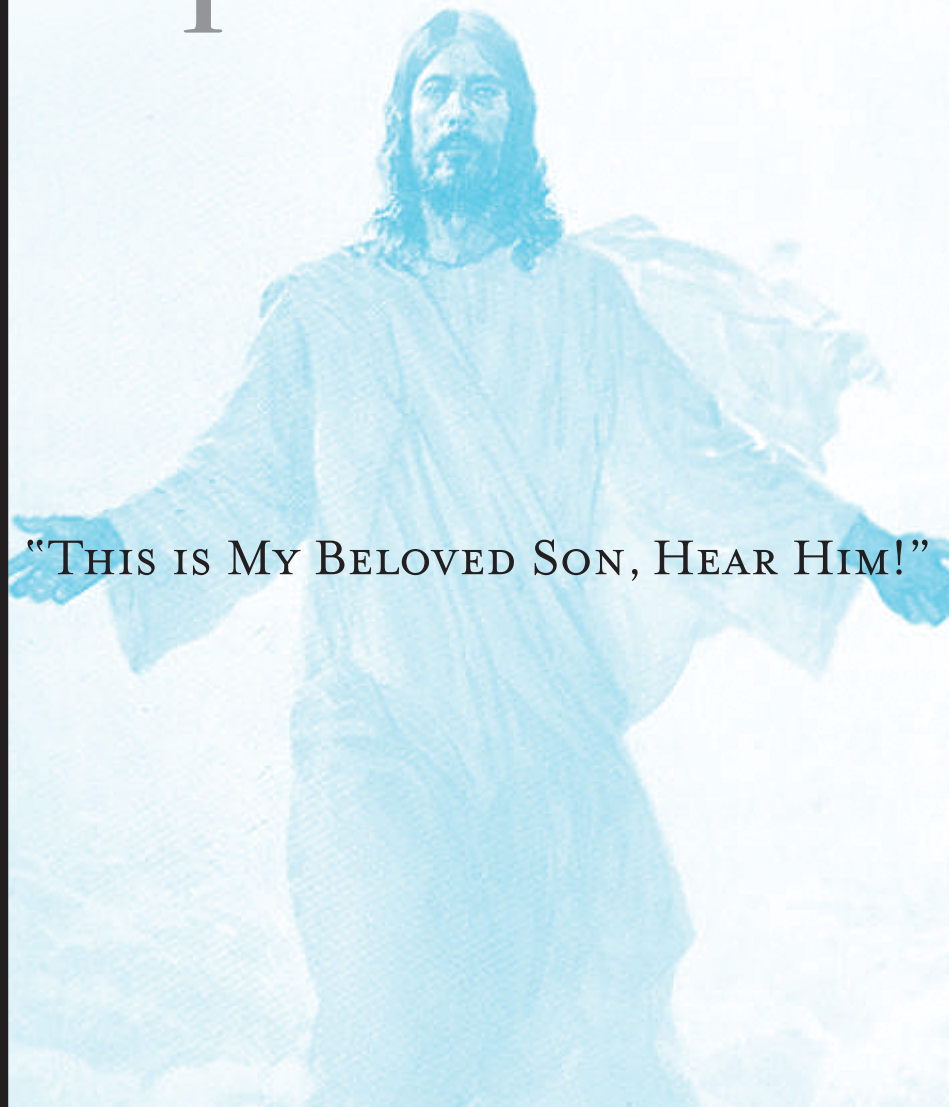


Lutheran Spokesman



“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM!”

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It is Good to Be Here ... It's Also Good to Keep Going

There are times when things are going so well that we do not want the moment to end. Peter felt that way as he witnessed the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter said, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Lk. 9:33).

We surely can sympathize with Peter for wanting to enjoy the moment, but we're also told (v. 33) that he didn't know what he was saying. It would have been devastating for Peter and all of mankind if Jesus had never come down from that mountain.

Consider your Savior Jesus, who was willing to move on from glory to shame for the benefit of lost sinners. The Lord encourages us as well to move ahead—even from a good situation—for the very same reason.

In Jesus "dwells all the fullness of

the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), yet during the time of His humiliation on Earth, His glory was hidden from sight. His appearance was so plain and unassuming that despite the performance of multiple miracles and powerful teaching, even those closest to Him routinely forgot about His divine nature.

On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus gave three apostles a view of that divine glory. "[He] was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light" (Mt. 17:2). In the trying days ahead, this would bolster their confidence in Him as true God.

