

The Concordia Lutheran



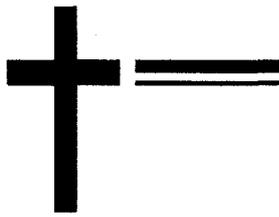
"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

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

Vol. XLV

January-February, 2000

Nos. 1 - 2



"(And we beheld His
glory; the glory as
of the only begotten
of the Father,) full
of grace and truth."

— John 1:14b

**OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference**

This publication appears in a monthly or bi-monthly issue at a subscription price of \$5.00 per year.

The Concordia Lutheran EDITOR:

Rev. E. R. Stallings
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218

Tracts and Booklets 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, 17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913.** A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

**Officers of the Concordia
Lutheran Conference**

PRESIDENT:

Rev. M. L. Natterer
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355

VICE-PRESIDENT:

Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452

SECRETARY:

Rev. Mark W. Dierking
420 Park Avenue
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

In our Lutheran Catechism, pages 164-166, we have learned that there is a Scriptural distinction between a temptation to good and a temptation to evil. The temptation to good comes only from God. And the word “temptation” is used in that sense in various places of Holy Writ. Note the Bible narratives listed in the Catechism. *“God did tempt Abraham”* (Gen. 22). In other words, God tested or tried the faith of Abraham. Remember how the Lord told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, up to Mt. Moriah and there offer him up as a sacrifice. Abraham promptly set out to do as the Lord had commanded him. At the last moment the Lord intervened and provided a ram in the place of Isaac. Abraham had passed the test successfully and the Lord declared, *“Now I know that thou fearest God.”* Then in the New Testament we read about the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus asked Philip, *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove (test) him: for He Himself knew what He would do”* (John 6). The temptation which comes from God simply means testing of faith. The temptation to evil comes from the devil and can never come from God. The Apostle James reminds us, *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (1:13-15).

There are six Bible narratives given in the Catechism (page 165) showing that the word temptation also means a temptation to evil. As we rapidly approach another Lenten Season **the temptation of Christ** is, of course, foremost. That temptation is described to us in Matthew 4:1-11. Don’t forget that this temptation which Christ experienced was not a sham temptation — it was a real temptation. Jesus was not a piece of wood or stone. He had become true Man, having assumed a

true human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. And being true God it was not possible for Christ to sin because He is holy and pure, untainted with corruption and sin. *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb. 4:15).

Prior to His first temptation He had not eaten or drunk for forty days and nights. Satan thought that he had timed his temptation perfectly. *“If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.”* Jesus withstood this temptation by a simple but powerful statement of Scripture truth: *“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”*

We Christians are not exempt from the devil’s temptations in this respect. When the vital necessities of life become meager because of spiraling inflationary costs, insufficient wages, lack of employment, inability to work due to sickness, etc., the devil comes and whispers to us: “God has let you down! Can’t you see that your trust in God and His Word is all foolishness!” At such times we must follow the example of Jesus our Savior and go back to the Scriptures and take our stand upon that Word of Truth, *“It is written!”* Where? *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). Possessing this true spiritual Bread, then the earthly bread, the necessities of life, will automatically follow. David exclaimed, *“I was young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread”* (Psalm 37:25). So also with our prayers. *“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His Will, He heareth us”* (I John 5:14). For Jesus’ sake, our dear heavenly Father does and will answer all of our prayers in His own way, His own time, and in accordance with His own good and gracious Will. He promises, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Heb. 13:5).

The devil then takes Jesus to the city of Jerusalem where he sets Jesus on the highest part of the roof of the Temple and tells Him to cast Himself down. Shrewdly he brings up a Scripture passage to back up his request. But instead of quoting properly, he misquotes from the Psalms. The passage reads, *“For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone”* (91:11,12). Very slyly

the devil omits the words, "*to keep thee in all thy ways.*" Indeed, the Lord has promised us the gracious protection of His holy angels in the daily performance of our calling in this life, but nowhere has He promised such protection to those who needlessly and frivolously cast themselves into danger. Again the attack of Satan is rebuffed with Scripture, "*It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.*"

Should we Christians not follow the example of the Savior in dealing with the false prophets who very conveniently have a habit of misquoting Scripture to mislead us? There are those who are easily recognized and others who are not. For example, in the southern part of our country there is a sect which erroneously holds on the basis of Mark 16:18 that they must handle poisonous rattlesnakes and drink strychnine in their services. On the other hand, however, there are some who do a masterful job of covering up their false teachings by pulling Bible passages out of their context to suit their man-made system. The Jehovah's Witnesses in particular are very adept at this. But what shall we say about the liberals within visible Christendom who deceptively quote passage after passage concerning love in order to excuse all manner of false teaching! No wonder the Savior so earnestly warns us, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*" (Matt. 7:15; cp. I John 4:1). The only way we can successfully resist such temptations is by diligently searching the Scriptures and taking our stand upon that Word; otherwise, we shall be like little "*children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*" (Eph. 4:14).

