the Concordia Lutheran

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

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

Vol. XXXXI **July-August, 1996** **Nos. 7 - 8**

"Be thou faithful

unto death,

and I will give thee

a crown of life."

Rev. 2:10

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

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

Address all subscriptions, renewals, and remittances to: **Scriptural Publications, 5910 Elk Ridge, San Antonio, TX 78249-2482.** A special notice of expiration will be inserted in the issue which terminates your subscription.

Officers of the Concordia Lutheran Conference

PRESIDENT:
Rev. Paul R. Bloedel
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118
VICE-PRESIDENT:
Rev. Mark W. Dierking
Box 33
Wilmot, SD 57279
SECRETARY:
Rev. David T. Mensing
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
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.

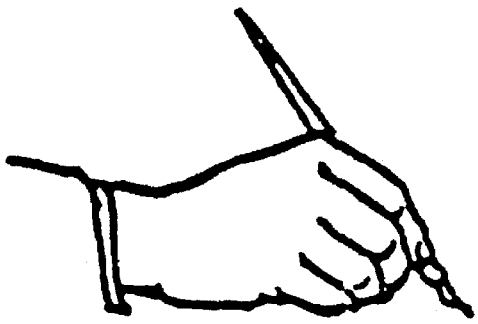
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

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

EVERY PASTOR IN THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE PREACHES ABOUT HELL

Even though the word "Hell" often falls glibly from the lips of the unbelieving children of this world who also make blasphemous jokes about hell, yet, people in general do not like to hear about hell or talk about it. There are those who think that the subject of "Hell" is distasteful and should not be spoken of in polite circles, and especially, in this modern day, should not be preached from Christian pulpits. Many so-called Christian churches, therefore, go easy on the subject of "Hell" because, they say, it makes people uncomfortable and it conflicts with mercy and love. In reality, however, pastors who minimize hell or avoid the subject of "Hell" altogether are cruel and unfair to their hearers. They do not warn their hearers forcefully enough about the fatal result of unbelief; they frustrate the merciful desire of God to bring sinners to repentance, and they thereby contribute to the eternal damnation of millions of people. The pastors of our Conference, however, inasmuch as they are committed to preach the "whole counsel of God" in all its truth and purity are also committed to preach about hell and to bring the subject of "Hell" frequently into their sermons. The Gospel and Epistle Lessons for the seasons of the Church Year give every pastor ample opportunity to speak from his pulpit on the subject of "Hell" or at least to mention hell in his sermons.

Those who will be the inhabitants of the abode of the damned are called in Scripture, "**The wicked.**" The Bible characterizes the wicked, in general, as those who do not recognize the true God and who do not believe in the Lord Jesus as their only Redeemer from sin, death, Satan, and hell, and who do not trust in Him alone for their salvation. Such people are indeed "**the wicked**" in God's sight -- no matter how nice,

and clean, and upright, and wise, and good they may appear in the eyes of the world. God says in Psalm 9:17, "**The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God!**"

In the light of the perversity of the human race since the Fall of Adam, it is amazing to consider that the Lord God sincerely desires to save **all** people and to give Heaven to all as a **free gift** of His grace alone in Christ Jesus, our Savior! The Bible teaches God's Universal Will of Grace (Gratia Universalis) and Salvation by Grace Alone (Sola Gratia) ever so plainly in so many passages, yet, there are those, in fact, the vast majority of people throughout the world, who despise the grace of God in Christ Jesus, who reject the spotless robe of righteousness which the Lord Jesus has earned for them by His perfect fulfillment of the Law in their behalf and by His holy, innocent, bitter suffering and death on the cross where He endured the torments of hell in their place, as their Substitute! The wickedness of the unbeliever is then simply this: That he does not humbly receive what the Lord Jesus has done for him and for his eternal salvation. He therefore falls under the condemnation of that plain Word of God which says: "**He that believeth not shall be damned!**" "**He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God!**" and "**He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him!**"

What the Bible teaches about Hell is so clear and so emphatic that a person cannot deny it without rejecting the authority of the Bible altogether -- which the pastors of our Conference simply refuse to do. The Hebrew word for Hell, which is used most frequently in the Bible to describe a place of punishment, is the word "**Sheol**." Elsewhere the Bible calls it: "**Outer darkness**," "**a lake burning with fire and brimstone**," "**a bottomless pit**," "**blackness**," "**the mist of darkness**," "**a furnace of fire**." The words by which Hell is described in the Bible actually stagger the imagination. There will be indescribable physical and mental anguish, for Hell consists in everlasting banishment from the sight of God, being forsaken by God into all eternity, being forever excluded from communion with God. To the unbelievers, Christ will say on the Last Day, "**Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels**." Banishment from God's face, in the excruciating pains of Hell, involves the most unbearable

suffering of body and soul. The Bible describes this agony by means of a variety of phrases: "**Tribulation and anguish,**" "**being in torments,**" "**tormented in this flame,**" "**where their worm dieth not, neither shall their fire be quenched,**" "**they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh,**" "**there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**" O, there are no atheists in Hell because in such a place of eternal torment there will be no need for the lie perpetrated by Satan and his followers, the unbelieving children of this world, that there is no God.

