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. XXXXIV March-April, 1999 Nos. 3 - 4

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

— I Cor. 15:3-4

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

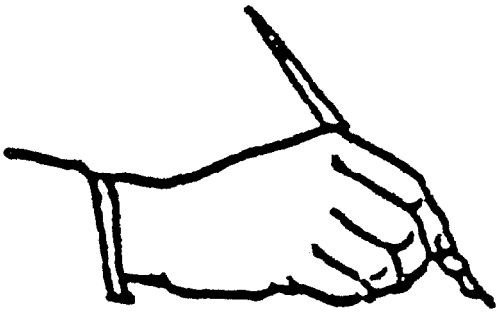
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

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

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

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



The President's Column

CARNAL SECURITY

In our last issue of the Concordia Lutheran, we considered the problem of dead orthodoxy and how, through the machinations of Satan, this phenomenon poses a definite threat to an orthodox Lutheran Conference or to orthodox Lutheran congregations. As an antidote against dead orthodoxy, the sectarian churches of our day as well as the liberal Lutheran bodies and congregations have forsaken the *"whole counsel of God"* and, in its place, have inserted man's wisdom together with popular beliefs in the fields of education, science, sociology, psychology and politics. Instead of teaching the Word of God in its full truth and purity, which they think leads to dead orthodoxy, they feel that they are providing something more entertaining, more practical and up-to-date in those fields in which their members are interested. Dancing, rock'n-roll music, movies, bake sales, contests, bazaars, carnivals, dinners, etc., are all encouraged for the purpose of making a congregation "alive and active" (the "keep the people busy" syndrome). Seminars are held on teaching and educating the young, on family planning and home economics, on understanding and getting along with people of alternative life styles and of other cultures and beliefs — how to make them feel accepted and wanted and as being a part of society as a whole without making them feel constricted or ostracized by the Word of God. This, of course, doesn't overcome "dead orthodoxy" but succeeds only in forsaking the only God-pleasing and God-provided remedy, namely, His Word, and embracing heathenism.

Actually, those pastors whose orthodoxy is "dead" pride themselves in teaching everything that is in the Bible, yet, without applying it correctly to a Christian's faith and life. Such a pastor feels that as long as he does not add to or subtract from the Word of God and simply sets forth the doctrines of God's Word in a perfunctory and outward manner, quoting liberally from the fathers, from Luther, and from the Lutheran Confessions, he is orthodox and is doing what God has called him to do. This is characteristic of a pastor whose orthodoxy is DEAD! He is not teaching his people how to use the Word of God as a Lamp unto their feet and a Light unto their path — how to apply the Word of God as their only Guide for what they, as Christians, must believe and how they are to demonstrate their faith in their manner of living — in their thoughts, words and deeds. A pastor, whose orthodoxy is dead and whose sermons are merely a mechanical recitation of divine truths, can only be instrumental in producing in his people that which is commonly called, "carnal security"!

Patient and thorough instruction in the Word of God is needed both in the children's as well as in the adult's instruction classes, in Bible Classes for the various age groups in the congregation, for young women and young men and for the old folks. Each member must be taught HOW to use the Word of God in his own life; HOW to apply the Word of God to himself, both as to what he believes and how he lives, not in order to be a Christian but because he is a Christian and earnestly desires to grow in his knowledge of God's Word and to show his faith in and his love for his Savior by *"walking worthy of the vocation wherewith* [he] *is called."* Here the Word of God must be "rightly divided" by careful and proper teaching and application of both the Law and Gospel.

"Carnal security" comes about when a Christian forgets or becomes less and less cognizant of how vitally important God's grace is for him personally. This, of course, causes Satan to delight and helps the sinful flesh of the Christian gradually to overcome his new man, hence, carnal security. Every individual Christian must, therefore, always be made aware of what God's grace is for him; he must be taught to realize his vital need for God's undeserved kindness in every aspect of his life: what the grace of God alone is able to accomplish in his life and how his knowledge of God's grace should affect his day-to-day living.

