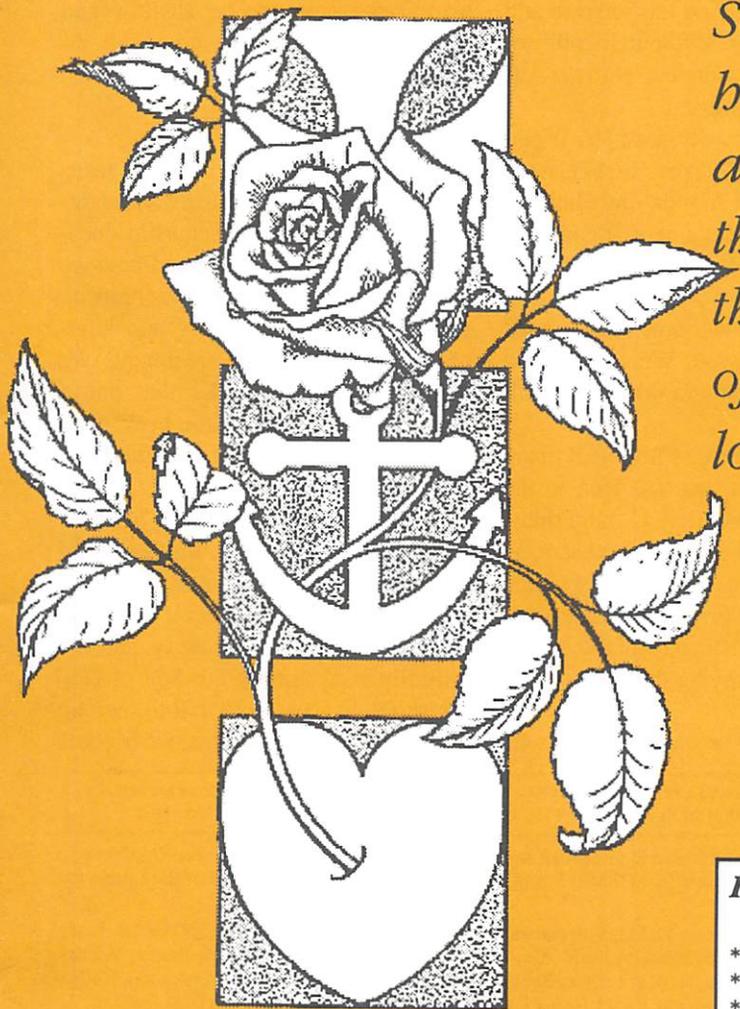


Lutheran Spokesman



*So faith,
hope, love
abide, these
three, but
the greatest
of these is
love.*

*1 Corinthians
13:13*

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- * What A Friend!
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What A Friend!

It has been said: "Friends are necessary to a happy life." Someone has said: "When friendship deserts us we are as lonely and helpless as a ship left by the tide, high upon the shore." When the ups and downs of life strike, friends help us divide the sorrows and multiply the joys. Without friends we are indeed left stranded, perhaps left alone, empty, depressed.

Holy Scripture declares: "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17). And: "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). Truly, a friend in need is a friend indeed. If we have such friends we are truly blessed. What's more, if we are such friends to others, we will be blessed.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ had many friends, yet most deserted Him in the dark hour of that first Good Friday. When Judas came out to Gethsemane leading the band of Roman soldiers, the Lord asked: "Friend, why have you come?" (Mt. 26:50) he then asked: "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

Truly, with friends like that who

needs enemies. And with that example in mind we do well to heed the advice of the Lord through the prophet: "Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion" (Micah 7:5). We had better take great care. Human friendships can be shallow and hypocritical. Human friends can't always be depended upon. But. . .

Trustworthy

What a Friend we have in Jesus whose love and friendship can be depended upon. Jesus' friendship doesn't depend on who we are and how we treat him. Human friendships are made and sustained through love and kindness, by fair and just treatment. We would not long consider that one a friend who stabs us in the back, runs down our good name, spits in our face, and maybe even betrays us.