The suffering of the damned in hell will be even more intensified by the knowledge that they, too, could have enjoyed the blessedness of heaven as a free gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus, their Savior. Where the believers in Christ see God face to face, the damned in Hell see only themselves and the devils. Where the believers in Christ are free from all evil, the damned in Hell are in the midst of evil and are evil themselves -- drenched in the filthiness of unending sin and corruption. Where the believers in Christ experience fulness of joy in body and soul, the damned in Hell have no joy whatever and are the children of God's wrath. Where the believers in Christ enjoy the glorious fellowship of their fellow believers (the communion of the saints in bliss), the damned in Hell form the company of the accursed.

And the punishment of the damned in Hell is without intermission and without termination! The Bible parallels the eternal salvation of the believers with the **eternal** damnation of the unbelievers. Jesus says, "**These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.**" "**They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**" The Bible says of the damned, "**They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might.**" "**They shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.**" "**The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night!**" The fire of Hell is unquenchable, the worm deathless, the punishment everlasting, the gulf between Heaven and Hell impassable, the sins of the unbelievers after death unpardonable! O, what deep sympathy and compassion we should have for our unbelieving relatives and acquaintances when we contemplate the terrible and certain fate awaiting them as well as all of the heathen in our nation and throughout

the world! O, what efforts we should make to save their souls from death by bringing them the life-giving Gospel of Christ and Him crucified!

Yes, every pastor in our Conference preaches about Hell, also and especially to impress upon his hearers the excruciating agony and pain which our Savior endured FOR US and for ALL PEOPLE, as the Substitute for the whole human race: His heart melted like wax in the midst of His bowels, His becoming a worm and no man, His unquenchable thirst, the nails, the thorns, the spear, the mockery, the buffeting, the shame, His cry of agony, "**My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?**" Yes, Christ Jesus suffered the agony of Hell as our Substitute, in our place -- the agony which each one of us deserves because of our sins -- and as true God, His holy, innocent, bitter suffering and death was sufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole world -- a perfect ransom for the redemption of all mankind -- "**that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

What the pastors in our Conference teach about Hell is that which has been revealed in Scripture by a kind and gracious heavenly Father to warn us from the wrath to come; to admonish us to repent of our sins and to urge us to turn to Jesus alone for forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. O, may people everywhere find the Cross of Christ planted deeply before the yawning gates of Hell -- a way of escape provided for all people by Him who says, "**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me,**" and of whom the Apostle Peter declares, "**Neither is there salvation in any other!**"

CONVENTION DIGEST

MOTTO: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

-- Revelation 2:10

In the shadow of majestic Mount Rainier (which was "out" this year in all its splendor under sunny to partly cloudy skies), delegates and visitors from around the country gathered together in beautiful Seattle, Washington, for the **Forty-Fifth Annual Convention** of the Concordia Lutheran Conference. Hosting the convention was St. Luke's Lutheran Church, the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, Pastor. Hustling and bustling about to finish the interior of their newly constructed sanctuary were the members of the congregation, joined in the evening hours by pastors and delegates who had arrived early for the **Pastoral Conference** (June 18th and 19th) and the **Board of Directors Meeting** (on June 20th). Plastering, painting, wiring, and carpentry crews worked into the wee hours of every morning, followed by a massive clean-up and scrub-down effort on Thursday night lasting until about 3 a.m. on Friday. The "transformation" was indeed marvelous to behold for those who had seen the building on Monday evening, and the beautiful high-vaulted sanctuary demonstrated its marvelous acoustics as the church's organist ran through his music for the opening service while the pews were set in place and a final wet-mopping dispatched the last of the plaster dust from the slate-black ceramic tiled floor. Guests from afar were welcomed by the members into their homes; and the loving, cheerful and generous hospitality of the local brethren contributed significantly to the success of the convention.

The convention itself began on Friday, June 21st, with a service of convocation at 9:30 a.m. The local pastor served as liturgist, and the Conference President, the Rev. M. L. Natterer, preached an edifying sermon on the basis of Hebrews 11:7, centering his message upon the exemplary heroic faith of Noah. His theme, ***The Heroic Faith of Noah -- An Example to Every Faithful Christian in These Last Evil Days of the World,*** was divided into two parts, namely, **I. His Fearless Courage** and **II. His Willing Submission to God's Word.**

Following the service, the first session was called to order with a brief devotion conducted by the President. During this first brief session, *ad hoc* convention committees were appointed, the delegates were officially seated, and the assembled convention heard the *Annual Report of the President.* Thereafter the *Convention Agenda* was adopted as printed, and the *Report of the Press Committee* was heard. Following that report, the convention stood in recess for the noon meal which was served by the ladies of the congregation in the basement of their new church building.