It is of little significance if a pastor simply defines God's grace as God's undeserved favor in Christ Jesus for the sinful race of mankind, and lets it go at that, without at all emphasizing the fact that God's grace is that boundless love in Christ our Savior which the Lord God daily and richly showers upon each individual member of his congregation who, by his sins, deserves nothing but eternal condemnation in Hell. It is likewise not enough merely to say, "mankind was ruined by the Fall" but **each individual person** within hearing range of the pastor's voice must be told that, by Adam's Fall into sin, **he** is ruined in body and soul — totally filthy and corrupt in God's sight; that **he**, as he is born into this world, has not even the slightest desire to honor God with **his** life; that **he**, by nature, constantly and persistently sets **his** will against God's will, desiring to go **his** own way and to do **his** own thing; that **he** has no power or inclination to do a single thing pleasing to God in **his** thoughts, desires, words, or actions; that **he** is blinded to the way of salvation — refusing to go the way which God points out for **him** in His Word; that **he** places **himself** and the things of this world first in **his** heart and life; that **he** is dead in trespasses and sins and is the enemy of God. This is the picture that **every Christian** in the congregation must have of **himself**, as **he** is born into this world since the Fall of Adam, in order that the grace of God toward **him** might shine forth in all its pristine splendor and beauty. For this very same purpose, the true Christian pastor must also, at all times, make **every hearer** aware of the fact that daily **he** sins against the Lord God in everything **he** says and does — that nothing **he** is or does earns any special blessing or favor from God and that **his** very best works (even those which flow from his faith in Christ), as far as **his** salvation is concerned, are as filthy rags in God's sight. In order to avoid carnal security, **every** Christian must always be reminded of WHY the grace of God is so important for him, namely, because without such kindness of the Lord God in Christ Jesus **his** Savior, which **he** does not at all deserve, **he** would be eternally lost and writhe forever in the eternal torments of Hell!

If every Christian pastor constantly makes **every** member of his congregation aware of his great unworthiness, his sinfulness and wretchedness in the sight of God, the wonderful Gospel of salvation — of God's grace and forgiveness in Christ Jesus — will become ever more important and precious to them. Throughout the church-year, **each** member should

vividly see the grace of God poured out for **him**: In the message of Advent; in the story of Christmas; in Christ Jesus as He, throughout His earthly life, fulfilled the Holy Law of God perfectly and vicariously; in the Savior's preaching, teaching, and miracles; in Baptism and the Lord's Supper; in the suffering of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; in the eternal Son of God bitterly persecuted, falsely accused, and condemned, and finally suffering the torments of Hell on the accursed tree of the cross as the Substitute for all people; His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming to judgment; and all of the Scripture texts throughout the Bible the purpose of which is to direct people to the grace of God in Christ their Savior. What a limitless wealth of material every pastor **has** with which to make personal application to **every man, woman, and child** in his congregation. He is then not preaching himself or his own wisdom and outward knowledge of Scripture, of Luther or of the Lutheran Confessions, but that which has behind it the spirit and power and wisdom of God — the plain and simple application of God's Word in all its truth and purity to the heart, faith, and life of every member in his congregation.

To avoid carnal security, the true pastor must time and again remind **each member** (in Sunday School, in Bible Classes, in instruction classes, in sermons and in private conversations) of the fact that, because he is spiritually dead by nature, it is **impossible for him** by his own reason or strength to believe in Jesus as his only Savior and Redeemer or to accept the grace of God which is poured out for him in and through Christ's work of redemption or to "make his own decision for Christ." **Every member** of the congregation must be reminded time and again that the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified is foolishness and a mystery to his naturally perverse human reason; that it is **for him** that God has therefore made His Gospel **a powerful Word** which the Holy Ghost uses to make him a Christian — bringing him to a saving knowledge of Jesus his Savior so that he trusts, believes, rejoices and finds true and lasting comfort in Christ alone — and to preserve him in that true and saving faith until he is taken from this vale of tears to be with his Savior in heaven. In this way, every Christian must be taught, in season and out of season, to prize the Word of God most highly for his own spiritual benefit. He should at all times be made vitally aware of the fact that it is this very Word of God's grace in Christ Jesus, which is being preached to **him**, which has the power to *"make* [him] *wise unto salvation,"* to open

his spiritually blind eyes, and to shine into **his** sin-darkened soul, to raise **him** from spiritual death to spiritual life, to create and sustain **him** as a child of God and an heir of salvation.