Luther tells us that the devil gives us no rest or peace day or night. He was right. Look what the devil attempted to do with Jesus. Although he was rebuffed two times, the arch deceiver tried once more. Taking the Savior up into a high mountain and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, he then tells Jesus that he would give Him all these things if He would fall down and worship him. What arrogance on the part of the devil! However, this Son of David, though lowly in His humilitaion, "*was in the world, and the world was made by Him!*" (John 1:10). Again the Savior rebukes the devil, telling him that God alone is to be worshiped and served.

The devil has an ally of which he makes use. He makes this wicked

world look ever so alluring and enticing and slyly whispers: "Why do you want to be so strict? Do anything which you think makes you happy!" How many give in like Demas concerning whom the Apostle had to acknowledge, "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*" (II Tim. 4:10). The sinful flesh of the Christian is also an ally of the devil and would readily follow the sinful ways of the world. Hence the Lord Jesus warns us, "*what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Matt. 16:26). Would to God that we would always follow the example of Jesus and successfully fight against the wiles of the devil with the powerful Word of God (Eph. 6:10ff.). This is the Weapon before which the devil must retreat! Therefore "*I walk with Jesus all the way, His guidance never fails me; within His wounds I find a stay when Satan's power assails me; and by His footsteps led, my path I safely tread, in spite of ills that threaten may, I walk with Jesus all the way*" (Hymn 413).

—M.L.N.

WELCOME

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 5.00 per year!

Give a subscription to a friend or relative!

Scriptural Publications
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

Being About the Father's Business

One of the few glimpses we have of the childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ is given to us by St. Luke in the account of Jesus in the Temple at age twelve conversing with the astonished Doctors of the Law as He was **“both hearing them, and asking them questions.”** (Luke 2:46). In this story we view something of the awesome mystery of the incarnation, for we see the boy Jesus was even then aware of His unique person and ministry. His life was no ordinary one for He was sent to us by the Father for a very specific purpose. When Mary and Joseph find Him in the Temple after searching for Him for three days, you can hear the exasperation in Mary's voice at His remaining in Jerusalem rather than accompanying His family home to Nazareth: **“Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”** (v. 48). Our Lord expresses surprise at their ignorance. **“Wist (know) ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”**

This statement by our Lord Jesus summarized His life and ministry, for He was truly always about His Father's business, and here He reminded Mary and Joseph of this fact. Even at this time in His life and continuing through His ministry and passion, He revealed to the world His true identity as the Divine Son of God, the **“Word made flesh”** who **“dwelt among us”** (John 1:14). Let us examine briefly: **I. How Jesus was about His Father's business while on the earth; II. How we too are to be about the Father's business today.**

I.

In the Christmas Season we commemorate God becoming a man through the Virgin Mary. However, it is in the Epiphany Season that we celebrate the manifestation of Christ as the Son of God; hence, during Epiphany we emphasize Jesus' miracles. Indeed, this manifestation of our Lord as the Christ would also include His Baptism, along with the miracles He performed among men, along with all of the events of his life that pointed men to His Divine Person and mission. St. John links

these two feasts together beautifully in John 1:14. **“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,”** (Christmas), **“(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”** (Epiphany). The entire life of our Lord Jesus is an Epiphany, a manifestation before the world of His Divinity, and the account in Luke 2 in the Temple reveals that His life would be dedicated to the Father’s work on the earth.

The Scriptures clearly reveal to us the purpose of the Incarnation of Christ which was the Redemption of mankind by His death on the cross. In Matthew 20:28 we read: **“Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”** In these words we see the singular purpose for our Lord’s birth, life and death, that He might keep the law for us (minister) and lay down His life as (a ransom) payment for the sins of the world. Nothing else would come between Christ and this grand purpose for His life, not even Mary, Joseph or those closest to Him.

