrine and practice. May we all so value the precious Word of our God that we gladly grow in it on a daily basis, let it dwell in us richly, assemble eagerly to hear it preached and taught, hold fast to it in faith, follow it in our lives as Christians, and thus continue to enjoy, exercise, and keep among us true Christian fellowship, ***the God-given intimate relationship that exists between those who are truly one in faith and confession on the basis of His precious Word!*** To that we pray with the hymnwriter *"unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Ephesians 3:20):

Spirit of life, of love, and peace,
unite our hearts, our joy increase,
Thy gracious help supply.
To each of us the blessing give
in Christian Fellowship to live,
in joyful hope to die!
Amen.

(L.H. 412, 3)

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

of the Free Tibet movement. But Mr. Stephens is more concerned with Buddhism's growing influence in local churches and even in formerly evangelical works. Buddhist monks, he says are increasingly welcome as speakers in churches. Last Christmas, St. Anselm's Episcopal Church in Orange City, Calif., brought in a statue of the Buddha and celebrated his birthday alongside that of Jesus (World, September 20, 1997)

Buddhism is a religion without Jesus who declared, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). In crystal-clear language the Word of Truth states, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). The Biblical teachings of the Triune God, sin, repentance, faith in the living Jesus whose blood cleanses us from all sin and that faith revealing itself in the fruits of faith, the final return of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of the dead, etc. — have no place in any form of Buddhism. The fact that Buddhism may be the fourth largest religion in the world and has a membership of 100,000 members in 100 congregations here in the United States clearly shows the truth of God's Word which warns that in the last evil days of the world "many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:11).

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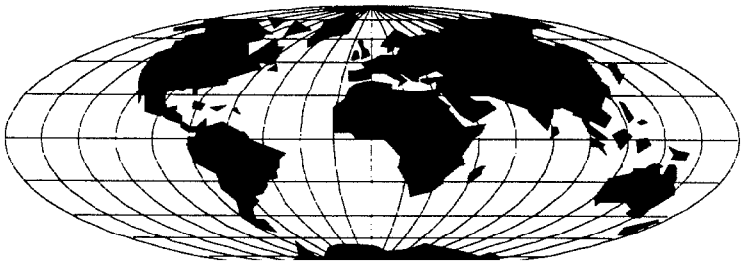
Around the World



with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Buddhism is now the spirituality of choice for the trendy ... On screen, Hollywood often depicts physical adultery; on and off, wherever spiritual adultery rules, filmdom's best and brightest pursue intense affairs with whatever ideology or theology is hot at the moment: Marxism in the past, Scientology in recent years, and this fall — Tibetan Buddhism. Buddhism has replaced New Age religion as the in-way to be spiritual, and several Hollywood actors have become strong defenders of Tibet and its religion. The result? Two movies about the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, are about to be released. The first movie, Seven Years in Tibet, will land in theaters next month. And the second, called Kindun (Tibetan for the presence) is scheduled to debut on Christmas Day. Not only the powerful are attracted to Buddhists and Buddhism. According to Diana Eck, director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, adherents are packing out the nearly 1,500 Buddhist temples and monasteries that are to be found throughout the United States. Tens of thousands of students are influenced by the Buddhist Studies departments that have sprung up in most major American universities and colleges. In southern California, a Thai Buddhist temple is erected every two months. Buddhism also has infiltrated some American churches. Not surprisingly, many liberal Roman Catholics and mainstream Protestants, imbued with a commitment to pluralism, have been enthusiastic supporters of Buddhism. Jim Stephens, director of the Sonrise Center for Buddhist Studies in Sierra Madre, Calif., states that liberal Christians are the largest financial supporters