

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE BRIEF STATEMENT 1932-2007
(CONCLUSION IN THIS ISSUE)

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

WE ACCEPT as our confessions all the symbols contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580. -- The symbols of the Lutheran Church are not a rule of faith beyond, and supplementary to, Scripture, but a confession of the doctrines of Scripture over against those who deny these doctrines.

SINCE the Christian Church cannot make doctrines, but can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture, the doctrinal decisions of the symbols are binding upon the conscience not because our Church has made them nor because they are the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but only because they are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself.

Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church

THE BRIEF STATEMENT OF 1932



MQY 2008, VOL. 50 NO. 11

CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF SPEAKING GOD'S WORD OF TRUTH

“And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” — Luke 24:50-53

Joy in His Ascension

Are you surprised at the disciples’ reaction to Jesus’ ascension?

I must say, I am. Just forty-three days earlier, Jesus spoke of His leaving the disciples, and they were sad and troubled. They were so dependent on Jesus for everything. For Him to leave them would be a great blow.

When Jesus actually ascended into heaven, the disciples seemed to be in shock. Long after Jesus disappeared from their sight, they just stood there staring into heaven. God had to send His angels to tell them to quit standing around and get going. Now we read in Luke’s Gospel account that they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

You might think they would feel lost without their Lord to lead them and tell them what to do. You would

expect them to feel sad after His departure—like you may feel when your parents or grandparents leave after a visit.

Instead, we read that they returned “with great joy.”

Jesus’ ascension does give joy. It gave the disciples visible proof for their faith. Jesus told them many times that He came down from His Father in heaven. They believed that He was the Son of God from heaven, as Peter confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:16). But as they revealed with their lives and with their doubts, their faith was often weak.

When they had seen Jesus alive from the dead, their faith was confirmed and they were filled with joy. Now they saw Jesus ascend into heaven with their own

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When Christ who is our life appears,
then you also will appear in glory.

e y e s .

That was visible proof that Jesus had truly come from God as He had said—and was now returning to God, also as He said He would.

Peter tells us that God's Word is made more sure for us by these eyewitness

ness accounts of all that Jesus did (2 Peter 1:19).

- That gives us reason for great joy.
- We know for sure that we have a living Savior who has returned to His throne in heaven.
 - We can be certain that He is ruling all things for the benefit of the Church (Ephesians 1:20-23).
 - We can be sure that Jesus is “with [us] always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:20).
 - Therefore we also know beyond a doubt that He will come again in the same way that He went up into heaven (Acts 1:11). He will come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, we shall be also (John 14:3).

Filled with the joy of Christ's ascension, may we also be “continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.”

—Pastor David Reim



Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:1-5).

THE TRINITY...REVEALED IN SIMPLE WORDS...RECEIVED IN SIMPLE FAITH

In just a few weeks we will celebrate the festival of Pentecost, and the following Sunday, the festival of Holy Trinity. The Sundays that follow make up the “Trinity Season” or non-festival half of the church year.

We know what to expect in Advent and Christmas. We look forward from

Epiphany to Lent. Our Easter joy peaks on Easter Sunday and carries us the forty days to Ascension. On Pentecost our attention is turned to what some call the birth of the Christian Church. Then it sometimes seems as if we take a breath, sigh, and wait for Thanksgiving to alert us all over again to the nearness

of the Advent season.

The Trinity season may at times seem disjointed, connected only by the numbers (such as, 19th Sunday after Trinity). While we may have difficulty connecting the Sundays in Trinity, let's never think of THE TRINITY as disjointed.

The Bible teaches simply that there is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), while at the same time revealing that the One God is also Father (Galatians 1:3), Son (Mark 1:1), and Holy Ghost or Spirit (Acts 5:3-4).

While the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible (but the concept certainly is), we use the word (meaning “three in one”) to describe the way that the one true God has revealed Himself in the Bible.

While cults and non-Christian denominations—as well as other misinformed people—suggest that the teaching of the Trinity is one born of pagan religions, we know it is founded upon the clear words of the Bible. We know that God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) and we accept His Word (the sixty-six books of the Bible) in childlike faith.

It is there that we find the Trinity taught in language even a child can understand. Our Lord and Master, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, bore witness to the Trinity in those oft repeated words: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen” (Mt. 28:19-20).

The Father, Son, and Spirit are united in will and purpose. This is evident in the fact that the three Persons are all

mentioned as having been present and having played a role in the creation of the world (Genesis 1:1-2,26; John 1:1-3,14; Colossians 1:15-17, etc.).

Moreover, it isn't just happenstance that when Jesus (God the Son) was baptized at the beginning of His earthly ministry, both God the Father and God the Spirit are revealed as having been present (Matthew 3:16-17).

We can only marvel at the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son (John 10:29-30; 34-38); we can only try to plumb the depths of the Word of God when it speaks of Jesus being begotten of the Father (Hebrews 1:5), and the Spirit proceeding from both the Father (John 15:26) and the Son.

So, is it all just too good to be true? Shall we consider these things false because we cannot fit them within our little human minds? Not at all!

There are many things I don't understand, but that doesn't make them false. I'm not sure exactly how the radio in my car works, but I am sure that there aren't little people behind the dashboard. I can't see the radio waves, but I know they are there.

