# 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.

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"God was in Christ,

reconciling the world

unto himself, not imputing

their trespasses unto them"

2 Cor. 5:19

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**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# The President's Column

## EVERY PASTOR IN THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE PREACHES OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE JUSTIFICATION

The Bible plainly teaches ***God's Universal Will of Grace***, namely, that God earnestly desires the salvation of all people. With an oath, the Lord God declares that He has "**no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live,**" Ezekiel 33:11. Scripture says that the Lord is "**not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,**" II Peter 3:9, and that God "**will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,**" I Timothy 2:4. His earnest desire to save all people is demonstrated by sending His only-begotten Son into this world as a true man, born of the virgin Mary, "**in the likeness of sinful flesh,**" Romans 8:3, to keep the Holy Law of God perfectly for all people (which no one by nature can possibly do, **for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not,**" Eccl. 7:20), and to suffer, as man's Substitute, the torments of hell (which all people deserve because of their sins, for God's Word declares, "**Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them,**" Galatians 3:10). And all this "**that all who believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life,**" John 3:16.

In harmony, therefore, with God's Universal Will of Grace the Bible also teaches the ***Universal Atonement of Christ***, namely, that Christ Jesus has redeemed ALL people, having taken away all our guilt by his active obedience ("**by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous,**" Romans 5:19) and having suffered our punishment by His passive obedience ("**being made a curse for us,**" Galatians 3:13). He even

atoned for the sins of those who deny and reject Him and "**who bring upon themselves swift destruction**," II Peter 2:1.

Such ***Universal Atonement*** and ***God's Universal Will of Grace*** is denied by all those thousands of so-called Christians in sectarian Protestant churches who have swallowed Calvin's false teaching of Predestination to Damnation, namely, that God has predestinated the majority of people to Hell. How could God predestine anyone to Hell and at the same time want ALL people to be saved; how could He predestine anyone to Hell and at the same time send His Son into this world to suffer and die for ALL people?! Calvinists therefore teach that God did not and does not want to save all people and that Christ did not atone for the sins of the whole world. They teach that God wants to save ONLY the elect, and that Christ atoned ONLY for the sins of the elect. This, of course, is man's wisdom and the devil's mask by which the prospect of heaven and eternal life becomes absolutely uncertain.

Now, in spite of the fact that in all Christian denominations (except those who have been misled by the false teaching of Calvin) we still hear, at least periodically, that God wants to save all people and that Christ atoned for the sins of the whole world, yet, the ***Doctrine of Justification*** (the Forgiveness of Sins) which is the *Chief Doctrine of the Christian Religion*, is garbled -- even in so-called Lutheran denominations in which, as the expressed heirs of the Reformation, we should expect to hear this great teaching of Scripture confessed, preached, and taught in its full truth and purity. In external Lutheranism today, except in the WELS, ELS, and other smaller bodies, the trumpet gives an uncertain sound in the area of Justification.

The Bible teaches and, therefore, every pastor in the Concordia Lutheran Conference preaches OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE Justification. These terms do not refer to two different kinds of justification but rather to two different *ways* in which the Bible speaks of the Forgiveness of Sins. Every pastor in our Conference teaches and every congregation has heard and continues to hear that **God** who wants all people to be saved and who, in Christ, has atoned for the sins of all people ***has also, by judicial pronouncement, declared all people*** (from Adam to the last person ever to be born in this sin-cursed world***) righteous and has forgiven the sins of all people*** by His GRACE (undeserved kindness) ALONE in Christ Jesus our Savior. This is known ***as Objective or***

***General Justification!*** It is set forth, as clear as the noon-day sun, in such plain Bible passages as: "***God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,***" II Cor. 5:19. "**There is no difference for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**" Romans 3:22-24. "**In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace,**" Ephesians 1:7

Some may ask, "*Why then are not all people saved--since God has, in Christ, declared all people righteous and has forgiven the sins of all mankind?*" Remember that what is taught in Scripture about God's Universal Will of Grace, about the Universal Atonement of Christ, and also about Objective Justification IS PURE GOSPEL and nothing but PURE GOSPEL! Because of Original Sin, *no one has a free will in spiritual matters* (being spiritually blind, I Cor. 2:14, spiritually dead, Eph. 2:1, and an enemy of God, Rom. 8:7) and the sweet message of the Gospel is "**foolishness**" to him, "**neither can he know them,**" I Cor 2:14. As he is born into this world since the Fall of Adam, not one person is therefore able to apply **God's Universal Will of Grace** or the **Universal Atonement of Christ** or **Objective Justification** to himself except by the power of the Holy Ghost whose power is in that very Gospel. The Gospel is "**the power of God unto salvation,**" Romans 1:16, through which "**incorruptible Seed,**" saving faith is created and nurtured in the human heart, I Peter 1:23. It is through this Gospel that "**faith cometh,**" Rom. 10:17, and that "**it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,**" I Cor. 1:21.

