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 September-October, 1998 Nos. 9 - 10

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

— Eph. 2:8-9

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.

EDITOR:
Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr.
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218
ASSISTANT EDITOR:
Rev. M. L. Natterer
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355
LAY MEMBER:
Dr. John M. Steinke
5959 Wurzbach F-7
San Antonio, TX 78238-1733

Address all subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452**. A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

Officers of the Concordia Lutheran Conference
PRESIDENT:
Rev. Paul R. Bloedel
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118
VICE-PRESIDENT:
Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
SECRETARY:
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Box 33
Wilmot, SD 57279
TREASURER:
Mr. Victor K. Bloedel
10200 - 62nd Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98178

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.

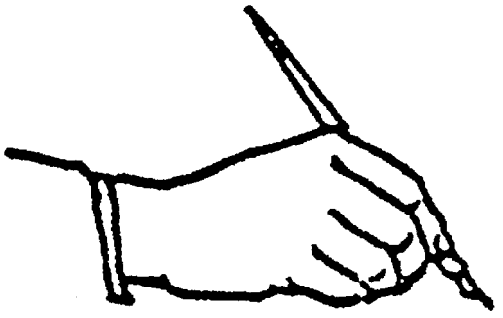
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

CHURCH GROWTH

"Church Growth" is one of the most popular items for discussion in external Christendom. Pastoral theology courses tell prospective pastors to "keep the members of the congregation busy and active in doing things around the church. This will hold your membership and cause the people of the community to look upon your congregation as an active church." "Start a Christian Day School. This will be a popular and aggressive feeder for the growth in the membership of your congregation." "Start an active young people's group, young married league, ladies aid society, and men's club." This is not to imply that such groups cannot help in various ways to reach the unchurched in the community, to bring them the Word of God, to invite them to church to learn what the Bible teaches and to center their lives around the Lord Christ and His Word.

Such, however, generally is not the case! Rather the modern Church Growth movement would say, "Go easy on the study of God's Word in your various organizations. Have small devotions and hymn singing but don't go into a study of the doctrines of Scripture. Especially tread lightly on doctrines which may prove controversial, such as, what the Bible teaches about unionism, creationism, homosexuality, divorce, women voters and women pastors in the church. Provide plenty of entertainment and busy work." "Make your Divine Service more attractive by not using the same old liturgy week in and week out." "Use more modern music and hymns which are acceptable to a wider range of people." "Make your sermons more appealing by adding

humor, entertaining and instructive stories from everyday life, and avoid theological terminology." "Make your Confirmation instruction classes easy and enjoyable for the children. Don't require perfect memorizing of the Catechism and Bible Passages. They don't have to be instructed thoroughly in every doctrine." "Especially, make it easy for adults to become communicant members. Don't require any memory work for adults; they may be embarrassed. Six weeks should be enough instruction for them to come to the Lord's Supper and to be members in good standing in the congregation." "Provide an interesting and entertaining program in Sunday School for pre-schoolers and children below confirmation age. Give them things to color; pictures to draw; visual and audio entertainment." "Initiate, as soon as possible, a building program for the congregation. A nice new building with lovely church parlors is always attractive to the people of the community and entices their interest."

Here's where bake sales, bazaars, fairs, raffles, etc., come into play — to help to keep a congregation, which has become embroiled in an elaborate building program, from going bankrupt. Now all the social organizations of the congregation begin to pay off. I remember, almost fifty years ago, on vicarage in a large Missouri Synod congregation in Illinois, (a congregation of over 3,000 communicant members) how, at the meeting of the ladies aid, the ladies aid president said something like this, "Well ladies, last year our efforts pulled in $5,000 for the church. Let's see whether our suppers and fairs this year will boost us over the $10,000 mark. Remember ladies, the more money we make for the church, the less has to come out of our own pockets!" This woman, although occupying a high position in the ladies aid, had never been taught the proper Scriptural method of Christian giving and was active in making her church "an house of merchandise."

One Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor told me that he would love to have the time to instruct his people more thoroughly in the Word of God, BUT that he is so busy with all the various social organizations in his congregation and also with the special building program of the church that he just doesn't have the time. Most of the large Lutheran bodies in the United States are badly in debt because of loans to

congregations for elaborate building programs. Some have even stooped to impose upon their home missionaries a "quota system" for new members. Their mission boards insist on the missionaries acquiring a certain number of new members each year or else lose their jobs. What a joy it should be for a pastor to be a missionary in such a church body and under such a mission board and subject to such a "quota system." Yes, more of a "grief" than a "joy!"

