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. XXXXII July-August, 1997 Nos. 7 - 8

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Acts 2:42

OFFICIAL ORGAN
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

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

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The President's Column

EVERY PASTOR IN THE CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE PREACHES THE REAL PRESENCE OF CHRIST'S TRUE BODY AND BLOOD IN THE LORD'S SUPPER AND REJECTS THE ERRORS OF THE CONSECRATIONISTS AND DISTRIBUTIONISTS

Matt. 26:26-28, *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."*

Mark 14:22-24, *"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."*

Luke 22:19,20, *"And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."*

I Cor. 11:23-25. *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

The Words of Institution of the Lord's Supper (as they are written above and as they are used also in composite form in our Communion Liturgy and in Luther's Small Catechism) are so clear and plain that, it seems as though no one could possibly misunderstand them or abuse them in any way. But the so-called **"consecrationists"** and **"distributionists"** become fanatics by making a doctrine out of their own opinion or out of an opinion which they think is expressed in the writings of Luther and other Lutheran church fathers when they try to answer the question WHEN does the bread in the Sacrament of the Altar contain the real presence of Christ's body and WHEN does the wine contain the real presence of Christ's blood. It is obvious that none of the Scripture texts which treat of the Lord's Supper emphasize or even mention the WHEN or the so-called "moment of the real presence." Instead, the emphasis, in every instance, is on the WHAT, namely, **the true body and blood of Christ** which is **received** by the communicant.

Looking carefully at the composite of the words of institution, it is not difficult to follow the pronoun, in the King James Version (in the original Greek it is self-understood), to determine the emphasis on the Real Presence of the true body and blood of Christ in the earthly elements of bread and wine as these earthly elements are received by the communicant: *"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took BREAD, and when He had given thanks He break IT* **[the bread]** *and gave it* **[the bread]** *to His disciples saying,* **[of the bread]** *Take eat,* **[eat what? the bread of course]** *this* **[bread which you are eating, which you are receiving with your mouth, NOT the bread which I have in My hand OR which is still on the table BUT that which you are eating as I have asked you to do, THIS BREAD]** *is MY BODY."* THIS IS ALL THAT YOU CAN MAKE OF THE SAVIOR'S WORDS -- unless you want to interject your own or other's ideas and notions. The Lord Jesus **did not say** of the bread lying on the table, "THIS is My body." **Nor** did He say of the bread which He was lifting up from the table, "THIS is My body." **Nor** did He say of the bread which was in His hand, "THIS is My body." **But of that bread which we receive with our mouths** according to **HIS WORDS**, *"Take eat,"* **He says,** ***"THIS*** *is MY BODY!"* The Lord Jesus **nowhere** emphasizes the "**moment** of the real presence." Nor does the Apostle Paul, who writes, *"Whosoever shall* ***eat*** *this bread, and* ***drink*** *this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him* ***eat*** *of that bread, and*

drink *of that cup. For he that* ***eateth*** *and* ***drinketh*** *unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."* (I Cor. 11:27-29) The Holy Apostle says nothing about discerning the Lord's body in the Sacrament without or apart from eating and drinking. And if the "moment of the real presence" is **prior** to the reception by the communicants, who is to say when this moment **comes to an end** for the left-over bread and wine -- Scripture surely doesn't! And then what is **to be done with** the left-over bread and wine -- the Bible doesn't say! Why not let it go at that and put the emphasis where the Lord Jesus Himself does, namely, on the eating and drinking of the true body and blood of Christ under the earthly elements of bread and wine. It is this Word of God which every pastor in the Concordia Lutheran Conference preaches without the fanatical innovations of the "consecrationists" or "distributionists."