The afternoon session opened with a brief devotion conducted by Pastor Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois. This session was then highlighted by the presentation of the *CONVENTION ESSAY, Part I.* Delivered by the Rev. Mark W. Dierking, Pastor of St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church of Wilmot, South Dakota, this essay was entitled: ***"The Christian's Perseverance in the Faith."*** The first part of the essay centered on the true nature of saving faith and the fact that it is God's work, not man's. (The essay in its entirety will appear in the Convention *PROCEEDINGS*, so that all our people can benefit from it in their personal study at home.) The first part of the essay was interspersed with and followed by lively and edifying discussion on the floor.

Following the first part of the essay, a recommendation from the Board of Directors was unanimously adopted establishing **Official Conference Archives** for the benefit of the generations to come, as well as for the easy access of our present pastors and congregations to significant historical, confessional, and business documents. The convention also appointed the first **Conference Archivist**, Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, to be assisted by Mr. Phillip R. Martin. This *ad hoc* committee of two, subject to annual re-appointment, will begin its work immediately. The *Treasurer's Report* concerning the past fiscal year, given by Victor K. Bloedel, was then heard and adopted, as was also his *Initial Report of the Finance Committee* with its preliminary proposed budget for fiscal year 1996-97. Then followed the *Report of the Editorial Committee*, which concerned chiefly the publication of our *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*, and the *Report of the Publishing House Board of Control*, which regulates *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*, the publishing arm of our Conference, these reports presented by the chairman of both committees, Pastor Stallings. Then came the *Report of the Business Manager of SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS*, David A. Steinke, who was

not present at the convention but had sent along his report in written form. This was followed by the *Report of the Committee on Missions* by its chairman, Pastor Redlin of Tucson. All of these reports in their detail will be found in the official *PROCEEDINGS*, which will appear later this year. Following the reading and approval of the day's minutes, the Friday Session adjourned for the supper hour, after which a presentation and hands-on demonstration of *Internet* and *World-Wide Web* possibilities for our Conference was conducted later in the evening by laymen from the host congregation.

The Saturday morning sessions were opened with a devotion conducted by Pastor David G. Redlin of Tucson, Arizona. Thereupon Pastor Dierking continued the presentation of his essay with its second part which examined the causes of questions and doubts that arise in a Christian's heart about his final salvation. Chief among these, it was noted, are the perversion of the grace of God in both the Romish and Reformed fashions, carnal security fostered by disdain for God's Law and evidenced by a despisal of His grace, and the basing of certainty upon one's subjective feelings. Pastor Dierking pointed out that uncertainty itself is a sin which stems from doubt about the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and that such doubt must be crushed and replaced by confidence in the gracious promises of God. The discussion of this section was again very edifying, with wide participation on the part of the delegates and visitors.

Before the lunch hour, the *Report of the Committee on Theological Education* was heard and discussed. Pastor Bloedel, the chairman, pointed out that the training of a future ministry is perhaps the most important work of our Conference, and that, humanly speaking, we may well be without pastors in the years to come for lack of students and the advancing ages of our present pastors. Our people need to **pray** for a future ministry, to **work** toward this end by eager growth in the Word, and to **support** with encouragement and evidence of our spiritual priorities those who are already our pastors and those in whom we should be fostering sanctified interest in the pastoral office as a life's calling. While the Lord has not promised pastors for the future, yet He will not fail to bless those who trust in His mercy and abide in His precious Word. On the other hand, if we do not value the Word and *"gladly hear and learn it"* at every opportunity, we should not be surprised if the Lord visits upon us

a **famine** of His Word and its faithful preaching among us, as He foretells it in Amos 8:11-12. From the fulfillment of such a prospect may the Lord graciously preserve us!