Therefore again, the Father’s business for which Christ came was the salvation of the world, and Jesus would accomplish this great work of redemption throughout His life by fulfilling the Law on our behalf, and on the cross, by paying the ultimate penalty of the Law, which is death (Rom. 6:23). In Galatians 4:4,5 we read concerning our Lord’s relationship to the Law of God: **“But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”** We see an example of our Lord fulfilling the Law for us in Luke 2:41,42 as godly Joseph and Mary take Jesus to the Passover Feast at age twelve in keeping with the Law of Moses. Every detail of the Law would be fulfilled in His life as He said in Matt. 5:18: **“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”**

Later in the chapter He is shown perfectly keeping the Fourth Commandment for us, which is **“Honor thy father and thy mother”**, as Luke records: **“And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them; but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”** (v. 51). It is the perfect obedience of Christ along with His death on the cross that constitutes the righteousness that

is ours by faith. (Rom. 4:5). This righteousness that is a gift of God in Christ is the basis of our justification before God. What a blessed comfort this is to the heart of the penitent, believing sinner as he beholds the grace and glory of Jesus. This grace he hears in the promises of the Gospel which are proclaimed in Holy Scripture. No wonder Mary and Joseph, weak human beings like us, could scarcely comprehend the magnitude of the Glory of God that was standing before their eyes. Truly here in the person of Jesus the Son of Mary was **“the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14), the one who would **“save His people from their sins.”** (Matt. 1:21).

II.

Thus again, by our Lord’s perfect life and death He accomplished our salvation which was the business that our Father in Heaven sent Him to complete. Yet we as His people are now called by Him to also be about our Father’s business out of faith in and gratitude for all that Jesus has done for us. Though our salvation in both its accomplishment and application are the work of God from start to finish, nevertheless, it is God’s will that His people spend their lives in serving the Lord. Paul could say in I Cor. 3:9: **“For we are laborers together with God.”** (II Cor. 6:1). The Apostle encouraged the Corinthians in their work for the Lord with the promise, **“forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”** (I Cor. 15:58). We Christians are to continue to be about our Father’s business as a fruit of our faith in Christ with hearts filled with thanksgiving and praise.

The first order of business that the Church has been given is to proclaim the Gospel to all the world. We are to **“Go (ye) into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”** (Mark 16:15). By our spreading the Word, men, women, and children are brought to faith. Indeed, God **“will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”** (I Tim. 2:4).

The business of the church is not political, educational, social, nor therapeutic, but is centered on the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Everything that tends to take the place of these in the church is to be avoided, for the Father’s business in the earth first and foremost is the proclamation of the Holy Gospel and the conversion of sinners. It is a sad commentary in the professing church in our day that so many

churches have abandoned the simple Gospel worship of Word and Sacrament for entertainment, and emotional, man-centered worship services. When men resort to such methods in order to build up their numbers, they are not about the Father's business; rather they are busy building their own success and name in the community.

As we think further about the business of our Father on the earth we are reminded of one of the great blessings of the Reformation. This was the rediscovery of individual vocations as a means of honoring and serving God, which freed the church from the slavery of Roman Catholic monasticism and monkery. No longer did men and women have to flee to a monastery or a nunnery in order to serve God, but they could be about their Father's business in their place of employment, or at home scrubbing floors to the glory of God. No longer did the best and brightest of Europe remain cloistered in a monastery, but they were set free to use their creative talents in craftsmanship, business, farming, and hundreds of other vocations while they blessed their communities with godly marriages and children to the glory of God. The call to the public ministry is indeed a noble one, but so is the call to any number of vocations in the world. It is in our lawful callings that the Christian serves His God in the world, and men are able to see a manifestation of our Lord in society by our lives of good works. Jesus says, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:16).

To this end Paul exhorts the believers at Colosse, **"and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him."** (Col. 3:17). In Christ, all of our activities each day, whether in school, at work, or caring for the home have the mark of divine worship upon them. We do our work in the Name of the Lord Jesus with hearts of thanksgiving and praise, for all that we do is sanctified by the Word of God. The believer is now free to cease complaining about his job, or doing the very least required of him, and instead **"whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."** (Col. 3:23,24). What a blessing the modern work place would be if men and women were to approach their labor as a gift from God and an opportunity to serve the Lord in the earth out of love for Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished His Father's business while on the

earth, redeeming us that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons through the Gospel. We who have received the Spirit of God in our Baptism into Christ are now set free to serve Him in the world, for we delight to be about our Father's business. May our God grant us hearts of thanksgiving, rejoicing, and zeal that it could be said of us that we are **“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,”** (Rom. 12:11) daily engaged in our Father's business. Amen.