Satan delights in taking pastors and laymen away from the plain words of Scripture and causing them to interject into it their own wisdom -- sometimes influenced by the writings of others, even by certain expressions in our Lutheran Confessions which they use without taking into consideration the immediate or historical context, namely, **that these words were directed against the false teaching of the Reformed** who insist that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper **merely represent** Christ's true body and blood. Thus, the orthodox Lutheran confessors in the Formula of Concord are also emphasizing the WHAT in the Sacrament, namely, the REAL PRESENCE of the true body and blood of Christ under the earthly elements of bread and wine. There is nothing to indicate that they were **ever attempting** to answer **or even were concerned** about answering the question as to WHEN the body of Christ is sacramentally united with the bread, or WHEN the blood of Christ is sacramentally united with the wine. People who appeal to their words in order to establish such a teaching are wickedly abusing our Confessional Writings -- even as do their bedfellows who deny Objective Justification on the basis of our Lutheran Confessions.

When **interpreting SCRIPTURE**, the BARE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE MUST ALWAYS STAND exactly as they read without external historical influence -- taking into consideration, of course, both the immediate and remote context. In this way, the Bible must always be the **Ruling Norm**, the "Norma Normans," of **all** that we believe and teach. The **LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS**, on the other hand, were written in defense of the Scriptures against gainsayers and therefore

must always be read in that important historical context. If we use our Lutheran Confessions to interpret Scripture, we are using them in the service of Satan. Chemnitz, Selnecker, and the rest of our orthodox Lutheran fathers would indeed be repulsed by such a misuse of their words. We confess with the Psalmist, "Thy Word is a Lamp unto [our] feet and a Light unto [our] path." And Luther exults concerning Holy Scripture, "What is brighter than the Sun!" Our Confessions must always be regarded as "Norma Normata," the **Reflecting Norm**, namely, that which simply reflects what Scripture teaches over against false doctrine. Statements in the Confessional writings must never be used as a sedes from which to develop a doctrine in a matter on which the Bible is not specific, nor are casual statements to be used out of context in order, seemingly, to acquire the support of the Lutheran Confessions for a position which has no Scriptural support. This is what happened with the writings of most of the early Church Fathers whose expressed opinions **were emphasized beyond the Word of God and even beyond what the early church fathers themselves had intended** through which most of the false doctrines of the antichristian Roman Church were developed.

The **Consecrationists** adamantly declare that the sacramental union of the bread with the body of Christ and the wine with the blood of Christ takes place at the moment of the "consecration" of the elements, that is, **when the pastor speaks the words of institution over the bread and wine while it is on the altar**. The **Distributionists** teach that the sacramental union of the bread with the body of Christ and the wine with the blood of Christ takes place **when the pastor gives or distributes the bread and wine to the communicants**. The **Consecrationists** insist that the Words of Institution MUST BE READ (or some permit them to be spoken by memory) over the bread and wine on the altar and that it is the power in the reading or speaking of these words which brings about the real presence of the true body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. And the **Distributionists** actually insist on the same thing only applying the power to accomplish the real presence to the pastor's words spoken at the moment when he distributes the bread or wine to the communicants.

From Scripture, all that we can really know for sure and be absolutely certain of is that, in a supernatural manner, we receive the body and blood of Christ with our mouth when we receive the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. And this is all the Lord Jesus wants us to be certain about. If someone has his own opinion as to the "moment of the

real presence" in the Sacrament, that is HIS own BUSINESS, not the Lord's. It has nothing to do with Scripture and such a person dare not make of his opinion a doctrine to which he binds consciences. If he does, his position is fanaticism pure and simple and is obviously separatistic. Every pastor in our Conference preaches the Real Presence of Christ's true Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper and rejects the errors of the Consecrationists and Distributionists of our day. The number of such consecrationists and distributionists is growing in all of the large Lutheran bodies and in some of the smaller ones. **Beware of them!**

