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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"[Christ] was delivered

for our offences,

and was raised again

for our justification"

Rom. 4:25

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Concordia Lutheran Conference

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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 AGAINST THE SIN OF UNIONISM — THE JOINING TOGETHER IN RELIGIOUS WORK OR WORSHIP, OR BOTH, BY SUCH WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS BUT ARE NOT OF ONE MIND IN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

In his excellent Convention Essay at our 46th Annual Convention, Pastor David T. Mensing set forth clearly the position of our Conference on the Sin of Unionism (see: The Concordia Lutheran, 1998, Jan-Feb issue, from the middle of page 11 to the top of page 16). It is my purpose, in this column, to emphasize the fact that every pastor in our Conference preaches against this sin which is so destructive of the true unity which God requires of those who pray and worship together and support Christian projects and undertakings. Of such the Lord says through the pen of the Apostle Paul, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10).

Unionism minimizes teaching and practice which is contrary to Scripture — as though it were something of minor importance. The Bible, however, tells us that we are neither to "add to" nor "diminish from" the Scriptures. To do so is an evil and wicked thing. And those who add to or take away from the Word of God, either in doctrine or practice, are called "false prophets" or "false teachers," "ravening wolves," in sheep's clothing, of whom we must "BEWARE!" (Matthew 7:15)

The doctrines set forth in the Bible are God's doctrines. They are not

doctrines with which man may do as he pleases! The Lord God Himself has revealed to us the saving Truths of the Gospel. He has shown the Way of Salvation to us poor, lost and condemned sinners, by His grace alone, through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ. And as the Lord and Head of the Church, our precious Redeemer will not tolerate human wisdom to be taught in the Church. Those who desecrate the Word of God, by teaching and practice which is contrary to Scripture, sin against the majesty of God and against their Savior Jesus Christ. God makes it clear, time and time again in His Word, that He hates false doctrine, and that he "is against" false teachers, e.g. Jeremiah 23:31. To think lightly of false doctrine and to support false teachers monetarily, or by being members of their churches, is nowhere excused or condoned in the Bible. It is, therefore, certainly not those who oppose the Sin of Unionism who are the cause of the divisions in external Christianity, but those pastors and theologians in Christendom who teach and practice otherwise than God's Word teaches, as well as those who support them or join with them in outward unity. They are the church-wreckers!

Let us try to follow the logic of the religious unionists or the so-called ecumenical leaders of our day. They say, "When you get to heaven, you will be ashamed of your denomination because in heaven there are NO denominations! If there is anything in your church which keeps you from sitting down with me at the Lord's Table, IT IS WRONG! If there is anything in my church which keeps me from worshiping with you, IT IS WRONG!" This, of course, is the voice of sinful religious unionism, and by such base and insidious half-truths such false teachers succeed in deceiving the hearts of the simple by appealing, in a striking way, to their human emotions, BUT NOT to the Bible which plainly forbids the joining together in religious work or worship, or in both, by such as are not agreed in doctrine. On the basis of such false and misleading statements, as the one quoted above, some Protestant sects, besides fellowshiping among themselves in spite of doctrinal differences, even clasp hands in religious work and worship with heathen religionists — Buddhists, Mormons, Jews, and Moslems. The Roman Catholic Church, of course, even though expressing pride in its unity as compared with divided Protestantism, is full to overflowing with divisions and disunity, and it has always been unionistic and syncretistic as long as it has benefited financially and in popularity by such unionistic activities. And the Lutherans are not following far behind — even those among them who consider themselves "conservative."

It is true that in heaven the true believers in Christ will not be divided and there indeed will be no denominations there BECAUSE the Light of heaven dispels all error. In heaven there will be no false teaching or practice contrary to Scripture! The Church in Heaven will be "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing"; it will "be holy and without blemish!" But, here on earth, there will always be errorists, false teachers, and false churches to which the Bible refers time and time again for our warning BECAUSE OF THE VERY FACT that we are NOT in heaven BUT on earth where false teachers abound who, as wolves in sheep's clothing, seek to destroy and devour the sheep; who lie and deceive by God's name, "us(ing) their tongues and say(ing) He saith;" "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," and who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple!"