As an antidote against carnal security, Christians must also constantly be made aware of the fact that such a knowledge of God's grace must also show itself in their lives. It is not enough merely to say, "Christians will do good works out of love for Jesus," or "Christians will show their faith by doing works which are pleasing to God." Rather, Christian children, who memorize a great number of Bible passages from the Catechism, should be able to say plainly and clearly the answers to such questions as, "What is the Lord telling **me** to believe in this Bible passage?" or "What is the Lord telling *me* to do in this Scripture text?" and "What effect should this Word of God have upon **my** life?" The same application should be carried out in every Bible Class so that the members of a Christian congregation **become conversant** with the Word of God and thus learn to use the Word of God as the one and only antidote against carnal security. Preaching merely the objective truths of Scripture without demonstrating to every Christian in the congregation the subjective application of those truths; preaching merely the doctrines of God's Word without showing what practical effect each doctrine should have upon every individual's faith and life as a true child of God is one way of furthering or promoting *dead orthodoxy* and *carnal security* — the very thing which Satan desires to accomplish in every orthodox Christian congregation. Our pastors and people can help combat this terrible, insidious, spiritual catastrophe from attacking the congregations of our Concordia Lutheran Conference by being aware of its symptoms and applying the **only** remedy which God Himself provides. The true growth of our congregations and of our Conference is NOT IN NUMBERS but growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the heart and life of every member. This must ever be our goal as long as the Lord grants us life and breath!

— P.R.B.

THE 48TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

will be held, the Lord willing, at

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Central Avenue at 171st Place
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Rev. David T. Mensing, Host Pastor

June 25, 26, 27, 1999

CONVENTION MOTTO

"Speaking the Truth in Love." Eph. 4:15

HISTORICAL ESSAY

"A Statement: Its Role in the Heterodoxy of the Missouri Synod"

The Rev. David T. Mensing, Essayist

DOCTRINAL ESSAY

"The Need, Purpose and Function of Christian Admonition in the Christian Congregation"

The Rev. E. R. Stallings, Essayist
Pastor of Holy Scripture Ev. Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas

Pastoral Conference to be held on June 22nd & 23rd
Board of Directors Meeting to be held on June 24th

How Christ's Death Fulfilled in Detail the Scriptures

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

— John 19:31-37

Every true Lutheran confesses with the old orthodox Lutheran theologians: "The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testaments are to be the sole source and norm of all Christian teaching in the Church." We confess this not because we slavishly repeat everything which our Lutheran forefathers declared, but because this is what God teaches in His Word! "For all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Tim. 3:16). And because all of Holy Writ is the verbally inspired Word of God, this is the Word which stands as the foundation of our faith and without which we would be forever lost!

How well the devil knows this truth! Hence we observe his untiring, ungodly zeal to destroy this foundation of our Christian faith. And "if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3). Down through the centuries this wily, crafty foe has attempted to chip away at the foundation of our faith striving to remove block by block until the faith of the Christian crumbles. Who can justifiably deny the success the father of all lies has achieved in visible Christendom in undermining the authority of the Scriptures? Why, particularly in these last evil days of

the world, do we observe so many, who at one time lay claim to the name Christian, making shipwreck of their faith? It is because they have neglected to make use of the Word of God and to allow it to be the only source and norm of their faith.

Look at that Word of Truth! Written by 36 different writers over a span of some 16 centuries and yet we find that every Word of that Book is pure and inerrant. And how could it be otherwise? After all, every Word has been given by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1:21). In the Old Testament all the main features and events of Christ's life, even many of the minutest details, were clearly foretold.