As every Christian, then, in the light of God's Universal Will of Grace, should be able to say with certainty by the power of the Holy Ghost, "*If God wants to save all people, He obviously wants to save ME also,*" and as every Christian, in the light of the Universal Atonement of Christ, should be able to say with certainty by the power of the Holy Ghost, "*If Christ has atoned for the sins of all people, He has also atoned for MY sins,*" so also, in the light of those passages (cited above) which teach that the Lord God has, in Christ, declared the whole world righteous and has forgiven the sins of all people, every Christian should be able to say with certainty by the power of the Holy Ghost, "*God has also forgiven MY sins!*" ***This is SUBJECTIVE Justification!*** A man is therefore

"**justified by FAITH without the deeds of the Law**," Romans 3:28. His FAITH in Him who objectively "**justifieth the ungodly**" is "**counted for righteousness**," Romans 4:5. Whoever therefore BELIEVES in Christ to whom all the Prophets give witness, "**shall receive remission of sins**," Acts 10:43. They are *personally* or *subjectively* justified. This is "**being justified by FAITH**," by which alone we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:1.

Now, there can be ***no*** Personal or Subjective Justification without Objective or General Justification. Those who teach Subjective Justification without teaching Objective Justification, or, those who teach justification by faith without teaching that God, in Christ, has already forgiven the sins of the whole world, make faith, rather than Christ's Redemptive work, the determining factor in the forgiveness of sins. Saving or justifying faith simply *receives* what God objectively pronounces upon all men because of Christ's Universal Atonement, namely, *the forgiveness of sins*. Without Objective Justification, faith in Christ would become a work on account of which the Lord God would forgive the sins of the believers. This would contradict salvation by grace alone (sola gratia) and would interject faith as a work of the Law *because of which* God would pronounce the forgiveness of sins upon a person. The Bible says, "**By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast**," Ephesians 2:8. Again the Bible says, "**Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace**," Galatians 5:4.

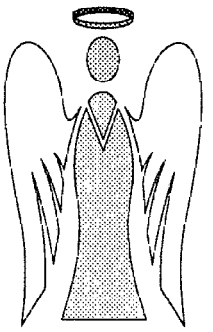
The denial of Objective Justification is also a devil's mask by which souls are led into uncertainty regarding the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Years ago an elderly lady was dying of cancer in her home in a small town in Minnesota. Her ALC (American Lutheran Church) pastor had not been visiting her as she lived out the last months of her life. Some of my members who were related to this woman asked her whether she would be happy to have me come to visit her. At her positive response, I made my first visit to her home where she was living by herself. I told her that I knew she had not long to live and asked her whether she was certain that she would go to heaven when she would breathe her last breath in this world. To my amazement, she declared that she did not expect to go to heaven when she died. When I asked her

why she was uncertain of her salvation, she replied, "*Because I don't have enough faith!*" It was not difficult to perceive that this poor woman was the victim of the false teachings of the ALC *in* their distinction between natural and willful resistance in conversion, *in* their false doctrine of "*in view of faith*" in predestination, and *in* their rejection of Objective Justification. Because she assured me that she believed the Bible with all her heart, I proceeded, for the remaining three months of her life, to bring her again and again those precious passages which speak of God, for Christ's sake, declaring the whole world righteous and forgiving the sins of all people, so that by the week of her death she was able to confess that she was indeed 100% certain of her salvation -- that because God has forgiven the sins of all people for whom Christ shed His holy, precious blood, and that, in Christ, God has reconciled the whole world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, He has also forgiven all of *her* sins for Jesus' sake which truth of Scripture she simply believed or received by faith. Faith had become for her *merely a hand* which, by God's grace, received all the blessings earned for her by Christ's work of Redemption. No longer did she have to be concerned about whether or not she had *enough* faith to be saved. Shortly thereafter this dear woman fell asleep in Jesus with the full Scriptural assurance of God's forensic declaration of the forgiveness of sins upon all lost and condemned mankind by His grace alone, for Christ's sake, and could commend her soul into the hand of her merciful Father in heaven with the certainty that He has indeed forgiven all her sins AND that where there is forgiveness of sins there is also LIFE and SALVATION! No longer did she vainly try to find her salvation in her *faith* BUT in *Christ alone* who earned for her the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, and because of whose Universal Atonement, God has forgiven the sins of all people and therefore also her sins. Now she could rest in joy and peace eternal. The ALC pastor buried her mortal remains -- not knowing of my many visits with her during those few remaining days of her life. One soul had escaped the devil's ploy to make us uncertain of our salvation to our eternal ruin.