I also can't fully comprehend the words that Jesus used to open His High Priestly Prayer, but I know that one day I will see and understand completely. The Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—is real and worthy of our complete trust, even though we cannot fully comprehend now how the three are One.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth
and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!
(TLH #246:4)

—Pastor Andrew Schaller
Watertown, South Dakota

Symbolism in "The Three-In-One God"

This symbol was inspired in part by Luther's seal.

The seven flames which radiate out from the top are meant to represent the Holy Spirit. In Revelation (1:4, 4:5) the Holy Spirit is uniquely described as "the seven Spirits" or "the sevenfold Spirit." Some see this as a reflection of Isaiah's seven-fold description of the Spirit who was to rest on Jesus (Isaiah 11:1-3). In the same way that the candlestick of the Old Testament temple had seven flames but remained ONE candlestick, the Holy Spirit is singular, though represented here with seven flames (see also Zechariah 4:1-6). Through the work of the Holy Spirit we come to faith. Flames also remind us of the Holy Spirit's visible presence at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

The cross placed inside the heart is central to the whole image, reminding us why we are called "Christians." Christ is our only Savior and hope, and therefore our greatest love. The cross is a fitting symbol of all Christ has done for us, for there He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), after having fully suffered the punishment for our sins, thus setting us free from the wrath we had earned by our sinful rebellion against God.

The water which courses down on the lower portion of the symbol reminds us of the blessings which come from God the Father. They are like a river that never stops. He not only provides us with everything we need for physical body and life; He also provides us with spiritual renewal and eternal life from His Son. Again we see the number seven in the seven water droplets, which may be understood to refer to the "number" of God's



covenant of grace with mankind. It has been suggested that since three is the number of God, and four is often used in connection with things of the earth (four corners, four directions, four elements, etc.), then the combination of four and three would make a fitting number to symbolize the covenant between God and mankind. How does sinful mankind get joined to the Holy God? With a cross, of course ($4 + 3 = 7$). Water also reminds us of the life-giving waters of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

The three circles around the heart and the three “prongs” which radiate out from the center of the image represent the three Persons of the one true God. The circle has long stood as a symbol of eternity, thus illustrating the fact that the Triune God is eternal. If this image were in color, the rings would be gold, to finish the imagery of the Three-in-One God who is eternally the King of all.

—Pastor Caleb Schaller
Lynnwood (Seattle), Washington



The Festival of Pentecost—

...But the Holy Spirit has called me...

“I believe that I cannot by my own reasoning or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel....”

This statement from the Third Article of *Luther’s Small Catechism* is so different from what is usually heard when people talk about how they came to believe in Jesus Christ.

“I found Jesus.” “I invited Jesus into my life.” “I made a decision to follow Jesus.” This is what we hear.

In each of those statements notice that “I” comes first and “Jesus” second. Those who say such things may well intend to give glory to Jesus by telling others how much He has done for them, but they end up placing the emphasis on themselves and what they did to come to Him or to draw Him into their lives.

Besides putting themselves first and Jesus second, such statements leave out the Holy Spirit altogether. They don’t acknowledge that it is only by the calling and enlightening work of the



Holy Spirit that anyone knows Jesus and believes in Him as Savior. “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

The Scriptures teach that “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). Since the Fall into sin, the mind of man is opposed to God.

That can be seen in the way the world treated God’s own Son who came to save them. Most people treated Jesus with indifference because they did not think they needed to be saved. Others treated Him with hostility and hatred because He exposed the evil that

was in their hearts.

“He opened our eyes...”

That indifference to Christ’s saving work and that hostility toward Him are in our sinful human nature. Without the Holy Spirit working in us, we would be as opposed to Christ as those who called for His crucifixion.

We see the Holy Spirit’s powerful working in those who turned to Christ on the day of Pentecost. Before the outpouring of the Spirit on that day, those people in Jerusalem had not believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. They had not understood that they were guilty of killing Him. But when Peter rebuked them, they were cut to the heart and repented, saying, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” When he preached Christ to them, they gladly received the Word and were baptized (see Acts ch. 2).

We owe our faith in Jesus to the

working of the Holy Spirit. He worked in us through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, giving us the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). He opened our eyes to Christ and led us to believe in Him as our Savior. Through the gift of faith He has given us all the gifts and blessings of salvation.

He continues to work in us whenever we hear the Word: He strengthens and keeps us in the faith; He assures us that we are God’s children; He gives us the peace of knowing that all our sins have been forgiven; He gives us joy in the hope of eternal life.

Our faith in Jesus Christ cannot be traced back to anything that we did or any decision that we made, but only to what God did for us in Christ and in us by the Holy Spirit. To God alone be the glory!

—Pastor John Klatt
Rapid City, South Dakota



Mother’s Day devotion—

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her!” (Proverbs 31:28)

“Thank You, Mother!”

My mother used to say that she got tired just listening to the description of “the virtuous wife” in Proverbs 31.

Up before dawn...working throughout the day...busy well into the night...securing her husband’s good...providing for her children’s needs...at work in the home, in the field, and in the marketplace...strong, wise, kind—how could any woman hope to measure up to such a description?!

Yet by the grace of God, my mother managed to be that type of woman, as do so many Christian wives and mothers who dedicate their time, talents, and energies to making the house in which their families reside a home!

Despite what popular culture might say, the family remains the bedrock of our society, and faithful wives and mothers play such an intricate and vital role in the welfare of those families. As



time passes, the details may indeed change. In our culture very few women spin their own yarn or weave their own cloth (cf. vv. 19,22). They do not need to any longer, but they still fill the role of providing for the needs of their family. As did the wife and mother described in Proverbs, many work both at home and elsewhere, using their God-given gifts to accomplish an assortment of goals all with the common end of benefiting those they love—their husbands and children.