Look at what the Evangelist John tells us of the crucifixion of Christ and his references to the Old Testament passages. Why? "That the scripture should be fulfilled." There on Golgotha Jesus was "numbered with the transgressors" (Is. 53:12), whose legs the soldiers broke, but when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already they "brake not His legs" ... "that the scripture should be fulfilled." There is the reference to the Old Testament prophecy, "He keepeth all His bones: not one of them is broken" (Ps. 34:20). Here was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) who had already been prefigured in the lamb of the Feast of the Passover concerning which the Lord had commanded, "nor break any bone of it" (Num. 9:12).

Note that the Evangelist refers to another Old Testament prophecy when he writes, "And they shall look upon him whom they pierced." The Old Testament reference is found in Zechariah chapter 12, verse 10, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." (Compare also Psalm 22:13,16,17.) And when the Savior bursts forth in the clouds of heaven on that Final Day, "every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" ... (Rev. 1:7).

Just think! Those prophetical passages referred to by the Evangelist John were written hundreds and hundreds of years before the Savior ever appeared on the scene! How could it be possible that those various Old Testament writers would be able to be so precise in their prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, unless the words which they wrote had been given to them by the Holy Spirit? And that which is recorded by the

Apostle John was something which he witnessed. "And he that saw it bare record" ... In his first Epistle this same Apostle writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, ...) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, ... This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you" ... (1:1-5).

In His last hour the Savior had cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He had carried out the Will of His heavenly Father. As our Substitute He had fulfilled the Law perfectly, endured the indescribable agony upon the cross, that we might "have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14). We had in no wise deserved such love! The sins of thought, desire, word and deed, had never been committed by Jesus "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's" ... (Heb. 7:26,27). **We were the guilty ones!** We were the sinners who deserved to be rejected by God and cast into hell!

For the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) — temporal and everlasting death! Ah, but what love beyond measure shines forth from that pitiful scene on Calvary's hill which announces, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (II Cor. 5:19). Now every repentant believing sinner can rejoice in the Savior's words, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2).

How thankful we Christians can be that our faith does not rest upon a system devised by sinful mortals but rather upon the solid foundation of the almighty God for whom it is impossible to lie, that "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast" ... (Heb. 6:18,19). He promises us, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). Therefore let us "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

— M.L.N.

For detailed information about our Conference, we invite you to visit our official Web Site!

The Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

http://www.concordialutheranconf.com

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The Resurrected Christ Confirms the Office of the Keys

"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." —John 20:23

In His appearance to the ten disciples on Easter evening, the Savior not only proved conclusively that He had risen from the dead on the third day, just as He had promised, but He commissioned them or sent them out on His divine authority, with the accompanying gift of His Holy Spirit, to exercise the ***Office of the Keys***. While the words of the Lord Jesus quoted above were appropriately chosen by Luther as the chief *sedes* or prooftext for the Fifth Chief Part of Christian Doctrine (*"Where is this written?"*) in his *Small Catechism*, we should not assume from this that the Office of the Keys was first instituted or established when these words were spoken. Nevertheless, it belongs to the comfort that we derive from the resurrection of our Savior from the dead, from His ascension into heaven, and from His sitting on the right hand of God the Father, that the exalted Christ continues to function as our Divine Prophet, Priest, and King with power and great glory, mediating to us the blessings of His redemptive work through the exercise of this special office.