—R.A.M.

“We Have a More Sure Word of Prophecy”

*“We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses** of His majesty... We have also a **more sure** word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place... knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*

—II Peter 1:16-21

While the Bible is still today one of the best, if not THE best seller of all the books ever published, it has really “taken a beating,” particularly during the 20th Century, at the hands of so-called “scholars,” “theologians,” and “higher critics.” The Bible *used to be* almost universally regarded as “the Word of God,” the inerrant and infallible, verbally-inspired revelation of God to men, clear and authoritative in and of itself, with no errors, inconsistencies or contradictions between its covers... at least that **was** the *traditional* Christian view of the Bible for centuries. **Nowadays**, however, the view has become widely accepted among many “mainline” Christians, and even among many

professing “Lutherans,” that the Bible is simply a collection of largely fictional religious writings, loosely strung together in Judeo-Christian tradition to form the philosophical and even psychological basis of what is known today as “Christianity.” Among those who regard themselves as *modern-day, educated, and socially sensitive* Christians, it is not unusual to hear talk about the “myth” of Jesus, the “legend” of Adam and Eve, the “sexist views” of Paul, and the necessity for each person to interpret the Bible “for himself”. What the Bible calls “*miracles*” have now been assigned completely *natural* explanations; and what the prophets, evangelists and apostles call their “record” of events, occurrences, and the divine pronouncements of God Himself is now regarded to be a cunningly devised scenario of “impressions” and “feelings” through which the writers expressed their *personal* and obviously *biased* viewpoints. And all these writings or “scriptures” were artfully strung together by the early church fathers and called the “Word of God” to lend credence to their content and authority to their pronouncements. But for an intelligent and educated “modern-day” person to put *absolute confidence* in the Bible as “divine truth,” they say, is simpleminded, naive, and unscholarly!

If that were really the case, then our entire religion would be a **sham**; Jesus would be the biggest **con-artist** the world has ever seen; and you and I might just as well read “Peanuts,” “Pogo,” and “Dr. Seuss” instead of the Bible! They’re a lot more entertaining, and their contemporary social commentary will probably do us as much or more good than the Bible in this day and age!! —Is that **all** we have to hang our hat on as Christians?? No, says the Apostle Peter in our title text; for the message of Jesus’ **Epiphany** or “manifestation” to us and to all the world is no hoax! On the contrary, there is *iron-clad evidence*, leaving not one shadow of a doubt, that Christ truly manifested forth His glory as the Son of God, our Savior ...**personally** to His Apostles in His *transfiguration*, and **objectively** to you and to me and to all mankind in the *Holy Scriptures*.

As the Holy Ghost “*moved*” Peter to write these reassuring words, the Apostle anticipated the objections of the skeptic and of the “modernist,” saying: “*We have NOT followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” “What we, the evangelists and apostles, have reported is **NOT made up**; it is **NOT** the cunningly devised **hoax** we have been accused of

peddling to fool people into following us!!” For the **record**, Peter says: “*We were eyewitnesses of His majesty.*” “We saw what we saw, and we would be liars to deny it and deceivers to disavow it!”

Eyewitness testimony on the part of just *one individual* will stand up as **evidence** before the **law**, provided no other individual gives eyewitness testimony to the *contrary*. In the case of Jesus manifesting forth His glory as the Son of God, our Savior, there were in fact **THREE** eyewitnesses to Jesus’ transfiguration, as we read in Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9: Peter and James and John. All three gave testimony as to what transpired on the mountain that day, and not one witness gave testimony to the contrary! They saw what they saw; they testified as to what they saw; and, barring conflicting evidence (of which there is NONE), any objective person—even a trained jurist—is compelled to acknowledge such “facts-in-evidence” as **true**, beyond any “reasonable doubt.” Moreover, God Himself sets the standard of “*two or three witnesses*” as sufficient testimony to establish a fact even in His churches here on earth (II Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:16; etc.), a standard, therefore, that we would be fools to dismiss.

Moreover, Peter says, “we heard what we heard” —**firsthand**, not by “hearsay”! “*For He received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’*” Only a **father** can say, “*This is My beloved Son.*” That’s no unwarranted conclusion, but a completely reasonable one! And for a father (even here in this world) to be “*well pleased*” with his son indicates **satisfaction** with the son’s performance of the tasks set before him by his father—another completely reasonable conclusion for the disciples to draw from what they had heard. What was the **origin** of the voice?? Peter says, “*it came to Him [to Jesus] from the excellent glory;*” it “*came from heaven,*” the voice of God the Father Himself! “*And this voice which came from heaven WE HEARD when we were with Him in the holy mount;*” and no one was present who could contradict their testimony. Hence, it was **EVIDENCE**, not “*cunningly devised fables*” or myths!!