The question is—do we appreciate and honor them as we should? I am not talking about children being good on one Sunday in May, or husbands taking their wives and children out to eat on that Sunday after church.

But rather, do we day by day live up

to the description of the husband and children of the virtuous wife in Proverbs? We are told: “Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her!”

Children—the Fourth Commandment tells you to “honor your...mother”! How might you do that? Proverbs 31 suggests that you honor your mother both with your actions and your words. “Rise up and call her blessed!” Don’t just sit on the couch, letting mother do everything for you; rather, rise up and help her! Do not complain and tell her that she is unfair; rather, tell mother each day how much you appreciate her. Encourage her with your sincere thanks and compliments!

Husbands and fathers—the apostle Paul encourages you to “love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her” (Eph. 5:25).

Would Jesus ever berate the Church or belittle it in front of others? Of course not! His goal is always to uplift, encourage, and strengthen the Church, so that it might be further enabled to accomplish His kingdom goals.

Consequently, husbands and fathers—praise your wives in public, letting them know how much you respect them



CLC Teachers Conference attendees pose outside the fellowship hall at Messiah Lutheran Church, Hales Corners (Milwaukee), Wis. They met there last October 24-26.

and appreciate everything they do for you and your families!

Such encouragement will support and strengthen wives and mothers and will encourage them to continue to

strive to fulfill their important roles within the family—even when they may be tired just thinking about it!

—*Pastor Paul Nolting*
Mankato, Minnesota



Written for the Pastor's Column of a local newspaper—

“FREEDOM ISN’T FREE”

The recent return of our local National Guard troops from service in Iraq was both a joyous and sober occasion. Many signs and yellow ribbons welcomed these young people home and expressed admiration and appreciation for their self-sacrifice to ensure our freedoms.

It was inspiring to see the wave of standing ovations along the Bavarian Blast parade route in New Ulm, as the men and women who had recently returned from overseas were honored by their grateful neighbors.

We need this kind of regular reminder that the liberties we enjoy come at a high price. From the struggles of our founding fathers—through the many hardships and loss of life during the great World Wars and right up to the present time—we owe our way of life to those who have been willing to give up their comforts, freedoms, and even their lives for our benefit.

We need to be constantly reminded that freedom isn’t free. If we forget that, we will someday lose these liberties we now enjoy.

“Freedom isn’t free.” It’s true when it comes to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in this great nation—and it’s also true with regard to spiritual things.

The most valuable liberty of all comes when the one true God sets us free from our sins. Even if we had every liberty and benefit that this world can offer but had to face eternity with broken commandments on our record, we would be eternally lost. All the temporary freedoms would then amount to nothing. It was Jesus Himself who posed the question, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?” (Mk. 8:36)

Only one Person could sacrifice His all in order to free us from our sins. It was God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ who gave up everything in order to give us this blessed liberty. He “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Php. 2:7-8).

This self-sacrifice fully paid for our sins, set us free from them, and now opens the door of ultimate freedom to eternal life in heaven.

We can’t honor and thank our service men and women enough for their sacrifice on our behalf. We should never forget that the freedoms we enjoy come at a high price.

Even more, forgiveness and freedom from sin and the promise of life eternal should never be taken for granted. It came at the price of the innocent life and atoning death of God's Son, our dear Lord Jesus.

We can never repay Him, but He

invites us to put our full trust in Him alone, while honoring Him with our praise, prayers, and lives of service to Him and each other.

—Pastor Bruce Naumann
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota



CROSS PURPOSES

WAIT CONFIDENTLY FOR THE BETTER DAY

In his last letter to Timothy written from prison, Paul fully expected that his life was nearing the end. He expected to die as a martyr for the faith. He wrote, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”(2 Tim. 4:6-8).

This is not a boast. It is the confident expression of one who knows in Whom he has believed and who has thrown his lot with Christ, His Redeemer. None has spoken of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus alone more eloquently than Paul.

As Paul was soon to take leave of this world, he left behind a testimony to what lay ahead for Timothy and the Church through the ages. He said, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow

worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:12, 13).

This is not a pessimistic utterance. It is an expression of reality as the world winds down.

All About Us...

The manifestations of what Paul wrote are all around us in our time. Christianity is under the gun from heathen attackers. However, the cruelest cut of all is the departure from Christ-centered theology and teaching within the church in the world. Sound Biblical teaching has been replaced by bland and seductive mouthings of religion without substance! In by-gone years one could reasonably recognize the confession of a church by its name. That is changing. Exactly what does “The Church of Happy Faces” stand for or believe? Frequently, pulpits are polluted by politicians who promote self and who do not bring the promise of God's grace in Christ, but rather promises of material and temporal nature as they seek votes.

Recently news appeared on *WorldNetDaily* that you will not read

in the mainstream press. Did you know that “a plan generated by California’s legislature created a ban on the use of ‘mom’ and ‘dad’ in public schools?”