The afternoon session began with a devotion conducted by Pastor Stallings of San Antonio, Texas, after which the *Report of the Committee on Theological Education* was augmented by a brief update on the status of our *Seminary Bookstore* and its plans to build up its inventory of scarce theological books for purchase by future pastors in our Conference. Then followed the *Report of the Committee on Lutheran Union* presented by Pastor Bloedel. He updated the convention on our heretofore fruitless efforts to meet in exploratory talks with the *Fellowship of Lutheran Congregations*, an off-shoot of the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation. Despite past friendly conversations with Pastor Lietz of that body, both by the chairman and by Pastor Mensing, no further word was heard from him up to the time of the convention, nor was anything further reported to us as to the desire of the F. L. C. to meet with our committee. From *our* standpoint, at least, the door is still open for future discussions, but we will wait to be contacted for the present and pray that these will one day materialize. The committee was urged to utilize the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN* with its wide distribution to advertise our continued interest in other Lutheran church bodies with the view toward God-pleasing union based on true agreement in doctrine and practice, the *"unity of the Spirit"* in God's Word. The report was followed by an interest report by Pastor Mensing on an informal meeting with six pastors of the *Church of the Lutheran Confession* in early May and his disappointment at our men not being permitted an open discussion of the passages that pertain without a predetermined exegesis being literally forced down their throats by one of the participants in a prepared "study paper". While our men did not expect to change any opinions, it would have been helpful to a mutual understanding of the Scriptures if polite dialog had been permitted where differences in exegesis were apparent.

The convention then heard and adopted the *Report of the Committee to Review the President's Report* and the *Report of the Auditing Committee.* It also heard the *Further Report of the Finance Committee Concerning the Budget*, which had not been revised since its report on Friday, except to recommend that funds needed by the Conference Archivist be handled as miscellaneous expenses rather than establish a

separate budget item for such costs. The convention then proceeded to the *Election of Officers and Standing Committees* for 1996-97. The following were elected:

PRESIDENT: The Rev. Paul R. Bloedel

VICE PRESIDENT: The Rev. Mark W. Dierking

SECRETARY: The Rev. David T. Mensing

TREASURER: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel

BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE:

Midwest -- Mr. John Steinke

Far West -- Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Pastor Stallings, Editor; Pastor Natterer, Asst. Editor; and Mr. John Steinke.

COMMITTEE ON LUTHERAN UNION: Pastor Dierking, Chairman; Pastor Mensing; Pastor Natterer; and Mr. Stephen Bloedel.

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: Pastor Natterer, Chairman; Pastor Stallings; Mr. Raymond Kusumi; Mr. Phillip Martin.

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS: Pastor Redlin, Chairman; Pastor Stallings; Mr. Daniel Bloedel; Mr. Mark Natterer; and Mr. John Steinke.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel, Chairman; Mr. Rodney Reyelts; Mr. Mark Natterer; and Mr. John Steinke.

PUBLISHING HOUSE BOARD OF CONTROL: Pastor Stallings, Chairman; Pastor Mensing; Mr. Raymond Kusumi; Mr. David Steinke; and Mr. Phillip Martin.

At the Sunday morning service, the host pastor again served as liturgist, and Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois, preached the sermon on *Revelation 2:8-11*. His theme was the motto of the convention taken from verse 10 of the text: ***"Be Thou Faithful unto Death!"*** and he

divided the sermon into three parts, each an exhortation of the Savior implicit or stated in the text: ***I. "Don't grow weary of the struggle!" II. "Don't be fearful of temptation!"*** and ***III. "Don't become forgetful of the prize!"*** Delegates and visitors from the congregations of our fellowship then partook of the Lord's Supper together as guests of St. Luke's Congregation -- for the remission of their sins, in testimony of their blessed unity in the Word of their Savior, for the strengthening and preservation of their souls in the true faith unto life everlasting.

After a sumptuous dinner, sessions reconvened with a devotion conducted by Pastor Paul R. Bloedel, the host pastor. The final portion of the *Convention Essay* was then presented by Pastor Dierking treating the role of the Means of Grace in the Christian's perseverance. Following spirited and fruitful discussion of this section -- discussion which was broadly based throughout a "packed house" -- this informative and edifying essay was unanimously adopted with thanks to the essayist, pending of course the usual review by the *praesidium* before any publication.

Concluding the business of the convention, the delegates first acted on a resolution offered from the floor, establishing an *ad hoc* committee of two, Mr. Stephen P. Bloedel and Mr. Raymond S. Kusumi, to research and conduct a feasibility study into the costs of establishing a Conference "**web site**", and to bring its recommendations to the next convention.

The convention then heard the *Final Report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses*, including a **resolution** arising out of its own midst regarding a letter of intimidation directed to our Conference in convention assembled. In this letter, three former voting members of St. Stephen's congregation in Wilmot, South Dakota, stated that for our Conference to seat their "former pastor" as a delegate to this convention would violate both the congregation's own constitution and the injunctive order of the 5th Judicial Circuit Court in Roberts County, South Dakota. The resolution denounced those men as *"servants of Satan, who have shown neither respect for the Word of God nor real concern for the salvation of their souls,"* refused to recognize them as the servants of a Christian congregation and rejected their claim to the name of St. Stephen's congregation, characterized their demands as *"ridiculous to say*

the least," denounced their attempt to intimidate our Conference *"by binding upon it a court order which has no bearing whatever upon our Conference"* as the wicked machinations of *"men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth"* (I Timothy 6:5), and defended the actions of the Committee to seat Pastor Mark W. Dierking as the **official delegate** of St. Stephen's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wilmot, South Dakota. -- The resolution was **unanimously adopted**.

