

The
Concordia  *Lutheran*

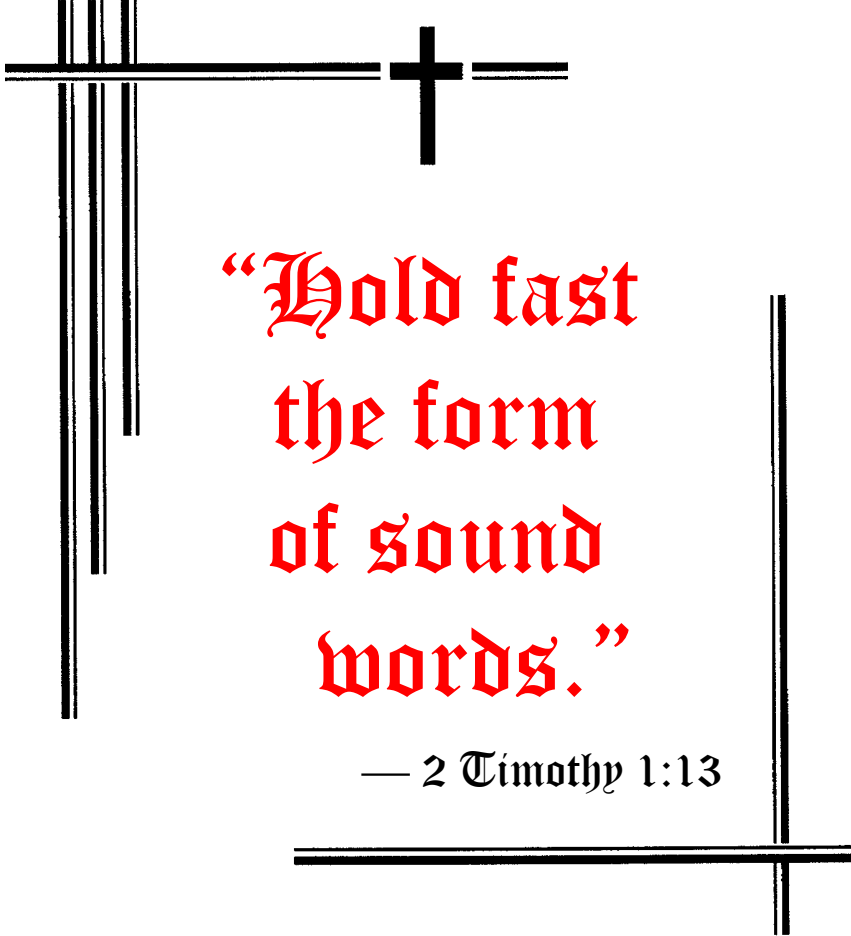
“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

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

Vol. LIV

September—October 2009

Nos. 9–10



“Hold fast
the form
of sound
words.”

— 2 Timothy 1:13



"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.
"My Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path." Psalm 119:105.

Vol. LIV September - October 2009 Nos. 7-8

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

The Concordia Lutheran Editor

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

Book and Tract Editor

The Rev. Robert J. Lietz
233 North Cuyler Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302

Lay Member:

Mr. Jason A. Mabe
2852 S. Western Avenue
Park Forest, IL 60466

Address subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, 17151 S. 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:

The Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

VICE PRESIDENT:

The Rev. Edward J. Worley
5350 South Fountain Street
Seattle, WA 98178

SECRETARY:

The Rev. Paul E. Bloedel
22012 Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411

TREASURER:

Mr. Robert G. Bloedel
10017 - 61st 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 false church body, 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.

www.concordialutheranconf.com

Scripture Alone – The Foundation of Our Faith

“Be ye followers of God as dear children.” —Ephesians 5:1

We often speak of ourselves, referring to our Lutheran heritage, as “children of the Reformation,” as those who are, by God’s grace alone, the beneficiaries of Luther’s monumental work of returning outward Christendom to the foundation of faith. That foundation is, according to the clear and unmistakable words of Holy Writ, “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20) upon which Christ’s church is “*built*” (Ephesians 2:20), the foundation to which our “*hope*” is anchored, “*both sure and steadfast*” (Hebrews 6:19), the only source and norm (or standard) of Christian doctrine and practice. Indeed, the “formal principle” of the Reformation, the basic premise upon which Luther’s work was grounded (and upon which we by the grace of God still stand today) is *sola Scriptura* — *Scripture alone*. It is this principle of Scripture itself (German: *das Schriftprinzip*) which establishes the absolute reliability of what we believe and teach, profess and practice, because it acknowledges the infallible and immutable, verbally-inspired **Word of God** as the only legitimate source of spiritual truth (John 8:31-32; 17:17) and the only reliable standard against which all teaching and practice is to be judged (I Corinthians 14:37; II Timothy 1:13; Romans 16:17; etc.).

Ironically, as a loyal son of the Roman Catholic Church in his early days, Luther himself had accepted the authority of **Rome** already since early childhood and throughout his formal education. **Rome’s** authority was that claimed by the Papacy to set, to declare, and even to develop its dogmas — its formal statements of doctrine and practice — according to a much *different standard*, the standard referred to by the Roman Church as “sacred tradition,” including but not limited to Holy Scripture (as interpreted by “Holy Mother Church”). Rome also regards as sources and norms of doctrine and practice the apocryphal books of the Old and New Testaments, the writings of the ancient church fathers, and the pronouncements, decrees and encyclicals of “**the Church**,” that is, of the popes and their councils — **all of which together** determine what is to be taught and believed by Ro-

man Catholics, *extra*-Scriptural sources, “*the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9).

Not surprisingly the doctrines, laws and practices of Rome brought Luther no peace of mind or of conscience with God but kept him in a state of constant fear and uncertainty regarding his sins, his unworthiness in the sight of God, and his lot in eternity. Only through his study of **the Bible** was Luther brought by the Holy Spirit “*to the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4), to confidence in God’s mercy, who justifies poor sinners alone by His grace for Christ’s sake, totally apart from the works of the Law (Romans 3:20-28). It also gave him the assurance that whatever is taught, believed and practiced according to the perfect rule of **SCRIPTURE ALONE** is “most certainly **true**” (Cf. John 8:31-32), the phrase with which he concluded his explanations of all three articles of the Apostles’ Creed. On the other hand, all doctrines of **men**, whether they can be shown to be contrary to Scripture or whether they are mere *adiaphora* [matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God’s Word] craftily disguised as the will of *God* (Romans 16:18; Ephesians 4:14; etc.) and laid upon the consciences of God’s people as *His* commandments (Matthew 15:9), must be rejected as “lying and deceiving by God’s Name” —**false** and **pernicious** doctrine.

It was the God-given principle of “*sola Scriptura*” to which Luther steadfastly held when he was summoned to appear at a meeting of the Imperial Parliament on April 16, 1521. There in the city of **Worms** [pronounced *vohrms*] on the Rhine River, Emperor Charles V, princes and dukes of the empire, and representatives of Pope Leo X had assembled to demand that Luther take back all his writings in which he had criticized Rome, accused it of false teachings, and condemned its abusive practices. So as not to appear personally arrogant and defiant, Luther asked for one day’s time to consider the demand and to prepare his response. On April 18th, surrounded by copies of books and pamphlets he had written and in full view of the “world,” as it turned out, Luther stood before the meeting and defended his writings in a lengthy speech, concluding with this mighty and uncompromising statement:

“Unless I can be prevailed upon by the testimonies of Scripture or by clear reasons —for I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone, who quite obviously have often erred and contradicted themselves— I cannot, nor do I want to, retract anything. I remain convinced by the Holy Scriptures I have cited, and my conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen.”

