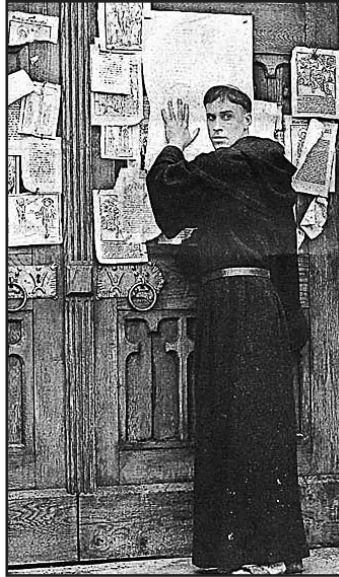


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



THE 95 THESES

READING OVER THE 95 THESES, A COLLEAGUE TOLD LUTHER:

"YOU TELL THE TRUTH, GOOD BROTHER, BUT YOU WILL ACCOMPLISH NOTHING."

ANOTHER SAID, *"THEY WILL NOT STAND FOR IT."*

TO WHICH LUTHER REPLIED:

"BUT WHAT IF THEY HAVE TO STAND FOR IT?"

AS FOR TETZEL, WHEN HE READ THE THESES, HE CROWED:

"WITHIN THREE WEEKS I SHALL HAVE THIS HERETIC THROWN INTO THE FIRE."

Do we need a second Reformation?

It was October of 1993. Fresh out of the Seminary, I was serving Resurrection Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi, Texas.

I had completed preparations for our congregation's Reformation celebration, so I picked up the newspaper. I noticed a headline which read: "We need a second Reformation." Intrigued, I began reading the article by Joe Patrick Bean.

The article began: "On Reformation Day, Lutherans honor the pioneering reformer for his liberating theological insights: salvation by grace through faith, not by works; rediscovery of the Gospel; rejection of fallible human tradition as the ultimate source of religious belief; the priesthood of all believers; the importance of individual conscience."

Now, of course, it is GOD we honor and praise for uncovering these truths by leading men to return to His Word.

We recognize that GOD used Luther to restore His Word to prominence.

So far I wasn't ready to argue too much with Mr. Bean; but then he continued: "Gay and lesbian Lutherans in the United States mark Reformation Day this year also with the hope that their church will reaffirm Luther's principles and at long last apply them to its understanding of human sexuality."

Mr. Bean went on to quote at length what he called 'a landmark report' produced in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) entitled: "The Church and Human Sexuality: A Lutheran Perspective."

The writer praised the statement because it "... recognizes that solid scientific research today provides a more valid understanding. ... We now know, as the biblical writers did not, that 'homosexual orientation' is experienced as an aspect of who a person is rather than something one chooses to be."

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There was more, but that's enough, isn't it?! Is that the kind of reformation the church world needs?! Do we need to contradict Scripture because of supposed scientific research?!

Luther's Attitude

Is that what Dr. Martin Luther was after when he encouraged that we poke out the eyes of our reason when it conflicts with Scripture?

Consider the attitude that Luther fostered: "... if you want to avoid all offenses, turn yourself over to the Word and work of God, putting aside and casting away all your own thoughts and counsels. Let yourself be spoken to, prick up your ears, and come close to listen. For in all the affairs of man and God our way is never safe unless we turn ourselves over completely to the Word and work of God and take our stand on it without any debate about it in our mind" [*Luther's Works*, Volume 15, p. 75, Concordia Publishing House (1972)].

So, do we need a second Reformation? I don't know about that, but articles like the one quoted DO remind us of the need to revisit,

relearn, and refocus on God's Word.

We need to come to Scripture with a child-like faith. We need to measure our every word and thought and teaching by the Word of Truth. We need to be careful that we don't make unwarranted deductions that are simply not supported by Holy Scripture. Do we need a reformation that includes 'scientific research overturning Scripture'? No—that's exactly the kind of Reformation the church DOESN'T need today!

We need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

We need to dig into God's Word again (anew) for this generation and the generation to come!

Let's do what we can to help others to see, learn, and passionately believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

—Pastor Andrew Schaller



Stand Your Ground!

When you think about great heroes of the Bible, many notables come to mind, such as Samson, David, and Joshua.

You may not think about Shammah, the son of Agee. He was as great a hero as any in the Bible, but not as well known. Shammah was one of David's three mighty men.

In 2 Samuel 23:11-12, we have a very brief account of one of Shammah's

great accomplishments. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down. "But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines."

Think of it, the Philistines could completely surround Shammah and

attack him from all sides at once. But they could not kill him; he struck them down one by one!

Shammah was truly a mighty warrior, but it wasn't just by his own strength that he could defeat so many. Verse 12 concludes, "So the LORD brought about a great victory."

It was God who fought through Shammah and defeated the enemy!

What a marvelous encouragement to us in this Reformation season. The victory of Shammah is very much like the victory of another great hero who lived about 2500 years later in Germany—Martin Luther. The enemy was different but the battle was just as fierce. Luther was surrounded by a horde of false teachers who were corrupting God's Word and trying to plunder and destroy God's people.

Like Shammah, Luther stood his ground; many times all alone. Armed with the Word of God, Luther defeated the enemies of God and His people. We still celebrate the fact that through Martin Luther "the LORD brought about a great victory"!

Still Today the Battle Rages

The battle continues today. There is no end of enemies against God and His Church. Many times we are gathered

together in the safety of our comrades in church and Bible class. But other times we find ourselves alone in the world, surrounded by unbelievers who scoff at God's Word and our belief in such "outdated foolishness."

We may also be surrounded by other professing Christians who challenge different parts of God's Word.