The convention then proceeded to ratify the *Final Budget Proposal of the Finance Committee*, which included the availability of a generous subsidy for St. Stephen's in Wilmot. It also heard and accepted the *Final Report of the Resolutions Committee* and acted on six resolutions of thanks offered by the *Resolutions Committee* -- to the outgoing officers and standing committees for their faithful labors during the previous fiscal year; to Pastors Natterer and Mensing for their edifying sermons at the convention; to Pastor Dierking for his instructive and edifying essay; to the various pastors for their devotions; to Mr. Stephen P. Bloedel, organist and choir director, and to the choir of St. Luke's Congregation for the musical offerings at the services; and to the pastor and members of St. Luke's Congregation for their hospitality. The final resolution concluded with a doxology of thanks and praise to the Lord for His abiding grace in preserving our Conference steadfast in its Scriptural position despite many trials and tribulations over the past forty-six years. The convention also heard and accepted with thanks the *Report of the Conference Statistician*, Mr. Raymond Kusumi, who was re-appointed to that post.

The convention then unanimously accepted the gracious invitation of Holy Scripture Ev. Lutheran Church of Windcrest (San Antonio), Texas, to host the **46th Annual Convention** (June 20, 21, and 22, 1997), immediately preceded as usual by the ***Plenary Pastoral Conference*** on June 17 and 18, and the ***Board of Directors Meeting*** on June 19th. Our people are encouraged NOW ALREADY to mark these dates on their calendars, so that they can plan ahead to attend.

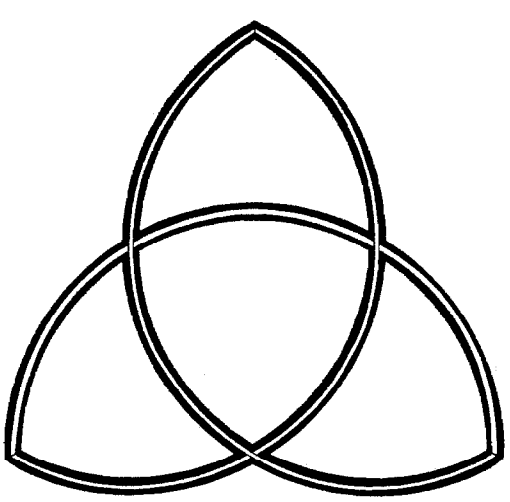
Finally, the convention committed to the *praesidium* for study, including a poll of the congregations, a proposal to change our standing regulation regarding the date of our conventions from the **fourth Sunday in June** (and its immediately preceding Friday and Saturday) to the **last Sunday in June** (and its weekend). For the sake of conserving time, the

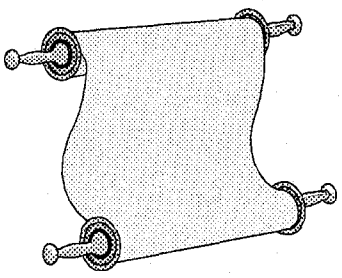
day's *minutes* were not read but were committed to the *praesidium* for the usual review. Immediately thereafter the convention adjourned at 5:42 p.m., and it concluded with the customary closing devotion led by the new President, Pastor Paul Bloedel. All in all, it had been a most brotherly and constructive meeting, and the delegates and visitors returned to their respective homes edified by the Spirit through Word and Sacrament, encouraged by the precious fellowship that He had preserved among them, and determined by His grace and with His never failing help to be ***"faithful unto death"*** and to receive at length ***"a crown of life,"*** the ultimate reward of His grace for Jesus' sake.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary

✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝ ✝





The Pharisees and Sadducees

Although there were a number of parties or sects among the Jews, all of which had their adherents among the common people, such as the Herodians, the Essenes, and the political parties of various times, yet none were so influential nor exerted their sway over the people for a longer period of time than the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The most powerful of the Jewish sects was that of the Pharisees, the representatives of extreme Hebraism, the orthodoxists among the Jews. Their members were selected only from the richer and more distinguished ranks of society. They adhered strictly to the literal sense of the Mosaic Law. To the authority of Scriptures they added that of tradition, the rules and regulations of the elders. But they introduced also some of the speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the Eastern nations. These ideas had been adopted by the Jews during the exile, and were founded upon the Persian dualism. The doctrine of fate or predestination, of angels and demons, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were among the newly formulated articles of belief. The Pharisees tried to compromise between the revealed religion and these obscure tenets, adopting those parts which were not expressly condemned in the Old Testament. Since they believed in fate, they maintained that it cooperated in every action of man, and stated that to act what is right or the contrary, is principally in the power of man. They moderated the doctrine of the transmigration of souls in so far as to say that all souls are incorruptible, but the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, while the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.[1]