Certain cliches which have to do with Church Growth and which have been used by Lutheran pastors down through the years, are: "Nothing holds the people and builds a congregation more than good preaching," and "A house-going pastor makes a church-going people," and "Provide wholesome entertainment for the children and young people of the congregation and your congregation will not stagnate," and, "By all means, start a Christian Day School as a feeder for Church Growth!" A young pastor is therefore made to feel that as long as he puts out interesting sermons from his pulpit and visits his people frequently in their homes, plays with the children of the congregation, and helps the congregation establish a Christian Day School, the people will come and his church will be filled. This may be true — but why and for what reason are many of the people coming to church: Merely to hear an interesting sermon rather than to be reinforced in their Christian faith with the Word of God? or To come because the pastor frequently comes to their house and may come more frequently if they don't go to church? or To come to church because the children enjoy the play time? or To come to church to enjoy the advantages which a private school provides for their children?

Think about the things mentioned above and then ask yourself the question, "Why do I come to church?" or "Why am I a member of my church?" In the next issue of the *Concordia Lutheran*, God's Recipe for Church Growth will be briefly discussed in this President's column.

— P.R.B

Editor's Note: *The following three articles on the Reformation are selected articles from several years past. While we do not make a regular practice of re-printing past articles, in our judgment, these articles are worthy of being read again.*

IF LUTHER WERE ALIVE TODAY . . .

One often hears the claim that, if Martin Luther were alive today, yea, if he were able to come back from the grave, if only for a short time, to see how far the world has come in almost five-hundred years, he would indeed be **pleased** — particularly with the growth of the Lutheran Church, the survival of Protestantism, and even many "reforms" that have been adopted by the Church of Rome. Nothing could be further from the truth, however; and anyone even remotely acquainted with Luther's work, his uncompromising stand on the Word of God, and his disdain for selling out the truth for the sake of temporal peace and tranquility should know better than to suggest such a thing. On the contrary, Dr. Luther would be filled with disgust and revulsion at the "Babylonian" conditions in our world today!

If Luther were alive today, **what indeed would he see**? In spite of technological advances (most of which would no doubt stagger the Reformer's imagination); in spite of vast improvement in the overall standard of living, particularly in the so-called "western" societies, with better nutrition, health care, and housing for most people; and in spite of the fact that people in general are better educated today and therefore better able to read, study, and understand the Holy Scriptures, **"which are able to make (them) wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,"** — in spite of all these strides **forward,** there has in reality been NO PROGRESS made at all! **"The wickedness of man (is) great in the earth,"** it is still **"corrupt before God"** and **"filled with violence"** (Genesis 6), as it was in the days of Noah, in the days of Sodom, in the days of Rome's legendary decadence, and the days of Medieval Europe.

so that, on balance, human civilization is steadily on the **decline,** heading down the broad and easy **"road that leadeth to destruction,"** Matthew 7:13. Indeed, by all objective indications, according to the description Jesus Himself makes of conditions to be expected just before the end of the world, we are today living in the last times; and the Day of Judgment cannot be far off. With this assessment, Luther would surely agree were he alive today!

In outward Christendom, conditions are not much different from those in the world at large. For so-called "improvements" are nothing but a skin-deep mask beneath which there are festering sores, putrification and the rigor of death to see and to smell at the mere touch of a spiritual surgeon's scalpel as he tries the spirits, marks errorists, and incisively probes with the Word of God. It wouldn't take Luther long at all to cut through the fair-sounding speeches, platforms and programs of today's church bodies and to distinguish between fact and fancy, truth and error, orthodoxy and heterodoxy. And it would be painful for him to hear the vaunted claim in "protestantism" today that "Luther's work of reformation" made all those sects, their varying positions and their freedom to interpret Scripture subjectively a "viable alternative" to Roman catholicism! He, of course, did nothing of the kind! Luther had to deal primarily with the **Papists** in his time, as well as with those who fomented controversy after controversy in the fledgling "Lutheran" movement. But TODAY, he would have a much **broader proliferation of error** to battle, over a field of almost countless sects, denominations and church bodies, IN ADDITION TO the soul-destroying errors of Rome (which have not diminished in the slightest but have only **increased** in number since the Council of Trent). Would he call that **"progress"**? Would he indeed be **pleased** with what he saw today? Decidedly **not**!