All of these are allies of Satan who are trying to weaken and destroy the foundation for our faith so that we fall into unbelief. It is not only our own faith that is at stake, but these constant attacks are trying to erode the solid rock of the Word of God, so that many people will fall and be lost.

Some fellow believers may retreat from the battle in fear. We ourselves may be tempted to shrink from confrontation.

But may we be like Shammah, standing our ground! Stand upon the solid rock of God's Word, armed with the sword of the Spirit (which also is the Word of God).

We can do so with great courage, knowing that the battle is the Lord's. When we stand on God's Word, we can be certain that "the Lord will bring about a great victory"!

—Pastor David Reim



"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." — John 8:31-32

Stand on God's Word Alone!

Our judicial system follows the rules of double jeopardy. This means

that if the court rules that you are not guilty of a crime, even if you commit-

ted that crime, the government cannot try you again for the same crime. The verdict stands.

God's Law shows us that we have committed the crime, that is, we have sinned. But the righteous Judge declares us to be not guilty because of Christ's sacrifice to pay for our sins. Christ was judged for our sins and, on His account, God's verdict upon us is "Not guilty!" The verdict stands, recorded forever in God's Word. It is this judge who declares in His Word, "I AM the LORD, I do not change" (Mal. 3:6).

By that unchanging Word of God we receive freedom from sin. It is the truth that makes us free. Without God's Word we could not know this truth, as is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

When Luther became convinced by the Bible that sinners are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone, without good works, the Church of Rome tried to convince him otherwise. But it was not God's Word being used to convince him! Instead, the church brought out the writings of Augustine and other church fathers.

Luther replied, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason...my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

When Ulrich Zwingli, the founder of the Reformed churches, appealed to Luther to be "reasonable" regarding the Lord's Supper—that surely Luther did not believe that Christ's body and blood were really and truly present with the bread and the wine in the Sacrament—Luther clung to the words



"THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." John 10, 35

of Scripture alone, "This is My body" and "This is My blood."

Stubborn? Yes!

Why did Luther hold so stubbornly to Scripture? Why not give in a little on some of these things?

It's very simple. For one to call the plain words of Scripture into question results in calling God's verdict into question!

Had Luther given in on the works-versus-faith argument, we would still be trying to make up for our sins with our good works. Had Luther given in to Zwingli, we would have been robbed of the assurance that the Sacraments offer—that our sins are forgiven!

It might be said, "Of course we shouldn't give in on these big, important topics. But why not give in on some of the other, less important ones?" To this we answer, "Because if we give up one part of God's Word,

where do we stop? If some of it is not true, even a little bit of it, then all of it might not be true!”

In other words, who is going to decide which parts we don’t need?

Jesus Himself said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt. 4:4). God’s Word is not ours to tamper with. Christ doesn’t say, “If you abide in most of My Word, you are

truly My disciples.”

Any departure from God’s Word endangers the freedom that we have in Christ, for we will have departed from the foundation of our faith. On the other hand, if we abide or remain in Christ’s Word, there can be no doubt about our eternal freedom, for God’s verdict stands—“Not guilty through Christ!”

—Pastor Joel Fleischer



A Reformation Message from our CLC President—

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION — A Positive Presentation of the Truth

The Lord God had made sure that the gospel would be restored through the Reformation of Martin Luther in the early 1500’s. There were external reasons for the continuation of Luther’s work. The German people and princes were tired of the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church and were sensitive to the money flowing from the coffers of Germany into Rome. Furthermore, the German Emperor Charles V needed the Lutheran princes to turn back the threat of the Turks (Muslims).

So, following the Diet of Worms in 1521, there was an uneasy status quo. Would the Reformation continue, or would it disappear from history as had so many previous efforts of reform?

The Lutheran princes pressed Charles V for a free General Council. In June of 1530, Charles V convened the Diet at Augsburg, promising to give a gracious hearing to the question

of whether preachers are bound to confine themselves to the doctrine of the Roman Church in their preaching. Charles V directed the “Protestants” to prepare a statement on the points of where they differed with the Roman Catholic Church and present it to the Diet at Augsburg.

The Elector of Saxony directed Luther and the other theologians at Wittenberg to draw up a summary of doctrine and a statement of abuses to be corrected. The Augsburg Confession was based on previous works, notably the Articles of Schwabach and the Torgau Articles. The Augsburg Confession is basically the work of Luther. However, Luther was not allowed to attend the Diet at Augsburg, because he was still under the imperial ban with a price on his head. Luther’s friend Philip Melancthon was the one who elaborated upon Luther’s work and present-

ed it in his peaceable style to the Diet at Augsburg.

Think of the contrast. In Orlando, Florida, this past summer, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) sought to find a doctrinal statement that would preserve the external unity of the church in the face of obvious doctrinal disagreement. At Augsburg the Lutheran princes and theologians sought to clearly confess what they believed and also to show that their doctrine was in line with the teaching of the New Testament Church based on the prophets and apostles.

What makes The Augsburg Confession so special is that it was and is based on Holy Scripture; and it is a positive confession of what the Lutheran Church believed and taught.

A Positive Confession

Too often a church expends all its energy exposing the errors of its “opponents” rather than presenting the true teachings of Scripture. I remember a member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of West Columbia, South Carolina, summarizing the ministry of one of the congregation’s former pastors, Paul F. Nolting. The congregation had left the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and had become an independent congregation. This particular church member stated that, before Pastor Nolting came, they knew what they were against; now, he said, they knew what they were for. So it was with The Augsburg Confession.