Yet such is the friendship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. With every transgression of God's holy will we, in effect, spit in the face of Christ. To fall away and sin willfully is to crucify the Son of God afresh (Heb. 6:6). If we fail to own up to our discipleship to Jesus, we become

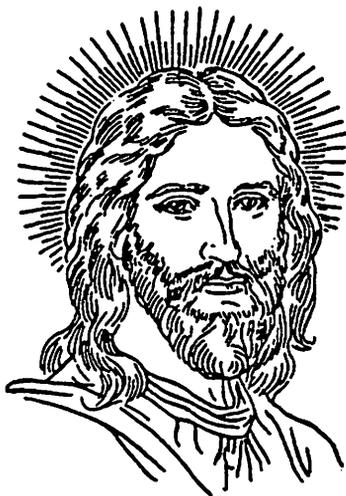
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guilty of denying Him as Peter did. Perhaps we have even betrayed Jesus at one time or other.

Still, in spite of all, Jesus loves us! Jesus is the true Friend of "tax collectors and sinners." "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). Jesus laid down His life for Judas who betrayed Him, for Peter who denied Him, for Thomas who doubted Him, for the rest of the disciples who had forsaken Him and fled. Jesus laid down His life for each of us.

Human friendship has to be earned. It is generally "deserved." But not Jesus' friendship for sinners: "Christ died for the ungodly" writes Paul (Rom. 5:6). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Rom. 5:8 & 10) As the Good Shepherd Jesus laid down His life for us, the weak, helpless, straying, lost sheep. Indeed, what a Friend we have in Jesus

because His love can be depended upon. His friendship does not depend on our earning or deserving it.

Unlimited

Jesus' friendship for us is **not limited by death**. Earthly friends and friendships are. Once a person whom we have counted as a friend in this world dies, that's the end of the friendship. We can do nothing more for them or they for us. It's sad, but it's true because "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). There is no purgatory, for example, as the Church of Rome claims. Once death strikes we can do our departed friends or family members no good by praying for them, or they for us.

But death does not separate Jesus from those who are His, nor they from Him! Three of the best friends our Lord had when He was on earth were Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. One day Lazarus took sick and died. Jesus said: "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up" (Jn. 11:11). Jesus further explained to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (11:25). When the Lord went to the place where Lazarus lay we are told: "Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!'" (Jn. 11:35f)

Jesus wept for his dear friend and over the terrible consequences of sin, but death did not limit His power. He called Lazarus forth from the grave. Of His own life Jesus said: "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of

Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn. 10:17f) And so it happened. Jesus died, and rose again!

And so shall we: "We eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Jesus will raise his believers to life eternal, while consigning the unbelieving to eternal condemnation.

Jesus Answers Prayer

What a Friend we have in Jesus also because He answers our prayers. "He ever lives to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25). In Jesus' saving Name we can "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

The Lord one time told this parable: "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him. And he will answer from within and say, Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give

to you? I say to you, though he will not rise to give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs, And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you..." (Lk. 11:5ff).

Earthly friends may not always be ready to help us. They may even forsake us in need. But not our heavenly Friend. Sinners though we are, often cumbered with a load of care, we have a Friend to whom we can go with all our trials, temptations, troubles, griefs, and weaknesses. In Jesus, our eternal Savior, we have one Friend we can always count on.

As we sing in one of our favorite hymns: "*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear...Can we find a Friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?...Do thy friends despise, forsake Thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer; in His arms He'll take and shield thee: thou wilt find a solace (true friend!) there.*"

—Paul Fleischer

*This is a synopsis of a funeral sermon.



The Gospel, the Power of God— Studies in Romans

Showing The Dark Side

According to Mark Twain, writing in a serious moment, "Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows anybody." Generally true, it

would seem. The civilized worldling as well as the self-righteous religious person is likely to wear a mask. A mask to conceal the greed, selfishness, and cruelty which can hide behind the bright-

est behavior. Why advertise your flaws when you want to make a good impression?

Yet there are those who do show their "dark side." Deliberately. And with purpose. Let us listen to one of those who "belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God" (Rom. 7:4)*.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing (Rom. 7:18-19).

In our Lutheran churches the Morning Service brings us together in confessing "that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed." Our way of "showing our dark side" to anyone who might like to gaze upon the ugliness of our fallen human nature ("flesh").

A Painful Exercise

A hard and harsh business, this laying bare. Pretty tough on self esteem! A Christian was counseling another who was caught up in the trap of "perfectionism" and "triumphalism." When this person was directed to Romans 7 he was distressed, for he had been led to believe that truly "born again" believers always triumph and sin not. Finally he argued that the apostle Paul could not have been born again when he wrote as he did in that dramatic, anguished lament: *What a wretched man I am—who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom. 7:24).*

What, then, is the value of doing

this? Wouldn't it be better to leave the dark side mercifully hidden?