But surely Luther would be gratified at the success enjoyed by **"Lutheranism"** today, wouldn't he? Just before LCUSA went out of existence in 1987, its final statistics showed in the United States and Canada alone almost 30,000 ordained ministers, almost 20,000 Lutheran congregations, and over six and one-half **million** communicant members! Think of those NUMBERS! And yet, as Luther himself would be quick to point out, they are just numbers! They actually say nothing at all about **genuine Lutheranism** based on **Scripture alone,** the "formal principle" of the Reformation. In fact, it is no secret nowadays that many

so-called "Lutheran" pastors deny the most basic, fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith: The inerrancy, immutability and infallibility of the verbally-inspired Holy Scriptures; the Vicarious Atonement; Christ's bodily Resurrection from the dead and the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day; Objective Justification; and the deity of Christ. "Lutheran" theological professors are permitted to attack with impunity such doctrines as the **Trinity,** the **Virgin Birth,** the **Creation** of the world by God in six twenty-four-hour days, and the **Real Presence** of the Savior's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. To many "Lutherans," the killing of unborn children should be a mother's prerogative; homosexuality is an alternative lifestyle which should not be condemned; women should be eligible for the public ministry; and pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are perfectly acceptable as the personal expression of love, provided that couples are encouraged to practice "safe sex." Would Luther join the ranks of those "enlightened" modernists who dare to bear his name and hold all these (and many other aberrations) to be **PROGRESS** in the church? The reader can intelligently answer that question in the negative without any help from this writer!

And what would the dear Dr. Luther see in the so-called "conservative" Lutheran bodies today? Certainly much of the above in pockets or enclaves of liberalism, benignly ignored by many, tolerated by most, dealt with according to sound doctrinal discipline by practically no one! Some of the "**staunch** conservatives" PROTEST, WRITE ARTICLES and LETTERS TO EDITORS, and even SPEAK OUT at conferences and conventions; but their words, "full of sound and fury," signify "nothing" but so much hot air and harmless paperwork generated by "smoking typewriters" and computers. When push comes to shove and the Lord through the Apostle says **"Avoid them!,"** they choose to avoid **HIM** instead, to "keep protesting," and thus to serve not **His** cause but their **own belly,** deceiving the hearts of simple fellow-Christians into believing that they are really orthodox! Would Luther see through the sham of conservatism today? By God's grace, Luther was not the fool that so many so-called "conservatives" try to take **us** for! He had no use for the poor ignorant laymen who were led about by the nose by those whom they trusted to be stalwart soldiers of the cross, laymen who themselves are without excuse for tolerating limp washrags in their pulpits, but who can be pitied for not having the Christian fortitude to depose them!

If Luther were alive today, what would he see in the **theological training programs** maintained by so-called "Lutheran" colleges and seminaries? Surely the **miserable preparation** of candidates for the Ministry nowadays accounts for much of the problem described thus far; for younger pastors in particular are, for want of a better word, **ignorant** of Christian doctrine. They are unable succinctly and clearly to state **"the first principles of the oracles of God"** (Heb. 5:12), even the **rudimentary doctrines** of Holy Scripture, quote **proof-texts** upon which they have been established, and **apply** them consistently in their practice. Many are so **"unskilful in the Word of Righteousness"** by reason of **non-use** that they are incapable of discerning good and evil, Heb. 5:13,14. Is it any wonder that they are **"tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine"** (Ephesians 4:14) when the winds of controversy begin to blow? Theological students nowadays "major" in scholarly branches of study — history, languages, sociology, psychology, counseling, textual criticism, and philosophy — but can't recite the Enchiridion (Small Catechism) word-for-word, nor give simple definitions or brief explanations of such basic concepts as Justification, the State of Humiliation, the Vicarious Atonement, the Church, the Doctrine of Election, and Christian Church Discipline. Religious unionism, selective fellowship, and separatism are such foggy notions that many frankly admit their inadequacy to deal with them! "Dogmatics" is "out;" "exegesis" is "in." Preaching the Law is to be avoided as "unloving;" and yet the Gospel is to be appreciated and cherished without the Law and the knowledge of sin that it imparts! Would Luther find such a state of affairs an "improvement" or "progress" in the making of theologians? **Need we even ask?**

Luther is credited with translating the Holy Scriptures into the language of his people, so that they could read them, **understand** them, **learn** them, **discuss** them, **quote** them, and **meditate** in them. Today we have so many translations in English alone that we are compelled to ask first thing, "Which **translation** are you using?" Just about every home has a Bible in it nowadays; and Bible societies make sure that every hotel and motel room has one. But the people's **knowledge** of the Scriptures is so **abysmal** by and large that one would suspect little or no contact with the Bible at all! What is going on here? **Luther** would know — He saw it coming already when he penned those prophetic lines:

"The Word they still shall let remain,
And not a thank have for it!"