And Scripture, moreover, teaches us plainly what our attitude and conduct must be over against them. It does NOT say, "mollify them," "pacify them," "appease them," "be conciliatory toward them," "respect their views," "embrace them in an outward show of love and affection," "worship with them," or "join them in their religious affairs and activities!" On the contrary, the Bible says, ever so plainly, "Beware of them," "Mark them," "Avoid them," "Keep no company with them," and that this is an act of the most sincere love, for "charity [true Christian brotherly love] rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth!" False teachers blaspheme (mock) God by their false doctrine and deceit, and their followers participate and support their blasphemy! Dare we, then, in the light of God's Word, practice any kind of religious work or worship with those who deny what is plainly taught in the Bible or who follow or support such false teaching? Unionism answers YES! O we can observe about us how this Sin of Unionism appeals to the Old Adam and to the fleshly minds of people everywhere and is especially deceptive to the simple who are not well-versed in Scripture. But the Bible answers NO, do not participate in any kind of religious work or worship with those who deviate, in any way, from the teachings of Scripture, and the pastors in the Concordia Lutheran Conference uphold Scripture in thus opposing the Sin of Unionism.

It doesn't take much intelligence to understand why the Sin of Unionism is so destructive of true Christianity. (History itself attests to this, for example, in the History of Lutheranism in America.) When you pray and worship with another person, it should be self-evident that you are praying to and worshiping the same God, and, if your are a Christian,

that God is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He is the One who tells us in His Word, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," (Genesis 20:3), and "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt Thou serve!" (Matthew 4:10) For a Christian to pray and worship with a heathen in a pagan land, bowing down to an image of wood or stone, would certainly be offensive to any one who considers himself a Christian. And most so-called Christians would consider it wrong to worship with anti-Trinitarians such as Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Moslems, Jews, or Bahai. This they would regard as a sin, and indeed it is. We call it "syncretism," i.e. to carry on religious activities with heathen people.

Now, however, someone comes along and says, "Yes, but we should not refuse to worship with those who call themselves Christians, especially if they call themselves Lutherans, and it shouldn't make any difference whether or not they believe the same as we do in every point of doctrine — because there are bound to be differences in interpretation!" What!? Are we to believe that God is such a fool so as not to be able to speak plainly in His Word, and that the differences which separate those who call themselves Christians are merely insignificant matters of interpretation? If we base our faith, not on human interpretation, but on whatever God says in His Word, then it should indeed make a difference with whom we worship, because our God wants to be worshiped with one heart, one soul, and one mind — as we are told of the early Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32), and as the Apostle Paul encourages us in his letter to the Philippians to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel" (1:27). If, then, we pray, worship, and engage in religious activities with someone or a group of people who teach and believe differently than what the Lord God says in His Word, are we not giving credence to their false teaching — no matter how minor the point of doctrine may seem to be? Are we not, by joining with them in religious worship, acknowledging that we are one in faith with them? God says in His Word, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" And are we not bearing witness to the fact that what God says in His Word isn't very important and doesn't mean as much to us as our outward fellowship with those who teach otherwise than God's Word teaches and thus profane God's name among us?

Now, there are those who think that they are so wise as to be able to put their own words into the mouth of God. They say, "God does not mean

to tell us that we are not to pray and worship with others who belong to different denominations and who call themselves Christians. What He wants us to do is to avoid their false teachings." But God says in His Word, "Mark THEM which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid THEM." Obviously, these words are not speaking of doctrine but of people, and they are not speaking of civil or business relationships with others who are not one in faith with us, for the Lord tells us in His Word to do good to all men, to respect them as fellow human beings, to be good citizens and good neighbors. But are we to join with them in worship? May we treat them as brethren in the faith? May we pray with them and participate with them in religious projects if they do not believe exactly the same as we do on the basis of Scripture? Here the answer from the Bible comes clear and sharp: "Mark them; Avoid them!"