This personal manifestation of Christ’s glory as the very Son of God and the Savior of the world, whose sacrifice in the place of sinners was to “*please*” His heavenly Father to such an extent that He would, for Jesus’ sake, forgive the sins of the whole world—this wonderful

manifestation was a **FACT**, not a *myth*, not some “*cunningly devised fable*.” —Luke tells us in his account that Moses and Elijah stood there with Jesus, discussing the Savior’s impending suffering and death on the cross as the substitute for sinners, making abundantly clear to the “*eyewitnesses*” WHY the Father was so “*well pleased*” with His “*beloved Son*,” so that they could then report that to us with absolute surety.

Oh, if only we could have been “*eyewitnesses of His majesty*” as were Peter, James, and John! Wouldn’t that be for us a source of never-ending joy and assurance and hope as we reflect upon what we had seen with our very own eyes and heard with our own two ears?? Just imagine, to have **personal eye- and ear-witness** of the manifestation of Christ’s glory as the Son of God and the Savior of the world!!

But that special personal witness was only for Peter, James, and John, and is ours only secondhand through their report of it ...not that we Christians should feel in any way **deprived**, however; for Peter goes on: “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Daystar arise in your hearts.*” —What could be “*more sure*”, **more firm** a testimony of the manifestation of Christ’s glory as the Son of God, our Savior, than to see His majesty with our very own eyes, and to hear the voice of His heavenly Father with our very own ears?? Why, it is God’s precious “*Word of prophecy*,” the **Holy Scriptures**. Our frail human senses may indeed fail us, as when one is nearsighted or hard-of-hearing, as when our eyes and ears “play tricks on us.” How much more fallible are our *spiritual* senses of “sight” and “hearing” apart from the revelation of God’s Word and the effectual working of His Holy Spirit through that Word!? For “*the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*,” Paul tells us (I Corinthians 2:14).

In the “*more sure word of prophecy*,” however, we have God’s own **light** shed upon the darkness of spiritual night, “*to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death*,” “*to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Thus we confess with the Psalmist: “*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*” —“*Take heed unto it*,” Peter tells you and me; we

should pay close **attention** to it and to what it tells us about Christ, our Savior. For what we **see** in that “*word of prophecy*,” unlike even eyewitness testimony, is **flawless, infallible, clear and radiant** light, “*to guide [our] feet into the way of peace*,” “*peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*,” peace which is ours by **faith** in Him!

Moreover, in that “*more sure word of prophecy*” we **hear** with ears of faith that very same voice of the Father in heaven, pointing out our Savior with unmistakable clarity, saying: “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.” —“*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!*” Indeed, when that “*more sure word of prophecy*” is preached and taught in its truth and purity, we **hear** the voice of our Savior (Luke 10:16), the voice of His heavenly Father (John 17:14), the voice of His Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:13), just as surely and yet **more firmly** than if we had been standing with Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration!

Just **how sure** is this blessed “*word of prophecy*”? With all the doubt and skepticism floating about nowadays concerning the reliability of the Holy Scriptures, how can we be **sure** about its infallibility, inerrancy, clarity, and sufficiency? After all, doesn’t it depend to a certain extent at least upon how a person **interprets** the Bible?? —“*[You should] know this, first of all*,” —this is a basic rule that everyone must acknowledge, Peter tells us— “*that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation*.” A person DOESN’T have the right to interpret the Bible for himself so as to force upon the text what **he wants** it to say and thus to make it conform to **his** will; “*for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.” It is **His** Word to interpret, not man’s! And how reassuring is that basic rule for reading and understanding the Scriptures; for just as the Father in heaven authenticated the manifestation of Jesus’ glory on the mount by saying, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*,” just **so** did the Holy Spirit authenticate His “*more sure word of prophecy*” by moving the holy prophets, evangelists, and apostles to write, and by putting into their minds the very thoughts which they expressed and the very words which they wrote. It is **HIS** Word, not theirs; for Paul declares in his first letter to the Corinthians: “*We speak NOT in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*.” It is **His** holy, infallible, inerrant Word which we are to “*search*,” Jesus tells us,

because *it testifies of Him*, just as surely as the voice of His heavenly Father testified of Him to Peter, James, and John!