The overthrow of error is an indispensable prerequisite to the proclamation of the truth. However, the overthrow of error is not the same as truth in and of itself. The Augsburg Confession



clearly rejected errors which were contrary to Scripture. The Augsburg Confession also clearly presented the positive truths of Scripture. There was no fear of acknowledging that Rome held to the truth in several articles of faith (for example, the Trinity). In fact, The Augsburg Confession sought to establish the fact that the Lutheran Church was in agreement with the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith as confessed by the church throughout the ages.

We need to remember that Luther was being presented as some kind of wild-eyed radical. The positive nature of The Augsburg Confession is what makes it such a precious confession of faith. The calm, peaceful nature of this Confession shines forth today.

This “good confession” needs to be read and studied today. As confessional Lutherans, we may take for granted this simple, positive confession of the Christian faith and the gospel. However, here are some things we can learn from this Confession, if and when we take the time to read and study it.

1. Doctrine needs to be established upon the clear words of Scripture. There is no authority except the Word of God.

2. Doctrine needs to be witnessed by the Church through the ages. We need to read and study and use The

Augsburg Confession today.

3. Confession needs to be clear. Error loves ambiguity. This involves the clear rejection of error. Unity is based on a clear understanding of the issues and the Scriptures.

4. The rejection of error—unless it flows out of love for the gospel—is never an end in and of itself. We are

primarily called to speak the truth in love.

When the Chancellor of Saxony, George Brueck (ca. 1484-1557), presented the Confession, he said, “By the help of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, this Confession shall remain invincible against the gates of hell, to eternity.”

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



INTRODUCING the Books of the Prophets

Hosea

“... Thus the Lord decided to make a very real object lesson out of Hosea. The Lord told Hosea, ‘Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord’” (Hosea 1:2).

“The word of the Lord that came to Hosea...” (Hosea 1:1). How do we know that Hosea’s word is God’s word?

We are thankful that the Lord has sent us His Holy Spirit to speak to our own spirit in order to assure us of the validity of the Scriptures. Thus we do not join the priests and people of that day and assume that Hosea was a false prophet.

We know that most, if not all, of the Old Testament prophets were persecuted, reviled, hated—at the very least misunderstood. Hosea was no exception.

What was the word of God he was instructed to bring to God’s people of yesteryear—as well as of today? Let us

seek the Holy Spirit’s blessing as we examine this book.

The prophet Hosea preached to the northern kingdom of Israel about eight centuries before the birth of Christ. The Children of Israel had been prospering greatly under the rule of their kings, and yet they had forgotten the source of their prosperity. Instead of thanking and praising the God of their fathers—the God who led them out of Egypt gave them this new land, promised to be with them and to be true to His covenant—they abandoned Him for the gods of the Canaanites. The chosen people of God (the Bride of Christ) had chosen instead to prostitute themselves to the local gods.

Outline of HOSEA

I. The Book of Symbols (ch. 1-3); the painful and personal history of the prophet, which he uses to symbolize the people's separation from God and their eventual restoration.

II. Reproof (ch. 4-6); Hosea charges gross iniquity against the people, priests, and princes.

III. Threats (ch. 7-10); He threatens punishment, to culminate in exile.

IV. Remonstrances (ch. 11-13); hopeful protests.

V. Entreaty and Promises (ch. 14)

(Outline adapted from Introduction to the Books of the Bible, Drewes, Concordia Pub. House, St. Louis, Mo., 1965)

Thus the Lord decided to make a very real object lesson out of Hosea. The Lord told Hosea, "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1:2).

So Hosea married Gomer, a faithless woman. During the next few years Gomer bore three children. God Himself gave names to them through Hosea. The eldest son was named Jezreel. The daughter was named Lo-Ruhamah. The youngest son was called Lo-Ammi. These names were chosen by God not simply to be poetic, but rather to be prophetic.

Testing God's Patience

Jezreel refers to the Valley of Jezreel in Israel. God said He would avenge the blood that was shed in the valley upon the house Jehu and He would end the Kingdom of Israel. God was not only disgusted with the unfaithfulness of the Israelites; He also abhorred their violent actions against their neighbors and own kin.

Lo-Ruhamah literally means "No-Mercy." God promised that He would stop having mercy on the Israelites, having them utterly carried away.

Lo-Ammi means "Not-My-People". Jehovah said to the Jews of the north-

ern tribes, "...you are not My people, and I will not be your God."

God's patience had been exhausted! After showing grace after mercy and kindness after grace to His people, yet they rejected Him for the gods of this world.

Could Hosea speak no comfort to the people? Why was God so harsh in His chastisement of His own people? Because "you shall know no God but Me; for there is no savior besides Me" (Hosea 13:4).

God knows He is the only way to salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. So Hosea sent out the call to repentance, "Come, let us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up...for I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." "Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you" (Hosea 6:1,6).

Even Hosea was commanded to take back his unfaithful wife—thus showing God's willingness to take back the repentant sinner.

What will be the results of God's call to repentance? "Yet, I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save

them by the LORD their God” (Hosea 1:7).

God will always keep His remnant faithful to Himself. He tells us that He will gather the whole Christian Church together, the number of which will be as the sand of the sea. The gathering will have one head, Jesus Christ.

“And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there it shall be said to them, ‘You are the sons of the

living God’ (Hosea 1:10)...Say to your brethren, ‘Ammi’ (My people), and to your sisters, ‘Ruhamah’ (Mercy is shown)” (Hosea 2:1).

Just as Hosea took back his adulteress wife and again showed her a husband’s love, so Jesus welcomes us back after our backsliding, enabling us to pray, “Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously” (Hosea 14:2).