Historians disagree as to Luther's exact words on that momentous occasion, but one thing is certain: By God's grace and with His help, Luther took his stand upon **SCRIPTURE ALONE**. He stood resolutely upon "*the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone*" (Ephesians 2:20). He stood his ground, fully persuaded of the Scriptures' absolute infallibility, inerrancy, immutability, clarity, sufficiency and authority as **the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice** and fully convinced that unflinching **adherence** to that SINGLE STANDARD is the only legitimate mark of **genuine orthodoxy** (Jeremiah 23:28b; John 8:31-32).

As we would, of course, expect according to Scripture itself (I Peter 5:8-9; etc.), Satan has not been content to sit idly on the sidelines and to leave the "children of the Reformation" unmolested. What should have been and could have remained a revitalized and doctrinally-focused Lutheran communion, solidly anchored on the *Schriftprinzip*, "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (I Corinthians 1:10) was "*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they [lay] in wait to deceive*" (Ephesians 4:14), at Satan's behest, "*the very elect*" — if that had been possible (Matthew 24:24). Like a paper boat on a breezy pond, the church that had been freed from the tyranny of the Pope by the Holy Spirit through the Word in Luther's Reformation was set upon by "winds of change" and was tossed to and fro over the next five centuries by a series of "isms," movements among "thinkers," philosophers, and "theologians" falsely so-called, which drove the "children of the Reformation" aground upon the rocks of disunity, false doctrine, and spiritual destruction! Those "isms" worked like gangrene (II Timothy 2:17) to destroy even the *certainty of salvation* by undermining the simple Christian's confidence in Holy Scripture as the only source and norm of doctrine and practice (Cf. Romans 16:18)! Along came the "isms," one by one, and set upon the sleepy, unwary virgins (cf. Matthew 25:1ff.), sucking the oil of the pure Gospel out of their lamps and replacing it with so much "hot air"! — Pietism, subjectivism, rationalism, mysticism, fundamentalism, liberalism, higher criticism, relativism, pessimism, accommodationism, unionism, syncretism, sinful separatism, ecumenism, and even conservatism (whatever that means, depending upon what is being "conserved") and confessionalism (which more often than not gives lip service to the Lutheran Confessions without true orthodoxy in doctrine and practice).

Tragically, the wide divergency of doctrinal positions among those to-

day who bear Luther's name is ample testimony to the fact that the "formal principle" is no longer adhered to with any consistency. In some "Lutheran" bodies it has actually *disappeared*. Concerning those, nothing more need really be said. They are what they are; they don't even pretend to be Scripture-centered. In other bodies, the confession of *sola Scriptura* exists *in name only*, while opposing factions within the body debate historical and social contexts, exegetical differences, textual variants in the manuscripts of Scripture, the viewpoints of "the fathers," what Luther, Chemnitz, Quenstedt, Walther and others said about this or that, and so-called "practical considerations" in order to find loopholes, exceptions, special circumstances, and "divine" or "apostolic" precedent to justify their differences. In the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, for example, the once-orthodox church-body of Walther, Pieper, and other staunch confessors of the truth, we now see an outward fellowship of really strange bedfellows: "Liberals," "moderates," "conservatives," and "confessionals" differing with one another, even *openly*, in doctrine and practice but maintaining a **guise of unity** in an effort to "save Synod" each from the other. Such a farcical circus with its non-stop posturing only deceives the simple and unwary into believing that doctrinal discipline (*Brief Statement*, ¶29) is actually being maintained on the basis of Scripture while allowing some room for "reasonable diversity" among Christians. So-called "conservatives" and "confessionals" continue to "mark" error and errorists, but they never "avoid them" (Romans 16:17). They "admonish" heretics, but they never "reject" them (Titus 3:10). They claim to "stand fast" (I Corinthians 16:13) upon *sola Scriptura* so long as they are not forced to choose between Scripture and their membership in Synod, or their pastorate, or their synodical pension! Such theological "whimps" are hardly what **Luther** would have called "conservatives" or "confessionals," who wrote:

And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife,
let these all be gone! They yet have nothing won!
The Kingdom ours remaineth!

Similar lip-service to *sola Scriptura* is rendered in other church bodies which call themselves "Lutheran" but tolerate diversity in doctrine and practice out of a false concept of "love" to the erring, OR on the basis of an arbitrary distinction between "doctrines divisive of fellowship" and "doctrines NOT divisive of fellowship." Who is kidding whom?? The Lord declares through Jeremiah: "*He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully*" (23:28), and through Amos: "*Can two walk to-*

gether except they be **agreed**??” (3:3). In Leviticus 19, God Himself shows how we are to demonstrate love to an erring brother, saying: “*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou **shalt** in any wise **rebuke** thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him.*” Unpopular though it be nowadays to engage in *polemics*, that is, to refute false doctrine, to admonish the erring, to reject and avoid those who will not heed correction, to take a “stand” and to make it count regardless of the consequences, this is what **Scripture demands** of every faithful Christian, pastor and layman alike! (Matthew 10:19ff.; II Timothy 4:2ff.).

By God’s grace, we in our beloved Conference have stood foursquare on **Scripture alone** down through the years, recognizing the **Word of God** as the **sole determiner** of what is preached and taught in our churches, practiced among us, committed to students in our seminary, printed in our position papers and in our *Concordia Lutheran*, and agreed to in meetings with other groups whose stance we must carefully examine (I John 4:1). “**Not unto US, O Lord, not unto US, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy Truth’s sake!**” (Psalm 115:1). Indeed it is not to **our** credit personally or collectively that **Scripture alone** has been and continues to be the **sole source and norm** of what we stand for; but the Lord in His great mercy and according to His promise has preserved His precious Word to us in these latter days, His Word in its **truth and purity** —a blessing for which we are grateful beyond expression.

As was the case with Luther, however, our standing fast upon Scripture’s sure foundation has not been without cost. Over the past fifty-eight years in our beloved Conference, there has been tribulation, controversy, slow and meager growth in numbers, and even sudden defection of once-stalwart confessors of the truth. Some of these were *pastors* who, out-of-the-blue, **reversed themselves** in doctrine and practice and left our fellowship, in some cases joining the very heterodox church bodies which for many years they had *marked* as such on the basis of *sola Scriptura* and, in obedience to its clear injunctions, had *avoided* (Romans 16:17). Some took entire congregations with them; some split their congregation in the process, leaving only remnants of their former membership to carry on; and some, in spite of their often insidious efforts, gained no adherents among their people. By the grace of God, sheep who stood on “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20) did not go after them, recognizing their voice to be the voice of “*a stranger*” (John 10:4-5) who was speaking “*divers and strange doc-*

trines” (Hebrews 13:9) in cunningly devised “*good words and fair speeches*” (Romans 16:18) intent on deceiving them.