Why are there those who want the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper to BE SOMETHING ELSE than mere bread already before it is partaken of by the communicant? **Why?** I don't know, except that they are interested in a completely **outward show** in the divine service or they delight in what they think is a **show of learning** which, of course, is only foolishness in the sight of God and which, in the end, amounts only to a striving about words which Satan causes them to wrest to their own spiritual harm. It is true that adding to the Word of God **always flows from the sinful flesh** which thinks it knows more than the Lord and, in this case, evidently wants to emulate the elaborate ceremonies of the Romanists and bring into their churches a so-called "high-church ritual" (all kinds of vestments, acolytes, genuflecting, so-called "chancel prancing," elevation of the host, even prayers to the blessed virgin -- the old Una Sancta movement in the Missouri Synod). Some of this so-called "high-church" nonsense has become quite convincing to average laymen who have **not** been properly instructed in the plain truths of God's Word. They have been told that our Lutheran fathers at the time of the Reformation and shortly thereafter were involved in consecrationism, or at least in distributionism, that this is established in the Formula of Concord, that Luther elevated the host "because of the presence of Christ's body", that a little bell was rung in Leipsig at the time of J.S. Bach to signify "the miracle that took place at the moment of consecration," etc., etc. It can easily be demonstrated that all such assertions are absolutely false and misleading -- to say the least! In your conversation with all such fanatics, ask them to show you primary sources and carefully examine the contexts. You'll probably be amazed at their brazen assertions.

-- P. R. B.

CONVENTION DIGEST

MOTTO: ***"Continuing Steadfastly in Fellowship"***

For the first time in the history of our Conference, its convention was held in the sunny southwest, *"Deep in the heart of Texas,"* in the city of Windcrest, a quiet suburb at the northeast corner of historic San Antonio. Hosting the convention was Holy Scripture Ev. Lutheran Church, the Rev. E. R. Stallings, Jr., Pastor. The congregation's recently acquired and newly remodeled church complex provided ample room for the convention services and sessions, for the delicious meals served by the ladies in the lower level, and for wholesome recreational activities during "off-hours" including swimming at the community pool adjacent to the church. 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 was preceded by a two-day Pastoral Conference (June 24 and 25) and the annual meeting of the Conference Board of Directors (June 26).

The convention itself began on Friday, June 27th, with a service of convocation at 9:30 a.m. The local pastor served as liturgist; and the Conference President, the Rev. Paul R. Bloedel, preached an edifying keynote sermon on the basis of I Corinthians 1:10, centering his message upon the perfect unity in doctrine and practice, possible only by adherence to the Holy Scriptures, which is the basis for truly Godpleasing fellowship.

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 with the addition of two reports which had been inadvertently omitted, and the Report of the Press Committee was heard. Following that report, the convention stood in recess for the noon meal.

The afternoon session opened with a brief devotion conducted by Pastor Dierking of Wilmot, South Dakota. This session was then highlighted

by the presentation of the CONVENTION ESSAY, Part I. Delivered by Pastor David T. Mensing of Oak Forest, Illinois, this essay was entitled: *"The Nature, Exercise, and Preservation of Christian Fellowship."* The first part of the essay centered on what fellowship **is** and its basis in true unity of faith and confession. (The essay in its entirety will appear in the Convention PROCEEDINGS and, by resolution of the convention, will be serialized in the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*, 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 that ***from henceforth our Conference annual conventions be held on the weekend including the last Sunday in June.***

The Treasurer's Report concerning the past fiscal year, given by Robert G. Bloedel as Treasurer *pro tem,* was then heard and adopted, as was also his Initial Report of the Finance Committee with its preliminary proposed budget for fiscal year 1997-98. 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 E. R. Stallings. Then came the Report of the Business Manager of *SCRIPTURAL PUBLICATIONS,* David A. Steinke. All of these reports in their detail will be found in the official PROCEEDINGS, which will appear later this year. The Report of the Committee on Missions, presented by Pastor David Redlin, concerned itself mainly with the financial subsidy of our sister congregation in Wilmot, the continuance of which the committee recommended to the convention. The committee also encouraged contemporary mission activity of our congregations individually and collectively through the establishment of "home pages" and "web sites" on the Internet. Following that report, the report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee to Study the Feasibility of a Conference Web Site was made by Mr. Raymond Kusumi. Its recommendations were laid before the Resolutions Committee for study and for the formulation of a proposal. Later in the convention, this proposal was unanimously adopted, namely, to establish an official Conference Web Page as a "pilot project" for the

year 1997-98, its function to be administered by a special committee and its content to be approved by the Conference President and Secretary. Its cost will be underwritten by Mr. Kusumi as a gift for the Lord's work among us. Following the reading and approval of the day's minutes, the Friday Session adjourned for the supper hour.