Oh, how we should **value**, diligently **hear, read, study, and learn** “*the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15); for it is in that “*sure word of prophecy*” that Christ manifests to us His glory as the Son of God, our Savior, the radiant glory which the disciples saw “*when [they] were with Him in the Holy Mount,*” the light of salvation which is **ours**, just as it was theirs, by faith in Him! By His grace, “*we [too] have [that] more sure word of prophecy, whereunto [we] do well that [we] take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,*” to dispel all doubt and misgiving, to expose all soul-destroying error, and to keep us steadfast in the true and saving faith in Christ, our glorified Redeemer, even unto our earthly end.

“**More sure**” than what? More sure indeed than the traditions and commandments of men! More sure than the subjective imaginations of human reason! More sure than the recollections of fallible human memory! More sure than private revelations and dreams, the source of which is always uncertain at best (and surely *of the devil* if they in any way conflict with the Scriptures)! More sure than the writings of church fathers and learned theologians! More sure than the decrees, canons, resolutions, and pronouncements of church councils, synods, and conferences! For our most cherished and theologically reliable *human documents* (such as the Lutheran Confessions) are only **truly reliable because they are** a correct exposition of the **Word of God**, the “*more sure word of prophecy,*” which **norms** or sets the standard by which all doctrine and practice is to be judged. It is therefore that “*more sure word of prophecy*” and the doctrines which it teaches in clear and certain passages (which neither need nor permit of “*any private interpretation*”) according to which we are to “*mark them which cause divisions and offences*” by departing from its perfect standard and according to which we are to “*avoid them*” (Romans 16:17). It is only by conforming our doctrine and practice to that “*more sure word of prophecy*” that we can “*all speak the same thing and...be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Corinthians 1:10). It is only by continuing in that “*more sure word of prophecy*” that we shall be and remain Christ’s “*disciples indeed*” and that we, He promises us, “*shall know the truth, and the*

truth shall make [us] free” (John 8:31-32). Therefore we join with the hymnwriter in declaring:

*How precious is the Book Divine,
by inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine
to guide our souls to heaven!*

*This Lamp through all the tedious night
of life shall guide our way
Till we behold the clearer light
of an eternal day!*

—D.T.M.

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

THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

www.concordialutheranconf.com

- Who We Are
- Our Seminary
- Our Doctrinal Position ● Our Publishing House
- Our Constitution
- Our Archives
- Our Early History
- News and Events
- Our Directory
- Our Guest Book

Has The Reading Of Scripture Become “A Lost Art”?

“Till I come, give attendance to reading.” —I Timothy 4:13

Over the last several years many articles and books such as WHY JOHNNY CAN'T READ have addressed the shocking inability of high school and college students to read at the level they should be able to read. Colleges and universities, for the sake of economics, have been forced to lower their entrance standards simply because so many students are such poor readers. Pastors also meet this dilemma when they teach confirmation instruction.

Many explanations have been given on why Johnny can't read. Some point to the failure to teach phonics, others to the over-watching of TV, habitual playing of computer games, or to non-stop listening to jangled music on CDs, etc. No doubt there is some validity to each of these charges. Who can deny that we live in a very non-reading era. Few people even bother to read the newspaper and thereby keep themselves ignorant of basic current events and render themselves virtually unqualified to vote as informed citizens.

However, there is a far worse reading crisis. Even church members who have no problem with the mechanics of reading are often negligent in reading the Bible, God's inspired, inerrant Word! It is as if the reading of Scripture has become “**a lost art.**” One of the reasons Luther was such an advocate of public education is that he knew people had to learn to read if they were going to be able to read and study the Bible. If we were able to take a wide-sweeping survey of church members, we would probably find that the greater majority do not regularly read their Bibles. Moreover, how many pastors actually take the time to read the Bible for their own edification? In addition to their sermon preparations and their preparations to teach classes, pastors should also read the Bible regularly. For example, by not regularly reading Scripture, it does not take long to become fuzzy on Old Testament history. Significantly, in the text above Paul instructed Timothy, “**Till I**

come, give attendance to reading.” He obviously meant the reading of Scripture. It is by such reading of Scripture that a pastor is able also to **“study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** (II Timothy 2:15)

Although our text, **“give attendance to reading,”** specifically addresses pastors, it can rightly be applied to all of us. How else can we comply with our Savior’s injunction, **“Search the scriptures...”** than by the reading of Scripture? Of course, the reading of Scripture takes time and therefore requires some self-discipline. How such reading is scheduled into one’s daily regimen must be left to the individual. Some like to rise early and “first thing” read the Bible. Others may prefer to read before they retire for the night. Many pastors will schedule their office work such that they use the first hour in the office simply to read the Bible for their own personal edification even before they begin sermon work or other preparations.