Protecting The Good Name Of The Gospel

A good reason for speaking like Paul is the protection of the Gospel's reputation. As demonstrated in this Epistle, the Gospel is God's power to make what was dead alive unto God and capable of bearing fruit to God (6:11; 7:4). "No one who is born of God will continue to sin" (I Jn. 3:9). This new man, entirely the creation of the Spirit, does no wrong. What is born of God is *perfect*. And this is the real "I." As such Paul and the rest of us can say of our sins: "It is no longer I who do it."

Simply stated, we confess our sins so that the glory of the "new man" in Christ is not dimmed. How comforting it is to see ourselves as our God sees us in his Son: born of God. Flawless. Holy. Sinning not.

How then do we explain those faults and failures? Some of them are likely to be highly visible to others. More will be known to our private selves. All are perceived by the LORD. To the whole mess we must say "No longer I,...but it is sin living in me that does it!"

So we may "show our dark side" for what it is: a very present and active force in conflict with my inner being, my real self. Don't let anyone think for a minute that I *approve* of my sins. I confess them with tears. Because of that foreign body in my life, I lose these battles. Yet I can confidently declare that the war is won. In Christ, I am invincible!

Just Wait A Bit!

The fight is fierce, the warfare long. But there is a rescue. There is an end to it. "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—*through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" (7:24-25) We eagerly await a Savior who, at His coming, "will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious

body" (Phil. 3:21).

Just think of it. No dark side to show! The prospect in Christ is an eternity of unimpeded living in righteousness and true holiness. The battle o'er, the vict'ry won!

—Rollin A. Reim

*All biblical quotations are from the New International Version



What Is This Thing Called Love?

"LOVE IS PATIENT" (I Corinthians 13:4)

Observers of Americana have observed a particularly alarming trait among many young people: impatience. They believe television is at least partially responsible as it subtly projects life with instant cures and instant gratifications—all within an hour, or half hour, with time out for commercials.

There are those who are impatient with circumstances. Witness the driver who sounds his horn to announce his irritation and squeals away ala the jackrabbit to protest situations which are common to daily life.

Some are impatient with other people. An exaggerated opinion of one's own self-importance causes tensions and loveless acts. An unrealistic assumption of perfection results in noticing too many "motes" (translate "toothpicks") in other's eyes without any awareness of the log-beam in one's own.

And have you ever witnessed the agitation of a person who becomes impatient about missing an opportunity to sin?

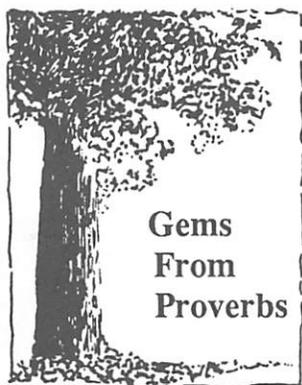
Patience. Love "suffers long"—as in both the King James and New King

James. Who but God could see a hopeless situation and suffer long? No resentment, no blows, no indignation, no bitter words. But only in Christ. With Him God was impatient because of mankind's sins and exacted the ultimate punishment. Such was the quality of His very special love, a love which He communicates to us through the Spirit in the gospel.

The apostle Paul knew love of this type. "But...I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his *unlimited patience* as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (I Tim. 1:16, NIV, emphasis added).

Patience is also God's gift to us. It appears in two lists of the fruits of the Spirit—Galatians 5:22 and Colossians 1:11. It is specifically the self-restraint which does not retaliate a wrong. It is the antithesis of wrath and vengeance. It is the quality of love which does not bear resentment against those who are ignorant, mean, or malicious. The quiet reaction of patient love knows how to return good for evil. (Cf. Romans 12:21)

—M. Sydow



“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, (also) wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (23:23).

So, you are off to college, away from home and on your own! This Proverb is for you. As you walk the halls of “higher” learning, or otherwise make your way in the world, be careful what you go after.

The world will dazzle you with its riches and dangle its forbidden fruit before your eyes. Perhaps you have already heard her call: “Get a good education so that you can be rich and buy the things you have always wanted”; or “Loosen up; get a life!—You’ve paid your religious dues, now reach out and get what you can while you can, whatever it takes”; or “Try drugs, the New Age philosophy, and other popular methods of reaching higher mental and spiritual awareness!” Oh yes, the world lies before you, young Christian. Like a wealthy prostitute she promises to give you “knowledge” of riches and pleasures beyond anything you have ever known. How can you resist her bed?