The ***Office of the Keys*** was actually instituted or established, and its name was first "coined" as it were, when the Lord Jesus said to Peter (Matthew 16:19), *"I will give unto thee the* ***keys*** *of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* The Romanists claim on the basis of this passage that the power of the Keys was given *exclusively* to Peter (*"unto* ***thee***"), to wield as the Prince of the Church and Vicar of Christ, as the first pope; and that his unique power is passed on from pope to pope as the "successors of Peter" until the end of time. This effort on their part to lift a passage from the pages of Holy Writ, to put their own self-serving "spin" on it, and then to hang their ecclesiastical papal hats on it in support of a doctrine that is nowhere taught in Scripture is as transparent as a pane of glass! Were they to read on in the Gospel of Matthew just two chapters further, they would find that the very same power was given to *ALL* the

disciples in precisely the *same words*, as Jesus said unto them: *"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"* (Matthew 18:18). Of course, the Episcopalians and "Romanizing" Lutherans latch onto this latter passage, as well as the title-text above, and spin from them their doctrine of "Apostolic Succession" and of Ordination as the means whereby this power of the Keys is conferred. The errors of BOTH camps arise from faulty *hermeneutics* (principles used in the proper interpretation of the Bible) and the consequent misuse of Scripture. BOTH camps proceed from a pre-conceived notion, seek a passage which *seems* to support it, interpret the passage so as to *make it* support it, ignore clear passages that teach *against* it, and then claim that *Scripture* in fact *supports* it! Jeremiah declares: *"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully!"* (48:10), and again, *"Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues and say, He saith"* (23:31). The context of ALL THREE passages, together with still others that teach the same thing, shows that Christ has given the ***Office of the Keys*** to ALL BELIEVERS, and very particularly to every LOCAL CONGREGATION, NOT to a hierarchy of ecclesiastical princes and administrators, and NOT to a "special spiritual estate" ranking above ordinary believers (Matthew 23:8-11; I Peter 5:1ff., etc.).

While the ***Office of the Keys***, according to Matthew 16:19, Matthew 18:18, and John 20:23, is defined *especially* (or *narrowly*) as "the power to forgive and to retain sins," its *wider* scope includes "the power or authority to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments." (See Catechism Ques. 267.) The ***Keys*** are emblematic of admission into *"the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 16:19), the Kingdom of Grace here on earth and ultimately the Kingdom of Glory in heaven — admission by authority of the *"Householder"* (Matthew 20:1), Jesus Christ Himself, who has the power in *"the key of David,"* His Messianic authority, to open and close the gates of heaven (Revelation 3:7). All true believers, who are members of Christ's mystical body, the Church, are by virtue of His vicarious atonement, mediation, and intercession *"a royal priesthood,"* Peter writes in his first epistle (2:9). *"Being justified by faith"* in Him (Romans 5:1), they have *"access"* into God's grace (5:2), as with a precious key that admits them *"into His marvellous light,"* the key called by St. Paul *"the **Word of reconciliation**"* (II Corinthians 5:19).

The Gospel is this precious Word, which not only ***informs*** men of the completed *vicarious satisfaction* which won for all the world God's *reconciliation*, but the Word which actually ***conveys*** to poor sinners forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation — all the blessings of redemption. This *"Word of reconciliation"* has been *"committed unto **us**,"* Paul says, so that we might be *"reconciled to God"* by the **application** of that precious message. ***The Gospel***, proclaimed both privately and publicly, **imparts** the forgiveness of sins to us: and we **receive** that forgiveness ***by faith*** in the merits of Christ and in the blessed fact that, for His sake, God no longer imputes men's trespasses unto them but declares them righteous. Thus we also confess and teach on the basis of Scripture that the Gospel (and the "visible Gospel," the Holy Sacraments) are the **Means of Grace**, the vehicle through which the Holy Spirit of God offers and conveys to men the gracious blessings earned by Christ and works in their hearts that faith whereby they accept Christ and His salvation. (Cat. Ques. 168.)