From our perspective it might have seemed very appealing to Jesus, as it was to Peter, to remain on that mountain top in glory, conversing with Moses and Elijah. Jesus certainly could have taken Peter up on his offer

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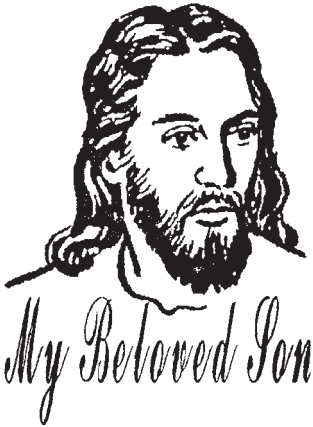
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of building three tents, but He had a mission to complete. Another mountain of pain and suffering and death awaited Him—Calvary. There wouldn't be glory there, but utter shame and humiliation—as the One innocent of all died as the most guilty of all.

It was love that brought Jesus down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and how much better for us that He did not remain, but kept going.

Much to Share!

There are circumstances ("good places") in which we, like Peter, find ourselves wanting to remain. We may think of a particularly uplifting worship service, or at the feet of Christian teachers, or in private meditation. It is good to be in that safe harbor, being

strengthened through the gospel of Christ.

Once again, though, it is better to keep going. It would be a selfish attitude to only receive God's Word and never share it. Being in such a "safe" situation may be good for us personally, but it does not help those who are in desperate need of God's Word, which illuminates our sin and casts a spotlight on Jesus as our Savior.

We are witnesses, just as Peter, James, and John were. In his second epistle Peter recalled the transfiguration of Jesus, and then added, "We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Enjoy that Word of God as you bask in Jesus' glory and are fed by Him in His Word! At the same time realize that it is also good to go out and illuminate others with that same glory of Jesus revealed in Holy Scripture.

Jesus shows us the way—in the fact that He left comfort and glory aside for the love of lost souls!

'Tis good, Lord, to be here.
Yet we may not remain;
But since Thou bidst us leave the mount,
Come with us to the plain. (TLH 135:5)

—Pastor Michael Schierenbeck



Please read John 2:1-11—

Jesus Reveals His Glory

We surely can sympathize with the master of this wedding feast, can't we? We all know what it is like to have some kind of emergency at just the

wrong time. He probably sprouted a few gray hairs trying to figure out what to do.

We have had similar things happen

to us—the sewer plugs up just when we have a house full of company, or the car decides it doesn't want to start on that particular morning when we are already running late for work. Such things have a way of happening at the most inconvenient time, and they all take a toll on us by way of stress, worry, and anxiety.

Jesus' mother had been invited to this wedding. When she learned that they had run out of wine, she immediately went to Jesus, who was also there with His disciples. Jesus was willing to help, but His "time had not yet come" at which He would come to the aid of this frantic master of the feast.

When we find ourselves in the middle of a terrible predicament and feel like no one is there to help—and perhaps even feel like God doesn't care—remember how Jesus handled that wedding emergency. He knows exactly what is going on in our lives. He does care. And He does help—but in His own time. It is true that His time often does not match our own. It may be His will that we "sweat it out" for a while just to teach us to learn patience, or to come to Him in prayer. Whatever His reason is, we know that His time is best.

To the Rescue!

We have concrete evidence of this here. Jesus did come to the rescue. He had the servants fill six ceremonial waterpots with water. It was then that Jesus told the servants to dip some out and take it to the emcee. And on the way that water became wine—Jesus' first miracle.

I'm sure that the wedding host would have been happy with just about

anything at this point. Most of the people had had close to their fill of wine, and it was customary to serve the best wine first, and the lesser quality stuff once people had their fill. But notice the way in which Jesus helps. His solution was far better than anyone could have dreamed!! The amount of wine—somewhere between 120 and 180 gallons—was enough for the rest of the festival and then some. And as for the quality—it was the best ever. How relieved that emcee must have been. His emergency had been solved in the best possible way.

No, God doesn't always help in the way that we want or expect. But we will always find that when He comes to our aid. His help is far better and greater than we could ever have imagined.

John records that Jesus' first miracle had a blessed result—"this beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and revealed His glory; and His disciples believed in Him."

Jesus comes to our rescue too, so that we might believe in Him. No matter what our need, He is with us. He will help us, at His own best time, and in His own best way.

May the Lord continue to help us through whatever comes upon us, so that, like the disciples there in Cana, we find our faith in Him strengthened day by day!

—*Pastor Paul Krause*



You and Me and a Tree

What does a tree have to do with you and me and our Creator-Savior-God?

In reading Holy Scripture, have you noticed how often trees are spoken of and how they come into play in our relationship with the LORD? From Genesis to Revelation—from the beginning of the world to the eternal life in heaven—the references are numerous.

It was due to the rebellion of our first parents in the Garden of Paradise that sin and its dreadful curse gained entrance into the created world. Some may wonder why God would put a forbidden tree there in the first place, saying to man, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17).

Having created the first couple with a free will to obey God, this tree was just one of countless ways for them to show their love for their Creator God by observing His command.