The Saturday morning sessions were opened with a devotion conducted by Pastor Redlin of Tucson, Arizona. Thereupon Pastor Mensing continued the presentation of his essay with its second part which examined the *exercise* of Christian fellowship a) between individuals and in Christian families, b) in the local congregation, and c) in such wider contexts as, for example, our Conference. 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 Natterer, the chairman, pointed out that, although we have at present no students enrolled in our theological program, we are not to stop praying for the Lord's gracious blessing in this regard, for He has commanded us so to pray and has promised to hear us. The chairman urged young men to consider training for this blessed work. Discussion was lively and participation was so gratifying that further time was allocated to continue it following the noon meal.

The afternoon session began with a devotion conducted by Pastor Stallings of San Antonio, Texas, after which discussion continued on the C. T. E. Report. The matter of our concern for a future ministry was then committed to the Resolutions Committee to draw up a suitable resolution regarding it. Following the reports of the Committee to Review the President's Report and of the Auditing Committee, the Report of the Committee on Lutheran Union was presented by Pastor Dierking. 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 a friendly contact with Pastor Lietz of that body on the part of Pastor Mensing this past winter, at which time one of the chief matters standing between our groups was discussed at some length, no further word has been received from the F. L. C. From our standpoint, at least, the door is still open for future discussions, and we

pray that these will one day materialize. The Committee also recommended that copies of two of our documents on the Church and Ministry be printed and mailed to every pastor and theological professor of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, inasmuch as there is some movement within that body to re-study its position on those doctrines. This recommendation was passed later in the convention. Before the mid-afternoon break, the convention heard the Further Report of the Finance Committee Concerning the Budget, which had not been revised since its report on Friday.

Following a brief recess, the convention proceeded to the Election of Officers and Standing Committees for 1997-98. 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. Phillip R. Martin

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 Stallings; and Mr. Robert G. Bloedel.

COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: Pastor Mensing, Chairman; Pastor Natterer; Mr. Phillip Martin; Mr. Daniel Bloedel.

COMMITTEE ON MISSIONS: Pastor Redlin, Chairman; Pastor Natterer; Mr. Ted Fitzwater; Mr. Rodney Reyelts; and Mr. Raymond Kusumi.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Mr. Victor K. Bloedel, Chairman; Mr. Paul Natterer; Mr. Phillip Martin; and Mr. Rodney Reyelts.

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

At this time, Pastor Dierking of Wilmot expressed his personal thanks, the thanks of his family, and that of St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church for the loving support of the Conference brethren, with their Scriptural exhortations and counsel, their fervent prayers, their brotherly encouragement, and their financial gifts, all of which helped him and his congregation in the recent sore trial of their faith. The Lord graciously and mightily relieved them this past spring from the harassment in the courts of their unfaithful former members; and the prayers of the Conference brethren are now still earnestly coveted, that the Lord preserve the little flock in Wilmot and bestow His continued gracious blessing upon it.

At the Sunday morning service, the host pastor again served as liturgist, and Pastor M. L. Natterer of Lebanon, Oregon, preached the sermon on I Corinthians 1:4-9. His theme was: *"Why a True Christian Congregation Is Such a Blessing to Us,"* and he divided the sermon into two parts, namely, I. There we have the grace of God preached to us, and II. There we are strengthened in our faith. Delegates and visitors from the congregations of our fellowship then partook of the Lord's Supper together as guests of Holy Scripture Congregation -- for the remission of their sins, for the strengthening of their faith and of their walk in sanctification, and in testimony of their blessed unity in the Word of their Savior by which their fellowship together has been established and preserved.

After a sumptuous dinner, sessions reconvened with a devotion conducted by Pastor Bloedel of Seattle, Washington. The final portion of the Convention Essay was then presented by Pastor Mensing on the *preservation* of Christian fellowship. This section also included a forthright presentation of practices which militate against and destroy true Godpleasing fellowship, namely, sinful religious unionism,

separatism, and selective fellowship. 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, and its publication in the *CONCORDIA LUTHERAN*, perhaps serially, was authorized.