Remember that the “Prince” of this world (Jn. 12:31) was there before you! The devil lies (Jn. 8:44) and the world lies with him; as there is no truth in him, so there is no truth in the world.

By faith in the Christ sent by God, you already know and possess the Truth which brings true and eternal joys in heaven through the forgiveness of sins. Jesus says: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn. 14:6). Think about it! What can the deceitful world offer you that is better, higher, or richer than the truth about heaven revealed in Christ’s Word? Does the world promise “secret” treasures to those who chase the skirts of human wisdom and philosophy? But “in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”! (Col. 2:3)

Now here is a strange thing: Our Lord truly “gives wisdom and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6), and yet we are to “buy the truth, and not sell it—wisdom and instruction and understanding,” as Proverbs says. How does the Christian buy what has already been freely given to Him in Christ?—By regarding the truth so highly that he will spare no effort or cost to keep it for himself.

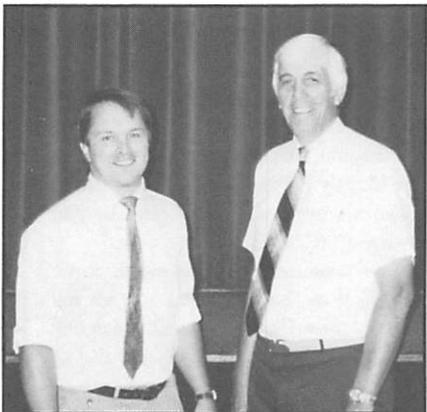
As the eldest son of his father, Esau was to receive the “birthright” inheritance. But Esau placed little value on it. He thought nothing of selling it to brother Jacob for food and drink! (Gen. 25:29ff) Are there Christians who think they can no longer “afford” the cost to “buy” the truth—grow in it, confess it, and sacrifice for it?

Solomon says to the young Christian also today: “Your Lord has given you the truth that makes you wise unto salvation! Don’t go after the world. If you ‘buy’ her deceitful reasonings and pleasures, you will end up selling off the precious truth you have been given. Rather, you keep on buying that which satisfies your soul (Is. 55:1ff). Don’t sell off the truth that is yours through faith in Christ and His Word by yielding to the persecution of peer pressure. Don’t give up the truth in order to practice the sins of the flesh. Don’t exchange the wisdom you have in Christ for the vain philosophies and man-made religions of the world! Desire the pure milk of the Word of truth that you may grow in your knowledge of Christ and be found perfect in Him when He comes. Confess the truth, sacrifice and suffer for it. You can afford to ‘buy the truth’ that has been so freely given, you cannot afford to ‘sell it.’”

—Vance Fossum



Participants at the June 1991 Pastors' Conference in Eau Claire



Chaplain M. Roehl; Service Speaker W. Fanning.



Essayist N. Greve

Below: Jyothi Benjamin (left); Essayist & Mission Board member W. Fanning standing in front of the Mission Board House on our ILC Campus.



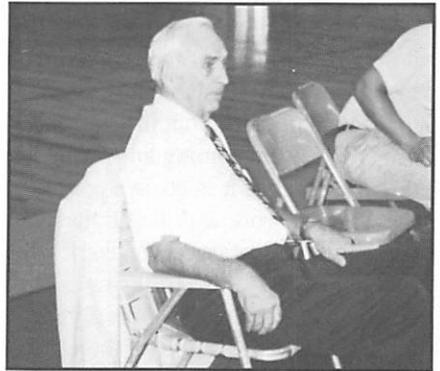


laire.

board Chairman D. Schierenbeck—in front of the Sem



President D. Fleischer (left); Vice-President E. Hallauer



Essayist Prof. R. Gurgel leisurely awaits his turn.



Missionary Paul Gurgel & Family.

This continues—and concludes what was begun last month—comments of Jyothi Benjamin to the CLC General Pastoral Conference, June 18-20, 1991. In these words Mr. Benjamin speaks on some specific areas of the work on the CLCI as he sees it.