While Adam and Eve failed to show their love for God by refraining to eat of this forbidden tree, God did not fail to show His love for them. He drove them out of the garden, lest they eat of the other tree known as the tree of life and live forever in this sin-cursed world (Gen. 3:22-24). Can you imagine an unending existence on this sin-plagued globe as opposed to dwelling eternally in the blissful world of heaven? Our loving and merciful LORD wanted to preserve us for the latter blessing.

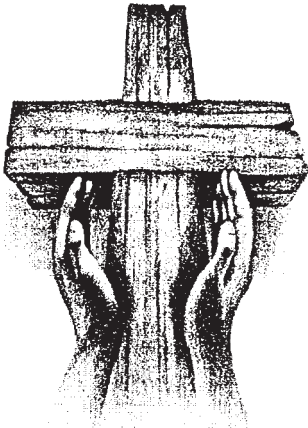
In order to deliver us from this sin-ravaged world, sparing us from the curse of eternal death in hell, our gracious God caused a tender branch to spring forth from the family tree of Jesse (Is. 11:1). It had been declared, "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. 23:5).

The Righteous Branch

In his well-known passion chapter (53), the prophet Isaiah connects the picture between this righteous Branch and His being lifted up on the accursed tree on Calvary. He leads off his account with these words, "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (v. 2).

Why did the heavenly Father choose a tree for His Son to be hung upon? The Old Testament law gives us some insight. "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God" (Deut. 21:22,23).

While Jesus had no sin and was not deserving of death, the Word of God explains that He "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1



THIS IS HOW WE KNOW WHAT LOVE IS:
**JESUS CHRIST LAID DOWN
HIS LIFE FOR US.**

1 JOHN 3:16

Pet. 2:24). As a marvelous result, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

How can we—pictured as a tree—respond to what Jesus suffered on the accursed tree for our salvation? In the book of the Psalms we are told of the believer, "He shall be like a tree plant-

ed by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season" (Ps.1:3). "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever. I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good" (Ps. 52:8,9).

The righteous Branch's redemptive work on the accursed tree means paradise restored to all those who are grafted (Rom. 17:11ff.) into God's kingdom by faith. In paradise they will have access to the tree of life. "In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. 22:2,3)

Praise and thanks be to the righteous Branch who blesses us with the tree of life in paradise!

—Pastor Mark Gullerud



PATRICK HAMILTON — Leap Year Martyr

Since this is Leap Year, and since February 29th falls on a Sunday (following Ash Wednesday), you may wish to know and honor something about that date in history.

Do you know any Lutherans of Scottish background? Do you know any surnamed Hamilton? They may be related to, or descended from, the family of the first Lutheran martyr of the 16th Century Scottish Reformation.

Patrick Hamilton was burned at the

stake on February 29, 1528, in front of one of the colleges of St. Andrews University—very near the Royal and Ancient Golf Course. He was only 24 years old, but a very brilliant man, and a man of royal blood. His birthplace—Patrickholm—is southeast of

Glasgow, near Stonehouse in Lanarkshire. This little farmhouse is located about thirty miles away from Scotland's one and only Lutheran congregation—begun in 1962 by this writer—in East Kilbride.

Martin Luther avoided martyrdom. But many of his followers on the Continent and in the British Isles did not escape making such a testimony. Patrick Hamilton was only one of many, but he is the one credited with being the "proto-martyr" of the Reformation in what is now the United Kingdom. He died as a professing Lutheran.

Income from an inherited northern Abbacy had allowed young Patrick (at 22) to study in Paris and Louvain. Later he went to Wittenberg, where he heard Luther lecture, preach at the Castle Church, and offer the Sacrament in both kinds (bread and wine). Then off to Marburg, to write his theses, known as "Patrick's Places"—which soon became a handbook of Christian doctrine in the Scottish Lowlands.

To read these articles, says Australian pastor-historian Bruce Adams, "is to become attuned to the work of the Holy Spirit addressing a man's deepest thoughts whilst searching the Scriptures of God. They breathe a pristine purity of the Reformation in its formative years . . . " and reveal a "grasp of the fundamentals of evangelical truth: of Law and Gospel, of the Person and work of Christ; of Justification by Faith and faith's living expression in godly works; and then, of the basic need of every living person to believe the Gospel of God for salvation . . . " (from the pamphlet "Luther's Ambassador to the Scots" in which he relies on such

author(itie)s as T. H. L. Parker, P. Lorimer, A. F. Mitchell, J. Howie, J. K. Cameron, W. Dallmann, J. T. McNeill).

On one return trip to Scotland, Patrick was received into the Faculty of Arts of St. Andrews (1524), and preached and spoke and composed music which bespoke his evangelical convictions. Pressure from Church authorities gave him no alternative but to flee to Wittenberg again. But he burned with desire to bring the gospel of Christ crucified for sinners back to his native soil. One historian reports that, shortly after his return in 1527, he married a young noble woman.