Even among those who regard themselves as "conservative" Lutherans, there are those who defend and encourage unionism, saying, "Let us join with others who call themselves Lutheran on the basis of those doctrines upon which we are agreed. After all, it is humanly impossible to find perfect agreement on all points of doctrine. Let us then join together with those with whom we are in agreement on most doctrines." How welcome and refreshing these words sound to the natural inclinations of the Old Adam! But what does the Lord God say in I Corinthians 1:10 (quoted above in the first paragraph of this article)? They are right when they say that such perfect unity is humanly impossible — but "with God all things are possible" and He is certainly able to and does produce such perfect unity in doctrine and practice through the preaching and teaching of His pure Word ALONE! In our Concordia Lutheran Conference we enjoy such perfect unity only as a precious gift of God's grace for which we thank and praise God alone, rejoicing in the words of Psalm 133, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." In this Psalm, the Lord compares such unity to the oil poured out upon the head of Aaron, the first High Priest, and to the dew upon the mountains of Zion, "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore!"

Since God hates false doctrine, a true Christian simply cannot remain unconcerned when anything contrary to Scripture is taught, defended, or tolerated. Unionism tolerates false doctrine and produces indifference to the true teachings of Scripture. It places false doctrine and the teachings of God's Word on the same plane — giving error equal rights with the

Truth. It compromises the eternal Truth of God's Word with falsehood. In such a compromise, the Truth always loses and error is victorious. A truth simply cannot be compromised without losing it!

Unionism therefore provides pulpits for false teachers of whom Jesus says, "Beware!"

God says, "By grace are ye saved ..., not of works"; the **False Prophet** says, "Good works are also necessary to salvation"; **Unionism** says, "Tolerate the false prophet!"

God says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ... they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them"; the False Prophet says, "Man, by nature, is able to make his own decision in spiritual matters"; Unionism says, "Join with those who believe and teach what the False Prophet says!"

God says, "They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no not one." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me"; the False Prophet says, "Every person is born with some good in him, because of which he can make his own decision for Christ"; Unionism says, "Let both things be taught; it won't make much difference!"

God says, "Being born again ... by the Word of God," "The Gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation," "He called you by our Gospel"; the False Prophet says, "You can make your own decision for Christ and become a Christian simply by praying that Christ would come into your heart;" Unionism says, "Let both teachings be heard!"

God says, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," "Baptism doth also now save us," "Repent, and be baptized every one of you ... for the remission of sins"; the False Prophet says, "Water baptism cannot accomplish anything; it is merely an outward sign of an inward grace"; Unionism says, "Tolerate the false doctrine!"

God says, "These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away"; "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"; the False Prophet says, "Once saved, always saved;" Unionism says, "Let the False Prophet's words also stand!"

The Lord says, "This is My body, ... This is My blood"; the False Prophet says, "It is mere bread and wine that represents the body and blood of Christ;" Unionism says, "Let people of both persuasions commune at the same altar!"

The Bible says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," "[God] justifies the ungodly"; the False Prophet, denying objective justification, says, "It is only faith in Christ which brings about the forgiveness of sins;" Unionism says, "Overlook the error, let both teachings be given equal rights!"

The Bible says, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called," "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will"; the False Teacher says, "God's predestination is in view of faith or in view of what a person has done," "God predestinates some people to Hell!" Unionism says, "The false teaching doesn't matter much. People won't notice the difference!"

The Bible says, "Tell it unto the Church," "He gave some pastors and teachers ... for the work of the ministry," "Set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee"; the False Prophet says, "Neither the local congregation nor the pastoral office is a divine institution"; Unionism says, "Forget it, it isn't that important anyway. Let's not be contentious!"

Certainly, we could go on and on to illustrate plainly the deceptive Sin of Unionism, how it is an evil and wicked thing — a gross insult to the Lord God!

Those who teach false doctrine cause divisions in the Church; they destroy the Unity which God wants His believers to have and enjoy in this world. The Sin of Unionism perpetuates and sustains the false teaching and keeps the error alive. It produces an intolerable situation in the Church: an outward union where there is no unity. It permits and encourages divisions to continue under the guise of unity. It permits a union to exist which is in itself a LIE! It is a horrible caricature of the true unity which the Lord wants to exist among Christians!