Sadly, we too in **our midst,** contrary to what we would **like** to think, have far too much **apathy** for Bible study, Bible classes, Bible reading in our homes, Bible discussions in the family circle and with our brethren, Bible USE on a day-to-day basis, as if our pastors will take care of our spiritual growth FOR us! Luther would see that too if he were alive today. He would not be **surprised** (since the flesh in Satan's service always seeks to weaken our knowledge, our confidence, and our strength); but he would be greatly **disappointed,** considering the precious heritage of grace we have had as "children of the Reformation." Do we actually want to follow so many others down the road of ignorance, complacency, apathy, and finally contempt for the pure doctrines of God's holy Word? God forbid! Therefore the Apostle Peter beseeches you and me in his second Epistle, chapter three: **"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"** (vs. 17, 18).

If Luther were alive today, (and we can thank God that he is **not here** to witness these distressing conditions, but safe in the arms of his Savior, **"which is far better"), what would he say to these things?** Luther wrote so much about all these matters in sermons, exhortations, commentaries and confessions, that we could never cull just one quotation typical of what his attitude would be. But suffice it for the purpose of our little article to cite a few pertinent lines from his Preface to the Small Catechism, lines which only indicate that "history repeats itself" when the sinful heart of man, when the Old Adam within us Christians, writes the script. Luther wrote **"To all faithful and Godly pastors and preachers: Grace, Mercy, and Peace in Jesus Christ our Lord:**

> **"The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced me and urged me to prepare this Catechism, or Christian Doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Help, dear God! What manifold misery I beheld! The common people**

have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and alas, many pastors are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach. Nevertheless all claim to be Christians, baptized, and enjoying the Holy Sacraments; and yet they can't so much as say the Lord's Prayer, nor the Creed, nor the Ten Commandments! They know about as much about their lives (as Christians) **as common cattle and irrational hogs! And yet, now that the Gospel has been restored to them** (and they know that they're not saved by their works anymore), **they think they can do as they please and have learned to abuse their new-found liberty like experts! O ye Bishops, what will you ever be able to answer Christ for your shameful neglect of your people and for never having for a moment really discharged your office as pastors?**

Therefore I beg you for God's sake, you who are pastors or preachers, take your office to heart for a change, have pity upon your people who have been entrusted to you, and help us teach them the Catechism . . . And those of you who are so unskilled in teaching doctrine that you don't know these things yourselves, take these simple pages and teach them to your people word-for-word in a uniform, standard format, so that they don't get confused along the way."
(Freely translated from the original German.)

If Luther were alive today, he would find things not a whole lot improved over what he had found on his visits to the German villages and towns in 1529 — maybe even somewhat **worse**, considering the wondrous benefits we Lutherans have enjoyed as heirs of the Reformation. And what he stated above could well be said also today to those pastors who do **everything** in their congregations **BUT** TEACH AND PREACH THE WORD OF GOD IN ITS PURITY! Paul writes to Timothy what we pastors should be doing for our people: **"Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure** (i.e. tolerate) **sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to**

themselves teachers, having itching ears," II Timothy 4:2,3. That time is **NOW!** People generally won't stand for sound doctrine anymore! And they want lots of teachers who will tickle their ears, telling them what they WANT to hear, rather than what they OUGHT to hear for their own soul's welfare! May we, dearly-beloved brethren, never tire of the pure doctrine of God's precious Word which He has in mercy preserved to us in our little Conference — scorned by men for its small size, derided for its doctrine, chided for its faithful practice. Let them say and do what they may! They can harm us none! Christ hath for us the battle won! "The kingdom ours remaineth!" That is indeed our legacy if we **"hold fast the form of sound words"** (II Timothy 1:13), and **"earnestly contend for the faith,"** Jude 3. If Luther were alive today, **that** would be his unrelenting plea and fervent exhortation, as we see the Day approaching. May God grant it to all of us for Jesus' sake!

Lord, help us ever to retain
The Catechism's doctrine plain,
As Luther taught the Word of Truth
In simple style to tender youth.

In every season, every place,
May we regard Thy Word of Grace,
Until, when life's brief day is past
We reach eternal joy at last!

— D.T.M.

W E L C O M E
TO ALL OLD AND NEW SUBSCRIBERS

We appreciate your concern for true orthodox Lutheranism and are certain that, by God's grace, you will receive rich spiritual benefits from your faithful reading of **CONCORDIA LUTHERAN** articles which are based solidly upon the pure and unerring Word of God.

Only $3.00 per year!

Give a subscription to a relative or friend.