Oh, may the pastors of our little Conference continue to preach ***Objective and Subjective Justification*** from their pulpits for generations to come!

--P.R.B.

# St. Michael and All Angels



Michael is the name of the archangel of the Lord. He is referred to several times in Holy Writ. In the 10th chapter of Daniel it is stated, "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me" (10:13). Then in v. 21, "There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." Again in chapter 12, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people" (v. 1). Turning to the New Testament we read in the Epistle of Jude, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee" (v. 9). And finally, in the last book of the Bible we are told, "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven" (Rev. 12:7).

We observe this day in the Lutheran Church (see Lutheran Hymnal, page 92, also hymns 254-257) not in order that we might worship the angels or the archangel Michael. Obviously that would be idolatry. Nor do Michael and the holy angels want such worship. In chapter 22 of Revelation the Apostle John writes, "And I John saw these things, and heard them, And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book: worship God" (vv. 8,9). We observe this day not merely for the sake of Michael alone, but rather because of all the holy angels of God.

The angels were created by God sometime during the six days of Creation. Obviously they were not created before the universe because there was only God (John 1:1-3). Nor were they created after the universe since God

"rested from all His work" (Gen. 2:2,3). The angels are not eternal, for only God is without beginning and without end. They are spirits and do not have flesh and bones as we humans possess (Luke 24:39). Neither are the holy angels all-knowing. They do not know the inner thoughts of men - this only God knows (I Kings 8:39). The hour of Christ's return is hidden from them (Matt. 24:36).

The holy angels are of great number. How many, the Bible does not say. Jesus speaks of twelve legions of angels when He rebuked the Apostle Peter for attempting to defend Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:52). The Lord Jesus there speaks of twelve legions of angels which are the equivalent of 72,000. In the Book of Daniel we are told that "thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (7:10). In Psalm 68 the Psalmist speaks of thousands of angels (v. 17). And the writer to the Hebrews refers to an innumerable company of angels (Heb. 12:22). The Scriptures also speak of different ranks among the angels. For example, they speak of the Cherubim (Ps. 80:1), and of the Seraphim (Is. 6:2).

The holy angels have great power -- they excel in strength (Ps. 103:20). From our Sunday School Lessons we remember the various examples showing the great might and power of the holy angels. When the city of Jerusalem was encompassed by Sennacherib and his Assyrian army, things looked quite bad for Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But the Scriptures tell us that during the night an angel of the Lord slew 185,000 of the Assyrians (II Kings 19:35). When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, an angel shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt him (Dan. 6:22). While the angels are powerful their power is not unlimited since that attribute can be ascribed only to God.

While the holy angels are spirits and therefore invisible, they can, whenever God so wills, assume visible form. This is clearly shown us in the Scriptures, for example, in the presence of Abraham (Gen. 18); Lot (Gen. 19); Zacharias (Luke 1:11); Mary (Luke 1:26-28); the shepherds (Luke 2:9); the women at the grave of Christ (Luke 24:4); to the disciples when Jesus ascended up into heaven (Acts 1:10). While in visible form the angels can also consume food as is shown when the angels appeared unto Abraham and his wife Sarah (Gen. 18 & 19). While this was indeed a real eating, it in no way was necessary to nourish their assumed bodies, it was simply to convince the men of the reality of their presence. The holy

angels also can speak as is evident from their various appearances. The example of the angel coming to the Apostle Peter in prison without opening the doors reveals that they occupy no space (Acts 12).

The holy angels can no longer sin and fall away since they are confirmed in their bliss. The Lord Jesus says, "that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). And when the Savior bursts forth in the clouds of heaven on the Last Day, the Bible tells us that He will come "in His glory and all the holy angels with Him" (Matt. 25:31).

It is the perfect joy of the holy angels to praise God. When we turn to the Prophet Isaiah's vision of the Lord's glory, we hear one angel crying to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory" (Is. 6:3). Again, we are told that after the angel announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13,14). Ah, what a mind-staggering scene that must be -- the holy angels in the presence of the almighty God, extolling and magnifying His holy Name with such heavenly hymns of praise!