The power or authority of the ***Office of the Keys*** is therefore the authority given by Christ to all true believers to proclaim the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments —the "loosing key" whereby *"whose soever sins [they] remit, they are remitted unto them"*— and the authority to *"retain"* with the "binding key" the sins of those who in impenitence and unbelief reject the Gospel. This "binding key" is NOT as some suppose the prerogative of the Church capriciously and arbitrarily to brand someone who is uncooperative, to suspend him from Communion, and to "kick him out" of the congregation. Rather it is the declaration of the Savior Himself: *"He that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16); and *"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). Thus in the proper exercise of the ***Keys***, the sins of impenitent sinners are *"retained"* as long as they do not repent. This is no idle threat, for Jesus says of their sins: *"They **are retained**."*

The ***Office of the Keys***, granted to every true believer individually, is committed "especially" or very particularly "to every **local congregation**" (Cat. Ques. 270). This is no artificial construction of doctrine (as those claim who deny that the local congregation is a divine institution distinct from other groupings of professing Christians). Scripture teaches with absolute clarity that it is God's will for Christians who dwell in one

locality not only to *read* His Word *privately*, but to gather together regularly and consistently to *hear the Word* publicly *preached* and *taught* (Hebrews 10:25). Such assemblies Scripture itself calls *"churches"* (Revelation 1-3, etc.), and membership in them is not a human but a divine mandate. In Matthew 18:17, for example, Jesus Himself directs *"two or three"* individuals who have fruitlessly admonished a brother for a trespass of which he refuses to repent to *"tell it unto the church,"* the local visible congregation; and He then confirms **its action** with His own authority, saying: *"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"* (v. 18).

Moreover, for the *public* proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, the local congregation is to establish the ***pastoral office*** in its midst (Titus 1:5) and is given the authority to call incumbents of that only God-ordained office in the church. Scripture itself distinguishes sharply between the *spiritual priesthood* of the individual believers and their right to the *private* exercise of the ***Keys***, and the *public* ministry of the ***pastoral office***, whose incumbents have specific qualifications and specific duties and responsibilities (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; II Timothy 4:2-5; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17). This *public* ministry *[in concreto]* presupposes the existence of local congregations because only a congregation can establish this office; and the incumbents, called by the synonymous terms "pastors and teachers," "bishops," "overseers," "elders," "ministers," "stewards of the mysteries of God," etc., administer the Means of Grace, the inalienable possession of the believers, by order and on behalf of the congregation. The office of the **Apostles**, to whom the Lord Jesus spoke on Easter evening, and the office of the later teachers of the Church, the ***Pastoral Office***, is identical in content and power; for the power resides in the Word which they preach in Christ's Name, and their rule is the rule of the Word (Luke 10:16; I Corinthians 4:1; Hebrews 13:17). Thus we confess with Luther in the *Small Catechism* (5th Chief Part): *"When the called ministers of Christ deal with us **by His divine command**, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and again when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, **this is as valid and certain, in heaven also**, as if Christ our dear Lord, dealt with us **Himself**."*

Yet, Christian pastors do not comprise a "special order" distinct from and "holier" than ordinary believers. On the contrary, the local congregation of Christians has not only the authority but the obligation to supervise the official conduct of its pastors, to hold them accountable, and even to dismiss them from office when they no longer possess the required Scriptural qualifications, become willfully neglectful of their duties, or are no longer able to execute the functions of their office. Thus, ultimately and irrevocably, the ***Office of the Keys*** is held by each individual believer to exercise privately, and by all the believers together to exercise in common in their local congregations, for their own spiritual welfare, the eternal welfare of Christ's holy people, to the praise of the glory of His grace! No one can (nor dare) take that office away from them, for it has been given to them by Jesus Himself, the Lord and only Head of His Church. What is then the ***Office of the Keys***, confirmed by the resurrected Christ to His disciples on Easter evening? *"It is the peculiar [special]* ***church power*** *which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent."* Where is this written? Thus writes the holy Evangelist John, chapter twentieth: *"The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and saith unto them: 'Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.'"*

— D.T.M.