Imagine, if you can, the cries of disbelief and dismay, the tears of sadness and anguish of heart, the just anger and resentment at having been betrayed, had **Martin Luther** in his later years *recanted* all his writings, sought the counsel and favor of the Pope, taken a colloquy in the Church of Rome, and returned to the spiritual “Babylon” from whence he had been so mercifully delivered many years before! His courageous stand before the Diet at Worms would have been for nothing; and Solomon’s words in Proverbs 26:11 would well apply to him: “*As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.*” Why the sudden shift in position on the part of these former brethren? It was because they did not “*stand fast and hold the traditions which [they had] been taught*” (II Thessalonians 2:15). Instead, as victims of their own pride, they ventured *off* the sure foundation of *sola Scriptura*, lost their spiritual footing, stumbled, fell, and ended up in the quicksand of error and ignorance!

Not only pastors, however, but also many laymen over the years became victims of spiritual ignorance **after** having been *carefully instructed* in the precious doctrines of Holy Writ (II Thessalonians 2:15; I John 2:24; II Timothy 4:2; etc.), **after** having *understood* and *apprehended* them (II Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 1:18; 5:17; Colossians 1:9; 2:2; II Timothy 2:7; I John 5:20; Romans 6:17; Hebrews 10:26); and **after** having *confessed* them before men at the time of their Confirmation (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Romans 10:9; II Timothy 1:8). Many, either ignoring or directly opposing the doctrine which they had learned, and contrary to the words of Holy Scripture, “*went back and walked no more with [their Savior]*” (John 6:66) on the sure pathways of His Word (John 8:31-32). They sinfully separated themselves from true brethren and forsook the fellowship of orthodoxy in which, by God’s grace, they had been established.

What *happened*? How could such apostasy have *occurred*? Some literally starved their faith by refusing to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of [their] Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:18) and became so weak that they lost what they once had learned and regressed in their knowledge of God’s Word to the point that, like “*babes*” requiring a milk diet, they practically needed to start “*from scratch*” in Christian education (Cf. Hebrews 5:12-14; also Ephesians 4:14). For such, Bible Class on Sunday morning was an “option” that

they refused to exercise; so were instructional classes during the week. Regular Bible study in the family circle was non-existent. The children's attendance at Sunday School was sporadic, their memory work neglected, and their Confirmation Class assignments chronically unprepared. They, like so many, suffered from a kind of "spiritual anorexia" — imagining themselves to be "fat," refusing to take in nourishment, and finally being unable to digest either "milk" or "strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12).

Others were "led away with the error of the wicked" (II Peter 3:17), contrary to better knowledge following after the "good words and fair speeches" of a false prophet (Romans 16:18) who told them what they wanted to hear (II Timothy 4:3). And still others, following the inclinations of the flesh, in their self-imposed ignorance and instability wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction (II Peter 3:16) by *twisting* them to suit their own agendas and finally, in some instances, convinced themselves in an erring conscience that they were right. — Where are they TODAY? Some wandered into heterodox Lutheran church bodies, some joined sectarian churches, some don't attend church anymore *anywhere*, and some became outright heathen and have no spiritual life at all! They "receive[d] the grace of God in vain" (II Corinthians 6:1) and even "believed in vain" (I Corinthians 15:2) by not keeping in memory the pure Word of God that had been preached to them.

In spite of such tragic losses, however, "the Lord hath done **great things** for us, whereof we are **glad!**" (Psalm 126:3). He has graciously preserved to us and our children His precious Word in its truth and purity and has strengthened us through that Word to ever greater steadfastness in building upon its **sure foundation**. Let us be wary, however, lest Satan lift **us** up with pride to despise the Word as **our** only authority and cause **us** to fall! Rather, let each of us, pastor and layman alike, "**hold fast the form of sound words**" (II Timothy 1:13), growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who assures us: "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). For then and only then will we be enabled by the Holy Spirit through that very Word to declare with Luther: "**Here**, on God's pure Word, **I stand!** By His abiding grace, **I cannot do otherwise!** **God help me**, as He has promised! **Amen!**" Then and only then will we be able to declare with boldness, confidence, and shamelessness with our orthodox fathers in the *Formula of Concord* (1580):

We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ. (*Triglotta, Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration XI, p. 1095.*)

To that blessed end we pray with the hymnwriter:

*Lord, keep us in **Thy Word**, we pray!
The guile and rage of Satan stay!
E'er let us in **its** power confide,
that we may seek no other guide!*

(*TLH 292, adapted*)

—D. T. M.





RIGHTLY JUDGING THE WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

(Part II of Two Parts)

“Judge righteous judgment.” —John 7:24b

Introduction

Many today think and confess that “**all** judging is wrong.” This is not the thinking and confession of the Holy Scriptures. They carefully and precisely distinguish between that judging which is indeed wrong, that is, sinful and to be avoided, and that judging which is good, namely, right and therefore to be practiced in our lives. Scripture draws that clear distinction in **all** areas of life, including judging, when St. Paul, for example, teaches us to “*abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good*” (Romans 12:9). The Psalmist teaches us the same, very important distinction for **all** of this earthly life, which surely includes judging, when it says to us in these easy-to-understand words: “*Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile; depart from evil, and do good*” (Psalm 34:13-14). And in Ephesians 4, Paul repeats, in essence, this distinction in these pointed words: “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor*” (v. 25). So Holy Scripture does not in any way condone nor does it give its support to the erroneous thinking that “**all** judging is wrong.”

The “theme” verse for this article (as well as for all of our “*Rightly Judging*” articles) is a changeless command from the Lord Jesus; it is a divine expression of His will for us to observe: “**Judge righteous judgment**” (John 7:24b). Jesus originally spoke these words to those who were “*angry*” with Him because He had healed a man “*on the Sabbath day*” (v. 23; see also 5:5-9); the Savior spoke these words to those who wanted to “*kill*” Him (7:19b); He spoke these words to those who had falsely accused Him of having “*a devil*” (v. 20a). He warned them: “*Judge not according to the appearance*” (v. 24a); they were not to keep on judging Him on the basis of **how things appeared to them**. Rather, they were to “*judge righteous judgment,*” as we, too, are to “*judge righteous judgment,*” not to posture ourselves as being righteous, not merely to be found on the “righteous” side of a controversy,

but **to teach and to uphold the precious teachings of God's Holy Word**, both Law and Gospel, "for the salvation of men and the honor of God" (C. G. Hofmann, quoted by Ludwig Fuerbringer in his *Theological Hermeneutics*, 1924), inasmuch as *false* doctrine, as spiritual leaven (Galatians 5:9), brings precious souls into jeopardy of salvation (Romans 16:18; II Timothy 2:17-18; I Timothy 4:16). To this truly "righteous" end the love of Christ, our Savior, should always constrain us (II Corinthians 5:14).

Summary of Part I

(From the September-October 2008 *Concordia Lutheran*, pages 161-168)

Up until the early 1900's, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (W.E.L.S.), by God's grace, let **the Scriptures interpret themselves**. It did not allow for any human "*private interpretation*" (II Peter 1:20) of God's Word. It submissively (II Corinthians 10:5) conformed its doctrine and practice to those clear Bible passages which neither need nor permit of any interpretation, the *sedes doctrinae* or "seats of doctrine," the bare, nude Scripture proof-passages, the "rule," the standard, the analogy of faith ("*It is written*," Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Under God's rich blessing, this position of bearing witness to, supporting, and defending the **unchanging, Scripture doctrine and practice** was "spearheaded" by Dr. Adolf Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod's leading dogmatician (professor of *dogmatics*, that is, of the systematic presentation of Scripture doctrine or teaching), and president of its seminary from 1866-1908. In the first volume of his *Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*, Dr. Hoenecke left behind for us this unequivocal, simple and clear confession: "Besides Scripture we do not need any helps or any helper, exegete, interpreter, as modern theology so frequently asserts" (page 415).