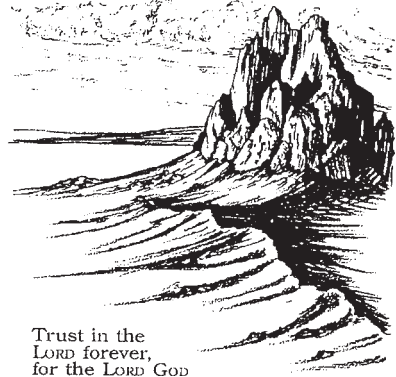
They do not want to offend and discriminate against homosexuals, lesbians, and transgender types. In what may still be a degree of common sense among some in California, an initiative is being promoted to take the issue to the voters in hopes that the plan will be overturned. A follow-up report said that there is a mass exodus from the public schools in the state.

In Britain new rules demand sensitivity toward the same aberrant behavior. England is following California’s lead. Did you know that a Hindu—who has opened the U.S. Senate with a Hindu chant (religion is good, you know!)—has been invited to open the senate sessions in Colorado? Recently a sports reporter was suspended because she used gross vulgarity with reference to Jesus.

Every kind of perversion is promoted on the internet; and from our perspective, just as bad is the endless stream of religious material that can be found on line—most of which promotes rationalism and sows confusion. Here most certainly we encourage Christians who may happen on to such sites to test the spirits in the light of the clear Word of God.

Do Not Lose Heart

We have just scratched the surface of what is happening in our generation that supports Paul’s warning. It is a difficult time to be a Christ-believer, though no more so than times before us, and certainly not any more difficult than the times that tried the apostle.



Trust in the
LORD forever,
for the LORD God
is an everlasting rock.
—Isaiah 26:4

Nevertheless, Paul and Silas sitting in prison were “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25). Even as he wrote the last epistle, Paul was confident, saying, “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18). When we look at life from the perspective of Paul whose life was hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3) even as ours, we have no “bad” days.

Our flesh is troubled and our minds are agitated at what we see about us in the world. We are fearful for those whose life is a life without Christ and who, in their unbelief, make our life miserable as confessing Christians. Yet there is a peace within because we know that life on this Earth is but for a short time compared with the eternity that lies ahead.

Our Lord told us, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). By virtue of Christ’s merit, His death, and His resurrection, we who believe in Him possess the victory and are sustained by the promise of life with Him in heaven.

Brethren, do not lose heart. God, whose children all Christ-believers are,

will see His children through the evil days to an indescribably better life. We who by the world are considered “the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things until now” (1 Cor. 4:13), will be with the Lord. It is the Father’s

promise to all who, in the midst of this world, cling to Christ. Therefore “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10).

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Texas



Fifth in a series—

“Savoring the Spirit-fruit” *Kindness*

Growing up in a Christian home, we heard our parents encourage us to treat other children with kindness. Acts of kindness included sharing toys with other little ones who came over to play. Kindness was also to be shown to the unpopular, ostracized children by including them in play and showing them love and respect. As for bullies, we were not to respond to them in kind, but treat them with kindness.

The Spirit-fruit of kindness grows from a Spirit-instilled disposition of love for others, not just to those we like and are nice to us, but to all, even our enemies. This kindly disposition involves being mild, gentle, and full of graciousness.

The ways of Christian kindness do not come naturally. Just observe how children are unwilling to share toys or are mean to outcast youngsters or are repay evil with evil. From little on we are in need of the Spirit’s indwelling to learn the ways of Christian kindness and to be filled with the spirit of Christian love.

In God’s Word the Holy Spirit supplies us with the ultimate example of kindness in our Lord and Savior. The psalmist reveals that “The LORD is gra-



acious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all, And His tender mercies are over all His works” (Ps. 145:8-9).

In His grace God does not discriminate as to whom He shows His kindness and love. Consider His governance of nature. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus points to this divine illustration, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mt. 5:44-45).

No Discrimination

Jesus not only pointed to His Father’s all-embracing kindness through nature,

but He demonstrated it in His words and actions. Much to the disgust and dismay of the Pharisees, the Lord Jesus was kind to everyone, including thieves, adulterers, prostitutes, tax collectors, and other “sinners.”

Jesus displayed indiscriminate kindness in His feedings of the 4,000 and 5,000. Before distributing the bread and fish, He didn’t have the disciples segregate the good from the evil—the believers from the unbelievers. While on the cross Jesus treated not only His mother with kindness by attending to her future earthly needs; but also showed loving-kindness toward His enemies by praying for them.

The apostle John writes in his epistle, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love

has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 Jn. 4:10-13). That Spirit of God lives within believers. May He lead us to put on the new man of faith regularly and thus to “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:12).

In His parable concerning Judgment Day (see Mt. 25:31-46), Jesus shows that He will point to the deeds of believers as evidence (“fruits”) of their faith in Him. Among those deeds will be a variety of acts of kindness which the Holy Spirit had produced in them.

As through the Spirit we daily crucify the sinful nature with its loveless ways, may the same Holy Spirit fill our hearts with the Spirit-fruit of kindness towards all.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Christian Witnessing in the Porcupines



Last summer on a youth camping trip to the Porcupine Wilderness State Park area in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, some 7th-8th grade students from Messiah congregation, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, came up with a grand idea.

Chaperone Pastor Mark Gullerud tells that, when they camped across the way from Lake Superior, the youth were challenged to create something on the shoreline which reflected their Christian faith.

With youth-full excitement, the pastor explains, “The cross of Christ and spelling out the name of Jesus with driftwood is what they came up with....Since the shoreline was along the highway, people driving by waved or honked their horn as a way of approval of the Christian message!”