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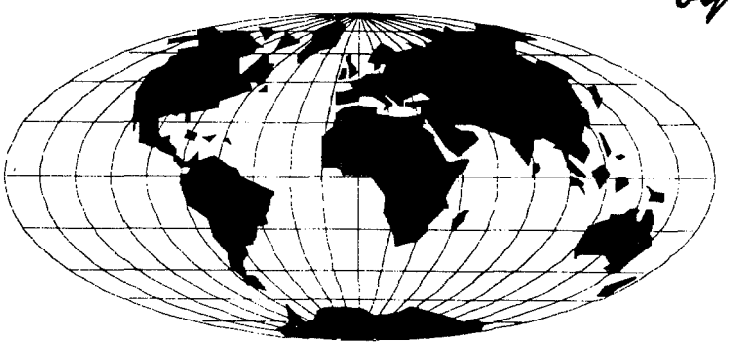
with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer



When the dark-haired 16-year-old girl straggled into the Chevron station in rural Box Elder County, Utah, to call 911, her back, arms and legs were badly bruised and her face was bloodied. Box Elder County sheriff's deputies who took that call on May 24 heard a grim story. The girl said she had run away from home a few days earlier, infuriating her father, John Daniel Kingston. He reportedly caught her at her mother's house, forced her into a car and drove 90 miles north from Salt Lake City to a remote family ranch, punching her in the face once along the way. ("I could taste blood from my nose," the girl said at a preliminary hearing last month.) In a barn at the compound he allegedly whipped her more than 20 times with a wide leather belt — "10 licks for every wrongdoing," she says she heard him say before she passed out from the pain. Her principal "wrongdoing"? The girl said she'd run away from a husband she'd been forced to marry at the age of 15. David Ortell Kingston had made her his 15th wife; he is also her uncle ... John Daniel Kingston is a high-ranking member of the Kingston group, one of four large fundamentalist Mormon sects that practice polygamy, arranged marriages and, as in the runaway teen's case, sanctioned incest ... The clan, which calls itself the Davis County Cooperative, has 1,500 members who live just outside the capital of Salt Lake City and run a $150 million business network. (*Newsweek*, August 10, 1998)

Actually, these Mormon fundamentalists are the real followers of Brigham Young and Joseph Smith. Not only did they teach polygamy but they also practiced it (Brigham, for example, had 27 wives). Their adherents claim that polygamy is an "everlasting covenant" revealed to their founder Joseph Smith (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132), espoused by Brigham Young and the succeeding presidents (Mormon President Heber C. Kimball allegedly had 40 wives), until 1890 when Mormon President Wilford Woodruff made public The Manifesto in which he declared, "my advice to the Latter Day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land." Forbidding the practice of polygamy and incorporating that into its Constitution in 1895 then allowed Utah to become one of the states in the union. But Brigham Young's words had been crystal-clear. "If any of you will deny the plurality of wives and continue to do so, I promise that you will be damned" (Journal of Discourses, III, p. 266). What a dilemma for the Mormons! Whom should they believe and follow in this matter — Smith & Young or Woodruff? And so it is when the word of man is substituted for the Word of God! Read Matthew 19:3-6, Mark 10:1-12, I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6, and observe how the Lord uses the singular word "wife" and not wives in speaking of marriage. God did not create wives for Adam but one wife, Gen. 2:18-24. And while the Lord Jesus teaches that in heaven "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Mark 12:25), the Mormon teachings contradict these words of the Lord with their so-called "celestial marriage" which will still be practiced in heaven with their "celestial wives."

In your May/June issue Christian Science lawyers and public relations managers blandly dismiss the preventable death of children in their church and ask the public to do likewise. But these children suffer horribly. Toddler Robyn Twitchell was vomiting his own feces, and even his mother told investigators he was in severe pain. He was so dehydrated that his skin stayed up when pinched. Autopsy photos

showed bright red lips and chin, likely because the acid in the vomit had eaten the skin off. Christian Science teaches that you have to believe you are getting a spiritual healing in order to get one, so members feel a heavy moral demand to trivialize and reinterpret symptoms. The Christian Science practitioner even testified at trial that she achieved a complete healing of Robyn and that he ran around happily chasing his kitty cat fifteen minutes before he died. Physicians testified that he would have been nearly comatose throughout the day of his death ... The church claims that both Christian Science and medical science should have equal legal status as "system(s) of health care" because some scholars are today studying the effect of spirituality on physical health. Who is being narrow-minded here? It is Christian Science that teaches that you cannot have both God and a doctor. In a briefing to the U.S. Supreme Court, a Christian Science mother stated, "Christian Science provides that no person may become a member of the Church unless he or she is prepared to rely completely on spiritual healing as practiced in Christian Science. Members of the Church believe that attempts to use medical means ... in combination with spiritual means destroy a Christian Scientist's power to heal through prayer. Thus, spiritual healing is ... a religious imperative for members of the Church." (*Liberty*, September/October 1998)