Mission Expansion Project: As you know India is the second most populated country in the world. Its population is about 850 million. Among this population only 2.5 percent are Christians. The remaining 97.5 percent of the Indian population is living without Christ. Each day people are dying in India without knowing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has given us His grace to start the CLCI mission in India in the year 1981...In India people of various castes and races live in separate areas. We invite all the people to the public Gospel meetings for a time in search of real truth. We never criticize their religion or their cults. Through these CLCI public Gospel meetings, we give advice to the people to recognize the difference between the religions. We encourage them to realize the religions which are created by man and that of the religion which is created by God. We always try to explain the importance of the belief in Jesus Christ...

Even though we have your kind help from the general body of the CLC (USA), it may be difficult in future to have help from you because of the problem with the Indian economic inflation and change in the Indian Government. Also because of this economic inflation, the Indian Hindu government may cut off all the foreign funds which are coming into India. It may happen at anytime in the future. Due to this reason also, it is always good to have these self support projects to continue the Mission work and the Orphanage for ever in India. On behalf of CLCI I am presenting my heartiest thanks to all the CLC members who participated in this self support project. Thank you...

Orphanage Maintenance: By God's grace, CLCI is following a steady policy to maintain and to improve the Orphanage in all aspects. After I get back to India more care will be taken about orphan boys' education, more concentration will be shown, in preparing them and in bringing them up in true Christian faith so that they could become strong enough to enter into the CLCI preaching ministry. Also we would like to take special care about orphan girls' education to prepare them as school teachers in the future...

Mission House Maintenance: The CLCI has always given importance to the mission development aimed at creating a devotional atmosphere to give good spiritual emotions to pastors and workers. There is also a beautiful garden in front of the Mission house under the special care of Orphan boys and girls...

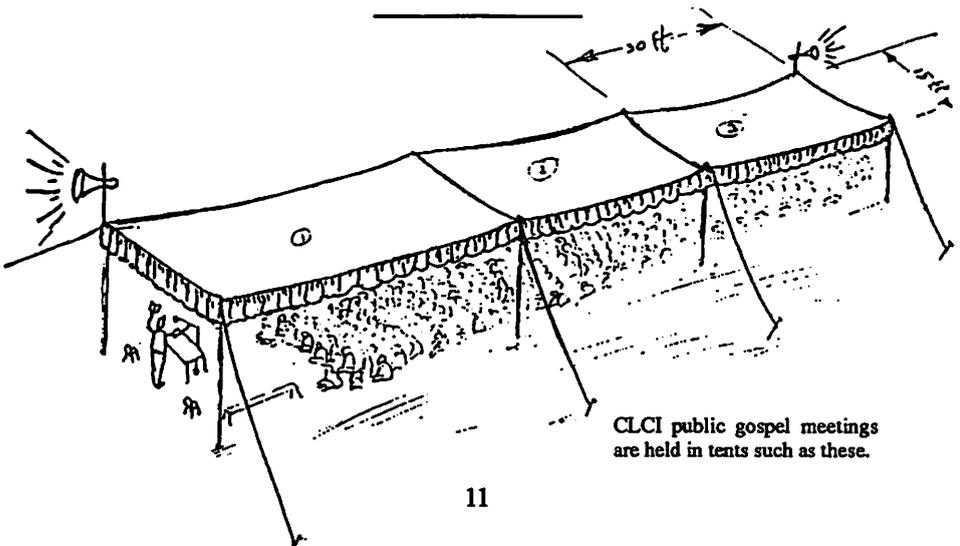
Bible Institute:...The challenge for the CLCI from other Christian groups like Catholics, Pentecostals, Methodists, Baptists and other Christian groups, is to start the Bible Institute to enable our CLCI to play a bigger role and to attain greater heights...I firmly believe that this Bible Institute stands as a strong testimony to the reality of the communion that holds the CLCI in front of the Indian Hindu society... I am once again humbly informing you that this training school would be used as CLCI main center for learning the Lord's Word and the preach-

ing skills of full length Telugu sermons, associated with proper maintenance and efficient operation of CLCI Mission program. Telugu theology sessions, exegesis, lectures and seminars will be included in the training program. I feel confident that the respected CLC will be generous in recognizing this need. Thank you.

Christian Day School: ...Our CLCI Orphans as well as our CLCI children of the pastors and members are in a grave danger and confusion between Hindu and Christian religion principles. To save our CLCI children from those dangerous Hindu influences and to improve their faith in our Lord, we are praying for a Christian day school in India. As you know, learning of the Lord's word simultaneously with their school education would give them tremendous grip in Christian knowledge and it would become an integral part of their daily life...