**Noting the 75th Anniversary of the
Brief Statement of the Doctrinal
Position of the MISSOURI SYNOD
(1932-2007)**

**A Trumpet Which Gave—and Gives!—a Clear Sound
(See 1 Corinthians 14:8)**

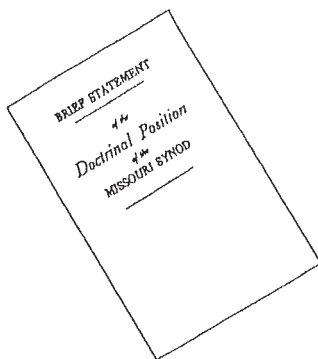
Brief Statement
Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church

Brief Statement Text [with comment]

**Of the Symbols of the
Lutheran Church**

45. We accept as our [Lutheran] confessions all the symbols contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580. *[The specialized, theological meaning of symbol is “creedal form of theological position”—in this case, the Book of Concord of 1580. Dr. F. Bente’s Historical Introduction presents much pertinent data that led to the publication of the Book of Concord in Germany on the fiftieth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. During those hectic decades, “search the Scriptures” was the watchword of the Lutheran reformers in their every-day lives, and indeed their very lives were expended in defending their public teachings on the basis of Scripture alone. While all the preceding articles of the Brief Statement are studied with Scripture citations, this closing article has none. Why is that? Because this article expresses our Christian reaction to the Scriptures; this article expresses our dedication to the Triune God in upholding His Name and defend-*

ing His reputation; this closing article expresses our support of all prior articles; this is our acclamation of the Scripturality of the Brief Statement. It reverberates with the stance of Luther: “Here I stand; I can do no otherwise! God help me! Amen!”] The symbols of the Lutheran Church are not a rule of faith beyond, and supplementary to, Scripture, [rule of faith means the measuring stick, the standard by which to measure the validity of what one believes as Truth. Not “beyond” or “supplementary to” Scripture means that the Lutheran Symbols are not considered as an add-on to Scripture, as though the Scripture alone were insuffi-



Brief Statement Of Open Questions

Introductory Comment

The *Brief Statement* clearly defines what we mean by “open questions” (sometimes called “theological problems”). Because the doctrine of the Trinity and the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament are clearly taught, they are not open questions. What is open, however, is “how.” We do not presume to answer. Another would be the question of how created angels could sin if they were created perfect. In this regard we teach what Scripture teaches, but do not go beyond that. To try to answer what Scripture does answer would involve adding to Scripture.

As we recognize that there are open questions, we must also recognize that matters of doctrine (for example, Creation, Redemption, etc.) are not open questions. The effort to put clearly taught matters of doctrine in the category of open questions is done by those who do not want to be bound by the clear words of Scripture. To leave “open” for speculation what Scripture teaches and proclaims is to subtract from Scripture.

Here, then, the paragraph from the *Brief Statement* [with comment] on this topic:

44. Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly. Since neither an individual nor the Church as a whole is permitted to develop or augment the Christian doctrine [as Rome does] but are rather ordered and commanded by God to continue in the doctrine of the apostles, 2 Thess. 2:15 [“...hold the traditions”—tradition being that which is handed down, the substance of teaching]; Acts 2:42, open questions must remain open questions [lest we add to Scripture]. — Not to be included in the number of open questions are the following: the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, of Sunday, of Chiliasm [Millennialism], and of Antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture.

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer
Corpus Christi, Tex.

From the Editor:

With the above treatment of paragraph 44, together with the accompanying article on “*Of the Symbols of the Lutheran Church*,” we bring this series marking the 75th anniversary of the *Brief Statement* to a close.

We heartily thank our respective contributing writers for their thought-provoking, helpful, and inspiring commentary on the biblical doctrines treated (confessed!).

May the Spirit of God keep the Church of the Lutheran Confession as a synod which is unapologetically confessional and “apologetic” in its setting forth all the doctrines of Holy Scripture!

cient foundation for faith and life. God's child would be quite content with the Bible alone—BUT when he is under attack by Satan, the Christian rallies with the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17) and holds his ground] but a confession of the doctrines of Scripture over against those who deny those doctrines.

46. Since the Christian Church cannot [and dare not] make [its own] doctrines, but can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture, the doctrinal decisions [statements] of the symbols are binding upon the conscience not because our Church has made them nor because they are the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but only because they are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself.

47. [Therefore we hold that] Those desiring to be admitted into the public ministry of the Lutheran Church [are obligated to] pledge themselves to teach according to the symbols not “insofar as,” but “because” the symbols agree with Scripture. [The qualifier “insofar as” is a sieve elastic enough to allow substance and meaning to be flushed away along with other non-essential matters of phraseology, logic, and erudition. “Insofar as” provides no warranty against Crypto-Calvinism or Crypto-Catholicism in Lutheran pulpits and behind Lutheran lecterns. On the other hand, the honest and forthright “because” means that all mental reservations are surrendered, while all support is given to the Scriptural validity of the Lutheran Confessions.] He who is unable to accept as Scriptural the doctrine set forth in the Lutheran symbols and their rejection of the corresponding

errors must not be admitted into the ministry [or a teaching position] of the Lutheran Church.