Concluding the business of the convention, the delegates first heard the report of the Conference Archivist and authorized the amount of $500.00 as "seed money" to permit the committee to publish past proceedings, essays, and other documents of historical significance. The Conference Archivist, Pastor David T. Mensing, was reappointed to that post, as was Mr. Phillip R. Martin to assist him. A brief report was also heard regarding the "Seminary Bookstore". The convention then acted upon the first two resolutions proposed by the Resolutions Committee, namely, that concerning the establishment of a Conference "Web Page" and that expressing the Conference's concern for a future ministry. Both were unanimously adopted.

The convention then proceeded to ratify the Final Budget Proposal of the Finance Committee, which included the recommended subsidy for St. Stephen's in Wilmot. It then heard and accepted the Final Report of the Committee on Registration and Excuses and the Report of the Conference Statistician, Mr. Raymond Kusumi, who was re-appointed to that post for 1997-98.

The convention also unanimously accepted the gracious invitation of St. John's Lutheran Church of Lebanon, Oregon, to host the 47th Annual Convention (June 26, 27, and 28, 1998), immediately preceded as usual by the Plenary Pastoral Conference on June 23 and 24, and the Board of Directors Meeting on June 25th. Our people are encouraged NOW ALREADY to mark these dates on their calendars, so that they can plan ahead to attend.

Finally, the convention acted on six resolutions of thanks offered by the Resolutions Committee -- to Pastors Bloedel and Natterer for their sermons at the convention; to Pastor Mensing for his instructive and edifying essay; to the various pastors for their devotions; to Mr. Stephen Bloedel for the organ music which enhanced the services and devotions; to the outgoing officers and standing committees for their faithful labors during the previous fiscal year; and to Pastor and Mrs. Stallings and the

members of Holy Scripture Congregation for their hospitality. The day's minutes were then read and adopted subject to polish; and immediately thereafter the convention adjourned at 6:15 p.m., concluding with the customary closing devotion led by President 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, encouraged by the precious fellowship that He had preserved among them, and determined by His grace *"to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Ephesians 4:3) and to *"continue steadfastly in fellowship"* (Acts 2:42), *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (I Corinthians 1:10).

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David T. Mensing, Secretary

Soli Deo Gloria!

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Scripture Sanctions the Death Penalty

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." Gen. 9:6

This year in the State of Texas, 18 people have been executed at the Huntsville State Prison. Just this past week alone, four people were executed, two in one night. Without question, Texas leads the nation in meting out capital punishment.

Due to the unusual number of murderers who have been executed this year in Texas, "bleeding-heart," liberal-minded people across the country and even in Texas have been hollering, "foul." Are the liberal-minded, "bleeding hearts" right in crying, "Foul"? Let it be said that in each case the executed person had been found guilty by a jury and legally sentenced to death. No person is executed without having been convicted by a court of law. And no person convicted has ever been deprived of his legal right for an appeal. Some have had the generous benefit of appeal after appeal and were still found guilty because they were guilty.

In the face of all the controversy over capital punishment, God's Word speaks. Our text says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." (Gen.9:6) These are the words which God spoke to Noah after the Flood. In these words, God tells us that if a human being murders another human being, then by man shall that person be put to death. The phrase, "by man," does not mean any single individual, but the government of man. Thus, the sense of our text is this, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, **by the government of man** shall his blood be shed." Government, as we all know, has been instituted by God for the basic function of protecting human life and preserving law and order. Indeed, Romans 13:4 says, "for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Thus, God Himself sets forth the principle that those who murder a fellow human being, ought to be put to death by man.

And let it be said here that when the government of man executes a criminal, this does not make the government guilty of murder. Murder is the unlawful taking of life. When government carries out capital punishment or when its armies kill the enemy, this is not murder. It is simply the government, the institution of God, not bearing the sword in vain.