Shortly before and then following Dr. Hoenecke's death in 1908, the **change** in the W.E.L.S. began to be evident with the arrival of three new professors for the W.E.L.S.' Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, seminary: John P. Koehler (served from 1900 to 1929), August Pieper (served from 1902 to 1943), and John Schaller (served from 1908 to 1920). What was the change? **The change was that *dogmatics* was demoted, and *exegesis* was promoted.**

Truly Scriptural *dogmatics*, the systematic presentation of **Bible doctrine**, is as changeless as God Himself; "*for God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He*

not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). The teachings of Scripture keep teaching the same thing; they leave no “wobble-room” for change, for development, for “new” insights, for “new” understanding; and therefore truly Scriptural *dogmatics* is not a fluid but a **static** presentation, the Scripture-grounded, bedrock-solid and indispensable foundation of sacred theology.

Any teaching or doctrine which **opposes** or is **contrary to the doctrine**, that is, the **teaching, of Scripture** (which is the *foundation* of saving faith, the *rule* of faith, the *standard* of faith, the *analogy* of faith, the *clear words* of God Himself which reveal what is to be taught in His Church), is **false doctrine**; it is a **lie**; it is **not of God**; and it is to be **rejected, abhorred, and avoided** (I Timothy 6:3-5; Romans 12:9; 16:17-18).

What is *exegesis*? **True, genuine, in-awe-of-Scripture exegesis** is the taking out of the words of Scripture only what God has clearly put into them, only what God has clearly revealed in them, only what God has clearly made known in those words, nothing more and nothing less (Deuteronomy 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19), **without any human injections, without any human opinions or conclusions, and without any human distortion**, ever remembering that these are **God’s words, and not our own** to do with as we please, to satisfy our own reason, our own intellect, and our own thinking (II Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, true, genuine exegetes, those who carry out true, genuine *exegesis*, are to speak and write what God has spoken and written in His Holy Word, conducting themselves as the faithful mouthpieces (I Peter 4:11; Jeremiah 23:28b; Acts 4:20), the faithful instruments (Luke 10:16; II Corinthians 5:20), and the faithful servants of God (I Corinthians 4:1; II Corinthians 4:5).

In the first part of our article, as proof of the **change** in the Wisconsin Synod, namely, the **change** of *dogmatics* being **demoted** and *exegesis* being **promoted** (shortly before and then following Dr. Hoenecke’s death), documented testimony was given from the writings of Professor August Pieper, of Professor John P. Koehler, and from the *Wisconsin Theological Quarterly*.

Part II

Now, in Part II, we will set forth from the Word of God (Psalm 119:104-105) and hear from the Word of God (Luke 11:28; John 10:27) what *God* has graciously revealed to us on **the doctrine of the church**,

especially concerning the local congregation, in clear Bible passages WHICH NEITHER NEED NOR PERMIT OF ANY INTERPRETATION (*sedes doctrinae*), for the Scriptures interpret themselves. (We had also planned on dealing with **the doctrine of the public ministry**, the **pastoral office**, as taught by the W.E.L.S. contrary to Scripture; but this present article on the church will already be longer than initially anticipated by the writer.) In contrast, we will also set forth the different-from-Scripture position on the doctrine of the church as taught, confessed, and defended in and by the W.E.L.S. officially since 1962 (*The Northwestern Lutheran*, April 8, 1962) on the basis of exegetical procedure which, according to their practice, trumps dogmatics.

In *A Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, there is a precise, accurate, and faithful summation of the Scriptural doctrine of the church, especially concerning the local congregation (pages 8-10). We now place before you, the reader, this summation:

In Scripture, the word “*church*” is used in TWO different religious senses. On the one hand, it is used to designate the **Communion of Saints**, Christ’s spiritual body, consisting of all and only true believers in Him as their Savior. Since true faith in the heart cannot be seen, the membership of this Church is invisible to men and known only to God. Hence the Communion of Saints is often called the **Invisible Church**. (**Bible References:** Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 5:25-27; II Timothy 2:19; Luke 17:20-21.)

The Bible also uses the word “*church*” in speaking of **local Christian congregations**. This, of course, does not mean that there are two different kinds of churches; for the local congregation, **as GOD sees it**, consists only of the believers in it. But the word “*church*” in Scripture also designates local congregations **as MEN see them**, that is, where immediate membership is determined (and can only be determined) by profession of faith. In such *visible* churches or congregations there may, of course, also be hypocrites or pretend-Christians who masquerade as believers. This mixed body is the “*church*” with which we mortals must deal when, for example, we preach, teach, exhort, admonish, and comfort. It is this church, this visible local congregation, to which the Savior refers when He says: “*Tell it unto the church*” (Matthew 18:15-17). (**Bible References:** I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Matthew 13:47-48; 22:2, 11; Revelation 1:11;

III John 9-10.)

According to Scripture, it is God's will and ordinance that Christians establish and maintain local churches **a)** for the regular hearing and learning of His Word as it is proclaimed by their divinely-called pastors; **b)** for the regular celebration of the Lord's Supper under the loving watchfulness of the flock's own overseer (inasmuch as the Holy Supper according to Scripture is to be celebrated only in the context of the local congregation); **c)** for the continuous exercise of the duties of Christian fellowship and love; and **d)** for the careful, evangelical exercise of church discipline in obedience to Christ's command. (**Bible References:** Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3; I Corinthians 11:23-29; Hebrews 10:23-25; Colossians 3:15-16; Matthew 18:15-17.)

Scripturally speaking, therefore, the "*church*" in the local sense is **NOT** just any chance gathering of Christians, nor a gathering of Christians at different places, nor a gathering of Christians without the specific and consistent public function of the Keys. (Examples of such gatherings are: Fellowship socials, ladies' societies and youth groups, summer camps, conventions, pastoral conferences, and so on.) The church, that is, the local visible congregation, may gather together regularly and consistently in various ways for the preaching, teaching, hearing, and learning of God's Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the carrying out of the business of the church, including the final stage of church discipline. If such gatherings are, by their nature, intended only for a certain group within the local congregation, such as certain Bible classes, confirmation instruction classes, even seminary classes, or whatever other form such gatherings may take, these must not be confused or identified with the local congregation itself, neither do they in themselves constitute local congregations or churches. However, in the light of Holy Scripture, it must be understood that the Voters' Assembly, as the decision-making body within the congregation, composed only of men, is rightly called "*the church*" because Christ Himself has committed the leadership and decision-making power to the men of the congregation. In the local sense the word "*church*" is used only of the **LOCAL CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION**, which, in its visible form, is the only divinely-ordained external fellowship.

All other uses of the word "*church*" are of human origin and usage, such as the designation of a building, a denomination, a synod or conference, and a non-Christian cult (*The Church of Jesus*

Christ of Latter Day Saints, The Church of Christ Scientist, etc.). Synods and conferences, therefore, are not so-called “super-churches” with the combined church-power of all their member congregations, nor are they churches at all in the Scriptural usage, but are rather humanly-devised organizations *of* churches, established *by* local churches in their liberty for the purpose of carrying out joint endeavors and projects which may be difficult for an individual church to handle locally. (**Bible References:** Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-3; Revelation 1-3; Matthew 18:15-17; I Timothy 2:12-14; I Corinthians 14:34ff.)