§48. The confessional obligation [expected of Lutheran pastors, teachers, and congregations] covers all doctrines, not only those that are treated *ex professo* [addressed specifically] but also those that are merely introduced in support of other doctrines. The obligation [the one captured in the “because” stipulation] does not extend to historical statements [which may contain incorrect data], “purely exegetical questions” [such as variant readings in the manuscripts which may produce differing translations] and other matters [such as logical/illogical lines of argumentation] not belonging to the doctrinal content of the symbols. All doctrines of the Symbols are based on clear statements of Scripture [and therefore bind consciences, nourish faith, and support confessions of faith. Perhaps enough has been said in earlier articles to demonstrate that the Lutheran Church—at least in its conservative branches and congregations—rejects teachings such as purgatory, prayers for the dead, the hierarchy of the Pope, the “rapture,” a 1,000 year reign of Christ on Earth—as being human dogmas that are insupportable by clear statements of Scripture. Here we stand! God help us! Amen and Amen!]

—Paul R. Koch
Eau Claire, Wis.

“...I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3)

The Word From Immanuel

*Chapel Talks to the student body of Immanuel
Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin*

To our young readers - This is for you!

When We Ask “Why?”

Lord, for Jesus' sake, hear us when we cry out to You. Amen.

Perhaps one of the most frequently asked questions is, “Why?”

There is the “why?” of curiosity. Little children often ask, “Why?” They want more information. They want to add to their knowledge.

There is the “why?” of disagreement. Young people often ask, “Why?” “Why does the administration do this?” “Why do we have to have that rule?” “Why can't we have just one snow day?”

There is the “why?” of confusion and frustration. Old people often ask, “Why?” “Why am I suffering this way?” “Why doesn't God just let me die?”

People of all ages often ask “why?” They ask it when they are confused...when they cannot see a good reason for something that is happening in their lives. “Why did God let my business fail?” “Why did God take my loved one from me?” “Why did God let me get this sickness?” “Why this?” “Why now?” “Why me?”

There is also the “why?” of faith. “Why should I be afraid? God is with me.” It is a question addressed to oneself as a reminder and a way of putting down the Old Adam.

But what do we make of the most amazing “why?” ever spoken?

“My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?”

These words are very familiar to the ears of Christians everywhere. How often we have heard these words coming from that Man suspended between Earth and heaven on the center cross of Calvary.

These words are heart wrenching, for they are the cry of One who loves us and whom we love. These words reveal the great depth of His love. It is because of His love for us that He is crying out, “WHY?”

This “why?” is heart wrenching for another reason: we know that we are the cause of this cry. You and I: it was our sins, our rebellion, our depravity, our miserable failures that evoked this cry of near despair.

In reality, this is not another reason but the same reason. Our contribution to this cry was our horrible transgressions. Christ's contribution was His infinite love. In love He took our sins upon His own innocent shoulders. In love He endured the punishment for all that we have done. It is from the hellish agony that was our punishment that Jesus cried out, “WHY?”

Abandoned...alone in the torment of

outer darkness, our Lord cries, “My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?”

Was this the “why?” of curiosity or the “why?” of confusion and frustration or the “why?” of one who disagrees? It was none of these. It was the “why?” of one crying out for deliverance.

Reaching out of the depths of hell’s agony, His voice ascends to the heights of heaven, “Why? Why am I abandoned to this unending pain and anguish? Why am I not delivered as was promised long ago? Why are not the gates of this hell broken down so that I may be the salvation of all of mankind?”

Here was the cry for God to keep His promises. Here was the cry for God to save Him, and with Him to save us all.

“...He...offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him out of death, and was heard because of His godly fear” (Heb. 5:7). From the bowels of death He cried out to God, and God reached down and saved Him.

So the gates of hell were shattered before Jesus, and He emerged triumphant. No longer forsaken, victoriously His spirit went to the Father, and there He awaited the day of His victory over the grave.

Pointing To Calvary

Now whenever we ask God “Why?”, He will always point to Calvary and say, “Why? Because I love you.” “Why? Because I sacrificed My Son for you.” “Why? Because you are now My child and an heir of heavenly glory. I did not spare My own Son, but delivered Him up for you.

“...As I was writing this chapel address, I received a phone call which caused me to think immediately ‘Why?’ The call informed me that a graduate of our high school had been killed in a traffic accident....”

How then shall I not with Him also freely give you all things?” (cf. Rom. 8:32)

Because of Jesus, God will withhold nothing good from us. Every time we ask “Why?”, the answer is, “This too is for your good. Be assured, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will never let anything bad happen. Pain, yes, but for your good. Sadness, yes, but for your good. Once My Son cried out, ‘Why?’ Now, whenever you cry out, ‘Why?’—the answer is, ‘Because I love you for My Son’s sake.’”

As I was writing this chapel address, I received a phone call which caused me to think immediately, “Why?” The call informed me that a



NOTE: Your editor was in touch with Michelle Gurgel, who subsequently sent us this photo of herself and her husband, and then also graciously gave us permission to share it with our readers. Micah and Michelle were united in marriage on May 26, 2002.

graduate of our high school had been killed in a traffic accident. His name is Micah Gurgel. He was thirty years old. He and his wife, Michelle (nee Williams), are related to many people in the Eau Claire area and throughout the CLC as well as here at ILC.

Why? Why would God let this happen to one so young? That was my question. But I had just answered my own question. God loved Micah and his family. Jesus died for Micah and his family. God forsook Jesus just so He would never have to forsake Micah. In their grief, Micah's family is not forsaken, but one day they will be reunited with Micah and Jesus in glory.