The regular reading of Scripture gives us a multitude of blessings which Scripture itself sets forth. Indeed, if one reads the longest Psalm in the Bible, Psalm 119, he will encounter verse after verse which sets forth the benefits of the Word and therefore the reasons why we should regularly read the Word. Consider the following sample verses from Psalm 119 and keep in mind that such words as **commandment, precept, law, ordinance, testimonies,** etc., are all synonyms for **the Word.**

- 1) **“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.”** (v.1)
- 2) **“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.”** (v.6)
- 3) **“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”** (v.9)
- 4) **“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”** (v.11)
- 5) **“I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.”** (v.16)
- 6) **“Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.”** (v.23)
- 7) **“Thy testimonies also are my delight and my**

counsellors.” (v.24)

- 8) **“My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.” (v.28)**
- 9) **“So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.” (v.42)**
- 10) **“This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.” (v.50)**
- 11) **“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (v.103)**
- 12) **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (v.105)**

You are encouraged to look up this Psalm to read it in its entirety. You will find many more verses like the above which extol the Word and which delineate the blessings which are ours just by reading and meditating on the Word.

Indeed, what greater motivation can there be to read the Word than the Savior’s own words, **“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:31-32), and again, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”** (John 5:39)! Indeed, as we all have been taught, it is through the Word that the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. By means of the Law He shows us our sins and our continual need for our Savior. By means of the Gospel He comforts and assures our hearts that in Christ our crucified and risen Savior we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Also, by means of the Word, the Holy Spirit enables us to **“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”** (II Peter 3:18)

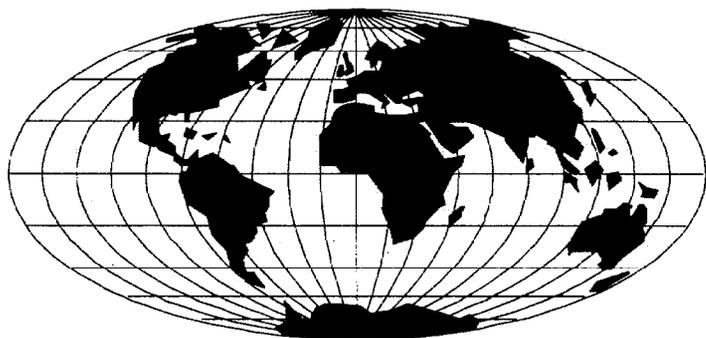
May we all join with the Psalmist who said, **“O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.”**

—E.R.S.

Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America delegates today approved a controversial unity pact with the Episcopal church that has been under discussion for decades. The vote was 716 to 317, or 69.3 percent approval, slightly exceeding the two-thirds (67 percent) margin needed for passage ... Under the “full communion” pact, the churches will recognize and share each other’s sacraments and clergy and cooperate in missionary projects ... Together, the churches have about 7.5 million members in 18,000 congregations. The agreement requires Lutherans to follow an ordination practice known as the historic episcopate: Each bishop is installed by a laying on of hands by three predecessor bishops from a line believed to extend back to Christ’s apostles ... Two years ago ... the ELCA delegates approved pacts with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Reformed Church in America and United Church of Christ ... Opponents said the Episcopal Church should be willing to take Lutherans as they are without requiring them to adopt the historic episcopate ... (Richard N. Ostling, AP Religion Writer)

Leave it to the ELCA! The liberals have taken over! The ELCA has already stated its agreement with the Roman Catholic Church on the doctrine of justification. In fact, on Oct. 31st in Augsburg, Germany, the ELCA president, H. George Anderson, together with Cardinal Edward Cassidy, head of the Vatican’s Christian Unity Council, will sign “The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of

Justification.” True Lutherans have always taught what God’s Word teaches, namely, that we are saved alone by the grace of God through faith in Jesus as our only Savior and not by our works (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8,9; Gal. 2:16). The Roman Catholic Church declares, “If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be accursed” (Council of Trent, Session VI, Canon 12). Even The Catholic Family News of July 1999 is honest enough to state, “Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the difference between the Catholic doctrine vs. the Lutheran teaching on justification will recognize immediately the impossibility of achieving a ‘common understanding’. The two teachings are diametrically opposed.” But this doesn’t seem to bother the ELCA. So also with their agreement with the Episcopal Church which endorsed same-sex relationships already back in 1989. The Episcopal Church and the ELCA should feel perfectly at home with one another, because both tolerate those who openly deny the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, that evolution is contrary to the Word of God, that Christ is the ONLY way to heaven, that Christ rose bodily from the grave, that abortion and homosexuality are sins, that women are forbidden to be pastors in the church, etc.