THE "THREE SOLAs" OF THE REFORMATION

SOLA is a Latin word, an adjective, which means alone. This is the word which has been attached to the three great principles and truths which the Reformer, Martin Luther, brought to the foreground and to which every faithful Lutheran steadfastly holds today. The first of these great truths is:

SOLA SCRIPTURA

This means Scripture Alone! It is to be the only Source and Norm of all teaching in the Church. When Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in the city of Wittenberg, on October 31, 1517, he stated in the 1st Thesis, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said," — and in their conclusion. "I am not so senseless as to be willing that the Word of God should be made to give place to fables, devised by human reason." Those were strange words for that day and generation. Men had been accustomed to say: When our lord and master at Rome says. Indeed, John Hus had raised his voice in protest some hundred years before; John Wyclif, too, had lifted up his voice before Hus. But the body of one and the bones of the other had to burn for it, and the deadly hold of the Roman Antichrist on the life of the Church had only tightened. But now Martin Luther was raised up by the Lord publicly to declare that everything pertaining to our salvation was to be decided on no other basis than the word of our Lord Jesus Christ. What God says in the Scriptures, that and that alone is the truth — the full truth. Nothing must be added to it, nothing taken from it. Not by the pope nor by any other creature.

Eramus, the Dutch Humanist and Ulrich Zwingli, the founder of the Swiss Reformed Church, interpreted Scripture to satisfy their reason. But Luther would hear of no fables, devised by human reason. He declared, "Erasmus does not know the first principle, the basis and rule: Holy Scripture; God's Word must remain empress. You must follow straight after Scripture and receive it and utter not one syllable against it, for it is God's mouth." Therefore the Confessions of the Lutheran Church emphasize, "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith,

and no one else, not even an angel." . . . "God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments", (The Smalcald Articles, Conc. Trig. page 467 & 497).

That uncompromising sola — alone — is there for a purpose. The pope's church was ready with a compromise. She was willing to acknowledge the authority of Scripture, but it must be Scripture as interpreted by the church, the councils, or tradition. So also with Zwingli and the heavenly prophets who claimed that their revelations, visions and reason simply interpreted Scripture. But Luther would have none of it. Passing Scripture truth through the channel of human reason is to divest it of its divine truth — else it will not pass through.

This meant, of course, that all articles so established must be received with unquestioning faith and upheld in the face of opposition. This Luther did before the Emperor in 1521 and before Ulrich Zwingli whose pleading for the authority of reason could not move Luther to surrender the little word "is" in the Savior's institution of the Lord's Supper. Luther maintained that it is fatal to follow a human guide in seeking the way of salvation. God's truth alone will answer — "nothing but the Scriptures." And so Luther declared to the end, declared it in his last sermon preached in Wittenberg, "I shall swerve not one finger's breadth from the mouth of Him who said: 'Hear ye Him.'" Hearing Him alone, Luther learned a glorious truth:

SOLA GRATIA

Grace Alone. They tell the despairing sinner that God, in His infinite mercy, has laid all the sins of the world on Jesus; that he is not required to bring about his salvation by his own works; that his sins are forgiven him freely, by grace.

Rome had established a different doctrine: Man is justified wholly or in part, by his own merit. Over against this principle Luther declared: "The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God," Thesis 62. It formed the burden of all his teaching, as it is the heart of Scripture: "Grace brings about this great thing that we are accounted wholly and fully just before God." Under the principle of justification through self-righteousness Luther had been groping in dark-

ness, sinking into despair: but when the principle of justification by faith lodged in his soul, "then the whole Scripture was opened to me and also heaven itself. Immediately I felt as if born anew, as if I had found the open gate of paradise."

Nothing in this article can be yielded. Here was Rome offering another compromise. She was ready to make copious use of the word of grace, but the sola — the alone — must be yielded, and a place, be it ever so small, granted to human merit. But Luther stood out for the sola. If our justification depends on one single good work, our case is hopeless. "Grace will not be halved nor quartered, but receives us wholly and completely into favor." Luther was simply echoing the words of the Apostle Paul, *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace."* Rom. 11:6, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."* Eph. 2:8,9. Therefore the word sola — alone — was put in. Salvation by grace alone, salvation in every respect, from beginning to end. Therefore Luther rejected and condemned "as erroneous all doctrines which extol our free will, as they are directly opposed to the aid and grace of our Savior Jesus Christ." All theological thoughts of the Reformation had but one source: sola gratia. We love the word and pronounce it at every step of our salvation. In order to uphold the sola gratia, it became necessary to emphasize another truth:

SOLA FIDES

Faith Alone. Justification by grace means, and can only mean, justification through faith. But the perversion of Rome made it necessary to emphasize it, and Luther always did it. "To preach Christ is to justify the soul and to save it, if it believe the preaching. For the Word of God cannot be received and honored by any works but by faith alone. Hence it is clear that as the soul needs the Word alone for faith and justification, so it is justified by faith alone, and not by any works."