The previous five paragraphs are a Scriptural summation of the doctrine of the church, with special emphasis on the local congregation. Now, we want to examine what the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod teaches, confesses, and defends concerning the doctrine of the church. The following are just a few public W.E.L.S. testimonies:

It would be granted by those who are in any way familiar with and interested in the theology of the Wauwatosa faculty that the **one doctrinal change** or refinement that was introduced and adopted by all was **the altered understanding of the doctrine of church and ministry**. Previously, Wisconsin theologians had agreed fully with the view held by the Missouri Synod that the local congregation was the one form of the church that existed by divine command. **A shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church** developed in the thinking of Wisconsin’s theologians after 1904. (Westerhaus, Martin O., Compiling Editor, Curtis A. Jahn, *The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message*, Volume I: “The Wauwatosa Theology,” Northwestern Publishing House, 1997, p. 53). [Emphasis added].

Take careful note: It is very significant that, **prior to 1904**, the W.E.L.S. teaching and confession on the doctrine of the church was the **Scriptural teaching**. The “Wauwatosa faculty [of the seminary]” referred to in the quotation above were Professors J. P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller. For more information on these three men and their tragic, far-reaching promotion of “one doctrinal change” and “the altered understanding of the doctrine of church and ministry, ...a shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church,” examine Part I of “*Rightly Judging the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*” in the September-October 2008 issue of *The Concordia Lutheran*, especially pages 165-168. August Pieper stated: “Wherever on earth there are two or more believ-

ers, there is a congregation” (Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, Vol. I: “The Wauwatosa Theology,” p. 55).

Take careful note: There is absolutely no clear Scriptural proof passage, no *sedes* (no seat or foundation of doctrine), for the A. Pieper statement above; it is humanly-invented nonsense; it is an **un**Scriptural declaration. If this Pieper statement was intended to paraphrase Matthew 18:20, it grossly missed the mark. Matthew 18, verse 20 says: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” The words of this verse do **not** say: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there is a congregation.” And what about the context of verse 20? In verse 17, Jesus tells us: “And if he shall neglect to hear **them** [the “two or three witnesses” in verse 16], tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Why would the two or three need to tell it “**unto the church**” if they already *were* the church? This is a striking example of how false doctrine, on the basis of careless and even manipulative exegesis, literally (and obviously) opposes true, sound, Scripture doctrine!

Given the statement quoted above, it is not surprising that Professor August Pieper expands upon it and draws the following anti-Scriptural conclusions: “A synodical assembly **is** a congregation in the actual sense of the word. [and]...If the synod **is** church in the true sense of the word, then it not only possesses the keys, but ought and must use them with its members” (Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, Vol. I: “The Wauwatosa Theology,” pp. 55-56). [Emphasis added].

Take careful note: There is absolutely and positively **NOTHING** in Scripture which teaches that “synod is church in the true sense of the word.” Synods, denominations, and conferences are not “churches at all in the Scriptural usage, but are rather humanly-devised organizations **of** churches, established **by** local churches in their liberty for the purpose of carrying out joint endeavors and projects which may be difficult for an individual church to handle locally” (*A Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, page 10).

What was the reaction in the W.E.L.S. to this “**one doctrinal change**,” this “**altered understanding of the doctrine of the church**” and “**a shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church**”? *The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, page 56, gives us the answer to this question: “At first, the view that the synod is truly church and has authority to exer-

cise the keys faced considerable opposition and many questions within the synod. But as Koehler [J. P.] notes, the three Wauwatosa men [Professor Koehler himself, plus Professors August Pieper and John Schaller] stood shoulder to shoulder on this matter, and in time their *Amtslehre* [their official teaching as seminary professors] was accepted by the whole synod.”

When did this take place? Although the Wauwatosa professors had been teaching this for some time, some in the Missouri Synod, though concerned that this position might eventually become Wisconsin’s official teaching, regarded it as an anomaly, a kind of “glitch” in the synod’s position, a “casual intrusion of error,” and that the synod, “by means of doctrinal discipline,” would combat the error and eventually remove it (*Brief Statement*, ¶29). However, the Wisconsin Synod’s *Commission on Doctrinal Matters* publicly released its presentation on the doctrine of the Church initially in the May 7, 1961, issue of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, the official organ of the synod. But, following some criticism that “the presentation appeared to be deficient in failing to dwell directly on the unique and vital task of the Church, namely that of proclaiming and administering the Gospel to others for the growth of the Church” (Carl Lawrenz, Chairman, Commission on Doctrinal Matters, quoted in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, April 8, 1962, p. 103), the Commission resolved at its meeting in February, 1962, to have the “entire presentation appear in *The Northwestern Lutheran*” (*Ibid.*). That **official publication** of the “entire presentation” was thereupon printed in the synod’s official organ in its April 8, 1962 issue, pages 103-105.

Judging “*righteous judgment*” with respect to the Wisconsin Synod’s *officially changed doctrine* and therefore *heterodox* (“different doctrine” – Cf. Romans 16:17; I Timothy 1:3b; etc.) position, we cite the *Brief Statement* of 1932, ¶29: “The orthodox character of a church is established...by the doctrine which is actually taught...in its theological seminaries, and in its publications.”

Take careful note: This acceptance, in the end, “by the whole synod,” was exactly contrary to what the Word of God teaches us concerning what is to be the Christian’s reaction to false doctrine. St. Paul writes: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:17-18). We find the same instruction in I

Timothy 6: “If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to Godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, ...from such withdraw thyself” (vv. 3-5).

Conclusion

1. The “one doctrinal change,” namely, “the altered understanding of the church and ministry” and “a shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church **developed in the thinking of Wisconsin’s theologians** after 1904” (*The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, page 53; emphasis added). Let us remember that this Volume I, along with Volumes II and III, was published in 1997 by W.E.L.S.’ own publishing arm, *Northwestern Publishing House*. As we have shown in this article, this “doctrinal change,” this “altered understanding” and “shift in understanding” did indeed develop “in the thinking of Wisconsin’s theologians after 1904,” especially in the three Wauwatosa seminary professors, J. P. Koehler, A. Pieper, and J. Schaller. This “doctrinal change,” “altered understanding” and “shift in understanding” did **not** come from the clear revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures; it did **not** come from “*It is written*” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

2. It is not only true that this “doctrinal change,” “altered understanding” and “shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church” did **not** come from “*It is written*” (Matthew 4), but it is also true that this “doctrinal change,” “altered understanding” and “shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church” is **contrary to “It is written.”** Therefore, this **different** doctrine (*heterodoxy*) is **false** doctrine, which must be “*hate[d]*” (Psalm 119:104), “*abhor[red]*” (Romans 12:9), “*avoid [ed]*” (Romans 16:17), “*withdraw[n] from*” (I Timothy 6:5), and “*reject[ed]*” (Titus 3:10).

3. The statement by the W.E.L.S. professor, August Pieper, “Wherever on earth there are two or more believers, there is a congregation” (*The Wauwatosa Theology*, I, page 55), does not agree with Matthew 18:20, nor does it agree with the **Scriptural** teaching that the local Christian congregation, in its visible form, is the only divinely-instituted external fellowship, inasmuch as Scripture nowhere calls any other grouping of professing Christians a “church.” Every professing Christian family of at least two or three sitting around the kitchen table is not a congregation; a pastoral conference of at least two or three professing Christian pastors is not a congregation; a synodical convention with at least two

or three professing Christians in attendance is not a congregation. When Jesus, in the final stage or step of church discipline, says, “*Tell it unto the church*” (Matthew 18:17), He is not instructing us to tell it to the Communion of Saints, the One, Holy, Christian Church, which cannot be seen (Luke 17:20b), but He is instructing us to tell it to the local congregation, in its visible form. Furthermore, the Savior did not, in Matthew 18:17, say: “Tell it unto the synodical convention,” or “Tell it unto the pastoral conference,” or “Tell it unto the Christian family,” or “Tell it unto the youth group,” or to any chance gathering of two or more professing Christians.