Miscellaneous Matters: 1. We are requesting you to pay special attention to increase the number of visitations from you to the CLCI which will give more inspiration and encouragement to the CLCI members. 2. We are also urging for your kind approval to sanction an opportunity for us to send some of our CLCI pastors and delegates to visit your CLC convention meetings possibly once in a six or eight years. It would be very kind of you and it would also give much encouragement to the CLCI members.

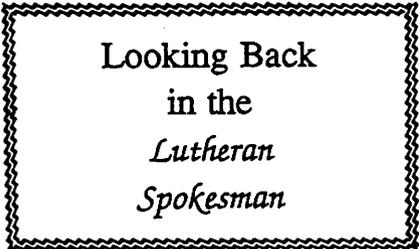
Conclusion: Respected brothers, before I close this report, on behalf of the CLCI and myself, I take this opportunity of expressing our CLCI great appreciation and gratitude to the Church of the Lutheran Confession, United States of America, for your contribution towards me and in keeping your CLCI in its premier position. In this final analysis, I thank every one of you for your love and affection that you showed toward this foreigner...These two years of life will remain fresh for ever in my memory. I will gladly remember everyone of you in the rest of my life. We may be poor in culture, but we are certainly not poor in loving you and in remembering your kind help forever. Once again I would like to assure all concerned that I am fully aware of my responsibilities to continue and to improve all around performance standards of CLCI. Thank you very much.



Why Be Orthodox?

By the grace of God "orthodoxy" is still a nice word in our midst. It does not bring to our lips the sneer that accompanies its use in some church circles today. Many have now relegated this term to the same discard pile where lie such other unneeded and outmoded words as "creeds," "confessions," and "unionism."

We should humbly thank the Lord of the Church that the idea of preserving an orthodox position is still a vital one among us, the *die reine Lehre* is for us still the pearl of great price, the treasure for which we are ready to give up all other things if necessary. Yet it is well for us to remind ourselves fre-



Looking Back
in the
Lutheran
Spokesman

quently just why orthodoxy is that important. We do not wish to make the mistake of thinking, after the bitter battle has been fought and the saving Gospel by divine help has been preserved intact against error, that we have then accomplished our goal and can take a well earned breather. Orthodoxy dare never become an end in itself. It is not like a vintage automobile that is carefully preserved by a connoisseur, endlessly polished and turned up only to be admired in a parade now and then. It is rather similar to a vehicle that must be kept in perfect condition because it is needed for heavy, daily highway use.

Orthodoxy is important because it is a *means* toward an End. It is able to make people wise unto salvation. Scriptural truth must be kept pure because of the many souls sitting in darkness that it must still guide to the glorious light of Christ.

St. Paul declares that "the Gospel of Christ...is the *power* of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." All error that is permitted by men to creep in can only reduce the efficiency of this wonderful power plant. Of all Christ's servants then, we to whom He has entrusted the greatest measure of pure doctrine should be most zealous in mission work. After all, we have the most Spiritpower with which to work. When the Master distributes His capital a pound to each slave, and commands them to trade with it—put it to work—will he not look for most return from those servants whom he has most fully instructed in its use?

If one develops the attitude of the servant who carefully wrapped the pound in a napkin and laid it away to keep it safe, then one has nothing but the sad thing called dead orthodoxy—something just as unprofitable as dead, unused capital. The wrapped-up pound gains nothing. Finally it must be taken away from the unfaithful servant and given to another who will use it.

Yes, orthodoxy must be preserved. But only so that it can be proclaimed! The rest of the world needs the pure Gospel just as much as we and our children do. O Lord, help us go and give it to them!

—Norbert Reim

Witnessing to one who is a...

Willing Inquirer Attracted By Something

This encounter is recorded by Mark. After Jesus had answered the Pharisees and Herodians who were sent to entrap Him, He then answered some Sadducees. Coming upon Jesus' refutation of the Sadducees, a scribe is pleased at Jesus' answers. Undoubtedly the scribe also disagreed with the Sadducees' teachings and attitude. He saw in Jesus a kindred spirit. He appreciated not only the wisdom of the Lord's answers but also their content. He then put a question to Jesus.