There is that Lutheran sola again. Luther knew there could be no joyful acceptance of the promise, no spiritual life, no Reformation, without these four letters: SOLA. When he, therefore, preached on justification, he would read the text in Romans 3:28 in this wise: "we conclude that a man is justified by faith alone without the deeds of the Law." Rome

moved heaven and earth to have that anti-Roman "alone" stricken out, and even spoke of forgery, but Luther patiently explained to them that the word always was there, plain to the Christian eye, and that merely because of their blindness it had to be written large. To strike it out would mean the elimination of faith. Besides, Luther saw that Rome's object was to make it not faith and works, but works alone. In the Roman dictionary faith now means something which receives its value from works. It justifies because it leads men to keep the Ten Commandments. There faith and works are synonyms.

Faith alone, but faith indeed. It became the business of the Reformation to teach men to believe, that is, to appropriate, every man to himself, the promise of the Gospel with joyful confidence. Luther knew that only in faith there is life and joy and holiness, and what is more, he knew that, where this promise is preached, "faith is always and ever called forth and nourished." Thus there is no question that this article: salvation by grace through faith as taught by the Scriptures, is the essence of Luther's teaching. And these six words — sola Scriptura, sola Gratia, sola Fides — gave new life to the dying Church. Human forces did not bring about the Reformation. No, God did it, God's Word, this truth: salvation by grace, through faith as taught by the Scriptures.

And the Word of God caused men eagerly to spread this same Word. In shops and palaces they loved to speak of it; the household gathered about the open Bible; the Gospel-preaching filled the churches; schools sprang up to nurture the gentle youth in the faith of their Savior. And the Word of God multiplied. At Worms a solitary confessor, at Augsburg already a goodly band, and soon there were in every land those who feared God and gave Him glory.

And these principles live today! There are still those, and will be until the Lord returns, who put their sole trust in the Gospel of grace as taught by Scripture. If we would be faithful Lutherans, then it is incumbent upon us to hold steadfastly to these three principles and publicly confess them that all men may know that our faith is built not upon the sinking sand of man's reason, but rather God's wisdom which teaches:

SCRIPTURE ALONE GRACE ALONE FAITH ALONE

— M.L.N.

WHAT MADE LUTHER A GREAT PREACHER

There is much that could be said about Luther the preacher and what made him a good preacher. Certainly included in this would be the fact that all his preaching centered on the Gospel of God in Christ Jesus, that he understood and appreciated just where his listeners were and the background from which they had come. Luther knew the vital importance of *"rightly dividing the Word of truth"* and had a God-given gift of applying Law and Gospel in such a way that each soul knew that God was talking to him specifically. But these were the fruits of something else, not those things which made Luther a great preacher.

Based upon Psalm 119, Luther himself has explained what makes one a great theologian, and, thus, a great preacher. He wrote, "Let me show you a right method for studying theology, the one that I have used. . . . This method is the one which the pious king David teaches in the 119th Psalm and which, no doubt was practiced by the Patriarchs and Prophets. In the 119th Psalm you will find three rules, which are abundantly expounded through the entire Psalm. They are called: Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio, PRAYER, MEDITATION, AFFLICTION." After much prayerful consideration, this writer concluded that the very best way to explain why Luther was such a great preacher was to let Luther himself speak as he explains these three requirements of a godly preacher and shepherd.

ORATIO: PRAYER

"First, you should know that Holy Scripture is a book such as will make the wisdom of all other books appear as folly, since no book teaches anything concerning eternal life but this one alone. Therefore you should straightway despair of your own wit and intellect, for with them you will attain nothing, but by such arrogance you will cast yourself and others with you from heaven into the abyss of hell, as happened to Lucifer. But

enter into your closet and kneel down and implore God with all humility and earnestness that by His dear Son He would grant you his Holy Ghost, who will enlighten you, guide you, and give you understanding. As you observe that David in the 119th Psalm continually prays: Teach me, O Lord, make me to understand, guide me, show me! and many more such words, though he knew well the text of Moses and of many more such books, also daily heard and read them; still he wants to have the true Master of the Scripture at his side in order that he may not plunge into them with his reason and become master himself. For that is what turns men into unruly fanatics who imagine that Scripture is subject to them and easily attained by their reason, as though it were the fables of Marcolfus or Aesop, for which they need no Holy Ghost nor prayer."