4. This “one doctrinal change,” “altered understanding” and “shift in understanding on the doctrine of the church” is the direct result of allowing, and now supporting and promoting exegesis over doctrine, instead of supporting and promoting doctrine over exegesis. This tragic demotion of doctrine and the promotion of exegesis over doctrine are documented in Part I of “*Rightly Judging the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*” (*The Concordia Lutheran*, September-October 2008, page 161ff.). The doctrines of the Word of God are changeless, as God Himself is changeless (Malachi 3:6).

5. Error in doctrine and practice is extremely dangerous, both in its initial appearance and in its end result, even “*overthrow[ing] the faith of some*” (II Timothy 2:18b); and the Wisconsin Synod, by yielding to false doctrine regarding the church as set forth from within its own ranks (Acts 20:30), has placed its people in grave jeopardy! The once-casual intrusion of error, unrecognized and unremoved, has become the synod’s official position in doctrine and practice. “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Galatians 5:9). The Berean Christians set a Godly example for us, in “*that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). We fully expect everyone in our Conference fellowship to do the same; we urge all laypeople, pastors, and synodical leaders/workers in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod to do the same; we encourage **all** of our readers to do the same as did the Berean Christians, ever motivated only by the grace of God in Christ Jesus (I Corinthians 15:10; Titus 2:11-14; II Corinthians 5:14-15).

6. If you, the reader, desire more in-depth materials on the doctrine of the church, our Conference’s publishing arm, *Scriptural Publications*, has the following available in tract form: “*How the False Doctrine of the Church and Ministry (as taught by the WELS, CoLC, and in the*

ELS) Endangers Other Plain Teachings of the Bible, "A Catechism on the Doctrines of the Church and the Ministry," "This Scriptural Position We Still Hold," "The Doctrine of the Church," and "A Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference." Address your requests to *Scriptural Publications*, 17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452.

7. As we, with gratitude to our gracious God and Savior, draw near to another Reformation Festival, let us, in the on-going work of our respective local congregations, standing together in the fellowship of our Conference, confess: "Here we stand! 'We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth' (II Corinthians 13:8)." This "truth" most certainly includes all of the doctrines of Scripture (Acts 20:27; Matthew 28:20), especially the most important teaching of all, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. ...For He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:19, 21). May that "Word of reconciliation," that precious Gospel of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 8:9), continue to motivate us (II Corinthians 5:14), His dear "sheep" (John 10:27), gladly to hear and cheerfully to "continue" (II Timothy 3:14; John 8:31-32) to follow what He has taught us in and through His Word of "truth" (John 17:17), begging of Him again and again, and, at the same time, confessing to Him in our daily lives the words of the Psalmist: "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths; lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day" (Psalm 25:4-5).

— R. J. L.



*A Mighty
Fortress
Is Our
God*

Especially for our youth as they return to school...

Godly Communication in What We Say and Write

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”

— I Peter 3:10-11

We live in an age of unprecedented communication technology! With laptops and Bluetooth, personal communication through various small and portable devices, the Internet allowing instant messages and email (even during multi-player online games), texting, and such, a person can literally stay in touch with untold numbers of people (friends, relatives and strangers alike). As with any tool, technology can be used for good or for evil, to build up or to tear down, to glorify God or to promote Satan’s agenda!

As the new school year is now well underway, we have an opportunity to examine ourselves in our interaction with others. Some are long time friends, some are new acquaintances, and some are complete strangers. How have we been using **communication**? Have we used it for good or for evil? Have we employed it for “*the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers*” (Ephesians 4:29), or has our communication been “*corrupt*,” that is, rotten and unbecoming a Christian (Ephesians 5:3-4)? If it has been for evil and for destructive purposes, have we truly repented of that sinful behavior, knowing that it is an offense not only to our fellowmen but also to our just and holy God (Psalm 51:1-4; 17)? And have we then, as poor, wretched sinners, cast ourselves upon God’s mercy in Christ Jesus for pardon (Psalm 41:4; 86:3-4; Luke 18:13)? These questions of self-examination are of prime importance (II Corinthians 13:5a). Then we should also ask ourselves how we intend, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to “*bring forth fruits meet for repentance*” (Matthew 3:8) in true amendment of our lives to prove our repentance, our sincerity, and our faith (II Corinthians 13:5b). How may we amend the abuse even of technological communication, as well as what we say and write “the old fashioned way,” in order that we may first of all “*refrain [our] tongue from evil, and [our] lips...[from] guile, [and] eschew*” that is, abhor and avoid, “*evil*” (I Peter 3:10-11), and then, positively, that we may “*do good*” to glorify God (Romans 15:6) in a more consistent manner?

Our theme text speaks to *Godly* communication in our daily life. Do you want to “*love life*”? Do you desire to experience “*good days*”? God promises you such blessings as the undeserved reward of grace if, as the fruit and evidence of God-wrought faith in Christ Jesus, you live moved and motivated by Gospel power especially in this one particular area: **Godly** communication!

Our theme text declares: “*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it*” (I Peter 3:10-11). Note, first of all, that God calls upon true believers in Christ to *preventative action*, namely, refraining from the carnal, sinfully-natural, abuse of the tongue (James 3:5-10). We should preemptively prevent the misuse of the tongue, refraining our lips from evil and guile. All communication that is “*evil*,” troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive and harmful to ourselves and others, should be eliminated from our tongue. All that is “*guile*,” communication comprised of deceit and craft, dishonesty and trickery, should be entirely avoided. The restraining of our tongue and lips (whether we whisper, text, blog, or tweet) should start in the heart, the heart cleansed and renewed by God Himself (Psalm 51:10) as He sanctifies [in the narrower sense] those whom He has converted and enlightened, that is, brought to saving faith, by the Gospel (Romans 1:16; II Thessalonians 2:14; etc.). For when the heart of the child of God is filled with gratitude for His grace, forgiveness, life and salvation (Psalm 51:12), our Lord Jesus declares, “*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*” (Matthew 12:34-35).

By nature, everyone’s heart, totally depraved by sin and inclined only to evil, is corrupt (Psalm 14:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; I Corinthians 2:14; etc.); and there is neither the desire nor the ability in “*the carnal mind*” to please God (Romans 8:7-8). Even Christians, because of the perverse, sinful “*flesh*” which is in them (Romans 7:18), “*cannot do the things that [they] would [do]*” (Galatians 5:17) —*want to do* according to the **New Man**— because even their best works are wholly “*unclean*” and therefore inadequate to merit God’s favor (Isaiah 64:6; Genesis 32:10). Holy Writ declares the fleshly heart of man to be filled with evil and guile: “*Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts...wickedness, deceit...*” (Mark 7:21-22), “*being filled with all unrighteousness... wickedness... maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity,... whisperers*” (Romans 1:29). Sinful men are thus “*backbiters... spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things...*” (Romans 1:30). And if we Christians arrogantly deny that **we** are plagued by such sins of the flesh, we are deceiving ourselves and are lying both to ourselves and to God (I John 1:8).