Their doctrine is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, since Christ was often obliged to expose the falseness of their claims, to warn against the leaven of their false doctrine, Matt. 16:12; Mark 8:15. They adhered with the greatest severity to the 613 precepts of the Great Synagog, thereby making their own lives and those of their followers an intolerable burden. Incidentally they disregarded entirely the evil

condition and the wicked desires of the heart, priding themselves only on their external show of holiness. They lived meanly and fasted oftener than the Law required; they despised delicacies in diet, Luke 18:12. They forbade even the most necessary works and deeds of mercy on the Sabbath, Matt. 12:1-8, 9-13; Luke 13:14-16; Mark 2:27; John 7:23. Christ calls their slavish adhering to the traditions of the elders a vain worship, Mark 7:2-7, 9.

These doctrines were continually revealed in the feigned virtue of the Pharisees' lives; in fact, the two were so closely related that a sharp division is hardly possible. The passage above, Matt. 23, is a complete denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They managed to cast sand into the eyes of the people to such an extent that whatsoever they did about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices was accepted without question, and many cities gave great attestation to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct. [2] Since they interpreted all the prophecies referring to the greatness of the Messiah's kingdom as foretelling a temporal empire, they never ceased in their attempts to regain political influence, succeeding, at times, for a brief period. They appeared before the multitude with their fasting, Mark 2:18. To eat with unwashen hands was in their eyes a transgression equal to the vilest sins, Mark 7:2-7. They feared defilement by the touch of a great sinner, Luke 7:36-50, and always strove to carry out the Law in its full strictness, John 8:2-11.

Since they thus both in their doctrine and in their religious practices held a position which was directly opposed to Christ, it is not surprising that they were filled with venomous hatred toward the Nazarene. They tempted Him, Matt. 16:1; Mark 8:11; they tried to entangle Him in His talk, Matt. 22:15; Mark 12:13; Luke 20:20; they took counsel to destroy Him, Mark 3:6; John 11:47-53. And after having succeeded in removing the Master, they persecuted the disciples in the same way, Matt. 23:34; Acts 7:58; 8:3; 9:1,2; Gal. 1:13, 14, 23; Acts 23:6-9. It is the world-old story of righteousness and truth being hated by unrighteousness and hypocrisy.

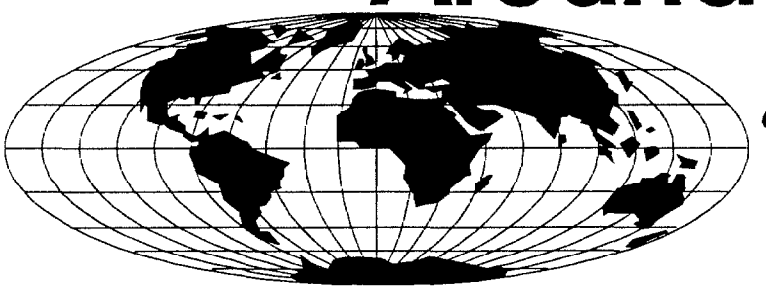
The bitter enemies of the Pharisees and their opponents in doctrine, but united with them in their hatred of Christ, were the Sadducees, the representatives of the extreme ultra-development of Hellenism, with Greek characteristics. They were recruited only from the richest people,

with leanings toward pagan culture. They were the rationalists among the Jews, with modern tenets of philosophy. They denied the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27. They maintained that there is no angel or spirit, Acts 23:8. They accepted the books of Moses only and rejected all traditions, saying that the Jews were to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written Word, but are not to observe what is derived from the tradition of the forefathers.[3] Since they did not believe in an after life, they rejected the idea of future rewards or punishments. On account of the small number of their followers and the narrow scope of their influence, they are not alluded to so often in Scriptures as are the Pharisees.

Christ was obliged, for the sake of the truth, to warn against their false doctrines, Matt. 16:6,12. He confuted them and their doctrine of marriage, a problem which they had invented to mock Him, Matt. 22:32. Upon other occasions, also, the Sadducees were exposed and their arguments overthrown with the same decisive frankness, Matt. 16:4; 3:7. And therefore their relation toward the Prophet of Nazareth was anything but friendly. To be termed a wicked and adulterous generation, Matt. 16:3,4, and be told that they knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God, Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24, roused their anger in such a measure that they gladly joined with the Pharisees in the counsel, the Synedrion, consulting how they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill Him, Matt. 26:3,4. And after the death of Jesus they persecuted His disciples, Acts 4:12; 5:18, since the most influential in the nation belonged to their sect, Acts 5:17. But the Word of God remained victorious.