St. Andrew is reputed to be the burial place of some of the bones of the Apostle Andrew, martyred in Greece on an X-shaped cross which has become the national symbol and flag of Scotland. Very soon, Patrick would join that martyr. The ruthless Archbishop Beaton was disturbed by Patrick's preaching and teaching—this "Lutheran heresy!"—and had him apprehended and committed as a prisoner to the castle. Twelve charges were quickly leveled against him. Patrick refused to renounce the doctrine of the trustworthiness of 'Scripture alone' and the twelve articles he authored, derived from those Scriptures (which had led to those twelve accusations).

The terrible sentence of death was read in the great metropolitan church of St. Andrews on February 29th. He was led to the stake, there to suffer over a six-hour period. The spot is marked in the pavement with a stylized "PH" still clearly visible. Also clearly visible above it—chiseled into the stone of the University wall—is a likeness of his visage, supposedly carved during those six terrible hours, and

which closed with his words: "As to my confession I will not deny it for awe of your fire . . . I will rather be content that my body burn in this fire for confession of my faith in Christ, than my soul should burn in the fire of Hell for denying the same."

Adams concludes his pamphlet with these comments about Patrick Hamilton: "In a particular sense is he

dear to evangelical Lutherans, who today hold fast to God's inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word, in an age of apostasy, secular illusion, and secular despair." He includes Patrick's encouragement: "Let us, I beseech you, follow His footsteps, whom all the world ought to praise and worship. Amen."

—*Pastor Em. Warren Fanning*



The Discourses of Christ

Christ and the Father
John 5:31-47
Part Three

Witnesses for the defense

Jesus is always on trial, for Satan has never given up his case against Jesus in our fickle hearts. Though for the moment we stand as visitors in an ancient courtroom, we heed the witnesses that Jesus calls upon for His defense, and their testimony resonates in our hearts even today.

The Jewish court is still in session, Jesus is still on trial, and we have sat through two hearings, puzzled and troubled that the case against Him has not collapsed like a burst balloon. He stands accused of two capital crimes: the first a technicality—that Jesus was breaking the third Commandment by doing a miracle on the Sabbath; the second more substantial—that in making Himself "equal with God," He was blaspheming, breaking the entire first

group of Commandments.

The accused is allowed to make His statement to the court, and His defense strategy stands open in the record before us. By the way, Jesus has no intention of escaping on a technicality from this bogus civil/theological trial, for He has a higher goal: to tell the truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the TRUTH! That always brings the best results, especially for undecided spectators, who could yet be saved (v. 34).

But how shall He organize His defense to refute the charges? What kind of evidence and witnesses shall He select? It would be best to discard friends and relatives, for they might waffle. Dismiss anyone who may be discredited by the court for having a

personal axe to grind. Call upon only those witnesses that are irrefutable and utterly dependable.

Call Your first witness!

After He concedes the common rule that self-testimony carries no legal weight (v. 31), Jesus calls His first witness, Baptizer John, who had been interviewed earlier (1:19-23), whose testimony had already been heard, and who had enjoyed some temporary renown (vv. 32-34). Though John was reputable and had "borne witness to the truth" of Jesus' identity, Jesus knew that when push came to shove, this bunch of hypocrites would discard John's testimony for the sake of expediency. So Jesus makes the preemptive strike of setting John aside, even though John "was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light." So much for the first defense witness.

Call Your second witness!

Here comes a more impressive testimony: "I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." No question about it, none but God could turn

well-water into vintage wine, cure the nobleman's son at a distance, and even heal a man lame from birth (by reconstructing his ankle bones, joints, and muscles)—and on the Sabbath!

That miracle had triggered the legal debacle, and at this juncture the prosecution feels it best to refrain from any comment on the forensic evidence, for it was both public and irrefutable. They will not concede the obvious deduction, of course, that Jesus and God are synonymous, in fellowship doing the holy Sabbath work of removing human burdens.

The Father Himself Bears Witness!

Jesus calls His third witness, and Father-God Himself steps into the witness stand. "The Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me." When had that happened? First, at Jesus' baptism the Father's voice had come from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And second, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the message was amplified with "Hear Him!" Yet since the only eye-witnesses to these two events were disciples, it was accurate



The Ladies Aid of Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown, South Dakota

reporting that disbelievers had "neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form." The jurors, not present at those two events, were in no position to dispute the eye-witnesses.

In an interesting side-bar, consider this: since it is impossible for the deaf to hear audible testimony (their hearts were "dull of hearing"), the voice of Father-God had never gotten through to them. Deafness disqualifies a juror, doesn't it? Therefore His deaf judges were disqualified to function in court, bogus as it was.

Nonetheless, one additional testimony deserves its day in court; it is the testimony of the Scriptures. "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe." The closing and clinching testimony to Jesus is the Scripture itself. Will they hear what the Father has to say about Jesus/Messiah in the Bible?