—Teacher David Bernthal



475th Anniversary of THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION (1530-2005)

FREEDOM TO PURSUE OUR MISSION

The true treasure of the Church is the gospel of Christ. The Church’s true mission is to use and spread its treasure. The Church’s mission statement is well-documented in Holy Scripture. For example, Jesus Himself commissioned us to make disciples of all nations by using the gospel in Baptism and teaching (cf. Matthew 28:19). The apostle Paul instructs, “Preach the Word!” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Whereas the Church’s focus remains trained on its true treasure and mission, there is great freedom in how the work of the Church is done. The confessors at Augsburg spoke of church usages—the practices and customs within an assembly of believers. “...It is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church that the gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance



with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by men should be observed uniformly in all places.” [Augsburg Confession, Article VII]

As Christians establish and follow ceremonies and customs, there is free-

WE BELIEVE & CONFESS

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

A CONFESSION OF FAITH PRESENTED IN AUGSBURG
BY CERTAIN PRINCES AND CITIES TO HIS IMPERIAL
MAJESTY CHARLES V IN THE YEAR 1530

Psalm 119:46

*“I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall
not be put to shame.”*

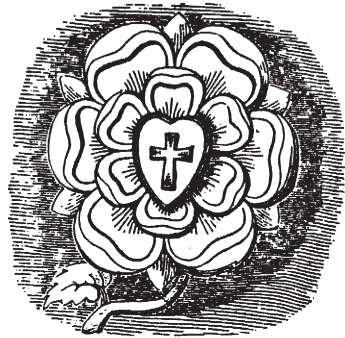
ARTICLES OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

XV. Church Usages

With regard to church usages that have been established by men, it is taught among us that those usages are to be observed which may be observed without sin and which contribute to peace and good order in the church, among them being certain holy days, festivals, and the like. Yet we accompany these observances with instruction so that consciences may not be burdened by the notion that such things are necessary for salvation. Moreover it is taught that all ordinances and traditions instituted by men for the purpose of propitiating God and earning grace are contrary to the Gospel and the teaching about faith in Christ. Accordingly monastic vows and other traditions concerning distinctions of foods, days, etc., by which it is intended to earn grace and make satisfaction for sin, are useless and contrary to the Gospel.

dom for variety. Traditions and practices will differ from one group of Christians to another, and this is God-pleasing as long as the practice and customs still serve the Church’s mission. The confessors at Augsburg gave criteria to use in evaluating church practices instituted by men: Can it be done without sinning? Does it contribute to good order and peace within the church? Does the observance come with adequate instruction, so that it is properly understood and is not viewed as being necessary for salvation? (cf. Augsburg Confession, Article XV).

In properly evaluating church usages, a necessary distinction lies in the difference between God’s command and man’s custom. Familiarity with Scripture and a growing faith nurtured by the Word of God will enable



us to make the distinction.

Illustrations

Church history provides illustrations: The Pharisees once challenged Jesus on the basis of the elders’ tradition. Jesus responded, “...you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you,

continued, p. 14

WHY I AM A LUTHERAN

+ *“Luther himself has no desire to be Lutheran except insofar as he teaches the Holy Scriptures in purity.”* (#2679).

+ *“...Nothing is to be done, taught, or believed except what is commanded by a very definite Word of God.”* (#2681)

+ *“We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law’ (Romans 3:28). But we teach that this faith is a gift of God, created in our heart by the Holy Spirit, not fashioned or formed by our own acts...”* (#2684)

+ *“We teach nothing new.”* (#2689)

+ *“The perfectly pure, the only, and the certain Word of God must be the foundation of our faith.”* (#2693)

(Quotes from *What Luther Says*, Vol. II, under “Lutheran Church”)

+ *“Faith is an unceasing and constant looking which turns the eyes upon nothing but Christ, the Victor over sin and death and the Giver of righteousness, salvation and life eternal.”* (#1374)

+ *“But if faith is real, it is a sure confidence of the heart and a firm assent, by which Christ is apprehended in such a way that He is the object of faith.”* (#1386).

+ *“Not for the sake of our faith but for Christ’s sake faith and salvation are given to us.”* (#1456)

(Quotes from *What Luther Says*, Vol. I, under “Faith”)

+ *“Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Romans 3 and 4”*

(Augsburg Confession, Article IV)

I am a Lutheran because by the Spirit of God I am convinced of the Reformation principles:

SCRIPTURE ALONE, GRACE ALONE, FAITH ALONE

Grace
Scripture
Faith
ALONE

WHY I AM A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Our Synod or church body, the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), is only one of many Lutheran bodies in the world. I made a conscious choice to be a member of this church body through membership in a congregation that itself is a member of the CLC. I am a member for the following reasons:

Because in this church...

+ Calling oneself a Lutheran does not make one Lutheran.

+ Christ Jesus and His Holy Word is the norm and source of all teaching and practice.

+ The law is proclaimed according to its divine purpose—to expose sin and our unworthiness before God; and the gospel is proclaimed according to its divine purpose—to bring forgiveness, peace, and the confidence of salvation to the troubled heart.

+ The heart and core of teaching is the cardinal doctrine of justification before God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

+ Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8) is proclaimed.

+ Sanctification is encouraged by the gospel as a fruit of faith, not the cause of it.

+ The doctrines of Holy Scripture are retained and maintained as set forth by God's grace through His servant, Martin Luther.

+ It is recognized that true unity according to the Heavenly Father's will is achieved only through agreement in the doctrines of Scripture.

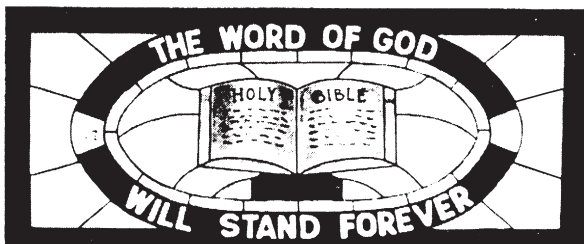
+ The Confessions of the Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord of 1580 are subscribed to as a true setting forth of the Word of God.