What is more, God tells us in our text that this principle, that when a person sheds human blood that person himself ought to die, is based on the fact that man was made originally in the image of God. Our text says, "for in the image of God made he man." When God created Adam and Eve, He created them in the image of God. Man was made in God's likeness. Our Catechism explains it this way: "That man knew God and was perfectly happy in such knowledge. That man was perfectly holy and blessed."

However, we need to distinguish between the image of God in the wider and the narrower sense. The image of God in the narrow and primary sense refers to how man at creation was like God spiritually. Man was holy and knew God in perfect righteousness and holiness. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, this spiritual image of God was lost totally. This spiritual image is partially restored when a person believes in Christ. But until a person is converted to Christ, the spiritual image of God is altogether absent.

Yet there is also the image of God in the secondary or wider sense. Even fallen man in the state of unbelief remains a rational, thinking creature who has an immortal soul. This is what separates man from the animals. Man can reason, and man has an immortal soul. Thus, the murder of a human being is the violation of the image of God in the wider or secondary sense which still remains in man. Indeed, what is a sad paradox in our society is that many people seem more concerned for the life of an animal which has no soul and was not made in God's image. Our society is more concerned when a dog gets run over than when an unborn child is torturously aborted from the mother's womb.

Furthermore, when God says, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," this is a matter of moral and civil justice. It is not spiteful, unlawful revenge as many "bleeding hearts" contend. Law and order deal with justice, punishment, and judgment. In the realm of civil

law, good is rewarded, and evil is punished. Thus, in our text God Himself is teaching us that the just punishment for murder is that the murderer be put to death. This is where "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" does apply! Executing a murderer is the carrying out of justice. This is the moral punishment and just judgment sanctioned by God Himself! In fact, when government does not carry out the just use of capital punishment, justice is not being served. Not carrying out the death penalty only adds to the offense of the original crime.

Added to this, capital punishment is also a deterrent and a warning to others. When someone contemplates murder but knows that murderers are swiftly sentenced and put to death, he will think again as to whether it is worth the loss of his own life. Of course, this is where swift, sure punishment ought to be exercised. Justice is not served when justice is delayed. The Bible says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccl. 8:11) Delayed justice dilutes the effect of justice. While the right to have an appeal of a murder conviction is legitimate, it must not be used to forestall and delay justice. Delay after delay after delay based on silly technicalities is not justice. Furthermore, when a murderer is put to death, it is a sure deterrent in that the murderer who is put to death will not be able to murder again. Today, many murderers get paroled and commit another murder! That is doubly horrendous!

But let us suppose a murderer truly repents of his crime. Should he still be put to death? Here it must be remembered that the state or the civil government is not an agency of grace and forgiveness. The civil government does not possess the Office of the Keys as does the Church. The Church is the spiritual agency of God's grace and forgiveness, but the government is God's temporal agency of Law and Order. Thus, even if a murderer should genuinely repent, he must still suffer the temporal penalty for his crime. He ought still to be put to death. Indeed, if he has truly repented, and has become a true Christian, even though he is executed for his crime, his soul will go to heaven. Some years ago a man was convicted of capital murder and was sentenced to die. He was visited by a Christian pastor. After having extensive discussions with the pastor, the murderer repented and became a true Christian. Yet, because he had become a true Christian, he accepted what the Word of God says about the crime of murder. He knew what our text teaches. Therefore, he did not seek to get a lighter sentence. Rather, he stated publicly that, as a Christian, he

believed he should still die for his crime. He also expressed no fear of dying. He knew that as soon as he would be put to death, his soul would go to heaven.

Even though the society of today is no longer ruled under a theocratic form of government as was Old Testament Israel, our various governments could surely profit from how justice was usually exercised in Israel. It was usually swift and sometimes even severe. If a person were guilty of adultery, after the fact was established in a legal proceeding, the offender was taken out and stoned to death. Also, as King David lay dying, a man named Adonijah sought to usurp the throne. When his plot was foiled, he went into the temple and seized the horns of the altar and earnestly begged for mercy. Having just been anointed to succeed David, Solomon granted him clemency. However, when Adonijah sought again to usurp the throne by seeking marriage with Abishag, Solomon no longer exercised mercy, but had the would-be usurper of the throne put to death!