[1] Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book III, Chap. VIII; *Antiquities*, Book VIII, Chap. I.
[2] Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XVIII, Chap. I.
[3] Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XIII, Chap. X; *Wars of the Jews*, Book I, Chap. VIII.

Around the World



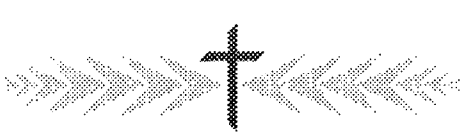
with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

"How dare the legislature," Rabbi Steve Fuchs of The Temple said yesterday of state law-makers' attempts to ban same-sex marriages in Tennessee. "It is an issue of human rights and human equality," Fuchs said. "It is nobody's business but theirs. I feel very strongly about the misuse of sacred scripture, which I spent a lifetime studying." Fuchs joined other religious leaders, representatives of the lesbian and gay community, and the state director of the American Civil Liberties Union at a Capitol Hill news conference to call on Gov. Don Sundquist to veto a same-sex marriage bill if it passes the House. The bill already has passed the Senate. The sponsors say they are pushing the legislation because of the possibility that same-sex marriages will become legal in Hawaii this year. That would open the door for gays and lesbians from other states, including Tennessee, to get married in Hawaii and seek to have the marriage contract honored when they return home. Hedy Weinberg, state ACLU director, told reporters at yesterday's news conference that she believes the legislation is motivated by bigotry, prejudice and fear. "This bill violates everything the state stands for when it talks about family values," she said. "It will prohibit the formation of families." (The Tennessean, March 22, 1996)

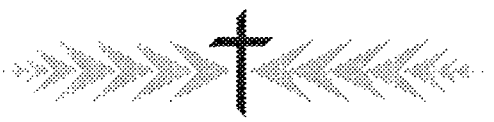
Being a Jewish Rabbi, Fuchs should know and accept the Old Testament Scriptures. And what is the teaching of the Old Testament concerning homosexuality and lesbianism? Let the words speak for themselves. One of the first references in the Old Testament is in Genesis 19 which speaks of the behavior of the men in Sodom. From this incident the sin of homosexuality has also derived the name "sodomy." The Lord vented His righteous wrath upon them because of their abomination. Then in Leviticus 20:13 the Lord instructs Moses to tell the Israelites, "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth

with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." Again in Deuteronomy the Lord declares that "there shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel" (23:17). In Judges 19 we read concerning some of the men in Gibeah who were homosexuals. And because the inhabitants of the city defended these perverts 25,100 men lost their lives. Homosexuality is a complete perversion of God's order as already ordained by Him in the Garden of Eden in the institution of marriage between a male and a female. Obviously, Rabbi Fuchs either neglected to read the above sections of the Old Testament or simply refuses to accept them. For us Christians, we not only have the prohibition in the Old Testament, but a repetition of the same in the New Testament, Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 1 Timothy 1:10. We note that the Greek word used for "homosexuals" in the Corinthians passage is the same one used in the Timothy passage. It is the word "arsenokoites," (αρσενοκοιτης) which means a man who has a sexual relationship with a male. It is certainly not in the best interests of its citizens when the State places its stamp of approval on such an abomination! "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).



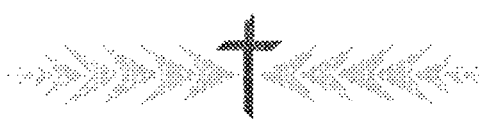
"It's not a major source of income," says Richard, 54, from Arizona. "It's my only income. In a good week I can make 3000 bucks." "It's so easy," says Susan, 36, of St. Petersburg, Fla. "I've done it thousands of times without getting caught." Harvey, a 65-year-old bespectacled New Yorker, calls it his "terrible secret." Cheryl, a 27-year-old Californian, sees herself as a latter-day Robin Hood. Fran, a devout Michigan Catholic, does it, then goes to Mass every Sunday. Terry, a 30-year-old Detroit-area attorney, got caught - but was admitted to the bar anyway. Who are these people? Shoplifters all. They're part of a growing army of Americans - millions and millions of them - who are giving new meaning to the concept of self-service. Most experts consider shoplifting one of America's costliest crimes. Retailers lose between $10 billion and $12 billion annually to five-finger discounters. That doesn't include the $7 billion to $10 billion that stores spend each year to prevent shoplifting. Such

offenses have more than doubled in the past 20 years. Experts say this is probably the result of better detection. Who bears most of the cost of all this? The honest majority who pay before they leave the store. Indeed the average American household is soaked nearly $200 a year in higher prices because of the rotten few. (Reader's Digest, June 1996)