Unionism spreads false doctrine; it strengthens the false teachers in their error; it produces indifference to the pure Word of God; and it causes the unsuspecting and the weak to stumble, to fall, and to lose their faith entirely. Many, in years gone by, left their homeland and came to this country rather than remain in a land where they were forced to practice religious fellowship with errorists. They were reviled and mocked —

and we also will be called bigoted, self-righteous, and narrow-minded by those who are caught up in the ecumenical movement and in the great popularity which unionism brings. But the Lord says, "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!" "Mark them ... avoid them!" May Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church, grant us His grace that the pastors in our Conference may continue boldly to preach against the Sin of Unionism, that His precious Word may not be mingled with error, but may endure among us, in our congregations, in all its truth and purity for all generations to come.

— P. R. B.

"[Christ] was Raised Again for our Justification"

Romans 4:25

The Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is without doubt the most important festival of the church year — *not* because of the lovely spring weather that often accompanies it, *not* because of the opportunity it affords people to purchase and show off new "Easter outfits," *not* because it is one of two or possibly three days out of the whole year on which church attendance tends to peak, and certainly *not* because of white bunnies, eggs and candies which the children of the world have made the *essence* of Easter! But we Christians declare with the Psalmist, *"This is the day which the LORD hath made! We will rejoice and be glad in it!"* (Psalm 118:24). Why? Oh, because the awesome event which we celebrate on Easter Sunday, namely, the mighty resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, is **essential** to the Christian faith and is the **seal** of comfort and assurance and hope to every believer.

Scoffers and skeptics who either *deny outright* or *cast doubt upon* the resurrection of Jesus are ***ignorant* fools** who cannot recognize a simple fact when it stares them in the face, and then also ***proud* fools** who reject it when it has been proved to be true. The **evidence** is so overwhelmingly *in favor* of the resurrection that anyone who **objectively examines it** and puts the wicked bias of unbelief aside invariably comes to the conclusion: "He IS risen! He is risen INDEED!" And those so-called "theologians" who masquerade under Christ's Name and yet play "fast and loose" with the Holy Scriptures, question their authenticity, inerrancy and authority, and deny the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on Easter morning, are ***doubly ignorant*** and ***doubly proud* fools** who *"know nothing"* (I Timothy 6:3-4); for the Apostle Paul says in no uncertain terms: *"If Christ be **not** risen, then is our **preaching** vain, and your **faith** is also vain! Yea, and **we** are found **false witnesses of God**, because we have testified of God that **He raised up Christ!**"* (I Corinthians 15:14-15).

But our faith is **not** *"vain,"* neither is our confidence in Christ, our Savior, *misplaced* in Him; for *"now* ***is*** *Christ risen from the dead!"* (I Corinthians 15:20). Our *"hope in Christ"* is **not** *"in this life only,"* for we have the **firm assurance** that, because of what Jesus accomplished in our place, all our sins have been forgiven and are buried, as it were, in the tomb where our Redeemer lay. Indeed, when God *"raised up Christ"* (v. 15), He pronounced the trespasses of all mankind fully and freely forgiven and declared all men righteous for Christ's sake; for in our title text, the Apostle Paul expressly declares: *"[Christ] was raised again* ***for our justification!"***

In this wonderful passage, Paul actually speaks of **two** events that worked hand-in-hand to accomplish this blessed outcome. He first says that Christ *"was* ***delivered*** *for our* ***offences.***" Man, whom God had created holy in the beginning, deliberately and wantonly **disobeyed** the Lord's prohibition in the Garden of Eden and thereby brought sin into the world; and, because man had thus **offended** his just and holy God and brought upon himself God's wrathful curse, a state of *"enmity"* and of perpetual **warfare** existed between man and his God from that day on. **We too** *"were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"* (Ephesians 2:3). Moreover, as a totally depraved, vile, wretched sinner, capable only of evil in the sight of God, man could never have *earned his way* back into favor with his Creator. He needed a **Redeemer** to *buy him back* from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, and thus to *restore him* to that earlier relationship with God that Adam and Eve had enjoyed before they fell into sin. Without such a Redeemer, reconciliation could never have taken place.