Indeed, God Himself often meted out swift and harsh punishment upon any transgression of one of his commands. In Numbers 4:15 God said, "but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die." As the ark of the covenant was being transported to a new location, no one was to touch it beyond the necessary lifting it up onto a cart and taking it out of the cart. Anyone touching the ark for other reasons would die. On one occasion, as the ark was being carried in a cart, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and caused the ark to be jostled. One of the men put out his hand to keep the ark from tipping over. Yet God punished this man with death! The Bible says, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzziah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." (II Sam. 6:6-7) This caused King David to be afraid. The Bible says, "And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" While this is not a case of man carrying out capital punishment, it does bring out how God often brought swift punishment in exact accord with His Word. It illustrates how swift, severe punishment brings about fear of the Lord. In the New Testament when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost about their offering, each one was struck dead by God. The effect of this is described in the Bible this way: "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." (Acts 5:11)

The principles of justice and punishment pervade all aspects of our lives. In the home, the parents are God's authority over the children. If the children are disobedient, they are to be punished. If children are not punished, they do not learn to respect authority. Then as they grow older, they will become rebellious and disobedient. The Bible says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13:24) Likewise the Bible says, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." (Prov. 19:18) "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Prov. 22:15) Again the Bible says, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Prov. 23:13-14)

All forms of punishment and the meting out of justice ultimately serve an even higher purpose. Where people are humbled by punishment and justice, they learn to see their sins and the need for forgiveness from God. The law shows us our sins and the need for a Savior. Here is where we appreciate all the more that there is a Savior who died for our sins to earn for us the forgiveness of sins. Any time a person is humbled into repentance, this is for his good. He who repents and trusts in Christ is fully saved from his sins no matter how horrible they may be. The Bible says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. 1:18) When we are shamed by our sins and repent, we thank God that He is also a gracious God who pardons our sins for Jesus' sake. As the Bible says, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Psalm 103:8-13)

Now then, even though our society no longer has much respect for the Word of God even when it addresses civil matters, we are to remain the salt of the earth. We are not to lose our firm stand on God's Word. We are to witness the truth in this sin-darkened world. May our hearts ever humbly submit to instruction. The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov.

1:7) May God's holy law ever keep us humbly repentant of our sins, and may His holy Gospel give us the true comfort of Christ's forgiveness, and in turn cause us to live obedient lives unto the Lord. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

-- E. R. S.

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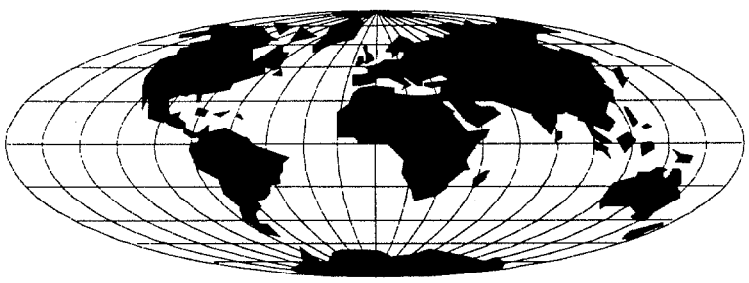


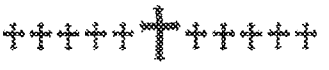
with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

"It's the mission" ... Those words were expressed by Dr. Martin E. Marty as he summarized his reflections upon the recent joint Conference of Bishops meeting of the ELCA and the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church of the USA. It was a historic meeting as leaders of our two denominations worshiped, prayed, reflected, and relaxed together around the possibilities of our churches participating in "full communion." ... The 1997 assembly of the ELCA next summer in Philadelphia will be considering proposals of "full communion" with the Episcopal Church (USA) and three Reformed churches: United Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ. Also, the assembly will respond to an action by the Roman Catholic Church of the lifting of the 16th-century condemnations concerning justification between the Lutherans and Roman Catholics ... Lutherans, Episcopalians, and Reformed Church members have been in discussion toward a fuller expression of unity for nearly 30 years ... Essential agreement on matters of the gospel have led us to this place ... (The Lutheran, official publication of the ELCA, January 1997)

The above article was written by Bishop Paul Swanson of Oregon. This union between ELCA pastors and the above denominations has been carried on for years already. In fact, in the same January issue we read that Pastor Laurie Larson Caesar, the woman pastor of Mission of the Atonement, Beaverton, Oregon, serves in a Lutheran-Catholic Parish with the Franciscan priest, Father Tumulty. She states that "almost everything that happens here, happens together. In fact, except for the Eucharist, everything is together.