These heavenly spirits also serve God and carry out His commands. In Psalm 103 we read, "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (v. 20). When the Savior was tempted in the wilderness, the angels came and ministered unto Him (Matt. 4:11). When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane an angel appeared unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him (Luke 22:43). The angels proclaimed the conception, the birth, the resurrection, and the Final Return of Christ (Acts 1:11). And on the Last Day the holy angels will accompany Him when He comes to judge the living and the dead (Matt. 13:41ff., 24:31).

The believers are often blessed with the presence of angels without knowing it. Therefore we Christians are exhorted, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. 13:2). The Lord is ever mindful of His own! He sends His messengers to serve those who are His dear children through faith in Christ Jesus. Listen to what the Psalmist writes, "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the most High, thy habitation: There shall

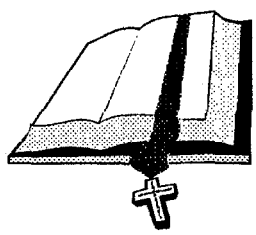
no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling, For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:9-12). Yes, only those who have repented of their sins and cast themselves upon the mercy of our dear heavenly Father who revealed His love beyond all comprehension in sending forth His only begotten Son to be our Savior from sin, death and hell -- they are the ones who have made the Lord their Refuge and receive and enjoy such gracious protection of the holy angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). Think of merely a few of the many examples in Holy Writ where the believers enjoyed the help and protection of the holy angels. Lot was delivered from the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; the angels took Lot and his family by the hand and led them to safety (Gen. 19). The three men in the fiery furnace enjoyed the protection of the angel (Dan. 3). Daniel was protected by the angel when he was thrown into the lions' den (Dan. 6). The angel provided Elijah with something to eat (1 Kings 19). When the Apostle Peter was thrown into prison by King Herod, the angel of the Lord came and delivered him (Acts 12).

What undeserving love the Lord has bestowed upon us sinners in granting us the gracious protection of His holy angels! Certainly this blessed teaching of Scripture should encourage us to lead a holy and God-pleasing life. What comfort for us Christians to know that the Lord has placed these holy messengers of His at our side to protect and preserve us in our appointed ways. And finally, when our last hour shall come, then the angels will come and take our soul to be with Jesus where we shall join the heavenly choir to praise Him who loved us unto death. We therefore pray with Luther, "Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen."

--M.L.N.

# CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

***"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."***
***--Jude 3***



In these latter days of sore distress, the claim is frequently heard that what outward Christendom really needs is another ***reformation***. Indeed, many of the *symptoms* of degeneration in the "visible church" today are similar to those which our 16th century forefathers identified in the Church of Rome: ***Scripture alone*** is no longer the **only source and norm** of Christian doctrine and practice, and its inerrancy and authority are (for all practical purposes) denied. The doctrine of ***justification*** has been recast into an image more palatable to the "mind of the nineties" (whatever *that* is); and, even among many "Lutherans," God's *forensic, objective justification* of the world has disappeared altogether. **The Bible** is still hailed as "God's Word"; but God's Law is flagrantly ignored and even deliberately set aside, and His precious Gospel is savagely perverted into a sugar-pill which even the impenitent and carnally secure find attractive. Churches and church bodies now have a **political** and **social** agenda instead of a spiritual purpose and mission. The **clergy** has resurrected the former arrogance of power which it had under the papacy, making *ordination* its claim to supreme authority in the church. The **laymen** are woefully ignorant of even the "basics" of Christian doctrine, and their pastors are ill-equipped (and largely unmotivated) to teach them anything of substance. Emphasis is constantly being placed upon **externals** such as liturgical forms, corporate affiliations, outward membership, perfunctory participation, philosophical posturing (*"conservative", "confessional"* etc.), and numerical growth. There is little if any *interest* in (and scarcely any *tolerance* of) **sound doctrine**, which very term has become a "nasty word" characteristic of narrow-mindedness and bigotry; and pastors (and even laymen) who try to focus attention upon false doctrine and practice are "dealt with." To be sure, they are not burned at the stake or subjected to the rack, but they are ostracized, deposed, banned, and even *sued* in court in a transparent attempt to minimize the effectiveness of their testimony!

On the other hand, unlike the visible church at the time of Luther's Reformation, which was for all practical purposes *one* denomination and church body, the scene today is more complex. There are literally *hundreds* of nominally "Christian" denominations in which errors vary as widely as styles on a department store clothing rack. And while the symptoms noted above indiscriminately cross denominational lines and pervade the entire "Christian" landscape, the specific issues can barely be "scratched" in a set of *Ninety-five [updated] Theses* or in twenty-eight articles of a new *Augsburg Confession*! Luther and his colleagues worked at first *within the system*, as it were, and had the blessed advantage of being able to target a comparatively limited number of false doctrines, practices, and abuses; and then, when some of the reformers themselves departed from the truth, their errors, too, had to be addressed. And, while we would not for a moment dispute the obvious fact that the churches and church bodies of our day and time which identify themselves as "Christian" are by and large suffering from spiritual putrefaction, whether a broad-based "reformation" of the *entire visible church*, addressing **all** errors in doctrine and practice is either practical or even possible **today,** is a question open to honest debate. Some, however, are of the opinion that it is essential.