When Jesus answered the scribe's question, the scribe acknowledged their agreement. There was a common ground between them. In our witnessing this is important. It is important as a base on which to build both our witness and our relationship with the prospect so that he is willing to listen. The scribe here knew the law but as yet not the Gospel.

The scribe was attracted to Jesus by our Lord's wise answers. We always hope that others may hear our testimony to the hope within us and ask us about it. Yet there are other things which may also attract an inquirer. For example, are our good deeds visible? Is our moral character such that our life is a principled one—a life which shows we are not willing to compromise the high standard of God's Word?

If this is the case, this may attract an inquirer. One thing is certain: wickedness not only does not draw inquirers, but even repels them. Why should any want to inquire after evil? Why should

any want to inquire after the compromising of principle? That is the ever present, pragmatic way of the world.

Things In Common

There is no question but that we see here the importance of some things in common. We see common ground on which to build the witness and relationship. We should try to establish some things in common with those to whom we would witness.

I remember a canvass I was on. I noticed a fine rose garden as I approached the door of the house. I don't recall whether it was before or after I spoke of the purpose of my visit, but I referred to the rose garden. I mentioned that it reminded me of the rose garden my father had, and how I was put in charge of it. I didn't just compliment the person on the fine rose garden but tried to let him know that we were both admirers of fine roses.

From this the person can look back on the purpose of my visit with a more friendly light. He can also remember back to that if and when I approach his door again. It may seem like a little thing, yet it can go a long way in establishing a relationship. Such a common ground on the lighter side helps avoid the icy attitude of stranger to stranger.

In our selfish, self-centered day there are not many people who genuinely inquire about others with a real interest. As Christians we want to be genuine. We want to be genuine not only with the ulterior motive of wit-

nessing sooner or later, but rather showing a genuine interest in people for whom Christ died. That is part of Christian love.

It is also noteworthy that this encounter in our text ends on a positive note, but not with a conversion. Jesus said: "You are not far from the kingdom of God." The scribe had understanding up to a point. We want to bear this in mind too in our witnessing. Why not give credit where credit is due? With this encounter you can imagine a later meeting of our Lord with the scribe, and possibly a good discussion ensuing.

We too should want to leave our witnessing encounter on a positive note. However, that is not always possible. When a person exhibits impenitence, rejection, or even ridicule, no

positive note could end such an encounter. It would be wrong to give the person the impression that he is fine as he is. In this case the scribe did not evince such a negative reaction, which is why the Lord spoke as He did. Another thing to note is that there is nothing wrong with a compliment to a prospect if he is correct on something. While we will want to guard against fawning, an honest statement or appraisal—as given here by our Lord—is in order.

In order that an encounter like this might happen, seek to speak, do and live each day in keeping with God's will. And pray. Pray that others may see your good works and speak to you. Pray that the result may be that they join you in glorifying the Lord for His grace and mercy.

—D. Koenig



Prophecy Or Fantasy?

The Middle East—Part IV

So how are things in the Middle East these days? Same old story! Each nation is secretly rearming itself as quickly and as best it can. Saddam Hussein is still in power in Iraq. Syria has consolidated its hold on Lebanon and is intent on regaining the Golan Heights. Israel keeps on building new settlements on the West Bank. Secretary of State Baker keeps on making the rounds—proposing, cajoling, pressuring. But the centuries-old hatreds, fears, suspicions remain.

Only one factor has changed—slightly. Talk of "Armageddon" has faded. Most prophetic "experts" were very cautious in connecting Desert

Storm with the possible beginning of the so-called endtime events. They were waiting for a supernatural event—

The Rapture

"The Rapture," as currently taught by millennialists and dispensationalists, is a fantasy that first appeared in the form of a vision seen by a certain Miss Margaret McDonald in England in March of 1830. For eighteen centuries this new doctrine of the Lord's first coming for the saints had eluded the profound studies of all preceding Bible scholars. According to the vision the Lord Jesus is to come secretly and

snatch (rapture) all believers from off the face of the globe. Thereafter the endtime antichrist is to arise to settle the Jewish problem, but shall institute a reign of terror known as the great tribulation. That shall be brought to a conclusion by the Battle of Armageddon which shall be followed by the establishing of the Lord's millennial reign here on earth. We consider this sequence of events to be religious fantasy, not prophecy!