God in His omniscience had **foreseen** this tragic situation *in eternity already* (although He had not willed it to happen), and He **determined** *already then* to save lost and fallen mankind by the death of His only-begotten Son (The Eternal Decree of Redemption). Therefore *"when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son ... to redeem them that were under the Law"* (Galatians 4:4). *"By the* ***determinate counsel*** *and* ***foreknowledge*** *of God"* (Acts 2:23), Christ was *"****delivered****"* — sent down from heaven to become one of us, placed under God's Law to be our Substitute in fulfilling its demands, made to bear the guilt of our transgressions, and cursed to suffer the wrath of divine justice in our place as *"the Propitiation for our sins"* (I John 2:2). And all of this *"****for***

our offences," because of **our transgressions**. God says to you and to me, *"Ye shall be holy!"* We can't do that, so Jesus stepped in and did it **for us**. God says to you and to me, *"Keep My commandments."* Try as we might, we fail; so Jesus kept them **for us**. God's justice declares, *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!"* Left to our own devices, that would surely be our lot for all eternity, the well-deserved *"wages of sin,"* the penalty we deserve to suffer. Instead, God *"made Him who knew no sin* [His sinless Son, the appointed scapegoat for sinners, the Lamb of God] *to **be** sin **for us**"* (II Corinthians 5:21); and Isaiah adds: *"It pleased the Lord to bruise **Him*** [instead of us]" (53:10). God took out the full brunt of His just anger on Christ, so that *"**He** was wounded for **our** transgressions; **He** was bruised for **our** iniquities"* (53:5). Yea, *"Christ died **for our sins** according to the Scriptures"* (I Corinthians 15:3), *" ... and **not for ours only**, but **also** for the sins of the **whole world**"* (I John 2:2). *"He died **for all**"* (I Corinthians 5:15), *"for the **ungodly**"* (Romans 5:6), *"when we were **enemies**"* (5:10), even for those who deny Him in unbelief (II Peter 2:1). This was God's plan of **universal redemption** from eternity, that by the ***vicarious atonement*** of His only-begotten Son, the Lamb of God would purchase reconciliation with Him for all mankind. And Jesus carried out that plan to the letter, laying before the bar of divine justice the only righteousness that could completely fulfill God's demands (Christ's *active obedience)* and the only sacrifice that could perfectly expiate man's guilt and satisfy God's just demand for punishment (Christ's *passive obedience*). Indeed, ***"[Christ] was delivered for our offences!"***

Now if Jesus Christ had rendered perfect obedience to God's Law in our stead and had gone through all that vicarious anguish and mockery and torture and death in our place, *"for **our offences,**"* and then, as the scoffers and so-called "modernistic theologians" claim, had been **left** by God **to rot in His grave**, Paul says that our faith would be *"in vain"* and we would still be *"in [our] sins."* Indeed, Jesus Christ would have been the biggest **fraud** and **failure** the world had ever seen! **Nothing at all** would have been *"accomplished"* [*τετέλεσται*] on the cross (John 19:30)! And we all would be **plain fools** for clinging to His merits, for trusting His atoning sacrifice, for believing the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning God's Messiah, and for hoping in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God!

Would our just and holy and faithful God suddenly have "trashed" His eternal decree of Redemption and failed to honor His divine commitment?? Would He have "ignored" the perfect righteousness earned by Christ and refused to impute it to the very ones for whom it was merited?? Would He have "written off" the vicarious suffering and death of His only-begotten Son as a "good try," but "insufficient" to purchase reconciliation with Him?? Would He have "refused" to absolve His beloved Son of the trespasses imputed to Him, thus still holding them against the sinners whose burden of guilt He carried and whose punishment He bore?? Would He have acknowledged some "defect" in Christ's vicarious atonement by making justification (forgiveness) *contingent* upon something yet to be done by man himself? If indeed ANY of those conditions had existed in the mind of God after Jesus *"gave up the ghost"* on Good Friday afternoon, God would surely have left Christ in the grave to suffer corruption, as the scoffers claim He did! God would have compromised His own perfect justice! God would have gone back on His Word! God would have betrayed His only-begotten Son! In short, God would not be God!!