Unable to save ourselves, unable to merit God's favor, unable to keep God's Law as He requires, we wretched sinners rely totally upon our Savior and His vicarious satisfaction of God's justice for redemption from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13). From Holy Scripture we know that Christ kept the entire Law of God perfectly in our stead and laid down His holy life before God in satisfaction of His requirement that we be holy (Leviticus 19:2; Romans 5:19; Romans 3:21-24, 10:4; I Corinthians 1:30-31), and that He paid the full penalty of all our sins (including all sins of heart and tongue), "*the wages of sin*" (Romans 6:23a), with His bloody ransom, with His wrath-appeasing sacrifice on the cross (cf. II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Romans 3:25-26; I Peter 2:24; I John 1:7b, 2:2). His all-sufficient vicarious atonement purchased for all mankind God's favor, His "*good will toward men*" (Luke 2:14), so that, in eternity already, in view of His Son's satisfaction of Divine justice, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (II Corinthians 5:19). That objective reconciliation or amnesty is ours personally, and Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to us personally, when we cling in God-wrought faith to His own assurance of our justification, of our forgiveness, of Christ's perfect righteousness covering all our sins; for "*being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Romans 5:1). And then, but only then, being saved by grace through faith, not of works ((Ephesians 2:8-9), "*we are [God's] workmanship created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained **that we should walk in them***" (v. 10).

Then, and only then, is Christ also our **example**, our example very specifically of Godly communication, "*for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously*" (I Peter 2:21-23). Although His enemies used guile against the Savior (Matthew 26:4 – "*take (Him) by subtilty;*" Mark 14:1 – "*by craft*"), He never, ever, once responded in kind or resorted to their evil tactics.

True believers, those who have been brought to faith, justified by faith, and sanctified in faith by the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:11) — all through the power of the Gospel as His blessed means (Romans 1:16; II Thessalonians 2:14; I Corinthians 4:15; I Peter 1:23; Ephesians 2:10) — are enjoined, as the fruit of faith (Matthew 3:8; James 2:18) and evidence that the *New Man* lives within us (II Corinthians 5:17), to be ever "*laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings*" (I Peter 2:1). For all lying and all deceiving is truly Satanic in origin, since anyone "*full of all subtilty and all mischief*" is a "*child of the devil*" (Acts 13:10). A true believer has

“*the New Man*” within him, a new “*heart*” (Ezekiel 11:19) opposed to his carnal one, a new “*mind*” (Romans 12:2), opposed to his fleshly one (Galatians 5:17). This new heart and mind earnestly desires to follow God’s Law (Romans 7:22; Psalm 119:35). Justified and forgiven, with Christ’s righteousness imputed to us and the complete remission of every transgression assured to us, we are empowered and motivated by the Gospel of grace to show by our Godly communication our thankfulness for our full, free salvation.

Yes, we are to “*eschew*” (“*avoid*” as in Romans 16:17) evil “*and do good.*” We are to “*seek peace and ensue it*” (“pursue, chase it down”). In our heart and on our tongue no evil should be manifest; in our mind and on our lips only good should be found. Our desire and action, our purpose and pursuit, our plan and actual manner of speaking, should always be directed toward peace and harmony, in heart and mind, in word and deed. How much evil and guile, malice and deceit, envy and lies, flow from the *carnal* heart and mind and produce enmity, disharmony, division, hostile opposition, and war-like behavior in human relationships! Indeed, sinful man is accurately described by God Himself as “*foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another*” (Titus 3:3). But the love and kindness of God our Savior in Christ Jesus moves believers to “*maintain good works*” which are “*good and profitable unto men*” (Titus 3:8)!

So, as we, by God’s grace, avoid evil and replace it with good (Romans 12:9, 21), as we pursue peace in our relationships with others (v. 18), as we seek to be “*kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another*” (v. 10), we should employ only **Godly** communication!

How is this accomplished? God would have us evaluate all communication in the sure and certain light of His Word, the only source and norm for faith and truly Godly living (Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 8:20, John 8:31-32; Ephesians 2:20; II Timothy 3:15-17; etc.).

If we thus examine ourselves according to God’s Law, we find, as did the Apostle Paul (Romans 7:18ff.) that we cannot, because of our flesh, “*perform that which is good*” even though the New Man, created within us by the Spirit, earnestly desires to do so. Thus we cannot “by [our] own reason or strength” [Luther] control the organ of communication which God Himself created in us to make it serve Him and His will only. James writes extensively concerning “*the tongue*” in the third chapter of his epistle, verses 2 through 18; and the reader is encouraged to look up and study his entire admonition. He says, for example:

The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind. But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. (vv. 5-10).

God holds all men accountable for their deeds (Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Jeremiah 17:10); and, although the misdeeds of true believers will be covered by the righteousness of Christ in the Judgment (Matthew 25:34-40; Isaiah 61:10; Matthew 22:11ff., Romans 5:19), we, as truly contrite sinners, acknowledge our transgressions in the light of His Law (Psalm 51:3), humbly confess them (v. 4), sincerely repent of them (Luke 13:3; II Corinthians 7:9-10), and rejoice in the blessed fact that for Jesus' sake our sins are forgiven and covered (Romans 4:7-8). Nevertheless, as true believers, we are to ask ourselves, as the test of our repentance and faith, "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" (Romans 6:1). The answer immediately follows: *God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?*" (v. 2). By God's grace we flee to Him for constant renewal, for a "*clean heart*" and a "*right spirit*" (Psalm 51:10; Ezekiel 36:26-27), by means of the Gospel. God's Law shows us our sins, makes us face up to them, and convicts us (Hebrews 4:12-13); but only the Gospel works in us "*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13; II Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 3:16-19).

With a daily change of heart in continual God-wrought repentance and conversion, our tongue and lips are also changed: "*The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips*" (Proverbs 16:23). In "*the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*" (Ephesians 4:24), this is true of every Christian. "*The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord*" (Proverbs 16:1). While the "*old man*" (Ephesians 4:22), the sinful flesh (Romans 7:18ff.), in every believer, loves to hurt, destroy, lie and gossip, "*destroyeth his neighbor*" (Proverbs 11:9) and makes "*wounds*"...that go deep "*down into the inner most parts of the belly*" (Proverbs 18:8), the "*new man*" within the true believer in Christ shuns and mortifies the flesh in daily repentance and, as the fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8; Galatians 5:22-24), uses his tongue and lips for good! For example, he thinks before he speaks (James 1:19) to make sure that his words apply (Proverbs 25:11-12), that his admoni-

tion and reproof with the Law stings (I Corinthians 15:56; Proverbs 27:6a), that his evangelical exhortation and comfort is pleasant, sweet to the soul and healthy to the hearer (Proverbs 16:24), making a sad heart glad (Proverbs 12:25), and of value and nourishment to the soul (Proverbs 10:20-21).

Scripture reminds us: “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof*” (Proverbs 18:21). Do you “*kill*” by applying the Law to impenitents, those sinning and refusing to repent, to convict them of their sins, to show them the wrath of God, and to warn them of the wages of their sins? Do you “*give life*” by applying the comforting and saving Gospel of salvation in Christ to those in sorrow and shame, guilt and pain? (II Corinthians 3:6b). Do you measure *what* you say, *when* you say it, to *whom* you say it, and *how* you say it in order “*rightly [to divide] the Word of Truth,*” sin and grace, Law and Gospel, as you stand ready to defend your faith to those who ask you about your Christian hope, and to do so with meekness and Godly fear, having a good conscience, unmoved by the fear or favor of men (I Peter 3:15-16)?