+ Our Lord is glorified by faithful confession of His Word, not by compromise of it for personal glory or aggrandizement.

I am a member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession because I believe...

IF IT IS NOT SCRIPTURE, IT IS NOT LUTHERAN

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer (Reformation 2004)



saying: ‘...in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’” (Matthew 15:6ff).

In the early days of the New Testament Church, false teachers insisted that Old Testament ceremonial laws be kept. Even though these laws were originally given by God, they became “commandments of men” because they had been fulfilled by Christ and were no longer binding upon God’s people. The apostle Paul wrote, “...let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17).

The confessors at Augsburg were reacting to the rules and regulations in the church of their day. There were rules concerning food and fasting, church rituals, vestments, relics, and more; and the forgiveness of sins was linked to these human ceremonies and rules. Led by the Holy Spirit, the reformers came to rejoice that forgiveness was through the gospel and that customs and traditions of men are not part of salvation.

In our day, customs and traditions can still conflict with the Church’s treasure and mission. At times these things are tied to salvation; at times they are believed to be an indication of greater holiness; and at times they are simply understood as being necessary for Christianity, when in truth they are not.

Speaking of man-made regulations, St. Paul cautioned the Colossians: “These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Colossians 2:23).

Traditions and customs of human origin can indeed be profitable. Our traditions concerning Confirmation, Marriage, and Funerals are of human origin. Is there value to these? Yes. Are they commanded by God? No. Our forms of worship, the music we use, preferred Bible translations, and a wide variety of practices within congregations—these are all examples of church usages in which we have freedom.

When customs and practices serve the goal of completing the Church’s mission, they have a blessed role. However, because these church usages are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, they may also be altered or removed. In matters clearly decided and directed by God’s Word, there is to be no alteration. Then there is only one correct path, and God’s Word points the way.

With the true treasure in our hearts, we cling mightily to every truth of God’s Word—and then mold, change, and make use of our practices to best serve the mission of the Church.

—*Pastor Wayne Eichstadt*



Pastors attending installation of Rev. John Hein at Grace Lutheran Church, Fridley, Minn. June 26, 2005; (L-R) W. Eichstadt, B. Naumann, D. Schierenbeck, Pastor Hein, J. Fleischer, D. Lau, D. Fleischer, E. Hallauer, Paul Lentz (congregation president)



The Christian Citizen

—Fifth in a Series—

ECONOMIC ISSUES: WEALTH, TAXATION, AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE

God is not a communist! God is not a socialist! God is not a capitalist—and He's not a Republican either!—God is “the King of glory...the LORD of hosts,” the One who created all, to whom all things belong, and to whom all people are responsible (cf. Psalm 24). Consequently, when God addresses the issues of wealth, taxation, and social justice and proclaims divine principles, it is imperative that we listen!

The Bible informs us that God bestows wealth upon those individuals to whom He chooses to give it—“The rich and the poor have this in common, the LORD is maker of them all” (Prov. 22:2) and “Remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18). He also protects that wealth by commanding us in the 7th Commandment not to steal.

God, however, wants us to view ourselves as stewards of that wealth—individuals entrusted with it by God and responsible to God for its use (cf. Matthew 25:14-30). Consequently, He instructs us regarding the proper use of the wealth He entrusts to us and warns us against improper attitudes over against that wealth.

God teaches us to use the wealth He entrusts to us to support His kingdom work (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1), to provide for our families (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8), to care for the poor (cf. 1 John 3:17-18), and to pay our taxes (cf.

Romans 13:6-7). He warns us against greed, pointing out that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). He warns us against envy of others and coveting their wealth, stating very clearly “let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have” (cf. Hebrews 13:5). At the same time God urges us to work hard, using our time, talents, and resources in an industrious way so that we might prosper under His blessing and be in a position to help others in their need (cf. Psalm 128:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Ephesians 4:28).

Our God is aware, however, of the ungodliness of men and mankind's frequent misuse of His blessings. He warned His Old Testament people against social injustice and the misuse of wealth. Through those warnings He warns us: “I know your manifold transgression and your mighty sins: afflicting the just and taking bribes; diverting the poor from justice at the gate....It is an evil time.... Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate” (Amos 5:12-13,15). God urges us, “Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy” (Proverbs 31:9). At the same time, God condemns showing partiality against the poor just because of their poverty. God desires impartial justice for all members of society: “You shall not

**“God is not a communist!
God is not a socialist! God is
not a capitalist! And He’s not
a Republican either!—God is
“the King of glory...”**

show partiality to the poor man in his dispute....You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute....I will not justify the wicked” (Ex. 23:3,6-7). In addition, God speaks directly to employers and employees, warning employers to treat their employees fairly, while urging employees to work diligently (cf. James 5:4; Ephesians 6:5-9).

Regarding taxation, God, who established government to protect the lives and property of individuals, recognizes the need and the right of governments to tax their citizens. He urges us as citizens to pay our taxes honestly and faithfully (cf. Romans 13:1-7).

We as voters not only help create public economic policy but also appreciate policies that reflect biblical principles. Let us strive to advance policies that encourage people to work and so

with God’s blessing to accumulate wealth. Let us strive to support policies that protect people and their wealth from those who would steal it or obtain it unjustly. Let us strive to devise policies that encourage individuals to use their wealth properly to support their families, to support charitable causes, and to pay their lawful taxes. Let us strive to uphold policies that punish evildoers, who use their wealth or seek the wealth of others in unjust ways.*

As Christian citizens, we will want to bear these thoughts in mind as we consider the various candidates seeking our support for political office. While no candidates may, in fact, follow biblical principles in all areas of concern, we will want to vote whenever possible for those candidates whose views best reflect these principles, and whom we believe will best serve our country.