MEDITATIO: MEDITATION

"Secondly, you should meditate, that is, not in the heart alone, but also externally, work on and ply the oral speech and the lettered words in the Book, read them and re-read them again and again, noting carefully and reflecting upon what the Holy Ghost means by these words. And have a care that you do not tire of it or think it enough if you have read, heard, said it once or twice and now profoundly understand it all. For in that manner a person will never become much of a theologian. He will be like worm-eaten fruit that drops from the tree before it is half ripe. Therefore you see in this Psalm how David over and over glories in the fact that he will speak, compose, declare, sing, hear and read day and night and evermore; however, nothing but the Word and precepts of God alone. For God will not give you His Holy Spirit except through the external Word; be guided by that. For He has not commanded without purpose to put things down in writing, to preach, read, hear, sing, recite."

TENTATIO: AFFLICTION

"Thirdly, there is 'tentatio,' affliction. This is the touchstone; this teaches you not merely to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how consoling, God's Word is, wisdom above all wisdom. That is why you observe how David in the 119th Psalm so often complains about all sorts of enemies, about nefarious princes and tyrants, about false prophets and factions, whom he must endure because he meditates, that is, as stated, is occupied with, God's Word in every

way. For as soon as the Word of God blooms forth through you, the devil will visit you, make a real doctor of you, and by his affliction will teach you to seek and love God's Word. For myself — if I may refer to my humble example — owe very much to my Papists, because through the raging of the devil they have so buffeted, distressed, and terrified me that they have made me a fairly good theologian, which I would not have become without them."

What made Luther a good preacher is exactly what makes all pastors who are faithful to God's Word good preachers. It is not the delivery, it is not any degree of sophistication in the preaching or the sermon, it is not, in other words, any outward, human measurement. Rather, it is that the preacher preach God's Word in all its truth and purity; that he teach the text, a text taught him by the Spirit of the Living God Himself, worked in his heart and mind through prayer, meditation, and affliction. May we each remember our pastors in our prayers, that when they leave their pulpits, they may do so rejoicing, confident not in themselves and what they have accomplished, but rather saying with St. Paul, as Luther certainly must have said also: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: THAT YOUR FAITH SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN, BUT IN THE POWER OF GOD,*" I Cor. 2:1-5.

— M.W.D.

TO ALL OUR READERS! STILL AVAILABLE...

...through our publishing house, copies of the **"SKETCH OF THE DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE"**. This important and useful pamphlet summarizes briefly what we believe and teach on the basis of Scripture in the matters covered. A real bargain at only $ 2.50/copy! Order directly from:

Scriptural Publications
Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452

About Our Seminary

Even though in the Old Testament God often spoke to His people directly and manifested Himself to them in visions, nevertheless He also caused His Holy Scriptures to be *"written for our learning"* (Romans 15:4) and established various offices through which His Word should be proclaimed and the services of His House administered by faithful men of His choosing, His prophets and priests. With the coming of Christ, our true and perfect High Priest, who broke down the wall of partition between us and God (Ephesians 2:14ff.), every believer was made a priest with direct access to God through Jesus; and the Old Testament priesthood was abolished. But the work of preaching and teaching, of watching for the souls of God's people, and of the public administration of the Keys was vested by God Himself in the Pastoral Office of each local "flock" or "church" (Acts 20:28; etc.). This office is to be committed to men with very specific qualifications according to the Word of God (I Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9; II Timothy 2:2; etc.), men who must be well-equipped to undertake and make full proof of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the congregations to which they have been called.

As in the Old Testament schools of the prophets men were specially prepared for their high calling, so also in the New Testament incumbents of the pastoral office are to be well-trained for their work. St. Paul wrote to Timothy: *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth"* (II Timothy 2:15). Careful preparation is not merely optional; and, by God's grace, we in our fellowship of Christian congregations recognize its vital importance. Therefore, while God in His Word has not specified exactly how this is to be accomplished, our Concordia Lutheran Conference has provided an excellent seminary program for the training of future pastors for our churches.

Our Conference has set up a peripatetic system in which a student travels from one church to another to train under their dedicated and faithful pastors according to a set curriculum of studies. It is generally desired that an entering student will have completed at least two years of college work before beginning concentrated study for the ministry. Then, under a different pastor each year, he takes specific courses in Christian doctrine, the Biblical languages, interpretation of Scripture, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, church history, principles of teaching, sermon preparation, writing, and preaching, and liturgics, as well as elective courses and an intensive *practicum* of internship in each congregation where he resides for the year. In about five years, he should be fit and prepared to assume the pastorate of a congregation upon receipt and acceptance of a divine call.