*"But now **IS** Christ risen from the dead!"* Paul declares. ***"[He] was raised again for our justification!"*** Not only does Christ's resurrection comfort us with the fact that **Jesus is the Son of God**, with the assurance that **His doctrine is the truth**, and with the expectation that **all believers will rise to eternal life**; but it is the declaration that **God the Father accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world**! When *"Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"* (Romans 6:4 and numerous other passages), God declared that the sins of the whole world were atoned for, that the guilt of all sinners was fully expiated, that all mankind is now regarded as righteous at the bar of divine justice. This act of God was a "forensic" or "legal" one, like that of a governor or president, who grants a full and free pardon to a **guilty** person — one who was duly charged under the law, indicted on the evidence, tried in open court, convicted on all counts, and sentenced to death as *"the due reward of [his] deeds"*. If it were **not** the "accomplished fact" [*fait accompli*] that, in view of Christ's all-sufficient vicarious atonement, God reconciled the world unto Himself, *"not imputing their trespasses unto them"* (II Corinthians 5:19), and declared the same when He raised Christ from the dead, then **justification** has **not** taken place! Then God still charges your sins against you! Then *"your faith is **vain!**"* For *without* the forensic

general (or ***objective***) **justification** clearly taught in Scripture (in Romans 4:5, II Corinthians 5:19, here in Romans 4:25, and in still other passages) as the **object** of his faith, a poor sinner couldn't be **personally** (or ***subjectively***) *"justified by faith"* (Romans 5:1) because his faith would be *"vain,"* empty, useless, misdirected, lacking an object, clinging to nothing! And then *"ye are **yet in your sins,**"* Paul says. Then you and I *"through fear of death,"* **eternal** death as *"the wages of sin,"* would *"all our lifetime [still] be subject to bondage"* (Hebrews 2:15) in the prisonhouse of hell!

God be thanked that ***"[Christ] was raised again for our justification,"*** as the declaration of the Father that, for Christ's sake, He had forgiven the sins of the world, that He no longer imputed their trespasses to the *"ungodly,"* and that all mankind was declared righteous in His sight! For now, by laying hold on that objective pardon by faith and appropriating for ourselves what is already in force for all mankind, we are personally justified or forgiven, we are reconciled to God by confidence in His unilateral action, and we have *"peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

Having this blessed Easter comfort and assurance from the precious Word of our God, let us be on our guard against those who would destroy our God-given joy and confidence in His ***objective justification*** of the world for Christ's sake. In this connection, we offer a particular word of warning: Some of our readers may be aware of a book recently mass-mailed to hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of Lutheran pastors and laymen —unsolicited by them— in which a cunning case is made for the devilish notion that *objective justification* is a "historical development," a doctrine of men with no basis in Scripture, a misrepresentation of what the Bible teaches, and an idea that militates against the doctrine of justification by faith. The author, a Mr. Larry Darby of St. Louis, Missouri, calls *objective justification* "doctrinal evolution" and accuses those whom he labels as "OJ'ers" of "subterfuge," "deliberate efforts to obscure" by manipulative translation what orthodox fathers had written, "distortions" of what they taught, false *exegesis* (interpretation) of Scripture, etc. Darby also bears slander against our orthodox fathers (Walther, Pieper, and others), claiming that they never taught the doctrine of *objective justification* (when abundant evidence is available to show that they **did**, i.e., their own words in the original German which we have before us). He attacks such orthodox

theologians as Prof. Georg Stoeckhardt (1888), and he denies that the Brief Statement of 1932 teaches *objective justification* in its reference to II Corinthians 5:19. This is a **dangerous** publication because it couches in the guise of *"good words and fair speeches"* vicious false doctrine which may well *"deceive the hearts of the simple"* (Romans 16:18) and thus subvert in the minds of his readers the clear Scripture doctrine of *objective justification,* the very object of justifying faith. The Lord's Apostle Paul especially warns us Christians *"that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* (Ephesians 4:14). We take definite issue with those (even among so-called "conservatives") who minimize the vicious attack that Darby makes on God's justification of the world for Christ's sake and impute to the author sanctified motives and a Godpleasing earnestness of purpose! St. Paul says the very opposite! Men like Darby, who *"cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which [we] have learned ... serve* ***not*** *our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly!"* (Romans 16:17-18). Let him rather heed the Apostle's condemnation of those who pervert the saving Gospel as Darby does by stripping from it the very object of faith: *"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!"* (Galatians 1:8). And to Darby's readers: *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall!"* (I Corinthians 10:12). *"Beware, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness!"* (II Peter 3:17).