Sad to say, these vipers had no stomach for anything God had to say,

even in the Bible! Their disbelief was worse than amazing, for God had opened His heart to them in the Bible; God invested His time and energy into producing this written record of His plans and deeds for humanity. Here in the pages of Holy Writ, Jesus lies in His manger-bed; here Jesus preaches from His pulpit; here Jesus is at work to open blind eyes and heal deaf ears; here Jesus stands astride His fallen enemies; here Jesus rides the tidal wave of judgment—as He comes to claim His own.

Yet the Pharisees and scribes were so fixated on their false approach to the Scriptures that they could not raise their eyes from the microscope to see they were standing on the threshold of Eden and in the shade of the Tree of Life (vv. 39-40)!

It's painful to read of their disbelief (vv. 40-47), for Jesus has built his case on a credible line-up of witnesses, starting with the lesser and progressing to the greater: a) John's witness, b) His miracles, c) The Father's voice, d) Scriptural testimony that Jesus is



Women of Faith, Faith Lutheran Church, Markesan, Wisconsin.

Messiah/Savior. God has done His best for them, as He always does.

Jesus had His day in court, and though it was a bogus trial, we bystanders have been blessed to hear the witnesses for the defense.

Though one might say that our own case is still pending, we have God's

word on it that the prosecution cannot condemn us, not while our Savior is alive and well and presides over the Supreme Court. He has declared us innocent and has promised to stand by our side into all eternity. Hallelujah for Jesus!!

—Paul R. Koch



CROSS PURPOSES



DOES ANYONE CARE WHAT GOD'S WORD SAYS?

There is a phenomenon that has arisen within the church world today that is well intentioned, but nevertheless is less than helpful. While "liberals" are involved, our reference is to the so-called "conservatives," who want to return their church to its former confessional position. Their tack—so prevalent in the LC-MS and in the ELCA—is to begin an organization within the church in an effort to change the direction of the church. In the meantime, liberals who think that the church is already too conservative start their own organization to counteract the conservative group.

The result is that there are three positions vying for domination in an effort to "save our beloved church." •

First of all, we are amazed that church bodies tolerate within them such factions as contradict the official or accepted teaching and practice of the church. But that speaks to the problem within these bodies and others. They delight in having a broad umbrel-

la under which people of diverse teachings and practice can co-exist. They are willing to tolerate these organizations while ignoring them. No orthodox church body could tolerate such "anti" movements and still be orthodox!

While the conservative concerns and desires are commendable, as there is a desire a return to pure teaching and practice, these organizations are in the wrong, because their proponents have themselves departed from the Word of God.

When it has been ascertained—by comparing what is being taught and practiced in the church to Scripture—that the church body has departed from the Truth of God's Word, and is defending, promoting, and otherwise tolerating doctrines contrary to the Word of God, Scripture has one directive. Following the Scripture directive in such cases is the strongest admonition to the errorist and to the erring body.

The Lord in Romans 16:17 and 18 gives both the action to be taken and the reason: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." It is incumbent on one to be convinced that he himself stands on the truth and to be very careful before making a judgment that false doctrine is being taught. However, when false doctrine and/or practice has official status, one's conscience is bound to follow the Word.

Delay is wrong, and delay is dangerous! Scripture says, "avoid." Separation for the sake of preservation is called for!

Such a separation is not easy. Many of us have experienced the heartache and anguish of separation. Nevertheless, the Lord does not ask of us what He Himself will not give the strength to do. He will bless faithfulness!

Deception & Confusion

For all their good intent, these conservative organizations deceive and confuse. Sheep who should be defended and protected—if they even know the danger in which they are—are given a false hope. As these organizations (usually more than one, not necessarily in agreement) meet and plan and lament and decry the situation in their church, the sheep are led to believe something positive is happening. Instead of fleeing the false teacher, they are lulled into complacency under the guise that a return to orthodoxy is



just around the corner.

Sometimes these organizations seek to make life so miserable for the liberals that the liberals leave. One tack often is to try to build a majority (as though Scripture suggests that a majority is always correct, or that the church should be run by majority opinion). In the Church the Word is to rule, majority or not!

It is commendable to be concerned about friends and neighbors in the church. Yet when false doctrine has infected the church, delay in applying God's directives hurts the very ones about whom we claim to care.

"Conservative" unionism is just as dangerous, and sometimes more so, than blatant unionism, because the former is deceptive.

The *Brief Statement* of 1932, an LC-MS confession now collecting dust, says: "*We repudiate unionism, that is church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Romans 16:17; 2 John 9:10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Timothy 2:17-21.*"

Again the *Brief Statement* is clear: "*All Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matthew 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox*

church-bodies to leave them, Romans 16:17."

Until concerned people—in churches those same people recognize as heterodox—bow to the Scriptures, liberals will give just enough to salve the

conservative concern. And the slide into confessional oblivion will continue.