—Pastor Paul D. Nolting

* In a personal notation to us, the writer explains his comments: “Our goal in life is not to improve this world, for our primary preoccupation is to serve our Lord Jesus...yet we have a calling to be responsible citizens.” — The editor



Some of the members & friends of Prince of Peace, Loveland, Colo. (left) who dedicated the new parsonage on July 17, 2005. A member decorated the cake!

“Roll Over, Martin Luther”??

TIME magazine (August 2004) contained an article entitled “Roll Over, Martin Luther,” subtitled “Long the dominant faith affiliation in the U.S., Protestantism may no longer boast a majority.” According to the article, the proportion of adult Americans calling themselves Protestants was “a steady 63% for decades (but) fell suddenly to 52% from 1993 to 2002.” The study’s authors projected that “perhaps as early as this year the country will for the first time no longer have a Protestant majority.”

Reasons offered for the decline may surprise. Explanations proffered included: 1) mainline churches did not require enough commitment, theologically or evangelistically, from congregants...”; 2) denominations, rather than courting members, turned to other things like social activism; and 3) mainline (Christian churches, we assume—ed.) birthrates are lagging behind the national average.

Also interesting is the observation that it is not that non-Protestants have increased [percentages of Catholics have held steady at 23%, and both Jews and Muslims are still under 4%]; the category that has really jumped in the past decade is people saying they don’t subscribe to any specific religion. They prefer instead to think of themselves “as spiritual rather than anything more specific.”

While there might be some truth to each of the suggestions as to why Protestantism is declining, our inclination is to point the finger in the direction of the first one. When there is an absence of theological commitment—when loyalty and allegiance to the



Word of God is no longer proclaimed and/or expected—well, (as Dr. Luther predicted) the passing shower of the Word of God will eventually pass by.

Neither are we to worry much about declining numbers—as Elijah did, thinking he was the only one left who hadn’t bowed the knee to Baal (see 1 Kings 19:1-18). The Lord, who alone knows those who are His, assured His despondent prophet that He had yet 7,000 who were among His elect children. Such was the case even in that evil, idolatrous day! The Lord’s Word doesn’t return to Him void. As then, so now, the Lord will always have His “remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:2-5).

Back a moment to TIME magazine and its observation that people prefer to think of themselves as “spiritual rather than anything more specific.” Is that not just further evidence of our postmodern “there is no such thing as truth” non-confessional day and age? While people want to be spiritual, they often stop short of committing themselves to an outward church organization or specific denomination. The political parallel would be a person desiring to be known as a moderate or “middle of the roader” without committing to a specific political party. That may be broadminded, to be sure, but it’s a weak, if not spineless, position.

As far as the church is concerned, “moderates” ultimately deny the existence of truth, of absolute Truth. What, for example, is the “moderate” position on such hot topics as abortion, practicing homosexuality, same-sex marriage, woman’s role in the church, or creation/evolution?

Ours is a confessional church. We believe that absolute truth exists and that it is found in the Holy Bible. In those divinely inspired Scriptures our Savior teaches that He Himself is “the way, the TRUTH, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). He also says: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the TRUTH, and the TRUTH shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31f).

The Reformation festival/season is rarely observed anymore by mainline non-confessional Lutheranism (at least for reasons we would endorse). Recognizing that the gospel itself is at stake, we observe the festival/season without apology.

We could offer many quotes from Luther on the importance of holding onto and standing up for the Truth of God in the Scriptures, even as the Reformer himself took His stand before pope and emperor at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

Luther said: “Our heart and our conscience are certain before God that we are teaching the true doctrine; for we are surely not following our own head, and we are not teaching according to our own reason or wisdom. Nor are we seeking our own advantage, good, or honor from the world by our teaching. We are preaching and praising God’s Word and work alone.” (*What Luther Says*, Vol. III, p. 1395)

Again: “The way of the world is

that people cannot bear the truth. Let him who would live in the world be silent about the truth. Let him tell dirty lies and engage in foul deceit. If, however, you want to testify to the truth, then be prepared to have as enemies the devil with his angels, the world with its wisdom and its greatest intellect, nay, to have as enemies your parents, your father and mother, and your best friends. Matters will take no other turn.” (WLS, III, p. 1399)

So if we ask whether Luther would be surprised at the state of things in Protestantism/mainline Lutheranism today, the answer is: saddened yes, surprised no. In another place he foretold what happens when the Word of God is no longer accepted/appreciated in all its truth and purity. The gospel shower passes...

If and when the numbers decline in our church(es), God keep us by His Spirit from being disheartened or discouraged. Rather, let us rejoice in the gospel preserved to us, working and praying to continue to uphold and defend it for ourselves and our posterity.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
Curb those who fain by craft and sword
Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
And set at naught all He hath done.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thy pow’r make known,
For Thou art Lord of lords alone;
Defend Thy Christendom that we
May evermore sing praise to Thee.

O Comforter of priceless worth,
Send peace and unity on earth.
Support us in our final strife
And lead us out of death to life. (TLH, #261)

—Pastor Paul Fleischer



Visiting Wittenberg, Germany!

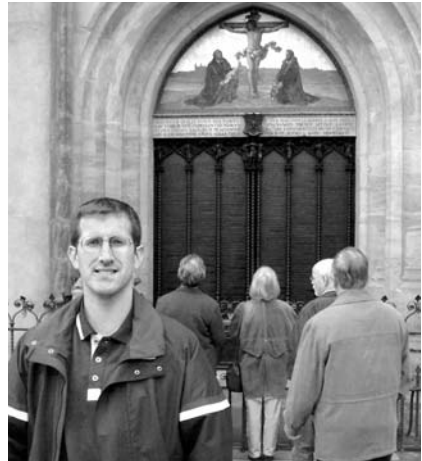
“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:4-5).