— D. T. M.

CHRIST HATH REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW, BEING MADE A CURSE FOR US: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, CURSED IS EVERY ONE THAT HANGETH ON A TREE

GALATIANS 3:13

For the Israelites in the Old Testament, it was considered a detestable act to be hanged. Specific instructions were given that "if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled" (Deut. 21:22,23).

This is the way the Savior was put to death! The Apostle does **not** write that the Lord Jesus was made a curse for Himself! He had committed no crime. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). He was able to challenge the Jews, "which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (John 8:46). Their trumped-up charges proved that they could not truthfully accuse Him of any sin. Even Pontius Pilate had to acknowledge to the Jews, "I find no fault in Him" (John 19:4).

He endured such a shameful death because He was our Substitute. He was made a curse for us in order that He might redeem us from the curse of the law. We were the ones who deserved such punishment. We were the transgressors of God's Law. We were the ones who had "sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). We were the ones upon whom the curse rested. "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). We were the ones to whom the words were directed, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). We must confess with Paul Gerhardt, "'Tis I who should be smitten, My doom should here be written: bound hand and foot in hell. The fetters and the scourging, The floods around Thee surging, 'Tis I who have deserved them well" (TLH, Hymn 171, v. 5).

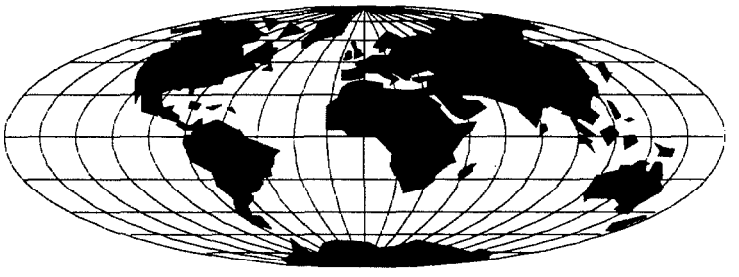
O what love beyond all measure! The Prophet Isaiah had declared concerning the promised Messiah, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (53:6). Our dear heavenly Father observed our miserable condition under the Law and that it was utterly impossible for us to keep the Law perfectly in thought, desire, word and deed. Hence, "cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10). But the heavenly Father had compassion upon us and "so loved the world, that He gave His only-

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). The Lord Jesus removed the curse of the Law from all men, for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor. 5:19). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Now we can have peace of conscience, because "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

Surely such a message which brings indescribable joy, peace and comfort to our sin-laden souls must move us to "love Him because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). Or, do the words of Luther apply? "When we hear that Christ has redeemed us with His blood, we are moved precisely as much as a dunce is moved when he hears that a hen has laid an egg. What kind of marvel is this? says he; indeed, that happens every day. There is also no joy, comfort, thanks, or wonderment when people hear of Christ's suffering. Oh, that is nothing new! Who does not know that? I have known it well for a long time. And so the dear Christ with His precious blood and His immeasurable works of wonder must be considered a trifling matter ... In a word, in eternity we shall not be able to marvel enough at the work of Christ and to study it sufficiently; but here we stocks and stones pay precisely as much attention to it when we hear about it as we do to the falling of a rotten apple from a tree. We yawn and say: Well, have you not often seen a rotten apple fall from a tree?" (What Luther Says, Vol. III, #4564).

We must guard against the temptation of our sinful flesh which constantly asserts itself, lest we yield to indifference and then such ingratitude engulf us to such an extent that we incur God's righteous wrath and lose the precious Gospel of Christ which "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). May the Lord help us to be diligent and faithful hearers of the Gospel so that through it the Holy Spirit may arouse our cold hearts to a fervent love of the Lord Jesus, "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of Life" (Philip. 2:15,16). — M. L. N.