Kate Cheney survived the bombing of Dresden in 1945 by fleeing with her daughter from their apartment and later from their country. So 54 years and a terminal cancer diagnosis later, it’s not hard to see why Kate had trouble accepting a psychiatrist questioning her ability to make another crucial decision — to pursue her own death with physician-assisted suicide. But a psychiatrist could see that at 85, Kate’s short-term memory was fading. It appeared that dementia was setting in ... Kate’s story reveals the complex dynamics that can test families when using Oregon’s landmark law. And it provides the first public peek into the challenges that Oregon psychologists and psychiatrists face when called upon to be the gatekeepers to death ... Kate received her bottle of barbiturate capsules, two anti-nausea pills, a beta-blocker and some mouth-numbing lidocaine syrup on July 23 ... On Aug 29 ... Pat knelt at her grandma’s bedside, Richard, Pat’s husband, supported Kate on the bed in the crook of his arm. Erika

stood at her daughter's side, with her husband at Kate's feet. Pat explained that Kate must eat this mixture quickly and finish every drop. Kate ... purposefully shoveled down the applesauce one mouthful after another ... Bob passed out the glasses of Liebfraumilch wine his mother-in-law requested. They raised and clinked their glasses with hers. Kate took a sip. After a while, Kate's breathing became erratic. Color and warmth drained from her face. Within an hour, she died. (*The Sunday Oregonian*, Oct. 17, 1999)

Our lives have been given to us by God who is the author of life. "He giveth to all life, and breath" ... "for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:25,28). We must confess with Job, "Thine hands have made me" ... "Thou hast granted me life" (10:8,11). God has given us the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13) to protect our lives which are a sacred trust from Him. Therefore the argument: "my body belongs to me and I can do with it as I please" as advocated by the abortionists and proponents for legalized suicide reveals their arrogance. For us to take another's life or even our own life is plainly forbidden by God, and if we should become guilty we forfeit our life at the hand of the God-appointed executioner — the State (Gen. 9:6; Matt. 26:52; Rom. 13:4). The Lord does not leave it in our hands as to when our life is to be terminated. When Job was told of the death of his children he exclaimed, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away" (1:21). For us arbitrarily to take our own life is contrary to God's Word. What about the argument: "I am going to die anyway. This way I won't have to endure all the pain and suffering and not be a burden on others." Such specious argumentation does not stand in the light of God's Word. For us to end our life based on our view of the quality of life presumptuously arrogates to ourself God's right and plunges us into everlasting despair. Look at the above example! No mention of repentance, forgiveness, prayer for strength to await God's help and deliverance; instead, the exaltation of man's perverted reason.

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, Illinois 60452-4913

Non-Profit Organization
U. S. Postage
PAID
Seattle, Washington
Permit No. 2649

Change Service Requested

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHURCH DIRECTORY

See our web site at: www.concordialutheranconf.com

FAITH EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

2620 Francis Street
Jackson, MI 49203 (517) 787-1411
Sunday School and Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
REV. ROSS A. MAHAN, Pastor
2175 Pioneer Drive
Jackson, MI 49201 (517) 750-3946

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730 (520) 721-7618
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 (520) 721-7618

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452 (708) 532-4288
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 (708) 532-9035

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 (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

55th Ave. S & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, WA 98178 (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 (206) 723-7418

Note: Services are also held in Victoria, British Columbia on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class 11:15 a.m.
REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279 (605) 938-4710

E-MAIL DIRECTORY

Rev. Paul R. Bloedel.....stluke@connectexpress.com
Rev. Mark W. Dierking.....dierking@tnics.com
Rev. Ross A. Mahan.....rmahan@voyager.net
Rev. David T. Mensing.....peace@orbitel.com
Rev. M. L. Natterer.....mlnatterer@dnc.net
Rev. E. R. Stallings.....stallings@freewwweb.com