This very year, for example, a "reformation" effort of sorts is being mounted by so-called "concerned conservatives" who have banded together under the name ***"Christians for the Truth."*** The group has its base primarily in Germany, but there is active interest and participation apparently on a world-wide scale. This cross-denominational organization recently published a new set of *"Ninety-five Theses"* (which it intends to nail symbolically to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in this *"Luther Year"*) in an effort to call attention to its concerns and its ecumenical movement to "reform the church". While *some* of its *theses* zero in on the obvious blights mentioned above, *others* are weakly stated, suggesting a willingness to compromise; and *many* errors and abuses are not mentioned at all. The movement seems to be getting high marks from many so-called "conservatives" even in Missouri Synod circles, but it is the kind of *unionistic effort* (with joint worship services and other acts of "selective fellowship") that ***orthodox*** Lutherans should want consciously to *"avoid"* in obedience to God's clear Word (Romans 16:17).

This is not to say, however, that we Christians should simply stand idly by and say and do **nothing**. For the Apostle Jude's exhortation was

written also *"for **our** admonition, upon whom the **ends** of the world are come"* (I Corinthians 10:11). Indeed, it was penned specifically because *"certain men crept in unawares"* (v. 4) into the churches to defile them with false doctrine and practice, as the following context of Jude 3 clearly shows. In fact, the Apostle's description of what was afoot among his readers is strikingly similar -- even in the specific detail of errors and abominations that were being introduced -- to the situation in our own day and time! Jude shows that we Christians dare not merely "rest on the laurels" of Luther and Chemnitz and Walther and Pieper, who by the Lord's hand, like Moses and Aaron, *"saved the people out of the land of Egypt"* (v. 5). We dare not smugly say concerning our "heritage of the truth" as Lutherans that "we still HAVE the Word of God in its truth and purity." For if we do not *"earnestly **contend** for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* and **fight** to KEEP it, we may well find that we no longer even HAVE it and that we ourselves have become *"leavened"* (Galatians 5:9) with all the rest and well deserve the *"woe"* that Jude pronounces upon the *"filthy dreamers"* who seek to defile the flocks of God! (vv. 11ff.) ***"From this preserve us, heavenly Father!"***

Jude exhorts us to *"contend for the **faith**,"* that is, for the **body of doctrine**, *"which was once delivered unto the saints."* This is <u>not</u> the "faith which believes" *[fides **qua** creditur]*, the confidence, created in us by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace, which lays hold on the blessings of salvation; for *that* faith is not of *our* making, nor do *we* strengthen and preserve it in ourselves by merely *"contend[ing]"*. But **this** is the "faith which is believed" *[fides **quae** creditur]*, the *objective faith* to which the believer clings for the facts and realities and assurances concerning salvation. It is *"the doctrine which ye have learned"* (Romans 16:17), departures from which *"profane the name of God among us"* (First Petition of the *Lord's Prayer*). *"**This** is the universal faith, which, except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved"* (Athanasian Creed). **This** is the faith for which we must *"earnestly **contend**"* so that it is not subverted, perverted, or converted into a man-made tradition which will lead precious souls to hell and thus make the Word of God of none effect (Mark 7:13). **This** is the faith *"which was once delivered unto the saints"* -- once and for all in one pure and unadulterated form -- to make men *"wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (II Timothy 3:15).

We can *"**contend** for the faith"* only if we KNOW WHAT IT IS. Therein lies the <u>first</u> challenge to every true Christian in Jude's