—*Pastor Daniel Fleischer*

• *This is what we term "synoditis" in accompanying article on goings on in Missouri — Editor*



Perspective on Goings On in the Missouri Synod—

LCMS At Another Crossroads?

One of our pastors, who happens to have some roots in the Missouri Synod, forwarded to us a copy of a paper delivered by Dr. Kurt Marquart to the "Walther Conference" held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. on November 7, 2003.

Ever since one of its District Presidents, Dr. David Benke, participated in that post-9/11 unionistic, syncretistic prayer service in New York's Yankee Stadium, the Missouri Synod has been involved in an internal struggle (catching even national attention!) between conservatives and liberals (or "moderates" as they prefer to be called). You may recall we commented on the matter in our July 2003 issue.

At this point in time, the on-going struggle/debate/controversy has pretty much boiled down to who is to be elected and thus become synod President at the up-coming 2004 Convention.

Will—or should—pro-Benke Dr. Jerald Kieschnick be reelected? Or will—or should—a conservative candidate such as Dr. Marquart replace Kieschnick? Marquardt is being actively recommended and promoted for the President's position by synod conservatives (and also by the outspoken editor of *Christian News*).

Conservatives used the "Walther Conference" as a rallying point for their valid concerns about the course and direction of the Synod. From all reports, essayists at the Conference agreed that the need is urgent and the time ripe to call the synod back to its confessional moorings.

In its considerable efforts to promote Dr. Marquart for Synod president, *Christian News* has reprinted or referenced an assortment of Marquart's writings. From what we have read of them, most of those writings could be endorsed by confessionally-minded Lutheran Christians.

Marquart is surely an articulate spokesman for the concerns of Missouri's conservatives. That was/is clear from his essay under the title of "Putting Missouri Back on Track." For its review of the paper, the November 17, 2003 *Christian News* chose the headline "*BUREAUCRATITIS*" *BASHED*—a "right on" title also from our perspective.

Our previous comments ("Universalism—and Politics—Marches on in the LCMS," July issue, p. 14f.) berated Missouri for allowing for/playing religious politics. We called attention to the fact that rather than addressing matters—mat-

ters tearing at the heart and soul of its one-time position of leadership of confessional Lutheranism in America—by asking "What does Scripture say?", Kieschnick-led Missouri has fallen into the satanic trap of asking "What does this or that synod board or commission say?"

Top Heavy

This is not only an outsider's characterization of Missouri's problems these days. In his presentation to the "Walther Conference," Marquart speaks of much the same thing. Hardly alone among synod conservatives in his assessment, the conservative candidate for synod President sees Missouri's problem as being "top-heavy" with bureaucracy.♦

Herewith a few quotations from the Marquart presentation—a presentation prompted largely by the fact that a synod Commission arbitrarily (without any use of/support of Holy Scripture) over-ruled the District's disciplining of Dr. Benke:

" . . . The outward structure is there to serve the Synod's confessional purposes, and must be changed or even abolished if it gets in the way of the confession of the evangelical truth."

" . . . In the Middle Ages the church had come to be distorted into a sacred bureaucracy, a chain of command, with the laity at the bottom, the papacy at the top, and the bishops and clergy in-between! The Augsburg Confession rejected this caricature and returned to the biblical understanding of the church not as a bureaucratic command structure, but as the glorious Bride of Christ, consisting of all believers in Christ, the sacred royal priesthood!"

" . . . Our disease is, you might say, 'bureaucratitis.' When theology is done bureaucratically, it simply dies and turns into a caricature of itself."

" . . . If our Synod cannot recover this absolute, over-riding priority of truth and confession over all sorts of organizational considerations, it will cease to be a Lutheran church and become just another bureaucratic sect."

" . . . If the evangelical truth is to regain top priority again in our Synod, we shall need quite deliberately to combat the bureaucratic spirit, which can never put truth first."

There is much more along the same lines.

In our opinion, doctrinal discipline has been long overdue on many synodical fronts in the LCMS. Marquart's concerns for reform and renewal therefore appeal to us, and Missouri might well benefit from someone like him in a position of leadership, provided his good words are turned into action.

On the home front, may the Lord of the Church graciously spare us of the CLC the scourges of synoditis and bureaucratitis. May He deliver us from theological posturing and politicking as we strive to uphold Scriptural integrity among us and to spread the gospel of Christ in its truth and purity. Lord, have mercy!

—Pastor Paul Fleischer

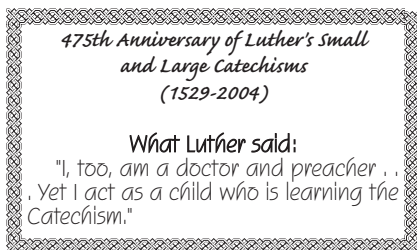
♦Another source in *Christian News* reports that in a twenty-year period between 1981 and 2001 the LCMS "swelling bureaucracy" grew when 593 members of the LCMS clergy left the parish ministry and took positions with the Synod or one of its Districts. If that is not sad enough, the loss of that many clergy happened at a time when over 1,000 of the 6,000 congregations in the LCMS have pastoral vacancies! (CN, Nov. 17, 2003, p. 11)

The Second Commandment

I would venture to say that at no time in the history of the world has God's name been taken in vain more than it is today in our own country. One cannot watch a television show or a movie for very long without "God" being mentioned inappropriately.