Upon their application and the recommendation of their own local pastor, men are admitted for study in our seminary program. Obviously, younger and unmarried men are better able to relocate each year to different areas of the United States, to study full-time, and thus to take the most efficient advantage of our program as it is presently set up. Ideally, a student should not have to divide his time between his studies and secular employment; and so our Conference does its best to provide cost-free housing for our students and a monthly maintenance allowance for their books, meals and other personal needs. Our Student Aid Fund is able to defray this support at present due to the generous contributions of our congregations; and both the needs of the individual students and the Conference's ability to provide them are reviewed annually by the Conference. Married men would, of course, have a difficult time relocating from place to place and would probably have to study only part-time while working to provide for their families, since the Conference is simply not able at present to offer them full support. The time required to complete the curriculum on a part-time basis would also be considerably longer, and special modifications in our peripatetic arrangement would have to be undertaken. Yet, given our critical shortage of candidates for the ministry at

present, we strongly encourage *any* qualified man in our fellowship who *"desireth the office of a bishop"* (I Timothy 3:1), motivated by the love of His Savior, and eager to *"study to show [himself] approved unto God"* for the work of the ministry, to apply for admission to our theological program.

The need for well-trained and faithful laborers for the Lord's vineyard is as great now, perhaps even greater, than when the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: *"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest"* (Matthew 9:37-38). We therefore encourage qualified men of our fellowship to consider preparation for the Holy Ministry, so that, when the need is imminent and the Lord's cry is heard, *"Who will go for us?"* there will be someone fit and prepared to accept the call of the Holy Spirit through one of our congregations and to answer humbly and yet confidently with Isaiah, *"Here am I! Send me!"* Your inquiries should be directed to the undersigned:

The Rev. David G. Redlin, Chairman
COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, Arizona 85730

— D.G.R.

✠ Concordia Theological Seminary ✠

Concordia Lutheran Conference

- Orthodox Confessional Position
- Individualized Instruction
- Complete Traditional Curriculum
- Customized student accommodations
- Flexible class schedules
- Urban, suburban and rural campuses
- All instructors are in the active pastoral ministry
- Local parish internships starting in the first year
- Theological libraries on all campuses
- Student Aid Fund keeps living costs down
- Geographically diverse locales broaden experiences

Training well-prepared and faithful pastors for the future

Contact: Rev. David G. Redlin, 4050 S. Melpomene Way, Tucson, AZ 85730

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
110 Grasmere Ct.
San Antonio, TX 78218

Non Profit Organization
U. S. Postage
PAID
San Antonio, Texas
Permit No. 322

9907B1 604
PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHURCH DIRECTORY

See our web site at: www.concordialutheranconf.com

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730
Worship Service ..... **10:00 a.m.**
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **11:15 a.m.**
REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730
Telephone: (520) 721-7618

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

5605 Windsong Drive
Windcrest, TX 78239
Telephone: (210) 650-9053
Worship Service ..... **9:30 a.m.**
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **11:00 a.m.**
REV. E. R. STALLINGS, JR., Pastor
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218
Telephone: (210) 656-2125

PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452
(South Suburban Chicago)
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **8:30 a.m.**
Worship Service ..... **10:00 a.m.**
REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
Telephones: Church Office and Pastor's Study:
(708) 532-4288
Parsonage: (708) 532-9035
e-mail: peace@orbitel.com

Note: Services are also held each Sunday in our Midland, Michigan chapel at the **Ramada Inn**, 1815 South Saginaw Road:
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **6:30 p.m.**
Worship Service ..... **7:30 p.m.**

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

6th and Tangent
Lebanon, OR 97355
(541) 258-8212
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **10:00 a.m.**
Worship Service ..... **11:00 a.m.**
REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355
Telephone: (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

55th Ave. S & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, WA 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-1078
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... **9:15 a.m.**
Worship Service ..... **10:30 a.m.**
REV. PAUL R. BLOEDEL, Pastor
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118
Telephone: (206)723-7418
e-mail: stluke@connectexpress.com

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.
Worship Service ..... **7:00 p.m.**
Bible Class ..... **8:30 p.m.**

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Wilmot, SD 57279
Worship Service .....
(June 1st through September 30th)
..... **9:30 a.m.**
(October 1st through May 31st)
..... **10:00 a.m.**
Sunday School and Bible Class
..... **after the service.**
REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
Box 33
Wilmot, SD 57279
Telephone: (605) 938-4710