Margaret saw the vision, but she and her followers had to dignify her vision with the voice of prophecy. They found it, or more accurately inserted it into comforting words that Paul had written to the Thessalonians:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up (raptured) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (I Thess. 4:14-17)

But a casual reading of this gloriously comforting text reveals that it has nothing to say about any secret spiriting away of believers from the earth. It speaks of the glorious second coming of our Lord with fanfare—the Lord Jesus is His glory descending with a shout, the voice of the archangel, and the blast of the trumpet of God. The Christians at Thessalonica were afraid that the living would enjoy some advantage over the dead when that great

day came. The apostle Paul removed those fears by assuring them that the believing dead would rise first and then simultaneously with the believing living be caught up (raptured) to meet the Lord in the air.

What then? Antichrist, great tribulation, Armageddon, an earthly millennium—long reign of Jesus with this capital at Jerusalem? All that is fantasy, not prophecy!

The early Christian Church formulated the endtime succession of events very simply in the Apostolic Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ...who ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead...I believe in the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting."

When Jesus comes again, the believing dead will first be raised and then, together with the believing living, be raptured unto the Lord before the throne of judgment where we shall hear these blessed of all words from the lips of our Lord Jesus: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34).

—Paul F. Nolting



West-Central Pastoral Conference

Dates: September 17-19, 1991; beginning at 10:00 A.M. (Mountain Time) on Tuesday through 12 noon on Thursday

Place: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Rapid City, SD

Agenda:

- 1) Exegesis of Malachi 2:13-17—Steven Siefert
- 2) Exegesis of I Corinthians 3:10-15 —Norman Greve
- 3) The Decalog as Promissory—John Johannes

- 4) A Thorough, Critical Survey of the Standard ELCA Dogmatics Book—Thomas Schuetze
- 5) Hometown Interaction with Clergy of Other Faiths: Are There Any Boundaries On Our Social Relationships with False Teachers? If So, What Are They?—James Albrecht
- 6) An Analysis of Contemporary Christian Music (To What Extent Does It Reflect Reformed Theology?)—Michael Sprengeler
- 7) History of Islam—Warren Fanning
- 8) Hitler and Lutheranism—David Fuerstenau
- 9) Book Review: Cross of Christ—Paul Naumann

Conference Chaplain: Michael Thom

Conference Speaker: Lawrence Bade

— Thomas Schuetze, Secretary

Wausau Worship

Members of CLC congregations living in the Wausau, Wisconsin area are meeting for monthly worship services at the Rib Mountain Travel Inn, just off Hwy. 51, near the County N exit (Exit #188). Services are held the third Sunday of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the Inn's banquet room (lower level). (The service for September, however, is on the 22nd.)

Please address all referrals or questions to Pastor Mike Sydow, Rt. 2, Box 644, Markesan, Wisconsin 53946.

— Pastor Sydow

South-Eastern Pastoral Conference

Place: Living Word, Hendersonville, NC

Dates: October 1-3, 1991

Conference Chaplain: M. Wilke

Communion Service Speaker: J. Klatt

Agenda:

Tuesday, Oct. 1 -

Exegetical Study of I Thess. 4:6ff—T. Kesterson

Toward a More Evangelical Ministry—S. Kurtzahn

Women in a Voter's Meeting—A. Gullerud
Christian Mothers Working Outside the Home
—J. Schierenbeck

Communion Service - 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 2 -

Old Testament Exegesis—M. Gullerud

Sermon Study—M. Thom

Thursday, Oct. 3 -

Exegesis of I John 3:4-9—M. Roehl

— Mike Roehl, Secretary

Great Lakes Pastoral Conference

Place: ILC Campus, Eau Claire, WI

Time: October 7-8, 1991 beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Agenda:

* The Influence of Reformed "self-help" Literature on Conservative Lutheran Pastoral Theology—P.D. Nolting

* Homiletics—Reformation Text—David Lau

* Effect of Feminism in (on) the Church—John Ude

* Critique of the Church Growth Movement—Art Schultz

* N.T. Exegesis, 2 Cor. 3:6-18—Mark Bernthal

* O.T. Exegesis, Excerpts from Eccl. 2—David Koenig

* I Cor. 14 and Tongue Speaking—Paul Koch

Conference Speaker: Gordon Radtke

Chaplain: James Sandeen

— David Reim, Secretary

Installation

Authorized by president Daniel Fleischer I ordained and installed Paul Krause in Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Hecla, South Dakota on July 14.

— Leland Grams