The answer to every "why?" can be found in the "why?" that Jesus asked. Why was Jesus forsaken? "Because

God loves us." Why do we have pain and sorrow? "Because God loves us."

PRAYER: *Heavenly Father, our knowledge is so limited. We do not always understand why You do the things that You do...why You allow suffering and sadness to come into our lives. Help us, O God of our salvation, to cling to Your love, so that even though we may not see the good in Your actions, we know that You do see and You do cause everything to work out for our good. We ask You to comfort Micah's loved ones, so that they may see beyond the grief of the moment to the glory which is ours in Christ Jesus, for whose sake we ask these things of You. Amen.*

—Prof. John Pfeiffer
February 29, 2008



Volume 50 Revisits Earlier Volumes

Volume 30, Number 10
(April, 1988)

IMAGE AND SUBSTANCE

A magazine dedicated to the preservation of Christian family values recently contained an article entitled "Image and the 80's—A Subtle Force that's Seducing the Family." It was said that "if the 60's represented the 'revolutionary' decade, and the 70's the 'me' decade, then the 80's may well be the 'image over substance' decade."

The thrust of the article was that many people in our "yuppie" generation spend more time trying to keep up with and ahead of the Joneses than in

nurturing home, family, and other sound (biblical) values. And to be sure, if what one buys and wears and how one looks is a person's (individually) or people's (collectively) first concern, it should not surprise that the fabric of society, its homes and families, is coming apart at the seams.

Satanic Seduction

This led us to thinking. There was a time when image and substance were not in conflict. Man was originally cre-

ated in God's image. In that blessed condition man was in perfect conformity to God's will and way. Enter Satan, who seduced Eve with the suggestion that she could improve her image ("you will be like God...") by disobeying God. From being a possessor of the image of God and eternal life, man became a creature of death, spiritually and physically.

Thus man in his fallen condition continues to have an image problem. He needs to learn and relearn that the God who created him looks at the substance of a thing—the heart—rather than at mere outward appearance. The Bible teaches this in many words and ways. For example: God chose the humble shepherd lad David as king of Israel rather than the more impressively appearing sons of Jesse. To His prophet Samuel the Lord said: "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

When Jesus walked on Earth, the Pharisees were the outstanding example of those who placed image ahead of substance. Their hypocrisy was exposed by the Savior in words such as these: "You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Mt. 23:37).

In plain words, "image over substance" is not a disease new to the 80's. It is an on-going testimony to, and the result of, mankind's estrangement from God. Apart from the new heart and life that the Spirit engenders through Baptism and the Word, the substance of man remains self-centered, self-serving and (eternally) deadly.

Lifestyle Choices

Christians are not immune. When it comes to choices, all of us have the problem Samuel had. Beware of seductive "yuppie" influences asking us to by-pass substance for image.

When you are bombarded with lifestyle choices—with advertisements and come-ons to buy (and wear) all sorts of "image boosters," remember: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk. 12:15). "Godliness with contentment is great gain...People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction" (1 Tim. 6:6). When you are told that "fitness" and how one looks is all-important, remember: "Physical training is of some value, but godless has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

In The Churches

Applied to churches, when image prevails over substance, the result is similar to what happened in Eden. It is falling for devil-inspired skepticism regarding the trustworthiness of God's Word. It is buying Satan's lie that doctrine is secondary to numerical growth and outward image.

Christ said: "If you [person, congregation, or synod] hold to My teachings, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (Jn. 8:31). Therein lies the substance of Christian discipleship.

But what do we find? Also in the spiritual sphere, substance is more and more caving in to image—not only in

cults and sects but in most denominations within Christianity, including Lutheranism.

For example, in the name of evangelism (traditionally called “mission work”), the substance of the Savior’s Great Commission (“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”) is bypassed if not ignored. When faithfulness to His Word is lacking, God is unimpressed—regardless of statistics that can be chalked into the ecclesiastical ledger (membership rolls). “This is the one [person, congregation, synod] I esteem; he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My Word” (Is. 66:2).

None of which is to say that image is unimportant. “Let your light shine...” says the Savior. In our midst we believe there is, for the most part, a holy trembling at the Lord’s Word. Yet as far as image is concerned, lethargic orthodoxy is no more pleasing to God than inclusive heterodoxy. In other words, God’s indictment of lukewarm

Christianity has application for both liberal and conservative elements in the Church.

“Because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich, and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” (Rev. 3:16ff).

May we ever tremble at such words! They teach us what to “buy” and what to “wear” to cover our shame. They teach true “fitness” for God’s kingdom now and forever. In short, they give God’s own prescription for keeping (getting?) substance in our image—personally, congregationally, and synodically.

—Pastor Paul Fleischer [editor then and still;
article adapted]



Re: our mission to reach out with the gospel—

The Open Door (First of Two)

“And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).

What is an “open door” for mission work or outreach? In Revelation 3:8 we learn that the Lord set before the church at Philadelphia an open door which no one could shut. On the other hand, on Paul’s second missionary journey there was definitely a closed

door in Asia Minor. “And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them...” (Acts 16:6-7). Today, though, we are not privy to a direct message from God as to a specific open or closed door.