exhortation. It is a sad commentary on the state of outward "Lutheranism" today that in the so-called "teaching church" there is precious little real teaching going on. ***Indoctrination*** is not only regarded with *suspicion* by those laymen and pastors who pride themselves in their freedom and ability to "think for themselves" and to "do the right thing" without being made to "conform" to a standard of doctrine and practice, but *"the time [**has**] come when they will not **endure*** [that is, *put up with*] *sound doctrine"* (II Timothy 4:3). And sadly, Lutherans today (more notoriously than those in other Protestant denominations) are known to despise instruction. Bible classes are poorly attended where they even exist; interest in studying Christian doctrine is at an all-time low; and pastors very frankly tire of leading unwilling horses to water, much less of trying to interest them in drinking. No doubt one of the reasons for such lack of interest is that people don't want to be held responsible for judging between truth and error, for standing up to be counted, and for *"contend[ing] for the faith"*; and with knowledge comes just such responsibility. Then, of course, there are also many pastors who, like those in Luther's day (whom he addresses in his preface to the *Small Catechism*), do not **themselves** know Christian doctrine, do not **themselves** have any interest in learning it, and therefore **themselves** have no zeal for teaching it in spite of the mandates of God's Word that they do so (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; II Timothy 4:1-5; I Peter 5:1-4; etc.). *"O ye bishops!"* cries Luther, *"how will ye ever render account to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and having never for a moment exercised your office! May the judgment not overtake you!"* Indeed, it is precisely because the warning and exhortation of the Apostle Peter falls on deaf ears still today that so many have erred from the faith and are in no condition to *"contend"* for it! He warns us Christians against being *"unlearned"* and *"unstable"* in our knowledge of the Scriptures and says: *"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But **grow** in **grace** and in the **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (II Peter 3:17-18). Those who don't grow remain *"babes"* (Hebrews 5:13), *"unskilful in the Word of Righteousness,"* and therefore unable *"earnestly [to] contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."*

Moreover, fighting for purity of doctrine requires mounting a strong **defense** when the truths of God's Word are questioned and assailed. Readiness by virtue of solid instruction in and thorough knowledge of

Christian doctrine is essential to such a defense; and we are not only *encouraged* but we are, as sanctified children of God, ***required*** to *"**be ready always** to give an answer to every man that asketh you a **reason** of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"* (I Peter 3:15). When people ask us **why** we believe what we believe, we should be **ready** to answer them, meekly submitting the question to Holy Scripture for a definitive judgment and in Godly fear deferring to its wisdom for the answer we give. How indeed can anyone *"earnestly **contend** for the faith"* when he cannot even **defend** and **give answer** concerning what he believes when he is **asked**??

But a rock-solid, well-informed and uncompromising **defensive** posture is only half the battle. We Christians must also be ready and able resolutely to go on the **offensive**, especially when false prophets and their adherents attempt to breach the ramparts of our doctrinal position and to infiltrate our ranks -- either from within (Acts 20:30) or from without (v. 29). For Holy Scripture is *"profitable ... [also] for **reproof**, for **correction**,"* Paul writes to Timothy (II 3:16); and he instructs Titus *"after the first and second **admonition**"* from that perfect "norm" or standard of doctrine to *"reject"* one who teaches contrary thereto (3:10). Sadly the refusal of the larger Lutheran church bodies, particularly during the last half of the present century, to exercise *doctrinal discipline* in their respective midsts resulted in the systematic **toleration** of error rather than its refutation; and thus they **forfeited** the orthodox character that once typified at least the synods comprising the Synodical Conference of North America. Oh, there were organized efforts at reform here and there; but many of the protests lodged, for example, with the 1950 Convention of the Missouri Synod, became so much "sound and fury signifying nothing" because most of their supporters simply rolled over and played dead when their pastorates and pensions were threatened. We think, for example, of the pastors in the *Chicago Study Club* in the late forties and early fifties, who courageously marked errors and errorists in the Missouri Synod ***for awhile*** and then suddenly fell conspicuously silent when a few of their brethren were "purged" by synodical officials and were made "object lessons". The *"contend[ing] for the faith"* effectively lost the momentum it could have had, and the Missouri Synod continued on its downward slide into the cesspool of *indisputable **heterodoxy*** where it finds itself today. Oh, we hear an occasional "gurgle" from beneath the surface, but it doesn't last long, especially when the protester is determined to **stay in** the

cesspool and **drown** instead of *avoiding* it in obedience to God's clear and unmistakable command.