Do you take the time to think of the impact that what you say or write may have on others? In our age of “one click” and “instant” messages, how often people click the “send” button without even reading back what they have written to make sure of its appropriate content! “*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him*” (Proverbs 18:13). “*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...*” (James 1:19). Being swift to hear and slow to speak allows time to listen well and to understand the nature of a question, problem, frustration or complaint brought to your attention and to contemplate and plan what you will say: “*The heart of the righteous studieth to answer; but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things*” (Proverbs 15:28). “*Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him*” (Proverbs 29:20).

“*Speaking the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15) is giving good counsel from the Word of God, whether it be “*for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, [or] for instruction in righteousness*” (II Timothy 3:16), not telling a person what he WANTS to hear but what he NEEDS to hear. The key to truly Godly communication is finding the *appropriate* answer –not from personal experience, not from psycho-babble, not from the so-called “social gospel” of modernists, not from the “gut” of what we “feel” about the situation, but from the all-wise and all-sufficient **Word of God**. This is why we encourage our people to commit key passages of Scripture *to memory*, so that they can be retrieved with readiness to give a *Godly* answer. **Godly communication** does not include trite phrases expressing empathy and sympathy with no real *spiritual*

substance and no *spiritual* purpose: “I know where you’re coming from;” “I’ve been there;” “If I were you,…” “This is what I would do;” “You know what I think? …”

Instead, choose words which “[are] good to the use of edifying,” that “minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29b). Scripture declares: “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6). Say what the person needs to hear, words of the Law that are timely and appropriate to reprove his sin, to identify his error, to convict his impenitence, to warn him of the wrath to come, to caution him regarding his heedlessness ...to bring the Gospel to the contrite, assurance to the penitent, comfort to the bereaved, strength to the weak and wisdom to the foolish. “A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Proverbs 15:23). “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

Thus far we have stressed chiefly the **positive** aspects of **communication**: for good, for *Godly* purposes, for “the use of edifying,” etc. But our theme text also warns us concerning the **negative** aspects of communication, speaking of the believer: “Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil.” And in communication today, especially in quick-time, instant, electronic, real-time, “virtual” communication via the Internet and wireless technology, some of which involves communication with unknown parties, there are very specific dangers and temptations which the Bible addresses. Some of these are spoken of in general but very clear terms in our theme text.

Scripture is filled with specific warnings against the sin of **slander**, for example, one of the most common misuses of the tongue. In his discussion about false witness and slander in the *Large Catechism*, Luther describes it as meddling in the affairs of someone else and reporting to others what is not properly their business and what cannot be properly proved with the witness required by God’s Word. He says:

“This [eighth] commandment forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we may injure or approach too closely to our neighbor. For to bear false witness is nothing else than a work of the tongue. Now, whatever is done with the tongue against a fellow man God would have prohibited. ...For it is a common evil plague that everyone prefers hearing evil to hearing good of his neighbor. ...I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins, but I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, do nothing else than turn your ears into a grave and cover it,

until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office. . . . If you know it, know it for yourself and not for another. For if you tell it to others, although it be true, you will appear as a liar, because you cannot prove it; and you are, besides, acting like a villain [malicious scoundrel]. For we ought never to deprive anyone of his honor or good name unless it be first taken away from him publicly.” (Luther, Eighth Commandment, *Large Catechism*).

The Psalmist writes: “*Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor*” (Psalm 15:1-3). Examine yourself regarding gossip, for gossip is NOT *Godly* communication. Do you “share” something with others that is not rightly their business (I Peter 4:15b)? If you have a grievance against someone, do you discuss it first with *others* rather than talking *to* the person in question (Matthew 18:15)? Do you make fun of others behind their back (Psalm 50:19-20; Proverbs 17:5)? Do you say things about others to retaliate against a supposed wrong (Romans 12:19)?

In this age of social “networking,” it is common practice, if not generally expected, that “the public’s [imagined] right to know” everything about everybody gives them license to “share” with instant messaging the private business of their neighbor; and with one “click” that business is “posted” for all to read, “blogged” for all to react to, “texted” to cell phones so that people have the information “on the go,” and “chatted” about across thousands of miles in a nanosecond. With *Facebook*, *MySpace*, *Friendster*, with micro-blogging, texting, *Instant Messaging*, chat rooms and email, words travel at great speed; and with the possibility of “instant communication” comes the lure of *ungodly* communication which incites the flesh to do that which is unseemly and contrary to true Christian love (I Corinthians 13:4-6; Romans 13:8-10). With “instant” communication, the admonition of the Apostle James, “*be slow to speak*” (1:19) is virtually impossible to observe after the “send” button has been clicked! Knowing these things before, “*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*” (Romans 12:21).

May we always, by the grace of God and motivated by His love for us in Christ Jesus, maintain *true Godliness* in every form of communication — oral, written, telephonic, and electronic, as the Spirit-wrought fruit and evidence of our faith, as testimony to others that we are the children of God, and especially to the glory of our beloved Savior!

— E. J. W.

Churches in Fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EKATERINBURG

Ekaterinburg, Russia
The Rev. Roman G. Schurganoff, Pastor
P. O. Box 62
620088 Ekaterinburg, RUSSIA
E-mail: lutheran@r66.ru



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria
The Rev. Onengiye C. Wariboko, Pastor
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria
The Rev. Onesimus Ekele, Pastor

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria
(Pastoral Office Vacant at Present)
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA



SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria
The Rev. Elison B. Agborubere, Pastor
Thompson Compound Abalama
Abalama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria
The Rev. Luckyn Kaladokubo, Pastor
St. Clement Lutheran Church,
Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry
Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria
The Rev. Allenson Karibi Asawo, Pastor
76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Kula, Nigeria
The Rev. Onengiye C. Wariboko, Pastor
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S NYEMONI LUTHERAN CATHEDRAL

Abonnema, Nigeria
The Rev. Nimi B. Fyneface and
The Rev. God'stime E. D. Douglas, Co-Pastors
P. O. Box 123
Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Worship Service 9:30 a.m.

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:45 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor

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

E-mail: david.redlin@worldnet.att.net

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 (708) 532-9035

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355 Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941

E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178 Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

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

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.

Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:45 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertlietz@yahoo.com

Martin Luther

Em felle Burgheist unser got, in gute wehre und waffen
Behelft uns frey auß aller not, die uns hat her betroffen
Und wenn die werlt vil teuffel hat, und tracht uns zu verhoffen
So sprichet vns die so sprach, so solt vns doch geliben
Der alt, der frucht mit reuch, der stet manet, der frucht
Der frucht der frucht, der frucht der frucht, der frucht
Und wollest, sein gütlich, wistig ist, auf ed, ist nicht sein, frucht
Und doch macht, der frucht, der frucht, der frucht, der frucht

A mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty Shield and Weapon.
He helps us free from every need that hath us now o'ertaken.
The old evil Foe now means deadly woe.
Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight!
On earth is not his equal!

The Word they still shall let remain and not a thank have for it!
He's by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit!
And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife,
let these all be gone; they yet have nothing won.
The Kingdom ours remaineth!

TLH 262, 1, 4 (adapted)