Around the World



with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

New photos of dying stars give a preview of what will happen to our sun in about six billion years, when huge streamers of heated gas will flare out at more than 100,000 mph and fry the Earth to a crisp. The pictures, taken by the orbiting Hubble Space Telescope, support one theory that the sun will fire out a sphere of hot gas that could envelope the Earth, draw it toward the center and completely vaporize the planet. "We won't go to hell — it would come to us," said Bruce Balick, an astronomer at the University of Washington at Seattle. But if there are people around to see it, the sun's death throes will give a spectacular view of colorful jet plumes ... "We have seen the future of our own sun billions of years from now," said Howard E. Bond, an astronomer at the Space Telescope Institute in Baltimore. "We have another six billion years to get out of town before that happens." Mr. Bond and others say a star about the size of the sun will burn for about 10 billion years, consuming hydrogen in a 30-million-degree nuclear furnace. Eventually, the hydrogen is exhausted and the core of the star collapses into an even hotter sphere. Then the star swells rapidly into a red giant, with superheated plasma racing outward in all directions. In its red-giant phase, said Mr. Bond, the sun will expand by about 200 times, searing the Earth to boiling temperatures. After a few thousand years, the sun will then collapse into a cooling white dwarf. (Associated Press)

It never ceases to amaze us Christians how men will flaunt their puny wisdom before the world as though it is the truth and only source of all knowledge. Here are men, whose ages span less than a century, forecasting what will take place in about six billion years!!! How utterly ridiculous! God, the Creator, and His heavenly wisdom

revealed unto us in His precious Word of Truth, is completely left out of the picture in spite of the fact that God has already revealed to them His almighty power and wisdom! "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:20-22). The Creator and Preserver of all things "hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world" (Acts 17:31), and the "Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:16,17). Then "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). All these Scriptural truths are set aside by such wiseacres as relics left over from the Middle Ages which have been replaced by the superior wisdom of man. But the hour is coming when they shall have to stand before the Judgment Seat of the almighty God — then what!!!

✝✝✝✝✝✝✝✝✝✝✝

The Rev. Jerry Falwell met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu January 19th and plans to encourage U.S. evangelical pastors to support efforts to prevent further territory being placed in the hands of Palestinians. "There are about 200,000 evangelical pastors in America, and we're asking them all through e-mail, faxes, letters, telephone, to go into their pulpits and use their influence in support of the state of Israel and the prime minister," said Falwell, The New York Times reported ... Netanyahu's meeting with evangelical leaders in Washington comes at a time when his country is under pressure from U.S. Jewish groups and the White House to move forward with Middle East peace efforts, which have been at an impasse ... Some of the other evangelical leaders who met with Netanyahu included Morris Chapman, president of the

Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, and the Rev. John Hagee, a TV minister from Texas. Their meeting was preceded by a rally attended by about 1,000 Christian and Jewish conservatives that was organized by Voices United for Israel, a small group based in Kansas City, Kan., that opposes any moves to give Palestinians territory now controlled by Israel. Some leaders of U.S. Jewish groups were upset that Netanyahu had met with evangelical Christians, many of whom cite biblical reasons for supporting Israel ... (Religious News Service)

Jerry Falwell together with the majority of the "200,000 evangelical pastors in America" are millennialists who, failing to allow Scripture to interpret itself, mistakenly believe that it is the inalienable right of the Jewish people to possess their ancient homeland. Already in 1977 fifteen major American evangelical leaders signed full-page newspaper advertisements in New York and Washington, D.C., stating, "we affirm as Evangelicals our belief in the promise of the land to the Jewish people — a promise first made to Abraham and repeated throughout Scripture, a promise which has never been abrogated ... the rebirth of Israel as a nation and the return of her people to the land is clearly foretold in the Bible and this fulfillment in our time is one of the most momentous events in all human history" (Religious News Service, Nov. 2, 1977). When the Lord promised Abraham the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:8), He also fulfilled that promise. But the land of Palestine was to serve as a temporal home for the Israelites in preparing for the coming of Christ, the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16). Every true believer in Christ, whether Gentile or Jew, is the heir of God's covenant with Abraham, "the father of all who believe" (Rom. 4:11). "They are not all Israel that are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:7,8; cp. 2:28,29). And the kingdom of Christ is not an earthly kingdom (John 18:36), but a glorious spiritual kingdom where "there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for we are all one in Christ Jesus. And if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28,29).

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