By God's grace the pastors and congregations of our beloved Conference, statistically insignificant as far as our numbers are concerned, continue to *"contend earnestly for the faith"* by their *individual* testimony as opportunities present themselves and by their *joint* testimony through our ***CONCORDIA LUTHERAN***, which we send out *gratis* to over two hundred and fifty different pastors each time it appears in a bi-monthly issue. We are hardly the "silent little fringe group" that some regard us to be. On the contrary, our *Theses* have been posted publicly in legible print on the "visible church's" door for almost fifty years; and it is inconceivable that anyone *truly interested* could NOT know who we are, what our position is, and how we are determined by God's grace to continue *"earnestly contend[ing] for the faith,"* come what may. This does not mean, however, that we see ourselves as a paragon of forthrightness in testifying and fighting for the truth. On the contrary, *"we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luke 17:10), and there is much more to be done: --First and foremost, we pastors must continue **teaching** with all diligence the unvarnished truth of Holy Scripture to our own people, and they in turn must continue gladly to hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest *"sound doctrine"* at every opportunity afforded them (II Timothy 4:3), so that we all continue to *"speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among [us]; but that [we] be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (I Corinthians 1:10). --Secondly, we all, pastors and laymen alike, must be *"ready always to give an answer"* concerning our faith (I Peter 3:15) in defense of God's precious truth *"which was once delivered unto the saints,"* even unto **us**. Christian people can easily talk about sports and politics and their children and their jobs; why not about Christ crucified and the full truth of His precious Word?? --And finally, we dare not be shy about stepping to the forefront of the hottest battle to fight offensively against those who would *"bring in damnable heresies"* (II Peter 2:1) to pollute the pure water of the Gospel from which we and our children drink in spiritual life and health and strength for our souls.

*"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand ..."* says Paul in Ephesians 6. **That** kind of "reformation" is an on-going, perpetual **fight** that we, as soldiers of Christ's cross, must **continue** to wage even

unto the end, so that when the smoke of battle clears at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may still be on our spiritual feet, *"steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end"* (Luther), and, by His unmerited grace alone, *"be accounted worthy ... to stand before the Son of Man"* in His righteousness which is ours by faith. To that end, may each and every one of us, individually and collectively, ***"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,"*** praying with the hymnwriter:

***Would to God that I may ever, as the martyred saints of old,***
***With the helping hand of heaven steadfast stand in battle bold!***
***O my God, I pray Thee, in the combat stay me!***
***Grant that I may ever be loyal, staunch, and true to Thee!***
*(T.L.H. 470,4)*

**--D.T.M.**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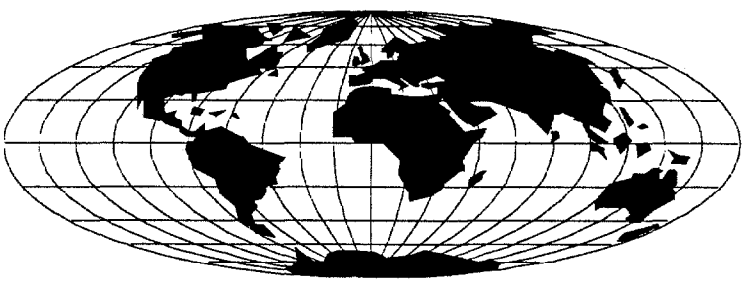

*with editorial comment*

*by M. L. Natterer*

When famous faces such as Tonya Harding and Bob Packwood get caught playing fast and loose with the facts, it's easy to point fingers. But the fact is, lying is as American as Benedict Arnold, P.T. Bàrnum and Mark Fuhrman. We give lip service to the value of telling the truth, but in a pinch, we fall back on falsehoods with alarming regularity, surveys show. Bernice Kanner, who spent two years asking Americans about their lives for her book, "Are You Normal?," found that 91 percent of us confess we lie regularly. "One out of five says we can't get through a single day without conscious, premeditated white lies," Kanner wrote. And 45 percent of her respondents don't think lying is necessarily wrong. An annual survey of high achievers by Who's Who Among American High School Students found earlier this year that three out of four of these smart, ambitious students admitted cheating in school. This deluge of dishonesty makes many ethicists, sociologists and psychologists fear we're turning into one big liars' club, fibbing more and worrying about it less, and sacrificing integrity for short-term convenience.

(Sunday Oregonian, June 30, 1996)

**The Psalmist declares, "I said in my haste, All men are liars" (116: 11). Lying is so prevalent it is just about taken for granted. Whether it be politicians, car salesmen, family members, husband and wife, the courtroom, the educational system, the churches, etc., lying has infiltrated every segment of our society! Years ago in our country the emphasis was placed on uprightness, integrity and trustworthiness. Agreements were often made and sealed with a man's word and handshake. Unfortunately, such is no longer the case. Why is this? First of all, the blame must be placed at the doorstep of the devil. Scripture tells us that the devil "abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for**

**he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). And secondly, the blame must be placed upon those individuals who follow in the footsteps of their father, the devil. The Lord pronounces His woe upon liars. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and ALL LIARS, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). Because of our sinful flesh even we Christians are tempted to lie. Hence we find the Apostle warning the Christians, "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor; for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25). We Christians should be truthful in our relationships with our fellow believers, honest and upright in our dealings with the unbelieving children of the world. The Lord Jesus tells us, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Our reputation as Christians dare not be like the Cretians concerning whom the Apostle writes that they were always liars (Titus 1:12); instead, the unbelievers should be able to point to us and declare: "There goes an honest person!"**