Sunday, October 31st, was the day for the CLC's Minnesota Conference biennial Joint Reformation Service at Immanuel of Mankato (Reformation Day, 2004—ed.). I was rather “bummed out” for missing the service due to extended military duty; however, I had the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Wittenberg, Germany, on that same day. That's where it was all started 487 years ago by the town priest, Martin Luther.

Fall in Germany has been rather cool, wet, and cloudy. I wondered if this weather was the type Martin Luther was experiencing when he published the Ninety-Five Theses. People were buying indulgences, not coming to the church for confession; and other Catholic priests were becoming better salesmen of indulgences rather than better preachers.

The outside weather and the atmosphere of the church made for a dreary time indeed. By the grace of God, a spiritually reformed town priest was ready to defend the gospel against the darkness within the church.

“For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also the Greek. For in it [the gospel], the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written ‘The Just shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1:16-17).



Mr. Schaller at the 95 Theses door

That the righteous live by faith, not by works, is a profound statement against Roman Catholic doctrine; that statement is the one on which Luther took his stand—“salvation by grace through faith”!

May we always be thankful to our God for His love towards us sinners. He is a gracious God who brought the gospel to a lowly priest in Wittenberg, Germany, and worked through Luther a movement within His church to keep it focused on what was lost—the light of the gospel wherein lies the eternal truth of a loving and forgiving Savior.

—Douglas J. Schaller,
member of Immanuel Lutheran
Church, Mankato, Minnesota

(Editor's note: Mr. Schaller was stationed in Germany; he submitted this writing and photo last December; we held it for printing this month, for obvious reasons. He is now home; we give thanks with him for the Lord's gracious protection during his service to our country.)



Students of the LCEA St. Peter's Seminary in Himo, Tanzania—February 2005

**Far left: Pastor Kossi, Lome, Togo
In between: Bible Study group in Denu, Ghana
Far right: Pastor Gideon, Denu**



Great Lakes Pastoral Conference in session at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sister Lakes, Michigan, September '04.

**Pastors present: (back)
M. Bernthal, M. Eichstadt,
P. Schaller, M. Gullerud,
J. Fleischer, M. Schierenbeck;
(front) M. Wilke, P. Matzke,
D. Schaller, W. Schaller,
D. Naumann, T. Holland,
P. Teifel, A. Schulz**



Meet Pastor Caleb Schaller

(Editor's note: ILC Seminary Graduate Caleb Schaller recently received and accepted the call to serve as Pastor of Redemption Lutheran, Lynnwood, Wash. We asked Pastor Schaller to tell us about his history, family, and thoughts on the gospel ministry. In his own words then...)

I was born in Marquette, Michigan. We lived there until I was in second grade when we moved to Lemmon, South Dakota. I lived there through my Junior year in high school. For my senior year I attended Immanuel Lutheran High School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

When I arrived in Eau Claire, it was not for the purpose of training to become a shepherd of God's people. Nor was my primary purpose to learn more about my Savior. But through the friendships that were born—friendships with fellow students and with teachers—I was led to take a course in Biblical Greek. Learning the language of the Greek New Testament led further toward the pre-theology program; eventually I completed college and enrolled in seminary.

In reflecting on this, a certain proverb comes to mind: "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9).

Life in Eau Claire was a tremendous blessing. Not only was I being trained and molded for the public ministry, but I got to spend time with relatives who live in Eau Claire. My sisters (Eve Naumann, Anya Oster) and my brother (Seth Schaller, Principal and teacher at Messiah Lutheran School) all live there with their families.

Another brother (Pastor Andrew



Pastor Schaller and family

Schaller) lives with his family in Watertown, South Dakota. My parents (Pastor Walter and Mrs. Kathleen Schaller) now live in Detroit, Michigan, where my father serves Mt. Zion Lutheran Church.

God also blessed me with a family while I was in Eau Claire. Jennifer (nee Murch) and I were married May 20, 2001. God has blessed us with two daughters—Allison Grace (3) and Marnie Kathleen (1).

As for thoughts on the ministry—God has blessed me far beyond what I deserve. If it is His will, I will spend my life helping God's workers bring in His harvest. My job will be to dig into the rich Word of the Lord, bringing out words of warning, comfort, and guidance for God's children. What the Lord teaches me, I will share with those I serve.

The only blessing greater than these already mentioned is the blessing He's given us all—a Savior who knows our hearts and has chosen to love us anyway; a Savior whose strength is only surpassed by His compassion; a Savior whose love was made visible by His actions.

...The One in whom we trust, Jesus!

#10: Will I lose anything in coming to God?

Some folks are afraid of having God in their lives, for fear that they will have to surrender too much. Dear reader, it's a lot like choosing between two loves. Satan with his deceit and lies draws you away from God and true happiness, luring you to a dirty life of lusts and sinfulness. The other is God's love, pure and holy, upright and full-hearted, a love that desires only your eternal welfare and blessing.

Can't you make the choice between the false lover and your true love? Joshua, that notable child of God, knew he had come to this point in his life when he said to his friends, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15)

Are you ready to put aside your devotion to this world's falsehoods, willing to sacrifice your pride, happy to discard anything and everything that does not belong to God's business, God's will, and God's love? Has God brought you to this place that you are willing to follow God's Word in all things?