One might expect this in the "worldly" entertainment industry, but of perhaps greater concern is the misuse of God's name among Christians, those who should know better. There is no doubt that we have been influenced by what we read and hear on a daily basis. Our speech tends to mimic that of the majority. This should not be so.

Chances are that when you memorized the Second Commandment, you were not required to learn the second part of the verse, attached to the Second Commandment, "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20:7). It is a big deal to our God to misuse His name. It should, therefore, be a big deal to us Christians, to those who bear His name. It would do us well to review the Second Commandment and Luther's explanation of it.



What is meant by God's name? God's name is more than simply those titles which are given to Him, for it also includes everything that is revealed about Him in the Bible. Consequently, those who teach other than what God's Word teaches are misusing His name.

We rightly use God's name when we hold fast to His Word and proclaim it faithfully to all around us, for it is the power of God to salvation.

God's name is misused when it is used unnecessarily. How many times have you heard the expression, "Oh, my God"? It is an evil habit because it trivializes God's name. It reminds me of the boy crying "Wolf!" when there was none. When we call upon God's name when we are in trouble, we want our sincere "Oh, my God" to be heard

The Second Commandment

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use His name to curse, swear, practice superstition, lie or deceive, but we should call upon His name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

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Large Catechism Comment:

"As the first commandment instructed the heart and taught faith, so this commandment (the second) leads us into the outer sphere and trains our lips and tongue God-ward. For words are the first issue and revelation of the heart."

and answered.

God's name is misused when it is used to curse others. We are instructed, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and do not curse" (Rom. 12:14). The use of G-d— in our society is so prevalent that it scarcely draws a reaction anymore.

Pray for yourself and others:

"Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from thee."
(TLH #400, v. 2)

God's name is misused when we swear inappropriately.

When we swear by God's name, we are asking Him to be our witness. There are times when this is proper, such as in a court of law. But most swearing done in our society is uncalled for. When faced with people doubting their word, how often have you heard them say, "I swear to God"? To this point Christ speaks clearly, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Mt. 5:37).

Luther states: "Lying and deceiving are in themselves gross sins; but they become greatly aggravated when men, wishing still to justify them, invoke God's name in confirmation." Do you recall why Peter went out and wept bitterly?

How should God's name then be used? As Luther states in his explanation, "Call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks."

As Christians who have been blessed with undeserved forgiveness for wrongs committed against this and other commandments, we cannot help but praise the name of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

I cried to Him in time of need:
Lord God, oh, hear my calling!
For death He gave me life indeed
And kept my feet from falling.
For this my thanks shall endless be;
Oh, thank Him, thank our God, with me,
To God all praise and glory.
(TLH #19, v. 3)

—Prof. Joseph Lau



First Article—God as Preserver

RICHLY AND DAILY

"(The first article of the Apostles' Creed) offers splendid insight, but more than that, a precious treasure. In it we see how the Father has given Himself to us together with everything of His making and how He most richly provides for us in this life, quite apart from all the other inexpressible eternal blessings showered on us through His Son and His Holy Spirit" (*Large Catechism*).

Jesus teaches, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). "All these things" are those things that we tend to worry about: food, clothing, and shelter, how to provide them for ourselves and those who depend on us.

By telling us that we need not be anxious about such things, Jesus teaches that our God is both willing and able

475th Anniversary of Luther's Small
and Large Catechisms
(1529-2004)

What Luther said:

"In the morning and whenever I have time, I read and also recite, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, psalms, etc. And besides this I must also read and study every day."

to provide all our needs. He is the Maker of heaven and earth. "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (Ps. 24:1). He is also good and generous, having made the world in such a way that it is fruitful and produces a great variety of things that support human life. "He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). In this way our Maker is also

our Preserver.

In the first article of the Apostles' Creed, we state our conviction that God is both our Maker and Preserver. In his explanation of the article, Luther teaches: "God also preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all my property and all I need to support this body and life." This is a comprehensive list which reminds us that God is the Supplier of everything that we need and the Source of all the good things that we enjoy.

God's work of preserving our life does not stop with providing the things we need. "He also protects me from all danger. He guards and defends me from every evil." We live in a fallen world, and for that reason we pass

The First Article

(About Creation)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has created me and all creatures. He has given me my body and life, eyes, ears, and all my bodily members, my mind, and all my senses and still keeps them for me.

God also preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, animals, and all my property and all I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger. He guards and defends me from every evil.