Confirmation, adult education, first communion instruction, women's retreats -- they're all done together" ... "Just like in most ELCA congregations, one Sunday he (Father Tumulty) preaches while I preside, and the following Sunday we exchange roles" ... "Laurie recalls her feeling of support from Bishop Paul Swanson when he said, "We can certainly ordain you in a Presbyterian church to serve in a Lutheran-Catholic Parish." The Biblical teachings which had been hidden under a pile of rubbish for centuries and brought to light through the Reformation are once again being buried by the ELCA with its open defiance of the plain teachings of God's Word. Down through the years the ELCA has been setting aside one Scriptural teaching after another until they now surrender the chief doctrine of Holy Writ: justification by grace through faith alone! "Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered (nor can anything be granted or permitted contrary to the same), even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, says Peter, Acts 4:12. And with His stripes we are healed, Is. 53:5. And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and the devil and all things gain the victory" ... (Smalcald Articles 1537 Part II). THE ELCA IS NOT LUTHERAN!



The taxi driver in Berlin snickered when I asked if he attends church. The bellboy shook his head no. Even the seminary student with whom I shared coffee one night echoed the voice of a German generation turning away from the church, even from God. For Matthias Lindenberg, studying theology is an intellectual pursuit. It has nothing to do with expressing his feelings. "I lost more and more faith when I studied theology," said Lindenberg, 28. "I have problems to believe this classic thing -- God the old man sitting on a cloud." If you fear America is losing its faith, avoid Germany. I had read how organized religion is losing its grip on our postwar ally -- according to Der Spiegel magazine, atheists and agnostics outnumber believers for the first time. Two-thirds of west Germans under age 30 say God has no meaning for them; the percentage is lower in eastern Germany ... "The church didn't have a

clear position during the war," said Hanni Lewerenz, 51. "It didn't have anything. Nowadays, the same. They don't have a clear position." In postwar Germany, said Alix Rehlinger, rejecting the church becomes one way the young can take a stand against the sins of their fathers. "Dropping out of church," she said, "is connected with rebelling against your parents." (The Charlotte Observer, North Carolina, Feb. 1, 1997)

Just think! The cradle of the Reformation, the country which was privileged to enjoy the restoration of the pure Word of God, treats that Word of Life with such indifferentism, yea, with such disdain! The Treasure which had been unearthed through the work of the Reformer is now being buried again beneath the haughty pride of man's perverted reason! Luther's cry: "Thus saith the Lord!" no longer sounds forth from the pulpits. The great Scriptural truths which Luther so ably brought forth: Scripture alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, -- that legacy to his countrymen has been set aside in favor of philosophical rubbish! Concerning such contempt for the Word Luther declared, "Germany, too, will eventually have to suffer because of this sin; for it constantly cries to heaven and does not let God rest. Therefore He must be angry and say: I have given you My dear Son, My greatest and dearest Treasure; I was eager to talk to you, to teach and instruct you in eternal life. And now I have no one who wants to hear Me. Therefore I must let the punishment take its course ... Therefore I shudder and fear that Germany, too, will shortly be visited and terribly punished because of the great ingratitude and the blasphemous contempt for the dear Word -- the Word which God lets shine so clearly and abundantly in these dangerous last times. He can be patient for a long time when people are wicked; but when they despise and persecute His Word, His patience is at an end, and the final punishment is at hand, as it was in the case of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, etc." (What Luther Says, Vol. 1, page 532). God grant that those words may never be said concerning us!

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