How sad when individuals have been so misled by the false teachings of Mary Baker Eddy and then must suffer the consequences of following her lies! Their use of the word "prayer" is a lie! According to the teachings of Christian Science the purpose of prayer is the conquering of the body by the mind, recognizing the non-existence of disease and sickness. Listen to Mary Baker Eddy's own words: "A self-evident proposition, in the science of mind healing, is that disease is unreal" ... "A man's belief produces disease and all its symptoms" ... "All disease is the result of education" ... "One disease is as much a delusion as another" ... "The evidence of the senses is not to be accepted in the case of sickness, any more than it is in the case of sin" ... "man is never sick" (Christian Science and Health, pages 12, 53, 69, 294, 384, 392). Their teaching refuses to recognize affliction. Christian Science insists that the human mind must rise above the sense of matter and come to the realization that sickness really does not exist! As we Christians experience affliction we cry unto the Lord

with the Psalmist, "consider mine affliction, and deliver me" (Ps. 119:153). And if it is His Will He will remove it. If not, He will grant us the necessary strength to endure it as He did in the case of the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 12). At the same time, however, we should obtain proper medical help whenever possible. Failure to do so militates against another Word of God — "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7).

If a Lutheran Brotherhood survey is correct, says Professor Marianne M. Jennings, in the August, 1998, *Imprimis*, then 82 percent of all students believe that right and wrong are relative terms and that morality is a ridiculous concept ... Jennings says that today's students "know what it is like to be the children of child care because 67 percent of them have mothers working outside of their homes." "Only 19 percent attend church regularly. Only 1 percent include a member of the clergy on their lists of most admired individuals." ... "Another survey conducted by the Lutheran Brotherhood asked, 'Are there absolute standards for morals and ethics or does everything depend on the situation?'" Seventy-nine percent of the respondents in the 18-34 age group said that standards did not exist and that the situation should always dictate behavior. Three percent said they were not sure ... "Comedian Jay Leno revealed during one of his street interviews on the Tonight Show that the same young people don't seem to know the Ten Commandments. What they do know about morality is what they have picked up in scattered, disconnected bits from parents, friends, television, and magazines. And a good deal of this is immoral rather than moral. As a result, Generation X lacks a solid moral foundation for its views on school, work, marriage, family, and community." (*Christian News*, Sept. 21, 1998)

We have emphasized this truth countless times: the home is the foundation of the state! Destroy the family and the state collapses. And this is precisely what has been happening in our own country. The woman has been taken out of her rightful sphere as wife and mother in the home and thrust into the outside working field to

work at full-time jobs while the children are left in child-care centers or with baby-sitters. God says that the wives and mothers are to be "keepers at home" (I Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:4,5). The home is the ideal place where fathers and mothers have the opportunity to lead their little ones to the Savior and His Word and thus "bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Where parents lay the foundation through such teaching and example, the children are then equipped so that with the help of the Holy Spirit they may withstand the specious argumentation of the unbelievers that "right and wrong are relative terms and that morality is a ridiculous concept." Such a devilish notion is not only found among the unbelieving children of the world but also expressed by many who profess to be Christians — even by some so-called Christian pastors and professors! Although God's Word clearly forbids adultery, stealing, lying, etc., it is amazing how, through the crafty and subtle rationalizations emanating out of man's sinful reason, such transgressions are no longer regarded as sins. We dare not forget that the Ten Commandments have not been abolished! The Lord Jesus declares, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil ... whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" ... (Matt. 5:17-19). "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" ... (I John 5:3).

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