God does all this because He is my good and gracious Father in heaven, not because of anything I have done to earn or deserve it.

For all of this it is my duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

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Large Catechism Comment:

" . . . He causes the necessities and comforts of life to be provided for me by everything in creation . . . He also gives whatever other physical and temporal blessings there may be, such as good government, peace, security. . . . All this is included in the word 'Creator.'"

through dangers every day—many more than we are aware of. We may drive our cars at high speeds on the highway and maneuver them through heavy city traffic, often with little thought of the danger involved. We are exposed to diseases and to viruses and bacteria that can kill. It is only due to God's work of preserving us that such things do not kill us. Over all these things God exercises control, so that He keeps them from us. If He does allow us to be injured or become ill, He does so to discipline and correct us as our loving Father.

Sometimes God may let us experience a narrow escape from danger, so that we see His protecting hand and thank and praise Him. In the *Large Catechism* Luther exhorts believers to look for God's protecting work in our lives. "Every time we escape from distress or danger, we should realize that this is a gift and act of God. He does all this for us so that we may look into His fatherly heart and sense how boundlessly He loves us."

God does all this for us not because of anything we have done to earn or deserve it, but because He is our good and gracious Father in heaven. Knowing this should lead us to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.

The knowledge that God preserves our life by providing for us and protecting us is a great blessing. It keeps us from foolishly thinking that we pre-

serve and protect ourselves. We work to serve our Lord; we save and conserve to be good stewards; but all our working and saving would be nothing without the blessing of the Lord. Luther comments, "If we could believe (the first article) with our whole heart, then we would also act accordingly and would not so proudly strut about, insolently pluming ourselves as though we ourselves had produced our life, wealth, power, honor, and the like, and as though others must therefore fear and serve us."

Knowing that God is our Preserver also helps keep us from sins such as greed and envy. We know that our welfare does not depend on getting what belongs to someone else, or upon piling up wealth. Whether we have little or much, every day we are dependent on our God.

Knowing that God is both Maker and Preserver frees us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We know that we do not live by bread alone, or that food and clothing are the greatest of God's blessings. Forgiveness of sins, our standing as children of God, the privilege of prayer, the hope of eternal life—these are the greatest of God's blessings. These things we may seek with all our heart, knowing that all the rest God will surely provide.

—Pastor John Klatt



Ground-Breaking in Chicago Area

On Sunday, August 17th, 2003, Immanuel Lutheran Church, formerly of Addison, Illinois and now relocating to Batavia, had a Groundbreaking

Service at its new property site.

At this outdoor service of thanksgiving and joy, Pastor Baker preached on Genesis 28:10-19. His theme was



Members of Immanuel Church, Chicago area, posing (above) and preparing for the Groundbreaking Service (below) with Pastor Baker.



"This is the House of God." Hymns were sung and prayers offered up to the LORD of the Church. After the service, all partook of an outdoor picnic, with games and activities for the children.

The first shovel of dirt was turned by Pastor Baker. The second shovel was turned by Mr. Chris Coutre, President of the congregation. The third shovel was turned by Mr. Michael Dvoracek, Chairman of the Building Committee.



Chris Coutre



Mike Dvoracek

In early October, the Kane County Building Department issued the building permit to the congregation. It is the goal of the congregation, God-willing, to at least get the foundation in before cold weather sets in. If weather conditions permit, the intent is to enclose the structure before winter and then work on the inside during the cold months.

The congregation eagerly anticipates the completion of the new worship facility!

—Pastor David Baker

Announcements

Creation Seminar

Dr. David Menton will be conducting a seminar at Messiah Lutheran Church, 12145 W. Edgerton Avenue, Hales Corners (Milwaukee area), Wisconsin, February 13-15, 2004. Topics will include "The Evolution of Evolutionism," "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made," "Feathers and Fur," and "Implications of Evolutionism." Please call, e-mail, or check Messiah's website for further information.

—*Pastor Michael Eichstadt*
(414) 427-9337

Announcement

Scott Wuerch of Eau Claire, Wis. is herewith declared eligible for the teaching ministry in the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

—*John Schierenbeck, President of the Church of the Lutheran Confession*

Trinity, Millston, Wisconsin

Peace with God, Onalaska, Wisconsin

Pastor Arthur Schulz, who has been serving these two congregations, informs us that the two churches will no longer form a Dual Parish.

Beginning January 1, 2004 worship services at Trinity Lutheran Church, Millston, will begin at 10:00 a.m. (summer, 9:00 a.m.). Pastor Schulz continues to serve.

Beginning January 1, 2004, worship services at Peace with God Lutheran Church, Onalaska, Wisconsin will begin at 10:00 a.m. The site will be at 1105 Riders Club Rd., Onalaska. Pastor Paul Gurgel will serve as Vacancy Pastor



Missionary Koenig describes these five men as the "Congo Translation Committee."

COVER: Matt Schaser