"It's true, I think, that the first 11 chapters of Genesis would be regarded as myths - the creation stories, the story of Noah and the flood, the Tower of Babel" says Hershel Shanks in an interview with William Dever appearing in the July/August **Biblical Archaeological Review.** Shanks, a Jewish lay scholar, is the editor of **Biblical Archaeological Review** and **Bible Review. Bible Review** has published columns stating that such New Testament stories as the Virgin Birth and Resurrection of Christ are myths. Dever is Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Arizona, Editor of the Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research and principal archaeological advisor, Anchor Bible Dictionary. ... "I Am Where I Belong," an article by Dever in the Feb. 1, **Moment, The Jewish Magazine for the 1990's** ... says that his father was a conservative Christian minister and that Dever himself had been the pastor of a rural congregation of the Disciples of Christ and minister of a large Congregational Christian Church in a Boston suburb. Dever wrote,

"During my years in Jerusalem, I remained a Christian, even serving as an Elder and occasional preacher in St. Andrew's Scots Presbyterian Church. But I moved in the American Jewish and, especially, the Israeli community - and I felt perfectly at home there. Finally, some years after coming back to the United States to teach and after a divorce, I married Pamela Gaber, a Jewish woman, fellow Harvardian, and Near Eastern Archaeologist ... I converted to Reform Judaism the week before we were married ... I had gradually come no longer to believe in the Christian myths that form the core of the New Testament and Christian belief" ... (Christian News, July 1, 1996)

**The long list of degrees after a person's name does not necessarily mean that the individual is wise. "Great men are not always wise" (Job 32:9). And the man to whom the Lord gave such <u>great</u> wisdom writes by inspiration, "Be not wise in thine own eyes" (Prov. 3:7). The Lord declares by the pen of the Prophet Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom ... but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME" (9:23,24) - He who has revealed Himself in His holy Word as the only true God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19). And in that Word of Truth He has revealed His plan of salvation. The Apostle Paul writes, "For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ... we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (I Cor. 1:18ff.). He who refuses to subject his puny wisdom to the unsearchable wisdom of the almighty "only wise God" (I Tim. 1:17) will have to suffer the consequences of his foolishness!**

†††††✝†††††

In a poll of 18 nations, The Gallup Organization discovered that Icelanders are the happiest people alive. All 267,809 of them. Eighty-two percent are satisfied with their personal lives. The United States ranked fifth at 72 percent; Japan came in seventh with 42 percent. Some people would say that happy Iceland is a statistical fluke. This is a country so small, an ordinary citizen can make an appointment to see the president. True, Iceland is no utopia. Icelanders are big boozers, with a fishing tradition of binge drinking. Almost a third of the births are out of wedlock. But that's what makes the Gallup study so interesting. Icelanders have problems like the rest of us, yet they are happy with their lot ... Americans are considerably better off by material standards than ever before. Yet we seem less happy, less contented with our lot ... (Reader's Digest, Sept. 1996)

**The above was gleaned from the article "Who are the Happiest People?" The author attempts to answer the question why the Icelanders are happier by citing such things as "rugged individualism," "tolerant attitude to the problems of life," strong systems of support," etc. Christians know what makes a person truly happy! We have the greatest of all treasures - Jesus our dear Savior! When we were under the wrath and condemnation of God because we were conceived and born in sin and continued to bring forth all manner of actual sin, God's boundless love and mercy prompted Him to send Jesus into the world who delivered us from sin, the curse of the law, and the chains of the devil, so that God is now our loving Father in Christ Jesus, who hears and answers our prayers, and through His holy Word leads us along the narrow path which finally enters into the everlasting and eternal joys of heaven. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Hence the Apostle reminds us Christians, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Being the dear children of our heavenly Father through faith in His Son we now have a different outlook on life. We rejoice in the works of His creation (Psalm 104:10-15), in His gifts of food and drink which we enjoy as the fruits of our labor (Eccl. 3:11-13), in family life (Prov. 5:18). Despondency, despair, and dark gloom arise from our sinful flesh and seek to engulf us when we experience afflictions and tribulations. For "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth**

**the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). When Peter and the other apostles were beaten, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41). The more we meditate upon the precious Gospel assurances of God's love in Christ, the greater will be our joy!**

*"My heart for joy is springing And can no more be sad,*
*'Tis full of mirth and singing, Sees naught but sunshine glad.*
*The Sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King;*
*The heaven I shall inherit Makes me rejoice and sing"*
*(T.L.H. 528,15)*


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