The world, the Devil, and our own human nature (Scripture calls it "flesh") all conspire to have us turn our backs on Jesus, to get us as far away from God as we can get. But all the while, the goodness of God is pulling

us like a magnet to come to Jesus, to live with Him under His loving care, and to enjoy all the blessings God has in store for us.

So don't be afraid that God wants to take something away from you that you can't bear to lose. He wants only to give blessedness, and what He takes away is the poison, the pain, and the disaster of life apart from Him. Trust Him in this!

He invites you, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

Blessed is that person who answers, "Yes, Jesus, I am coming to You and I will serve You!"

We Lutheran Christians are dedicated to Jesus and eager to help you share in the blessings God has waiting for you. Let us serve you, for Jesus' sake and your own eternal salvation!

God's Word is our great heritage
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor;
Through life it guides our way
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure
We keep its teachings pure
Throughout all generations! Amen!

—Paul R. Koch



—The Bread of Life—

Daily Bible readings for home devotions

November, 2005

We continue our tracing of God's plan of salvation in **2 Samuel**. Though Saul's life ended in disaster, God was faithful to raise up a king after His own heart, a type of the King of kings, our Savior.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>A thought from the reading</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	2 SAM. 1:1-27	How are the mighty fallen!	325,1-3
2	2:1-11	The house of Judah received its king	73,3-4
3	3:6-21	Saul's old general Abner came over	41,1-4
4	5:1-12	God blessed David for the people's sake	343,1-3
5	6:12-23	The Ark of the Covenant came home!	352
6	7:1-17	I will be his Father, and he shall be My son	353,6-7
7	9:1-13	A king who rules with generosity	361
8	11:1-27	Idleness is the Devil's workshop	369
9	12:1-15	After sin, godly sorrow and repentance	390,1-2
10	12:16-25	Pray for living saints, rejoice for the dead	390,3-4

Israel's history reminds us of what it means to be a nation under God—that we submit to His rule in our hearts and lives.

11	13:1-33	Evil friend=evil purpose=evil compounded	398,1-4
12	14:21-33	Deceitfulness can be learned	391
13	15:15-37	Sorrow on the Mount of Olives(v.30)	385,6-7
14	18:1-8	A tragic end for the lad who went bad	334,1-3
15	19:9-23	Bring back the merciful king of Israel!	130,1,4,5
16	21:1-14	An evil deed was avenged at great price	153
17	22:44-51	Hail to the Lord's Anointed!	59,1-3
18	23:1-7	Inspired prophecy of the King(dom)	59,4-6
19	24:10-25	Sin, repentance, chastisement, peace	580,1-4
20	1 KINGS 2:1-12	Be strong as a man of God	395,6-8
21	3:1-15	And Solomon loved the Lord (wisely?)	429,1
22	4:20-34	He was a credit to God	430,1-4
23	6:14-21	Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!	465
24	8:22-43	Will God indeed dwell on Earth?	466
25	8:54-61	May the Lord our God be with us!	21,1-3
26	9:1-9	If you walk before Me in uprightness	21,4-6

The history of God's people hit new lows after Solomon—when the kingdom was split up, and godlessness overtook the country.

27	17:1-24	Only a few were faithful to the Lord	17
28	18:1-16	Obadiah, an underrated Christian helper	482
29	18:17-40	Baal got too close to Elijah's fire	260,1-3
30	19:9-18	I have reserved seven thousand in Israel	260,4-6



Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Mrs. Peggy Kesterson and Miss Anita Meyer, who were called by Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Spokane Valley, Wash., to be teachers in its Christian Day School, were installed on July 24, 2005. Assisting were Jerry Lueck, president of the congregation, and Paul Karnitz, Board of Education.

—*Pastor Robert List*

In accord with our usage and order, Miss Heidi Aymond, who was called by Gethsemane Lutheran congregation of Saginaw, Mich., to be the lower grade teacher in its school, was installed on July 24, 2005.

—*Pastor Michael Wilke*

**Minnesota Delegate Conference
September 18, 2005 — 3:00 p.m.
Salem Lutheran Church
Eagle Lake, Minnesota**

Agenda:

- + What is the Christian to do when He Observes a Difference in Practice Between two Congregations? — Teacher Douglas Libby
- + A Review of Baptism Customs (especially in regard to Sponsors and Baptism's Correlation to Confirmation) — Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
- + Encouraging Fathers in their Role as Spiritual Leaders in the Home — Mr. Philip Strike
- + CLC Board Reports

Chaplain: Pastor Norman Greve

—*Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Secretary*
(Printed belatedly for information)

**Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference
Resurrection Lutheran Church
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
October 18-20**

Agenda:

1. New Testament Exegesis: Galatians 5:11-18 — Pastor Caleb Schaller
2. Old Testament Exegesis: Psalm 39:1-13 — Pastor Paul Naumann
3. Book Review of Walther's *Law And Gospel*, Thesis XI — Pastor David Povolny
4. Book Review of *The Purpose Driven Life* — Reviewer to be determined
5. An Analysis of Mission Mechanics (from WELS.NET Parish Services—Can we use

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any?) — Pastor David Reim

6. Hamartology (Mortal, Venial, Willful, etc.)

— Pastor Paul Krause

7. The Living God in the Old Testament —

Pastor David Povolny

Conference Chaplain — Pastor Robert List

Communion Service Speaker — Pastor Terrel Kesterson

—*Pastor Terrel Kesterson, Secretary*

Reformation Service

An area Reformation Service will be held at Faith Lutheran Church in Markesan, Wisconsin, on October 30, 2005, at 3:00 p.m. In connection with the service the congregation's recently purchased organ will be dedicated to the glory of God. We hope that you can join us on this special occasion.

—*Pastor Michael Schierenbeck*

Cover: Matt Schaser