God's Commandment is "Thou shalt not steal." But how many pay any attention to it? Many excuses are offered in an attempt to justify transgressing this Commandment. "My boss doesn't pay me enough money, so I'm just taking what I'm entitled to" ... "He's got so much money he will never miss it." ... "The store's prices are too high and I can't afford what I want." ... "I can't help it that I steal." And so the excuses go on and on. Luther correctly observes, "if all who are thieves, and yet do not wish to be called such, were to be hanged on gallows, the world would soon be devastated, and there would be a lack both of executioners and gallows." But excuses do not nullify God's Commandment. It still stands. Woe to those who seek to justify their sins and yet desire to be known as believers. "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" (Jeremiah 7:9,10). In the Old Testament the law was "if a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Ex. 22:1). In the New Testament we note that the Apostle Paul reminds those in the Ephesian congregation who had been guilty of stealing, "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). We Christians must ever be alert lest we yield to the temptation to steal and then seek to excuse our sin instead of being sorry and showing our thankfulness to God, who has forgiven us for Jesus' sake, by not stealing anymore.

A document crafted here last month moves Lutherans and Catholics a step closer to settling differences that Martin Luther and his Catholic colleagues argued about in the 1530s. This week the document was sent to the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva and to the Vatican. Joint Lutheran-Catholic agreements from more than 140 other countries are also being sent to the international centers, which are expected to produce a final document next year. The U.S. joint document was drafted by 17 Lutheran and Catholic theologians over three days at the Mercy Center, a Catholic retreat house in Town and Country. Bishop Harold Skillrud of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and Denver's Catholic Archbishop Francis Stafford led the sessions. They found agreement on sinfulness, grace, good works, freedom, the relationship of law and the gospel, and the role of merit in redemption. They spent a lot of time on justification by faith, which both sides call the core issue.



The teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were officially set forth in the Council of Trent which convened with long interruptions, between 1545 and 1563. It was Rome's official answer to the Reformation. Alongside the Scriptures Rome insists also upon "the traditions, whether they relate to faith or to morals, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession ... and whoever knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be accursed." (Read John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15-17.) Rome declares concerning original sin, "If anyone says that after the sin of Adam man's free will was lost and destroyed or that it is ... a fiction introduced into the Church by Satan, let him be accursed." (Read Ps. 51:5; Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:3.) Rome declares concerning Christ's redemption, "If anyone says that God always pardons the whole penalty together with the guilt and that the satisfaction of penitents is nothing else than the faith by which they perceive that Christ has satisfied them, let him be accursed." (Read Heb. 10:14, 17, 18.) Rome declares concerning justification, "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sin for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be accursed." (Read Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8,9.) Rome declares

concerning the assurance of salvation, "If anyone says that a man who is born again and justified is bound by faith to believe that he is certainly in the number of the predestined, let him be accursed." (Read Rom. 8:33-39; 2 Tim. 1:12.) Rome declares concerning good works, "If anyone says ... that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be accursed." (Read John 3:36; 5:24; Rom. 8:1.) Rome has NOT changed its teachings from the Council of Trent, but the above so-called Lutherans have obviously ceased to be Lutherans, having forgotten the three great principles of the Reformation: the Bible alone, Grace alone, and Faith alone.

TO ALL OUR READERS! STILL AVAILABLE...

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

Scriptural Publications
5910 Elk Ridge, San Antonio, TX 78249-2482

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218

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

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE CHURCH DIRECTORY

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730

Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... 11:15 a.m.

REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730
Telephone: (602) 721-7618

HOLY SCRIPTURE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

5605 Windsong Drive
Windcrest, TX 78239
Telephone: (210) 650-9053

Worship Service ..... 9:30 a.m.
Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... 11:00 a.m.

REV. E. R. STALLINGS, JR., Pastor
110 Grasmere Court
San Antonio, TX 78218
Telephone: (210) 656-2125

PEACE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452
(South Suburban Chicago)

Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service ..... 10:00 a.m.

REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452
Telephones: Church Office and Pastor's Study: (708) 532-4288
Parsonage: (708) 532-9035

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

Sunday School and
Bible Class .....10:00 a.m.
Worship Service .....11:00 a.m.

REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355
Telephone: (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

55th Ave. S & S. Fountain St.
Seattle, WA 98118
Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Sunday School and
Bible Class ..... 9:15 a.m.
Worship Service .....10:30 a.m.

REV. PAUL R. BLOEDEL, Pastor
9658 - 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118
Telephone: (206)723-7418

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

Sunday School ..... 3:00 p.m.
Worship Service ..... 3:45 p.m.
Bible Class ..... 5:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

Wilmot, SD 57279

Worship Service .....
(June 1st through September 30th)
..... 9:30 a.m.
(October 1st through May 31st)
.....10:00 a.m.
Sunday School and Bible Class
..... after the service.

REV. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
Box 33
Wilmot, SD 57279
Telephone: (605) 938-4710