For ourselves today, we should go

back to the Great Commission given by our Lord to His Church and repeated in all the Gospels. We are well familiar with Matthew's record in Chapter 28 of how, as we go, we are to make disciples of all nations. In chapter 16 of Mark's Gospel the words of our Lord remind us again about going, and that, in the process, we are to preach the gospel to the whole of creation. Luke records the resurrected Lord's words to His Church in the prophecy in chapter 24, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations." John records the scene that Easter evening when the Lord said to His apostles, "I send you." In his twentieth chapter, John reminds all how the Church represented there by the apostles has the precious proclaiming power of the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus (repeating the Master's very words). The assumption, the injunction, and the prophecy are that we will go.

Another assumption, too, is to treat the world as an open door. Read through the contexts of the previously cited chapters and see no limitations. Wherever each of us is, it is as a witness to Christ—as one who declares the wonderful deeds of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

As it is with the individual, so it is with a group of Christians. We have been given the power of the gospel of forgiveness. This is the compass and stabilizer for our group's movement; it is, as well, the heart for the life's trip of the individual Christian.

In the Bible, life's Divine Manual, besides the direction being given us geographically, the will of God is explicitly stated. He is forbearing, "not



wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Our God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

All have been reconciled!

Not only do we go and witness in the knowledge that this is God's desire, it is also a fact. God in Christ has forgiven all mankind their sins. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:19-20). As ambassadors for Him we seek an audience for His Word. If they will not allow us to speak—or if, upon hearing, they reject the message—then the door would appear closed.

But notice that we make the attempt to present the gospel message as His emissaries. We see the closed door demonstrated after the attempt to give the Good News by the seventy: "But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near'" (Lk. 10:10-11).

On Paul's first missionary venture, at Antioch in Pisidia (after an initial receptiveness), they "stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and

drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium” (Acts 13:50-51). The door closed for a time. But then Paul returned to that city of persecution, as well as to others, strengthening the souls of the converts.

The Lord also said the same to the twelve as He did to the seventy with regard to the closed door, “And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them” (Mk. 6:11).

The clearly stated assumption prior to the marking of the closed door is that both the twelve and the seventy went and sought to gain a hearing for the Word. In Paul’s case at Antioch of

Pisidia, he and Barnabas were there, had preached, and the Spirit had converted. Then the door was closed.

How can we today determine if a door is “open” or “closed” to the Word? There will be no vision of a man of Macedonia beckoning to a certain place in a dream, nor will there be a divine revelation of the Spirit to stay clear of yet other places. We should assume all the world is the open door until we see through the exercise of common sense that the place, town, district, or nation is closed to the Word.

Individually also we should assume there are far more opportunities (open doors) through which to witness than we have taken advantage of.

—Missionary Koenig (in his Dec. '07 Newsletter)



Tenth Anniversary



(Left) Members of Zion congregation;
(Above) Pastors present: N. Mayhew,
J. Johannes, J. Schierenbeck,
V. Fossum

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1). This was the theme of the special Tenth Anniversary service celebrated January 27, 2008, by the congregation of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lawrenceville (Atlanta), Georgia.

Of course, the history of Zion starts much earlier than ten years ago. In 1984, an Atlanta-area preaching station was started when Pastor Vernon Greve asked a fellow pastor, Robert

Mackensen, to visit his son. The church in Hendersonville, North Carolina, gave its blessing for Pastor Mackensen to serve a new preaching station in the Atlanta area on a monthly basis.

Between 1984 and 1997, Pastors John Schierenbeck and Warren Fanning (both coming from Columbia, S.C.) also served the start-up.

In those early years a handful of people gathered, first in congregants’ homes (complete with singing parrots and barking dogs), and later in a series

of motel rooms and meeting rooms; this led to the church's incorporation in April, 1998.

In July of 1998 the congregation rented its first permanent worship location, where it began holding weekly lay-led services to supplement the monthly communion worship.

The LORD has continued to bless the preaching of His Word at Zion. People throughout the southeastern U.S. have gathered around the Word of Truth proclaimed here. We have much to be thankful for and look forward to the future, welcoming the challenges that lie ahead, confident of the Lord's blessing. Praise be to our Triune God!

The sermon for the anniversary service was divided into three parts, which was presented by former servants of Zion—Pastor John Schierenbeck (President of the CLC and pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Fla.); Pastor John H. Johannes (first full-time pastor, currently retired in Fargo, N.Dak., and a member of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, N.Dak.); and Pastor Vance Fossum (pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Columbia, S.C.).

There were fifty-six in attendance as we gathered together to praise the Lord for His marvelous grace—including twenty-five visitors from six CLC congregations.

—Reported by Ann C. Duncan
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Announcements

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Lawrence Bade, who was called by Trinity Lutheran congregation of Millston, Wis. to be its pastor, was installed on Sunday, February 24, 2008.

—Pastor Michael Eichstadt

CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION (CLC) TWENTY-EIGHTH CONVENTION

June 16-20, 2008
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

*"May We Be Found Faithful Stewards of the
Mysteries of God..." Colossians 1:24-29*

1. "...in making the Word of God fully known" (Col. 1:24-26) —Pastor James Albrecht
2. "...in proclaiming the glorious richness of Christ to the unbelieving world" (Col. 1:27-28) —Pastor David Schaller
3. "...in laboring to share what God has given to us" (Col. 1:29) —Mr. Steven Leinberger

Communion Service Speaker: Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer

Communion Service Liturgist: Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

Memorial Service Speaker: Prof. Em. Paul R. Koch

Chaplain: Pastor Paul Naumann

Organ Coordinator: Lane Fischer

Convention Reporter: Professor Joseph Lau

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